

# Challenges and opportunities of generational renewal in rural areas of Lithuania



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**Generational Renewal in European Farming, EURAGRI CLG, 19-11-2025**

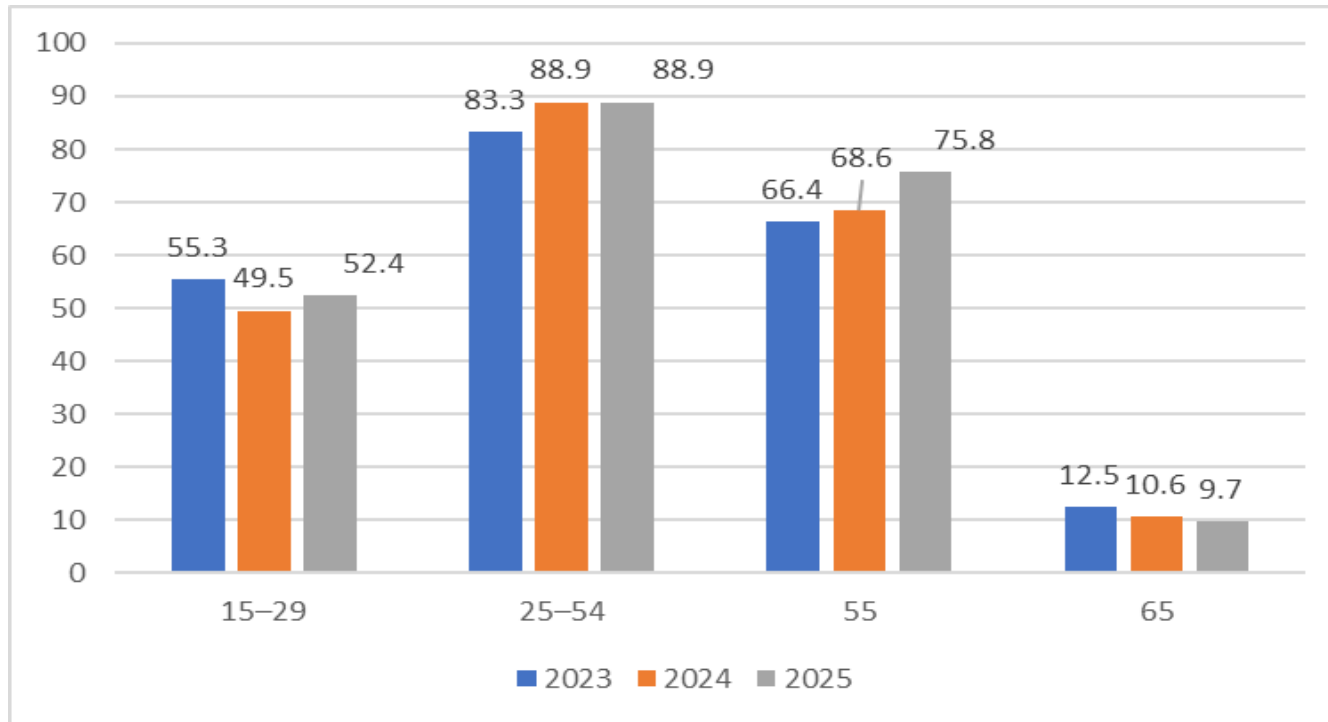
# INTRODUCTION

- **Generational renewal** is a process whereby older generations gradually withdraw from active social, economic and political life and are replaced by younger generations with different social experiences, values, education and behaviour patterns.
- **Since these generations are formed under different historical and social conditions, they are characterized by different values and behaviors.** Over time, changes in society's reaction to such differences (e.g., emigration, old people leaving active activities) lead to **a fundamentally new situation in the structure of society.**
- A long-term demographic and sociocultural process that influences the structure of society, cultural development, the labor market, and political orientations is **managed by various stakeholders.**
- **Generational renewal in agriculture** is a complex process in the agricultural sector where the older generation of farmers transfers agricultural resources – land, equipment, technologies, knowledge, values and management practices – to the younger generation, which takes over.

# Generational renewal problem

- The population density of Lithuania's peripheral municipalities is very low. The municipalities have only 10-12 inhabitants per 1 km<sup>2</sup>, and are the least populated, most forested municipalities with many recreational resources. In municipalities with protected areas, as well as in municipalities near large cities, the population density is decreasing.
- Generational renewal is a bigger problem in sparsely populated areas. In these regions, the older generation is gradually declining through natural ageing, while the younger generation does not find these areas attractive due to limited career opportunities and poor social infrastructure.
- A new model of generational renewal is gradually emerging, where young people do not necessarily move to city centres, as previous generations did, but **seek a compromise between career opportunities and quality of life in the suburbs or in economically viable rural areas rich in recreational resources.**
- This process is **increasing regional disparities** – *large urban areas are attracting more and more young families, while remote rural areas are becoming problematic and facing deeper demographic challenges.*

# Labour force participation rate (men and women) in rural areas



***Fig.1. Labour force participation rate (men and women) in rural areas, per cent.***

Source: Lithuanian official statistics portal

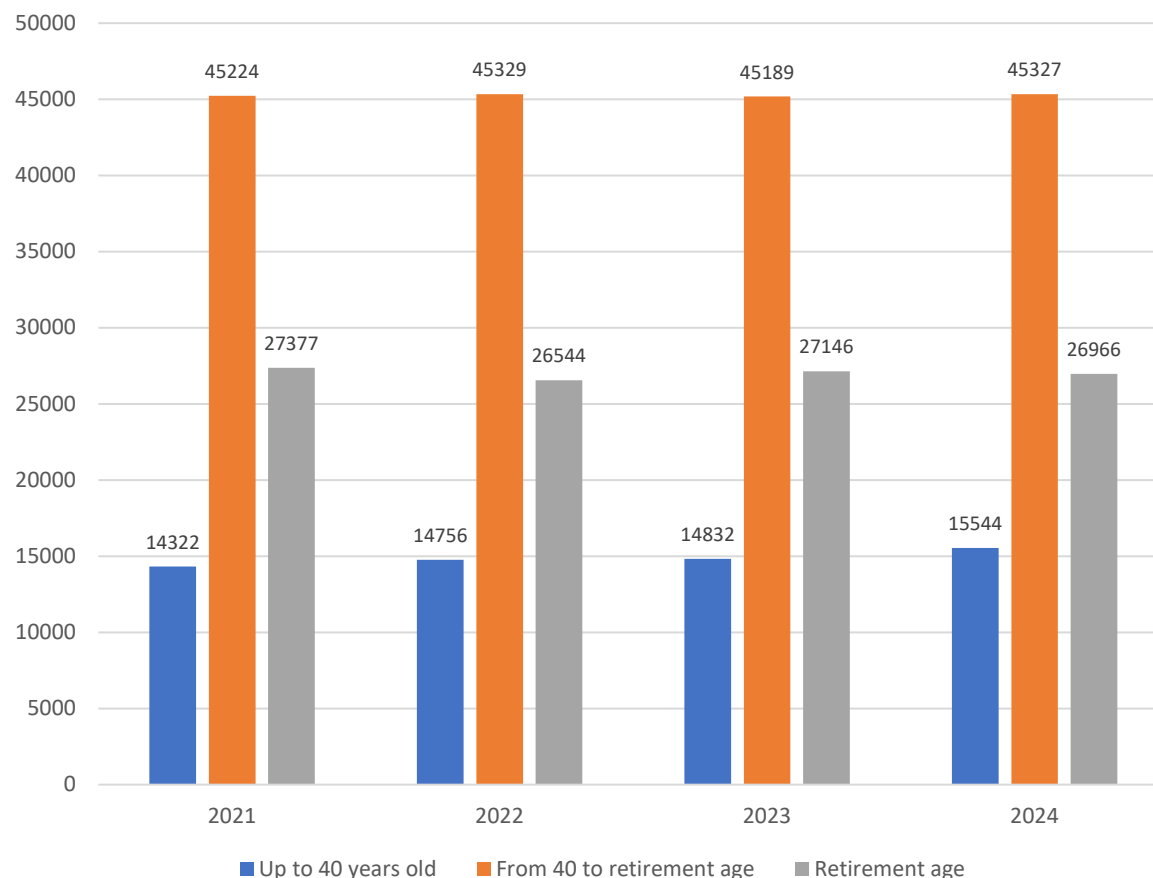
In the youth group (15-29 years), labour force participation rates show a negative trend, falling from 55.3 per cent in 2023 to 49.5 per cent in 2024.

5.8 percentage point drop reveals structural problems in youth participation in the labour market in rural areas.

In the middle age groups (25-54 years), the activity rate remains high and stable, ranging from 83.3 to 88.9 per cent, which indicates stable economic participation of the population in these rural areas.

The older age group (55-64 years) also shows a high activity rate, ranging from 66.4 to 75.8 per cent.

# Distribution of farmers by age in 2021–2024



***Fig. 2. Distribution of farmers by age in 2021–2024, persons***

Source: Lithuanian agriculture, facts and figures 2024

There is a noticeable overall stability in the number of farmers with a slight increase:

2021 – 86,923 farmers, of whom 16.5 % are young farmers,

2022 – 86,629 farmers, of whom 17.0 % are young farmers,

2023 – 87,167 farmers, of whom 17.01% are young farmers,

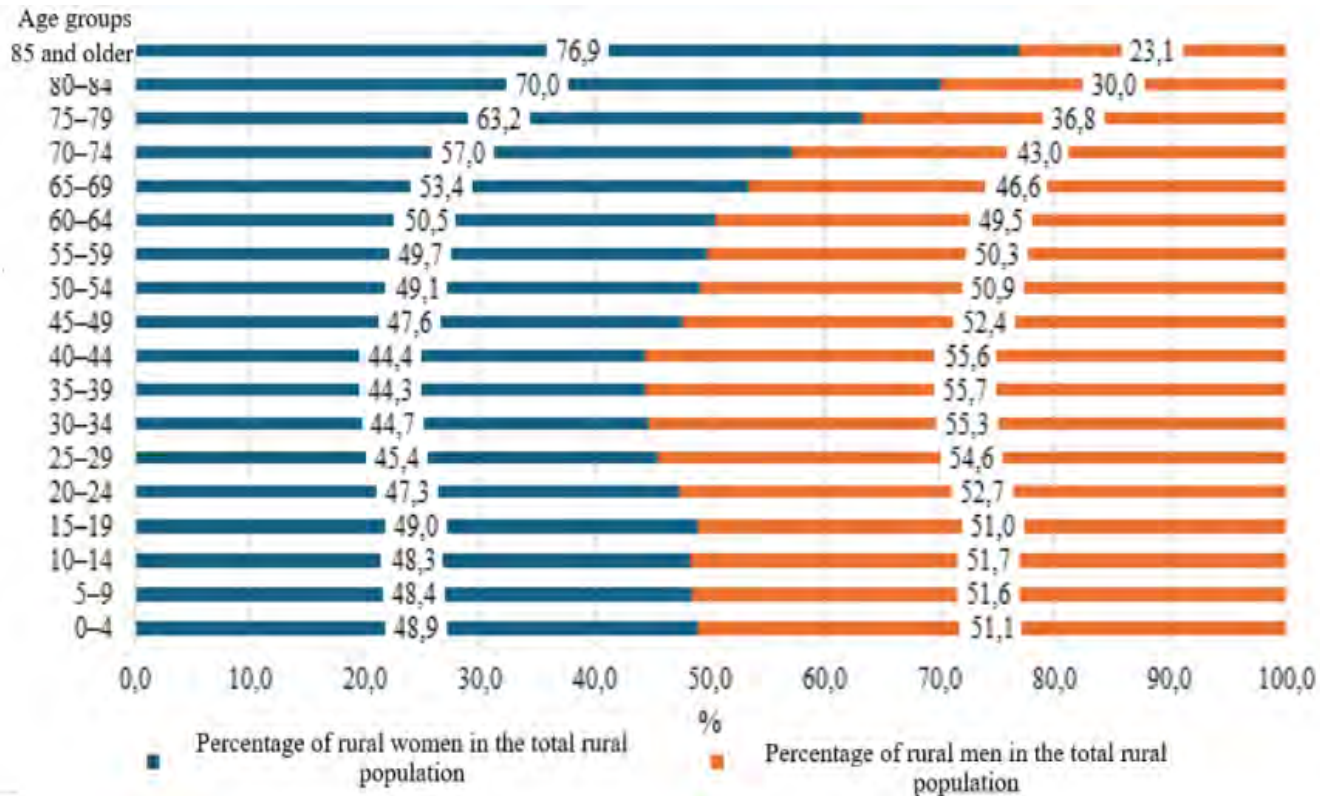
2024 – 87,837 farmers, of whom 17.7% are young farmers.

The agricultural sector is not experiencing a particular demographic decline, but the process of generational renewal is slow.

The relative weight of young farmers in the total number of farmers remains relatively small – around 16.5-17.7 %, which shows that the rejuvenation of the agricultural sector is taking place, but slowly.



## Share of women and men in total rural population by age group



The demographic structure shows a clear imbalance in gender distribution in different age groups.

In the age groups under 50, men make up a larger share of the rural population. This phenomenon is especially noticeable in the 20-49 age range, where the proportion of men varies from 52.4 to 55.7 percent.

Such a trend **creates favorable conditions for the agricultural sector**, since traditionally male employment prevails in this area, although modern agriculture is becoming increasingly accessible to people of both sexes.

**Unfavorable conditions for family formation, birth rate and community structure.**

*Fig. 3. Fig. Share of women and men in total rural population by age group at the beginning of 2025, %*

*Source: Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal*

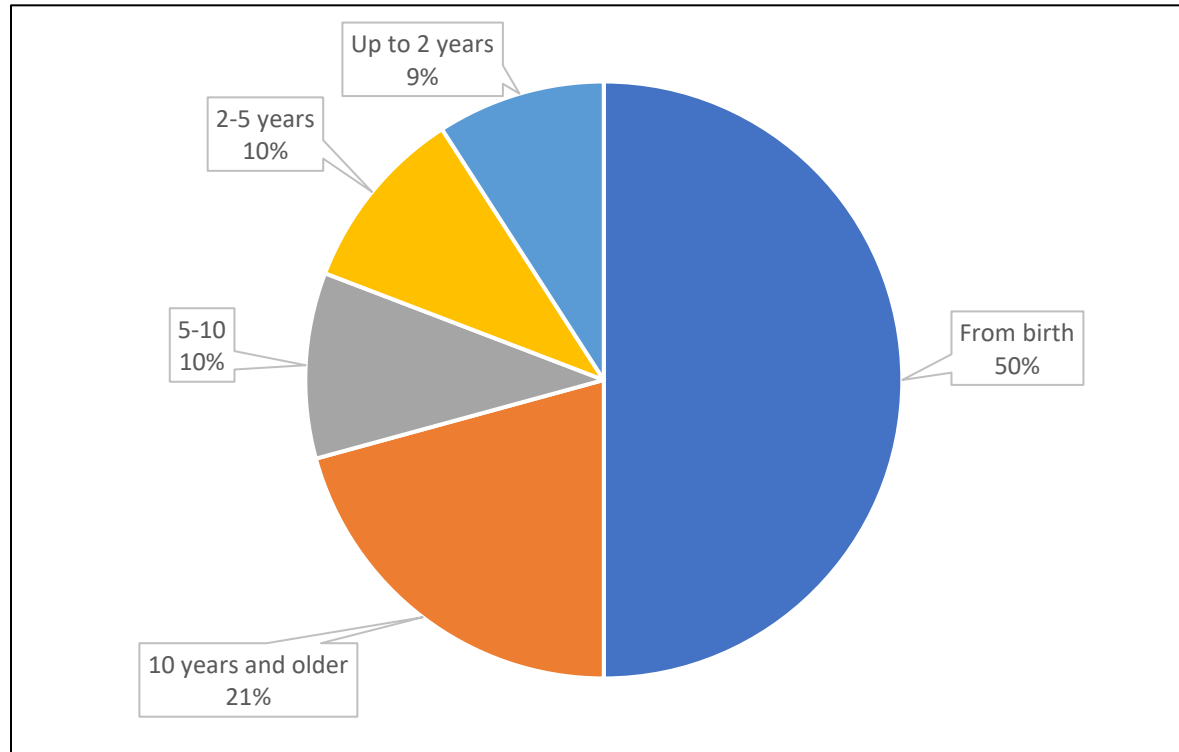


Generational Renewal in European Farming

- **Insights from an empirical research** on the attitudes of young people and agricultural subjects on generational renewal and youth's incentives to create, live in rural areas and take up farming activities and/or business // *V.Atkočiūnienė, I.Kazlauskienė, J.Zaleckienė, M.Vienažindienė, R.Pranskūnienė, A.Aleksandravičius, G.Vazonienė*
- A representative questionnaire survey of young people (14 - 40 years old),
- covering respondents from all counties and 42 municipalities of Lithuania



# Distribution of respondents by length of residence in their current place of residence



*Fig. 4. Distribution of respondents by length of residence in their current place of residence (N=318), per cent*

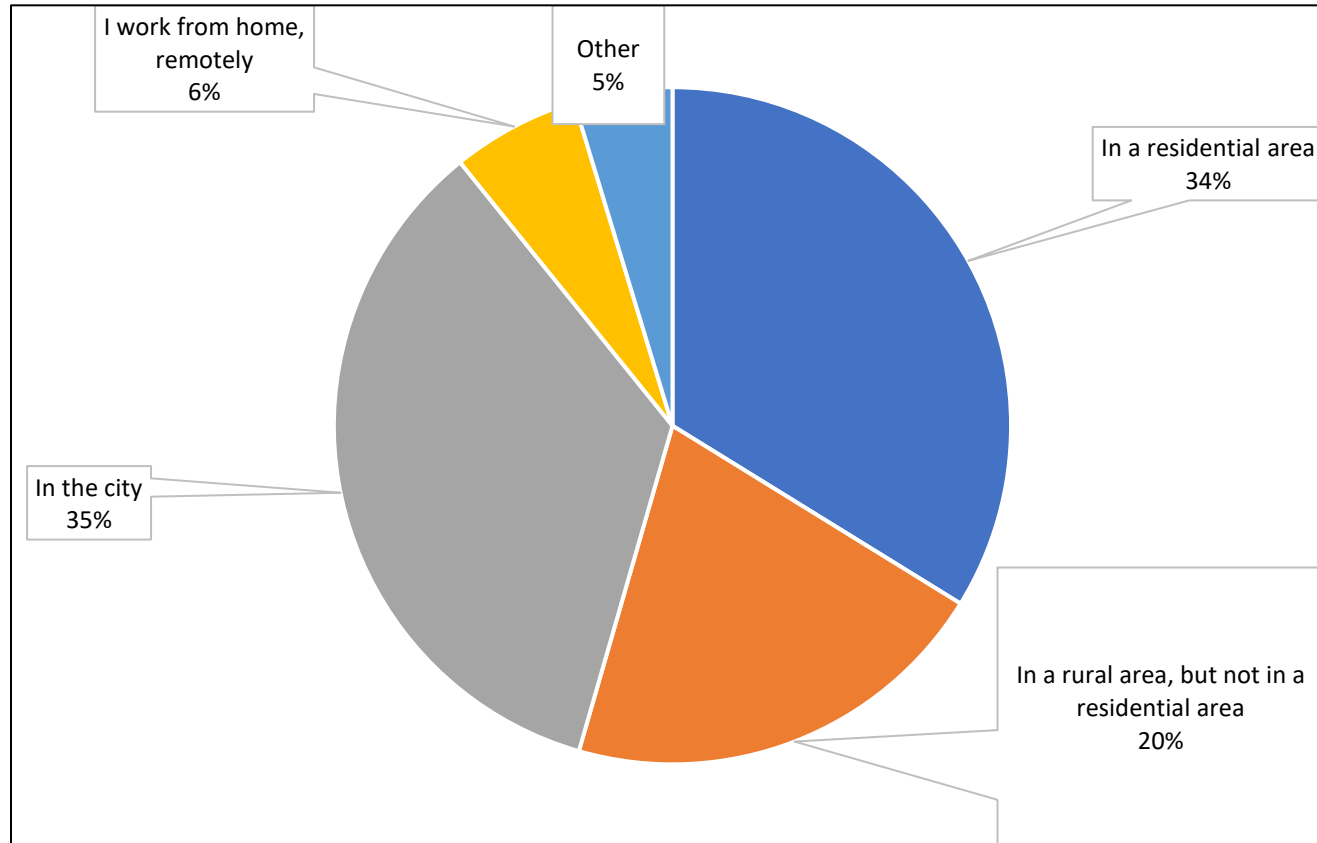
Half of the respondents (50%) have lived in the same place since birth, which indicates a fairly strong attachment to their place of residence. However, the other half of the respondents have changed their place of residence, but at different times.

Considering the purpose of the study and the overall context of the study, it can be said that **the "migratory" experience of 50% is significant.**

Such mobility is characteristic of the younger generation, with one-fifth of respondents indicating that they have migrated in the last 10 years, which may be related to studies, job searches, career aspirations, or starting a family.



# Distribution of respondents by place of work



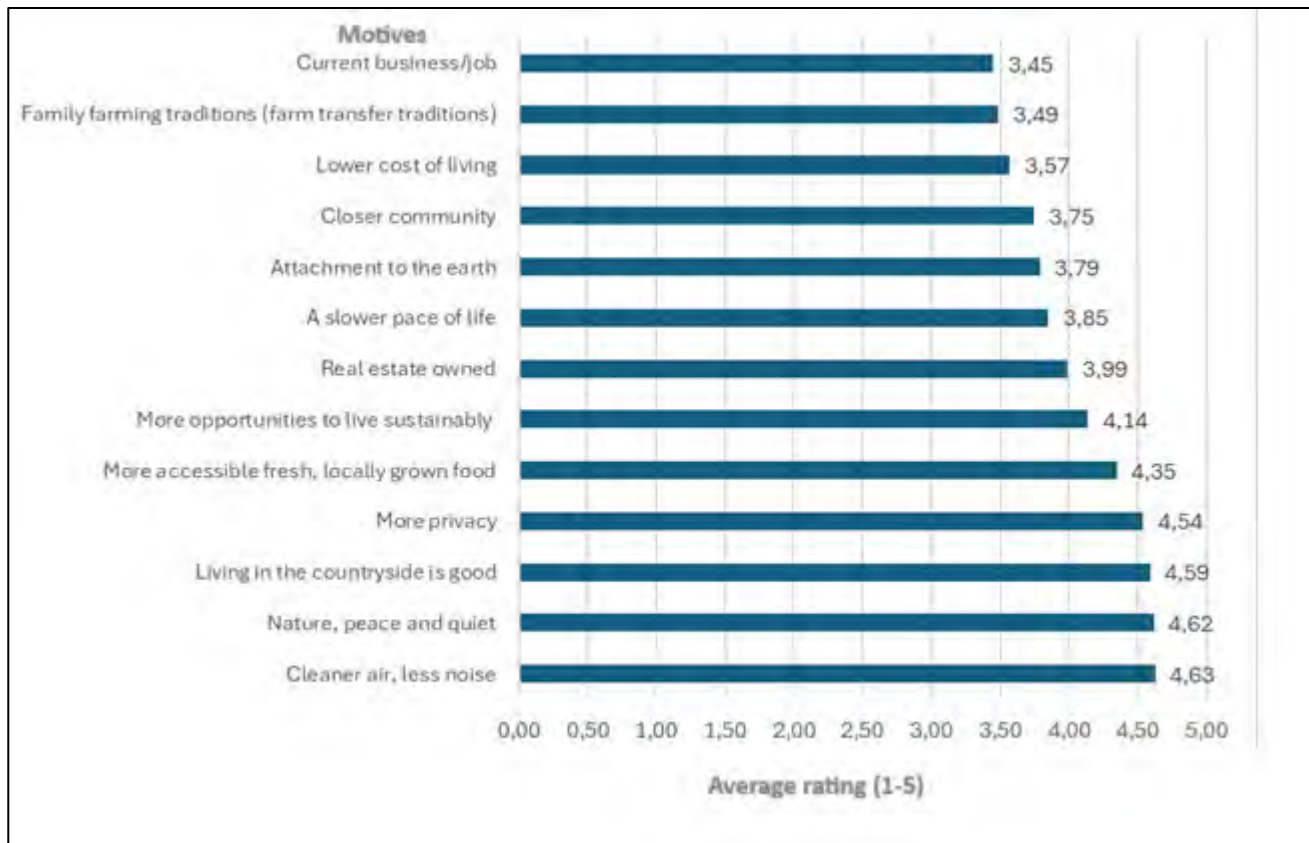
**Fig. 5. Distribution of respondents by place of work, per cent.**  
(N=213)

The survey results confirmed by the answers to the question ***"Where is your place of work?,"***  
**The countryside is becoming a more attractive place for young people to live.**

The survey results show a fairly high level of territorial mobility of employees – 55% of employed respondents commute to work, working outside their place of residence or city.

More than a third of urban workers indicate that rural areas are becoming “bedroom towns”.

# The factors motivating people to stay in rural areas

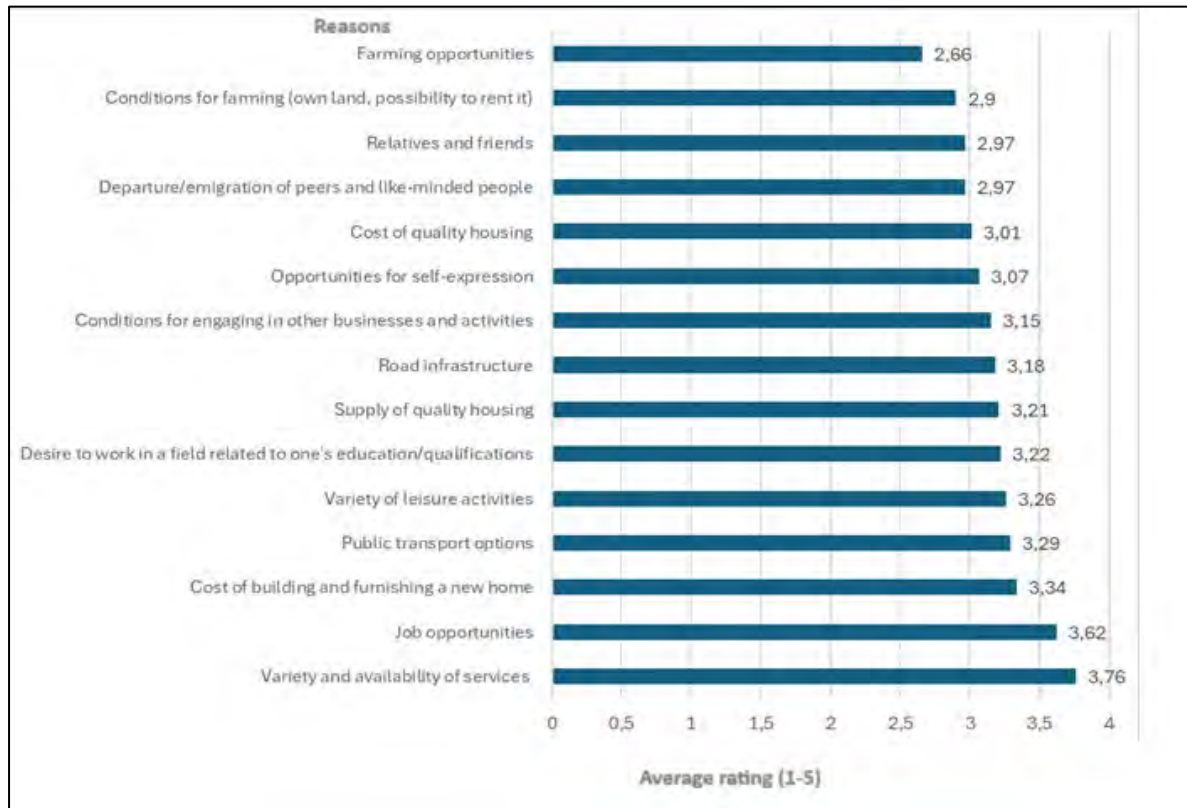


*Fig. 6. Assessment of factors motivating people to stay in rural areas (N=184)*

The main factors of attraction to rural areas are the dimensions of the environment and quality of life – cleanliness, silence, nature and privacy, as well as an internal positive assessment of rural life. Fresh food and sustainability opportunities complement this “quality life” profile, showing the contemporary values and priorities of young people.

Community (~3.75) and lower living costs (~3.57) are complementary motives, suggesting that the social and financial environment in the countryside is also important.

# The factors discouraging/limiting young people from staying in rural areas



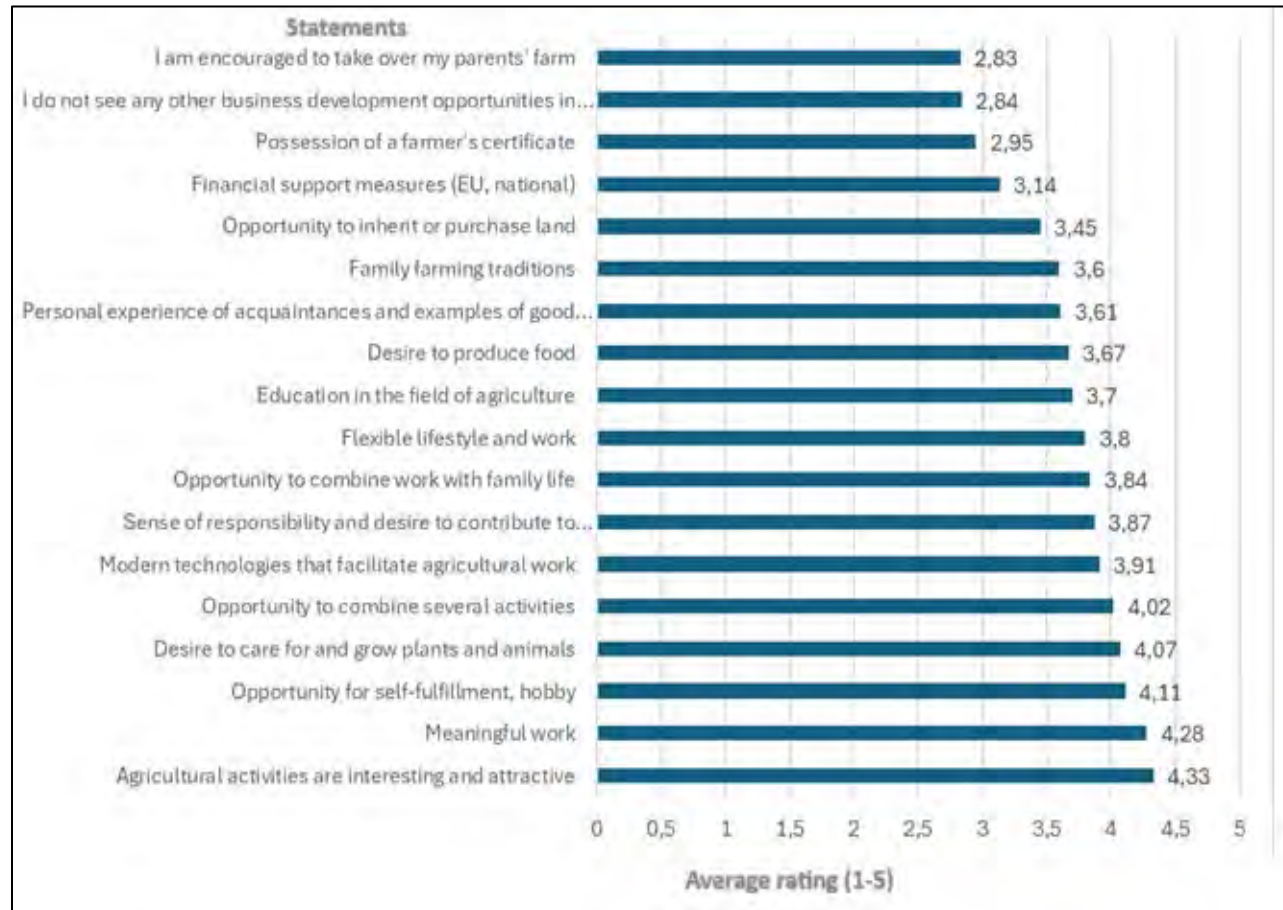
***Fig. 7. Assessment of factors discouraging/limiting young people from staying in rural areas (N=45)***

The shortcomings of the service ecosystem, the diversity and accessibility of services (health, education, culture, public catering, post, banks, etc.) in rural areas were identified as one of the factors most limiting the decision to remain in the countryside.

Not only the supply of jobs or employment opportunities reduces the attractiveness of rural life, but also the low variety of leisure activities.

Work, employment opportunities based on the acquired profession or qualification, opportunities to create businesses, meaningful leisure time and opportunities for self-expression are important for young people.

# The factors encouraging work in agriculture



The dominant factors are intrinsic motivation: agricultural activities are interesting, they see work in agriculture as meaningful, they see an opportunity for self-realization, the desire to take care of plants and animals, and the opportunity to combine not one but several activities.

The younger generation sees agricultural activities not only as a source of livelihood, but also as a space for self-realization and meaning.

***Fig. 8. Assessment of factors encouraging work in agriculture***



# Conclusions

The following policy and management measures can be applied to ensure sustainable **generational renewal** and the viability of the agricultural sector:

1. Promotion of employment, entrepreneurship and diversified economic activity.
2. Improving inclusive social infrastructure and quality of life.
3. Development of education (e.g. biology, environmental protection, local development, farming innovation, application of technology, sustainable farming), digital skills training and innovation systems (Living LAB, cooperation with universities and vocational schools) in rural areas.
4. Programmes for the involvement/participation of rural youth in the management of change in rural areas and their return to rural areas.
5. Management measures at local government and community level.
6. Long-term, integrated regional policy combining measures in the areas of education, mobility, employment, social inclusion and infrastructure.
7. Political measures should be used to encourage rural areas to become more attractive to young women (jobs, education, services), and to create regional programs that support gender balance.



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**Thank you for attention**  
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