



Press Release

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Covid-19's effect on rural lives in Scotland to be measured

How Covid-19 has affected people living in rural communities in Scotland is to be captured in a new survey.

The poll will investigate the psychological, social and financial effects of the pandemic in rural areas, where one in six people in Scotland live and work.

The study is one of the first to provide insight into rural areas, organisers from the University of Edinburgh said. Many studies on the pandemic have focused on city dwellers and urban industries.

Its aim is to give rural communities a voice in how to best deal with policies that directly affect them.

Rural communities were spared the high infection rates and number of deaths seen in urban areas during the first wave, but still faced travel restrictions, reduced access to healthcare, and economic uncertainty.

Researchers will ask a variety of questions on themes such as quality of broadband connections, tourism and health and wellbeing.

Concerns about access to medical appointments, using public transport and thoughts on video and telephone appointments will also be gauged.

The survey – named RuralCovidLife – will be open to anyone over the age of 16 living in a rural area of Scotland and was designed in partnership with people living in rural communities.

RuralCovidLife is part of Generation Scotland, a long-term Scotland-wide research project looking at the health and wellbeing of volunteers and their families. Generation Scotland participants have answered questions on their medical history and lifestyle, and granted researchers access to their health records.

Professor David Porteous, Principal Investigator for Generation Scotland at the University of Edinburgh, said: "Rural communities will have been impacted by Covid-19 in a very different way to urban ones. Listening the concerns of these communities will help us understand how best to prepare for the future, making sure rural voices are represented."

Rhoda Meek, a Digital Consultant and crofter based on Tiree, established a social enterprise called isle20.com during lockdown to allow businesses in the Scottish islands that were dependent on tourism to sell their wares online.

Rhoda, who is part of the advisory group for RuralCovidLife, said: "It's so important to hear the rural perspective about the last few months, and it's great the survey is here to do that. Covid-19 has been challenging no matter where you live, and rural areas which have a greater than average reliance on tourism have had a very unique set of circumstances. It's been incredible to watch communities pulling together, and see innovation in action, with people willing to adapt their business models and try new things. Hopefully the results of the survey will be a great basis from which to learn and to build for the future."



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Generation Scotland was set up 14 years ago and is funded by Wellcome.

Volunteers can sign up at: www.ruralcovidlife.scot

For further information, please contact: Shane Canning, Press and PR Office, 0755 782 0266, shane.canning@ed.ac.uk