

Students from Rural Communities in Student Mobility

The survey asked participants to selfidentify if they were from a rural area, a town or suburban area, or an urban area.

The rural students were those that selected they were from a rural area.

"Rurality in the 21st century is a diverse picture: rural regions that are closer to cities or have good access to transport can facilitate mobility of people, goods and services and create strong "economies of proximity".

The responses for students related to barriers and support; showcased similar trends between rural and urban areas; indicating that students from suburban areas have more resources at their disposal; indicating that other factors such as income and ethnic background might impact opportunities as a whole; for example: 43% of ethnic minority students from a rural background reported being treated unfairly by students

Rural youth however; report a lower improvement on their adaptability to work in an international setting and intercultural teams compared to students from urban and suburban areas.

2370 respondents from rural groups

25% of universities recognise students from rural communities as students with fewer opportunities.

Access to opportunities

Those living in rural areas who face challenges when accessing higher education can also miss out on many of the support mechanisms in place that is being offered on campus - as students from rural areas are not always as actively engaged on the university campus due to commutes.

- 53% of non-mobile respondents reported needing at least 75% of the mobility programme costs to be covered by funding if they were to go abroad. Only a very small portion went on exchange as self-funded, which is higher than their peers.
- For respondents from rural areas a slightly higher percentage did not want to leave family and friends to go on a mobility programme compared to urban and suburban peers.

Reflections from the community

Rural youth are a diverse group of people; rurality seems to be more impacted by distance and access to educational opportunities; rather than the density of population in the area. It is noted that rural youth and their family and friends are less exposed to international environments, meaning they have less experience with topics such working in an international setting or intercultural teams - which might impact the way they perceive and understand ourselves and others.

Their perception of mobility might be that it's advantageous and can help them in the future. If they are eager to move to other parts of the country or the world, this can be their ticket "out". On the other hand they may be more hesitant to such culture shock and exposure, and might not have the confidence to believe they could manage in the unknown.

Recommendations

Interaction with factors such as socioeconomic class as well as ethnicity, should be take into account when analyzing the data, and the intersections of these with rurality.

The sentiments that they might hear in their surrounding can be different, both from family and community as well as local and national news and perceptions of rural people. These are the people who stand closest to them and whose opinion has a great influence. This target group is strongly influenced by their community and the politics of the country. In many cases rural people suffer the economic consequences of politics and the market, hence this might have a big influence in how they perceive cities and countries are unknown to them. When discussing how to best reach this target group more "traditional" measures were suggested so that it reaches these youth; but also it's surrounding community:

- Involve local news and local channels of communication.
- Have local politicians endorse the experience of going abroad.
- Collaborate with local influencers/Youtubers/peers who might have a mobility experience.

When it comes to adaptation to the intercultural settings; it is suggested to organise workshops to improve intercultural skills; in order for them to understand the value of international experiences and intercultural learning.

The data extracted in this fact sheet comes from the Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) research project run by Erasmus Student Network (ESN) funded by the Erasmus+ programme. An extensive research report that gathers input of 12.000 students and 750 staff members across Europe and beyond on the inclusion in international student exchanges.

