

Regional Skills
Assessment 2007

Rural Profile



West Midlands
**Regional
Observatory**

Regional Skills Assessment 2007:

Rural Profile

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Skills Research Team
West Midlands Regional Observatory
Level L1, Millennium Point
Curzon Street
Birmingham
B4 7XG

Telephone: 0121 202 3250
Email: enquiries@wmro.org
Web: www.wmro.org

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1 Introduction

1.1 Report content

This report is a supplement to the main 2007 Regional Skills Assessment produced on behalf of the Rural Skills Development Group. It highlights the key skills issues for the rural areas of the West Midlands. In particular the report considers:

- Trends in employment and gross value added
- Key sectors within the local economy
- Earnings of those in employment and the impact of commuting
- Trends in demography and migration
- The contribution to the local economy being made by migrant workers
- Qualification attainment and access to education and training

1.2 Sources of data and intelligence

The report draws on a range of key sources of data and intelligence, notably:

- Sources used in the main 2007 Regional Skills Assessment such as the ONS Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), Annual Population Survey (APS).
- The West Midlands Rural Economy Study, prepared by SQW and LUC on behalf of AWM in 2007, and notably data relating to gross value added, earnings, population trends and economic and social deprivation.
- 'Skills and rurality: a summary of key issues from regional research', a report produced in 2007 by the Regional Skills Partnership cross-regional research group.
- A study of the economic impact of migrant workers in the West Midlands commissioned by WMRO on behalf of the LSC and Advantage West Midlands in 2007
- Data sourced from other relevant WMRO studies such as the 2005 Regional Lifestyle Survey and the Contextual Report for Urban and Rural Renaissance produced for the West Midlands Regional Assembly in 2006.

1.3 Definitions of the rural West Midlands

For the majority of the analysis we have used the following classification developed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to allow comparison of the Rural West Midlands and various types of area within it with the region as a whole and England. While it is recognised that there is often significant variation within these areas, detailed analysis by local authority level is beyond the scope of this project and, for a significant number of the indicators considered, is not possible due to a lack of robust and reliable data at that level:

- Significantly rural - districts with more than 37,000 people or more than 26% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns (Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Rugby, Shrewsbury and Atcham, South Staffordshire, Stafford, Warwick, Wyre Forest)
- Rural 80 - districts with at least 80% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns (Bridgnorth, North Shropshire, Oswestry, South Shropshire, Stratford-on-Avon, Wychavon)
- Rural 50 - districts with at least 50% but less than 80% of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns (Herefordshire, Lichfield, Malvern Hills, North Warwickshire, Staffordshire Moorlands)

In a few cases where data at a Local Authority District level is not available we have presented analysis for the counties within the region that are most predominantly rural (Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire) based on the convention used in the West Midlands rural economy study.

2 Key Headlines

2.1 The business base

While the business and employment base of the rural West Midlands is growing strongly the dependence on lower value added industries is greater than in the West Midlands as a whole and the England average. Many higher skilled residents are likely to be commuting to better paid jobs outside the rural West Midlands, leaving lower skilled residents working in lower paid jobs in lower value-added industries locally. Key issues include a need to:

- Encourage the further development and diversification of the business base of the rural West Midlands
- Raise the demand for skills from rural businesses
- Raise the aspirations of lower skilled rural residents
- Help rural business to recruit and retain well qualified and skilled rural residents as employees

2.2 Demography

While the population of the rural West Midlands is growing quite strongly it is ageing and there are limited numbers of young people in the 'available for work' population. The influx of migrant workers is helping to meet employers' short term labour and skill needs but in the medium and longer term there is a need for:

- Employers to develop more diverse recruitment policies to encompass older people as well as the 'traditional' market of younger people which is shrinking
- Increasing recognition of the considerable skills and qualifications of migrant workers and provision of opportunities for progression into higher skilled, higher paid employment

2.3 Qualifications and training

The rural West Midlands benefits from a well qualified working age population, in terms of both young people emerging from the education system and those already of working age.

Nevertheless many of these qualifications and skills are lost to the local economy, with significant numbers of well qualified young people migrating to other parts of the UK and many highly skilled and qualified adults commuting to work in locations outside the rural West Midlands.

As previously mentioned action to diversify the local business base, raise aspirations and the demand for skills and help businesses to recruit and retain local people will be important.

In addition in areas where large numbers of people are well qualified there are significant numbers of people with few qualifications and facing barriers to progress. There is a need to develop more accessible and flexible education and training opportunities for those who may find 'mainstream' provision unsuitable.

3 The business base

Key issues

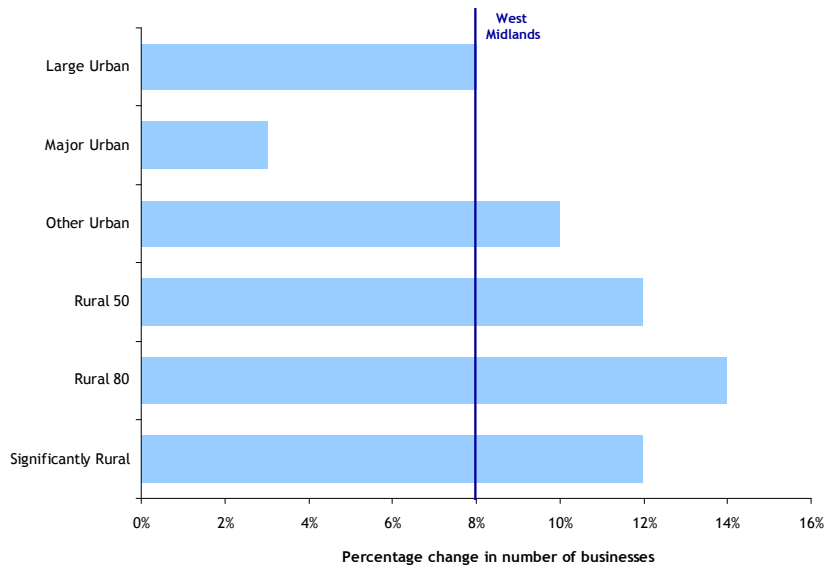
While the business and employment base is growing strongly there is still a dependence on lower value added industries. Many higher skilled residents are likely to be commuting to better paid jobs outside the rural West Midlands, leaving lower skilled residents working in lower paid jobs in lower value-added industries locally. Key issues include a need to:

- Encourage the further development and diversification of the business base of the rural West Midlands
- Raise the demand for skills from rural businesses
- Raise the aspirations of lower skilled rural residents
- Help business to recruit and retain well qualified and skilled rural residents as employees

3.1 Business and employment growth

The rural West Midlands has seen relatively strong business growth in recent years, reflecting a healthy rate of new business formation. The overall number of 'business units' increased by 12% between 2000 and 2005 in the rural West Midlands as a whole and by some 14% in the 'rural 80' districts. This compares with growth of 8% across the region as a whole. While it is recognised that this is from a low base relative to urban areas of the region, growth of 12% does represent an increase of some 9,000 businesses.

Percentage change in the number of businesses 2000-2005

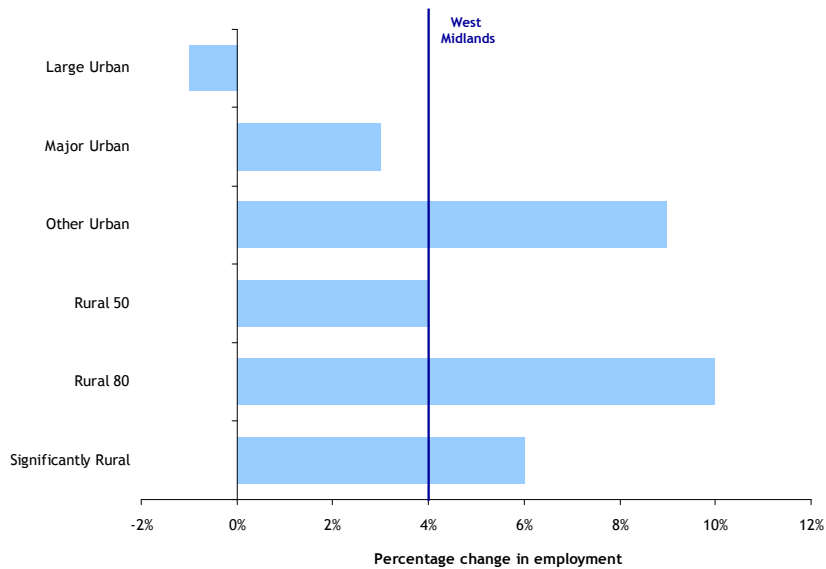


Source: ABI 2000-05

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This has been paralleled by relatively strong growth in employment. The number of people in paid employment in the rural West Midlands expanded by more than 45,000 between 2000 and 2005 (representing growth of some 6%), and by some 10% in 'rural 80' districts, well above the growth of 4% across the region as a whole.

Percentage change in employment 2000-2005



Source: ABI 2000-05

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These trends are reflected in higher employment rates and lower rates of economic inactivity in the rural West Midlands than both the Regional and England average:

- The employment rate for the rural districts of the West Midlands was 79% in 2006, which compares with a regional average of 73% and an England average of 75%¹.
- Only 18% of residents in the rural West Midlands were economically inactive in 2006, which compares with a regional average of 23% and an England average of 22%.

3.2 Gross value added per capita and per worker

Nevertheless the West Midlands Rural Economy Study, prepared by SQW and LUC on behalf of AWM (see section 1.2 for further details), highlights lower gross value added (GVA) per capita in the rural West Midlands than the regional and national averages. In 2004 GVA per capita was £12,947 in Herefordshire, £13,291 in Shropshire, £13,121 in Staffordshire and £14,528 in Worcestershire, well below the regional average of £15,325 and the England average of £17,532.

The same report also highlights relatively low GVA per worker (a direct indicator of productivity) in some parts of the rural West Midlands. In 2004 GVA per worker was £33,112 in Staffordshire and £34,341 in Worcestershire, which compares with a regional average of £35,062, and an England average of £38,920

¹ Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

3.3 Key sectors of the rural economy

This strong business and employment growth coupled with low GVA per capita and productivity is largely explained by an economy that has an above average dependence on relatively lower 'value added' sectors. In particular:

Construction employs 42,000 people in the rural West Midlands, representing 5.4% of the workforce and 6.2% of the workforce in 'rural 50' districts. The industry employs 4.5% of the workforce in the region as a whole.

'Other' manufacturing (and notably food processing) employs nearly 60,000 people in the rural West Midlands, representing 7.5% of the workforce and 9.7% of the workforce in 'rural 50' districts. The industry employs 6.8% of the workforce in the region as a whole.

According to the ONS Annual Business Inquiry agriculture employs 19,000 people in the rural West Midlands. This constitutes 2.4% of the workforce and 4.3% of the workforce in 'rural 80' districts compared with 0.9% of the workforce in the region as a whole. Other sources², however, indicate that numbers employed are much higher than this. It is estimated that some 47,000 people work in agricultural operations in the region (6% of all employment) and a further 16,000 work in directly dependent supplies and services.

The proportion of employment in higher value added activities such as engineering, BPS, ICT/telecoms, education and public administration, meanwhile, is lower than regional average in the rural West Midlands.

² 1997 DEFRA report for the Rural Development Programme

Table 1 - Employment structure by sector, 2005

Industry	Large Urban	Major Urban	Other Urban	Rural 50	Rural 80	Significantly Rural	West Midlands
Agriculture	0.2%	-	-	3.7%	4.3%	1.0%	0.9%
Business & Professional Services	13.3%	17.5%	16.3%	13.8%	15.2%	14.7%	15.9%
Construction	3.0%	4.4%	3.8%	6.2%	5.9%	4.8%	4.5%
Education	12.6%	10.7%	8.4%	9.0%	8.4%	8.7%	10.1%
Electricity, Gas and Water	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.7%	0.6%
Engineering	7.9%	8.9%	11.5%	6.6%	7.3%	7.2%	8.4%
Health & Social Work	12.4%	12.0%	10.4%	11.0%	8.8%	13.6%	11.9%
Hotels & Restaurants	5.5%	5.7%	5.0%	6.6%	8.9%	7.3%	6.2%
ICT & Telecomms	3.1%	2.2%	1.8%	1.7%	2.0%	2.4%	2.2%
Miscellaneous Services	4.3%	4.6%	4.2%	5.1%	5.7%	5.1%	4.7%
Other Manufacturing	6.9%	6.1%	7.2%	9.7%	7.9%	6.2%	6.8%
Public Administration	4.4%	5.3%	5.1%	3.2%	4.0%	4.8%	4.8%
Transport	7.8%	6.7%	7.7%	8.9%	7.0%	7.9%	7.3%
Wholesale & Retail	18.0%	15.2%	18.2%	13.9%	14.4%	15.5%	15.7%

Source: ABI 2005

The economy of the rural West Midlands is also dominated by smaller businesses. Data from the 2005 ONS Annual Business Inquiry indicates that some 71,000 of businesses (86% of the total) employ 10 people or less, well above the regional average of 83%. Given that firms below the VAT threshold are not well represented in this survey, and there are known to be considerable numbers of these based in the Rural West Midlands, the proportion in reality is likely to be much higher than this. Numbers of small and micro businesses have increased considerably in recent years due to, for example, diversification within agriculture into the food & drink processing and sales and tourism industries.

‘Skills and rurality: a summary of key issues from regional research’, a report produced by the Regional Skills Partnership cross-regional research group notes that these lower value added industries, often dominated by small and micro businesses, are prevalent in rural areas across England, notably in locations remote from transport networks.

3.4 Workplace and residence based earnings

The Rural Economy Study highlights a dichotomy between workplace based and residence based earnings in the rural West Midlands:

- Mean workplace-based earnings in the rural West Midlands in 2006 were £26,212, - in line with the Region as a whole but well below the England average of £30,097.
- Mean residence based earnings at £28,405 in the rural West Midlands and £30,902 in the ‘rural 80’ districts in 2006 were significantly higher than mean work based earnings and the regional average of £26,270. Earnings in the ‘rural 80’ districts in particular compare favourably with an England average of £30,171³.

³ More detailed analysis relating to the Rural Regeneration Zone is available from the 2006/2007 monitoring report produced by WMRO

Table 2 - Mean annual earnings, 2006

	Residence based earnings	Workplace based earnings	Difference
Rural West Midlands	£28,405	£26,212	-£2,193
Rural 50	£26,590	£25,534	-£1,057
Rural 80	£30,902	£27,243	-£3,658
Significantly rural	£28,380	£26,223	-£2,157
West Midlands Region	£26,270	£26,197	-£73
England	£30,171	£30,097	-£74

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2006

While as already mentioned the rural West Midlands economy has an above average incidence of jobs in lower value added industries, the proportion of rural residents working in higher skilled, better paid jobs is well above the regional average:

- 17.2% of rural residents (160,000) in employment work in managerial occupations compared with a regional average of 13.9%.
- 13.4% of rural residents (124,000) in employment work in professional occupations compared with a regional average of 12.2%
- However only 8.3% work as lower and semi-skilled operatives (77,000) compared with a regional average of 9.4% and only 10.4% work in unskilled elementary (96,000) compared with a regional average of 12.5%.

Table 3: Employment structure by occupation, 2006

	Large Urban	Major Urban	Other Urban	Rural 50	Rural 80	Significantly Rural	West Midlands
Managers and senior officials	10.8%	12.2%	12.2%	17.8%	17.2%	16.8%	13.9%
Professional occupations	10.0%	12.0%	11.7%	14.0%	11.5%	13.9%	12.2%
Associate prof & tech occupations	11.6%	11.8%	12.4%	12.4%	12.8%	14.0%	12.4%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	11.4%	13.3%	11.1%	10.4%	10.6%	11.9%	12.0%
Skilled trades occupations	13.1%	11.9%	13.2%	11.2%	14.6%	9.9%	12.0%
Personal service occupations	9.0%	7.4%	7.5%	7.7%	7.4%	6.6%	7.5%
Sales and customer service occupations	8.5%	8.0%	5.9%	6.7%	6.6%	8.5%	7.7%
Process, plant and machine operatives	9.7%	9.6%	11.7%	7.9%	9.4%	8.0%	9.4%
Elementary occupations	15.4%	13.2%	13.9%	11.6%	9.7%	10.0%	12.5%

Source: APS 2006

This analysis suggests that many higher skilled residents are likely to be commuting to better paid jobs outside the rural West Midlands, leaving lower skilled residents working in lower paid jobs in lower value-added industries locally. For example in South Shropshire while 1 in 3 households is home to a director 50% earn less than two thirds of the average wage⁴. The Skills and rurality report suggests that there may be a lack of demand for higher level skills in rural areas, which may be leading to low aspirations among some sections of the local population.

⁴ Various studies commissioned by AWM

4 Demography

Key issues

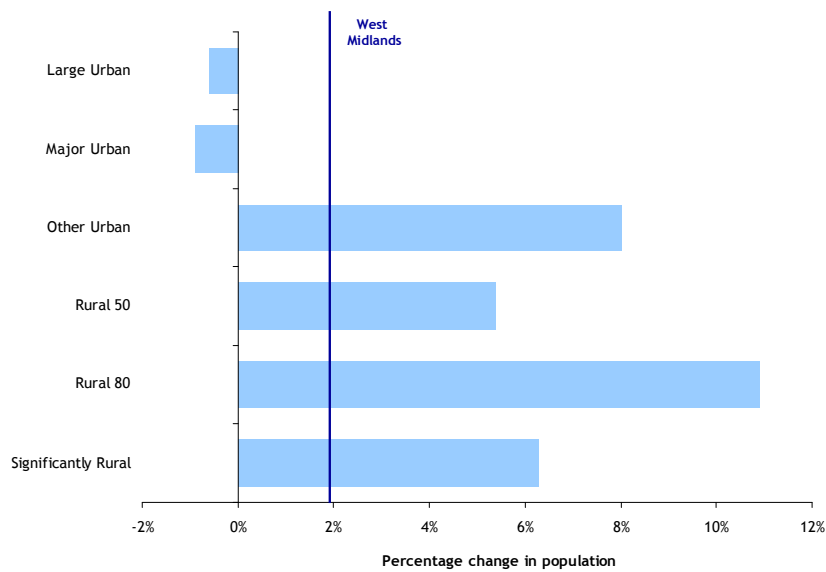
While the population of the rural West Midlands is growing quite strongly it is ageing and there are limited numbers of young people in the 'available for work' population. The influx of migrant workers is helping to meet employers' short term labour and skill needs but in the medium and longer term there is a need for:

- Employers to develop more diverse recruitment policies to encompass older people as well as the 'traditional' market of younger people which is shrinking
- Increasing recognition of the considerable skills and qualifications of migrant workers and provision of opportunities for progression

4.1 Population growth

The Rural Economy Study highlights the significant growth in the size of the population of the rural West Midlands in recent years. Over the 1991-2006 period the total population of the rural West Midlands has increased by 7% and by 11% in 'rural 80' districts. This compares with growth of 2% in the regional as a whole and 6% in England as a whole. While it is recognised that this is from a low base relative to urban areas of the region, growth of 12% does represent an increase of some 1.9 million.

Percentage change in population 1991-2006



Source: ABI 2000-05

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4.2 An ageing population

This population growth is principally driven, however, by older age groups and the population of the rural West Midlands is ageing:

- In 2005 some 18% of the population of the rural West Midlands (and some 19% of the population in the 'rural 50' and 'rural 80' districts) was over 65 compared to 16% of people in the region as a whole.
- Younger workers aged between 20 and 29 year account for just 10% of the population of the rural West Midlands as a whole (and only 9% of the population in the 'rural 50' and 'rural 80' districts compared) with 12% of the population of the region as a whole.
- Only 17% of the population of the rural West Midlands are young people aged 15 and under who will enter the workforce in the future, compared to 19% region as a whole.

Table 4 - Population by broad age group, 2005

	Aged under 15	Aged 20-29	Aged over 65
Rural West Midlands	17.1%	10.0%	17.9%
Rural 50	16.9%	8.9%	18.9%
Rural 80	16.9%	9.2%	19.1%
Significantly rural	17.2%	10.9%	16.8%
West Midlands Region	19.0%	12.0%	16.0%

Source: ONS mid-year estimates

4.3 Out migration of younger people

Indeed a significant number of younger people are migrating out of the rural West Midlands. Analysis from WMRO's Regional Lifestyle Survey reveals that there is a strong aspiration among young people from the rural West Midlands to live in urban areas, notably those outside the Region. WMRO analysis of NHSCR migration data for 2001-2004⁵ reveals that between 2001 and 2004 there was a net out-migration of 3,600 18-24 year olds from Worcestershire to other parts of the UK and the figure was 3,800 for Warwickshire, 1,400 for Herefordshire and 3,600 for Shropshire.

⁵ Based on data collected for the Contextual Report for Urban and Rural Renaissance produced for the West Midlands Regional Assembly, 2006

4.4 Influx of migrant workers

A study of the economic impact of migrant workers in the West Midlands commissioned by WMRO on behalf of the LSC and Advantage West Midlands in 2007 (for further details see section 1.2) demonstrates that at the same time large numbers of migrant workers have found employment in the rural West Midlands in recent years. Some 11,350 were registered for NI numbers in 2005/2006. A significant proportion of registrations were from the 'A8' EU Accession countries with Polish nationals the largest group. A particular concentration of migrant workers exists in the 'rural 50' districts with 102 registrations per 10,000 working age population (compared with 63 in the region as a whole and an England average of 74).

Migrant workers are making a useful contribution to the economy of the rural West Midlands by helping to address businesses labour and skill needs. Significant numbers work in sectors with buoyant labour demand highlighted in section 3.3 such as agriculture, construction and 'other manufacturing' (notably food processing) and also in transport, hospitality & catering, mainly in lower skilled, lower paying occupations.

The 'Skills and rurality' report mentioned in section 3.3 also highlights issues with the recognition of migrant workers' qualifications and skills, with some employers reluctant to accept the transferability of skills. As a result migrants with higher level skills and qualifications may be doing semi-skilled or unskilled work and many employers still report 'hard to fill' vacancies.

5 Qualifications and training

Key issues

The rural West Midlands benefits from a well qualified working age population, in terms of both young people emerging from the education system and those already of working age. Nevertheless many of these qualifications and skills are lost to the local economy, with significant numbers of well qualified young people migrating to other parts of the UK and many highly skilled and qualified adults commuting to work in locations outside the rural West Midlands.

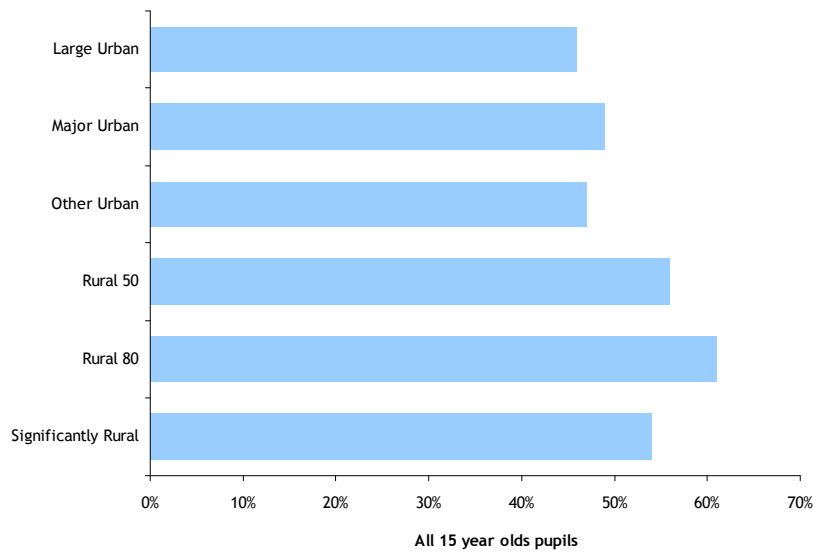
As previously mentioned action to diversify the local business base, raise aspirations and the demand for skills and help businesses to recruit and retain local people will be important.

In addition in areas where large numbers of people are well qualified there are also significant numbers of people with few qualifications and facing barriers to progress. There is a need to develop more accessible and flexible education and training opportunities for those who may find 'mainstream'

5.1 Young people

The rural West Midlands benefits from a relatively well qualified supply of young people emerging from the education system. Some 56% of 15 year olds achieved 5+ GCSEs at A-C in 2005/2006 across the rural West Midlands as a whole and some 61% of pupils from 'rural 80' districts achieved this standard, which compares with 51% across the region as a whole.

All 15 year old pupils achieving 5+ A*-C by geography, 2005/06



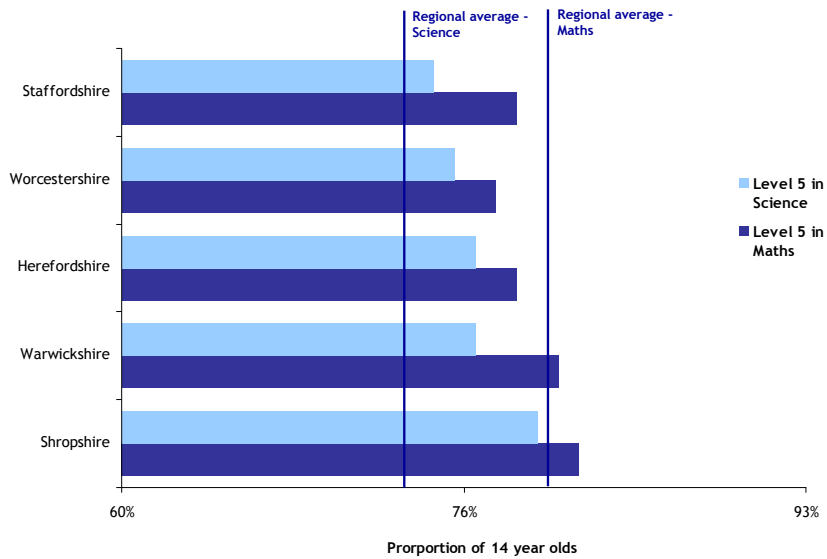
Source: Neighbourhood Statistics

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Analysis of the supply of Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) Skills and Qualifications conducted by WMRO on behalf of the Innovation & Technology Council (for further details see section 1.2) highlights that the proportion of young people attaining these qualifications, which are highly sought by employers, is often above both the regional and the England average:

- Some 82% of 14 year olds in Shropshire, 81% in Warwickshire, 79% in Herefordshire and Staffordshire and 78% in Worcestershire achieved a level 5 in maths in 2005/2006, compared with a regional average of 75% and an England average of 77%
- Some 80% of 14 year olds in Shropshire, 77% in Warwickshire, 77% in Herefordshire 76% in Worcestershire and 75% in Staffordshire achieved a level 5 in science in 2005/2006, compared with a regional average of 70% and an England average of 72%

Proportion of 14 year olds achieving level 5 in Maths and Science at key stage 3, 2006



Source: LFS 2006

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- Some 62% of 15 year olds from Shropshire, 58% from Warwickshire and 60% from Herefordshire and 54% from Staffordshire achieved a GCSE in maths compared with a regional average of 52%, and an England average of 54%
- Some 61% of 15 year olds from Shropshire, 57% from Warwickshire, 68% from Herefordshire and 56% from Worcestershire achieved a GCSE in science compared with a regional average of 52%, and an England average of 54%
- Some 65% of 15 year olds from Shropshire, 59% from Warwickshire and Staffordshire, 67% from Herefordshire and 62% from Worcestershire achieved a GCSE in design & technology compared with a regional average of 57%, and an England average of 58%
- Some 69% of 15 year olds from Shropshire, 60% from Warwickshire 75% from Herefordshire and 60% from Worcestershire achieved a GCSE in information technology compared with a regional average of 57%, and an England average of 59%

Table 5 - Rates of achievement of grades A-C in STEM GCSEs, 2005/2006

	Maths	Science	Design & technology	Information Technology
Herefordshire	60%	58%	67%	75%
Shropshire	62%	61%	65%	70%
Warwickshire	58%	57%	59%	60%
Staffordshire	54%	53%	59%	59%
Worcestershire	52%	56%	62%	60%
West Midlands region	52%	51%	57%	58%
England	54%	54%	58%	59%

5.2 Adults

Similarly the adult working age population in the rural West Midlands is better qualified than both the region as a whole and England as a whole:

- Some 69% of the working age population in ‘rural 80’ districts and 68% in ‘rural 50’ districts are qualified to NVQ level 2 and above compared with a regional average of 60% and an England average of 67%.
- Some 48% of the working age population in ‘rural 80’ districts and 47% in ‘rural 50’ districts are qualified to NVQ level 3 and above compared with a regional average of 41% and an England average of 46%.
- Some 29% of the working age population in ‘rural 80’ and ‘rural 50’ districts are qualified to NVQ level 4 and above compared with a regional average of 24% and an England average of 27%.

Table 6 - Adult qualification attainment, 2006

	No qualifications	Level 2+ qualifications	Level 3+ qualifications	Level 4+ qualifications
Large Urban	19.2%	58.8%	40.2%	21.9%
Major Urban	21.2%	55.3%	36.1%	20.8%
Other Urban	13.4%	62.6%	41.4%	22.4%
Rural 50	13.8%	68.0%	46.7%	28.4%
Rural 80	12.3%	69.4%	47.9%	28.4%
Significantly Rural	13.8%	65.2%	47.4%	29.4%
West Midlands	17.5%	60.5%	41.1%	23.9%
England	13.6%	67.3%	45.8%	27.1%

The ‘skills and rurality’ report notes, however, that the relatively strong overall performance of rural areas on skills can often disguise significant local variation. In areas where large numbers of people are well qualified may also be significant numbers of people with few qualifications and facing barriers to progress:

- For young people a lack of appropriate local sixth form and further education provision can restrict progression from compulsory education:
 - There are often relatively long ‘travel to train’ distances with infrequent or unreliable public transport services compounding the problem.
 - Lack of vocational and flexible provision is an obstacle to young people who find mainstream provision unsuitable. In the West Midlands young people have reported difficulties in accessing apprenticeships, with few places available in rural areas.
 - Young people who leave rural areas to access education and training often stay away permanently.
- For adults skills training is often provided in larger towns during the day, making it difficult for them to attend.

In the rural economy study it is highlighted that while overall the rural West Midlands does not suffer from particularly severe economic or social deprivation, levels are higher in the more sparsely populated areas of South Shropshire and Herefordshire. In particular these areas score relatively poorly in terms of access to education, skills and training provision.

Full document information

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West Midlands Regional Observatory
Level L1
Millennium Point
Curzon Street
Birmingham B4 7XG

Telephone: 0121 202 3250
Fax: 0121 202 3240
E-mail: enquiries@wmro.org
www.wmro.org



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