

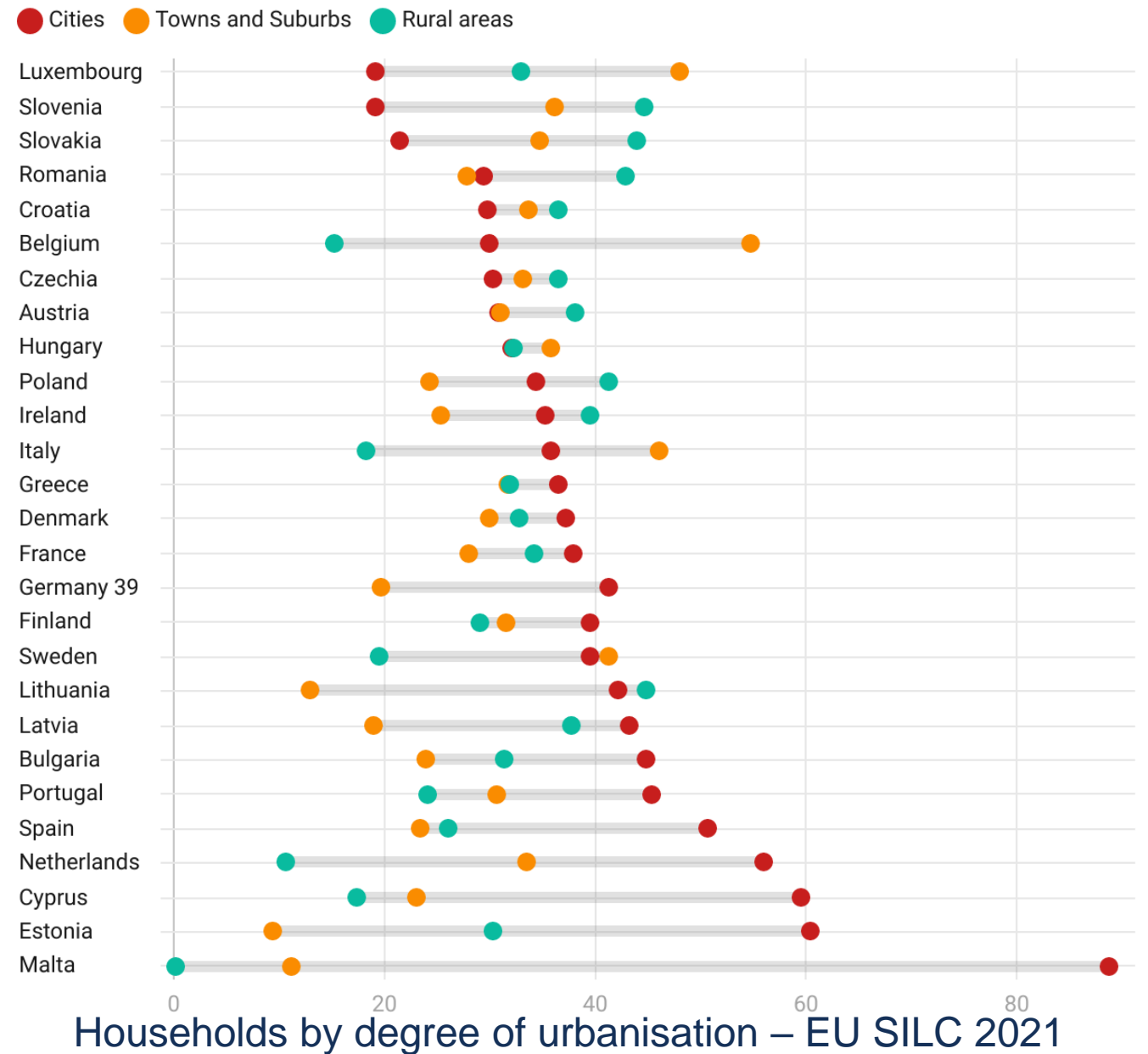
Bridging the rural–urban divide: Addressing inequalities and empowering communities

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An urban Europe

- Most citizens in Western societies, including Europeans, reside in urban areas.
- Over 336 million people (75% of the total population of the EU), live in urban areas.
- Rural areas cover 83% of the EU's territory but account for only 25% of the population.
- Europe's urban population is higher than the global average of 56%.



Motivation: The importance of Territorial Cohesion

- The place in which people reside is a significant component of their identity and influences their daily lives and activities.
- Urban areas have higher employment rates, average GDP per capita and productivity, and are better equipped to reap the advantages of globalisation.
- Rebalancing geographically uneven development and narrowing regional disparities within the EU and its Member States is of utmost importance.
- Lisbon Treaty (2007): territorial cohesion became the third dimension of cohesion policy.

Motivation (cont'd): Implications for Social Cohesion

- Rural-urban divide could lead to political division and populism (McKee 2008; Gimpel et al. 2020).
- Economic and social disparities have far-reaching impacts on the fabric of rural communities and their identities (Stenner 2005; Lamont 2018).
- Societies are becoming increasingly divided into two main categories: ‘anywheres’ and ‘somewheres’ (Goodhart 2017), with tensions intensified by “urban imperialism” (Hansen 2006).
- Economic, social and recognition gaps can trigger “authoritarian dynamics” (Barca 2019).

Our report:

Inequalities in income and living conditions

- Income
- At risk of poverty
- Housing

Social and opportunity gaps

- Employment participation
- NEET rate
- Education and Digital skills

Cultural and recognition gaps

- Recognition
- Values

Political polarization

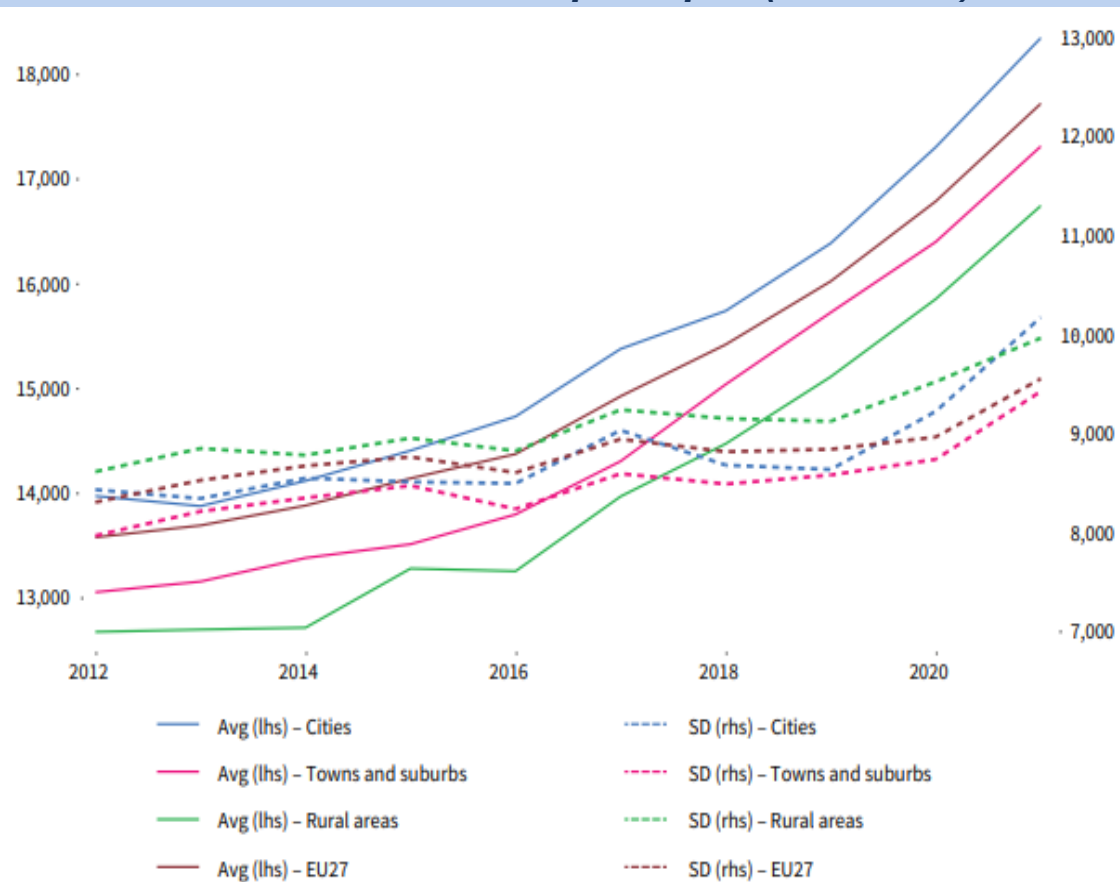
- Trust in Institutions
- Satisfaction with Democracy

Policies and services

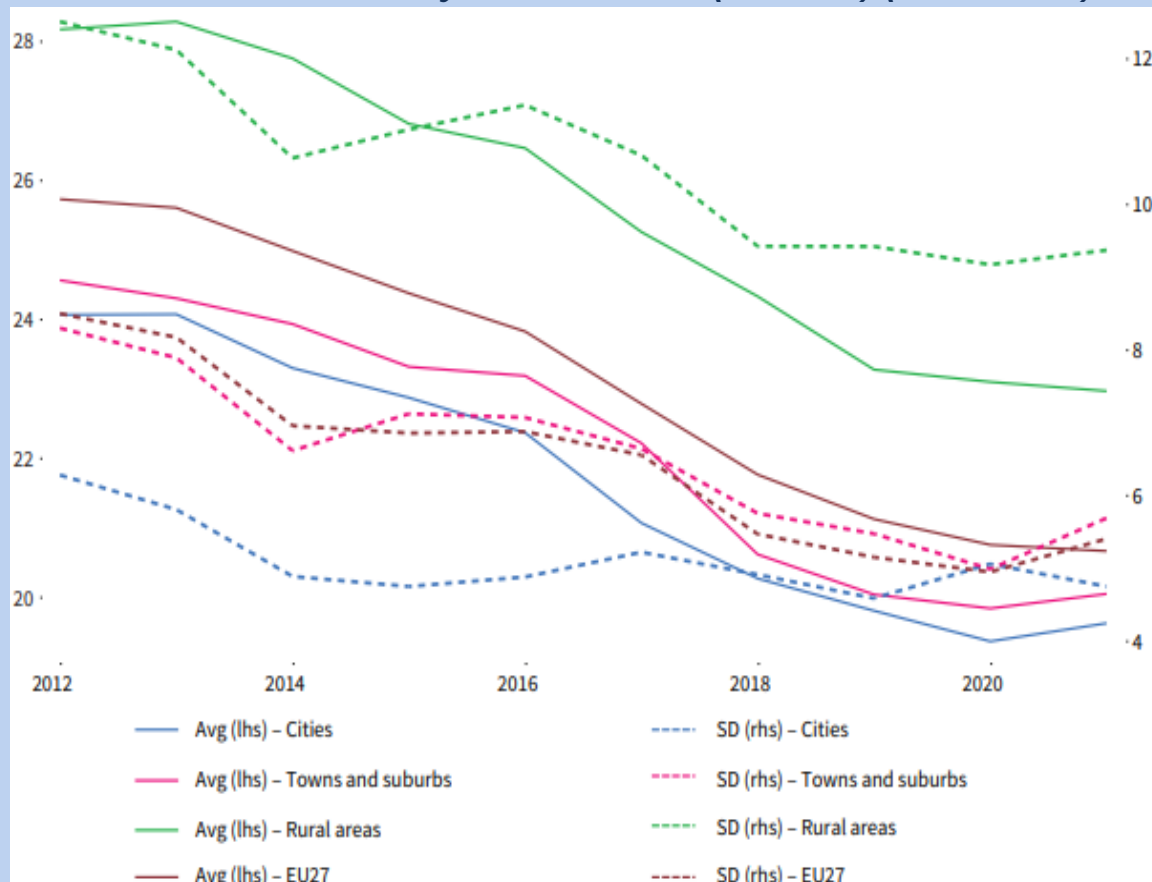
- Case studies
- Care for older people

Divide in income and poverty

Real median income per capita (2012-2021)

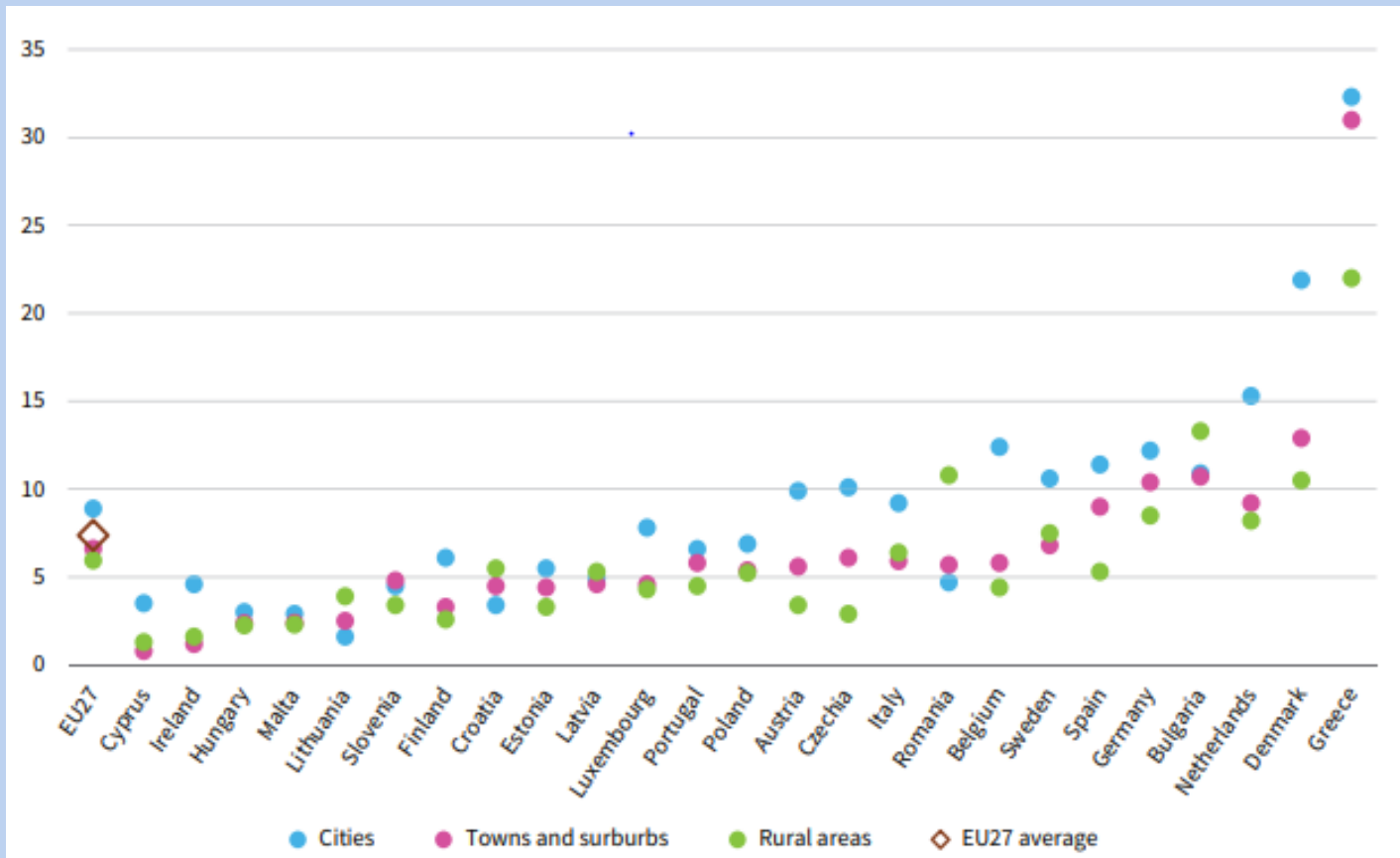


At Risk of Poverty or Exclusion (AROPE) (2012-2021)

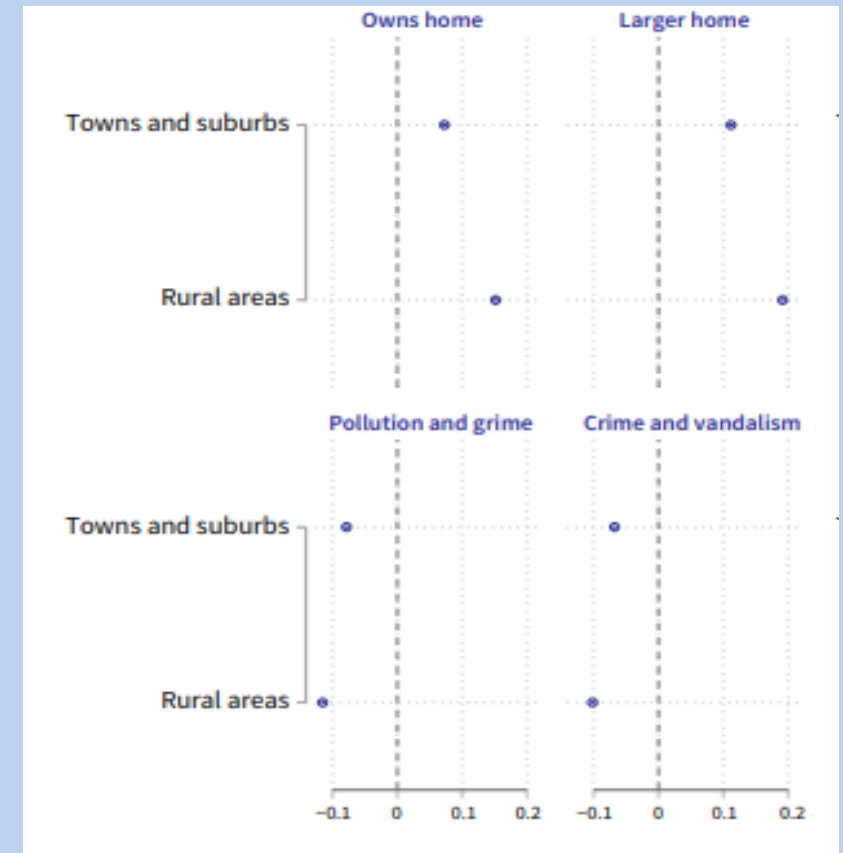


Divide in housing costs and conditions

Housing cost overburden rate, 2021 (%)

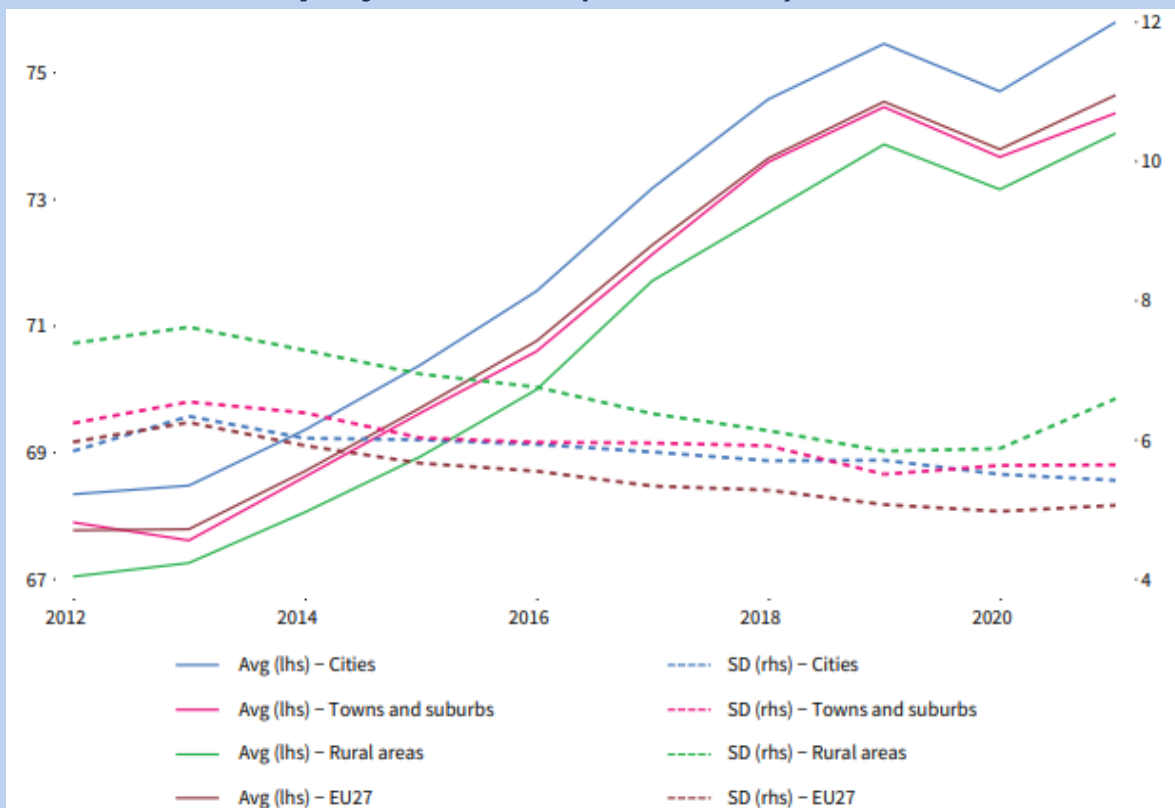


Housing conditions, SILC microdata 2021

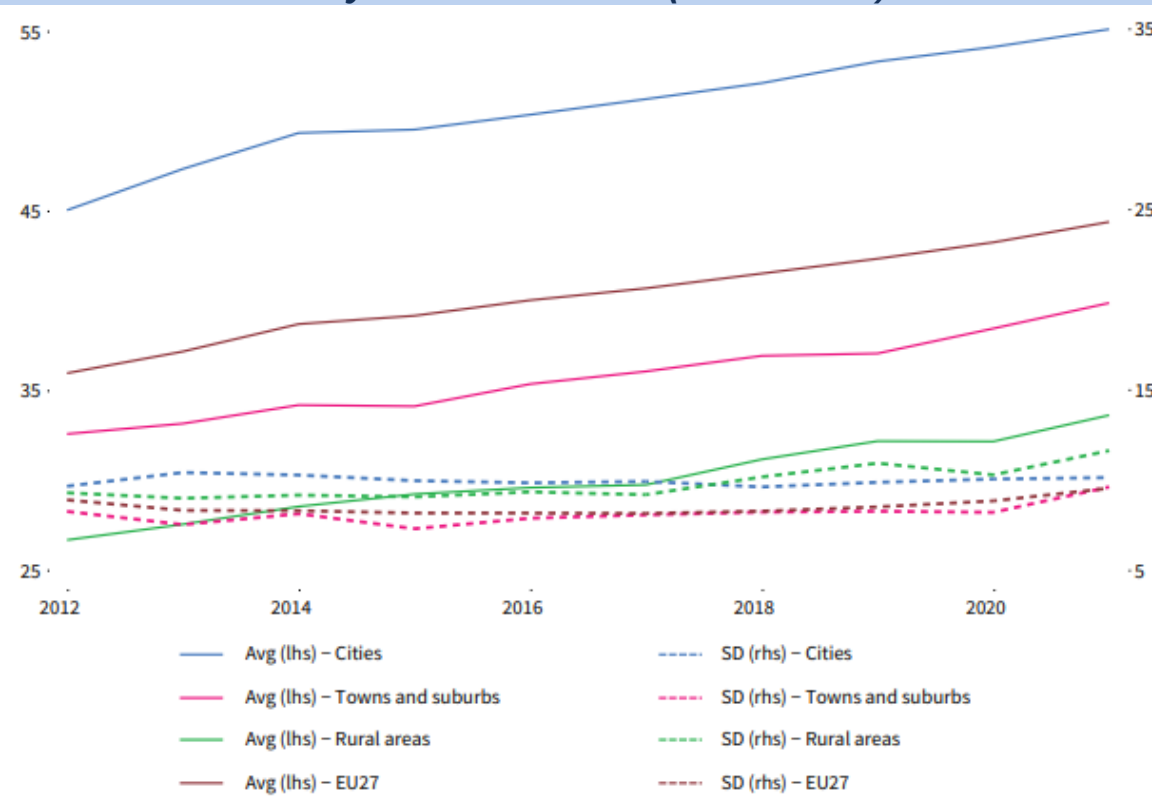


Divide in employment and opportunity

Employment rate (2012-2021)



Tertiary education rate (2012-2021)



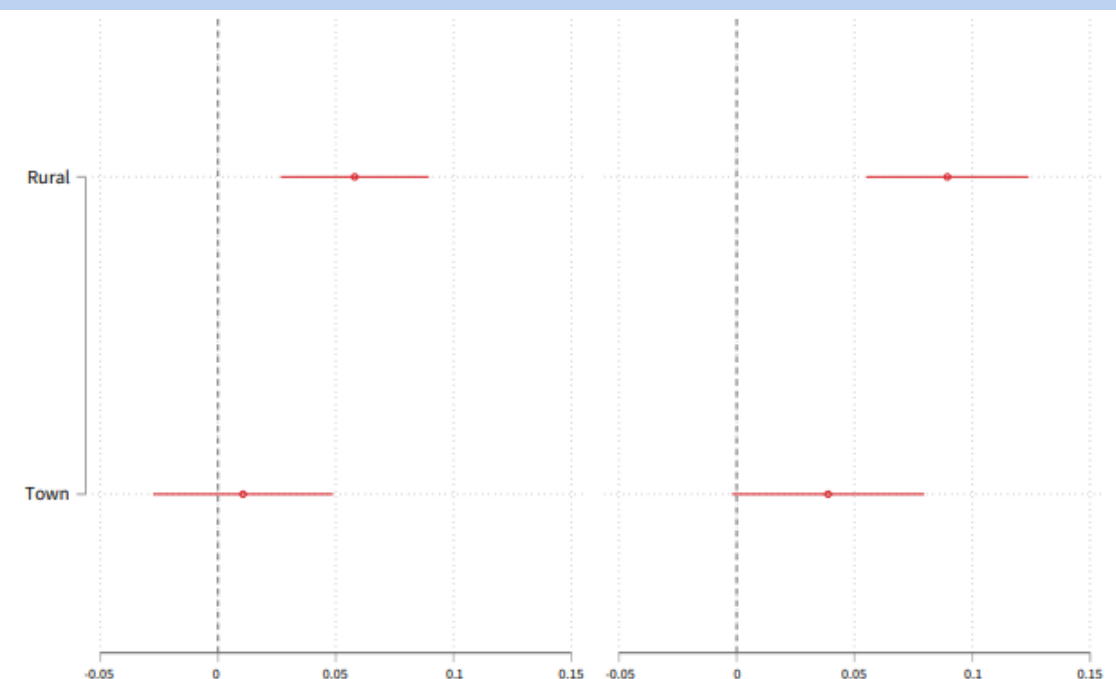
The rural-urban recognition gap

- Recognition gaps: the subjective experiences of individuals and groups who feel that their cultural identities are not valued or recognised.

Recognition gaps	E-survey question	Values
Individual	Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	0: respondent disagrees with all statements
	○ The government acts unfairly towards people like me.	1: respondent agrees with at least one statement
	○ The government doesn't respect people like me.	
	○ The government usually ignores people like me.	
Community	Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	0: respondent disagrees with all statements
	○ The government cares less about people in my area than about people in other parts of the country.	1: respondent agrees with at least one statement
	○ The government usually ignores my community.	

Individual Recognition Gap

Community Recognition Gap



Notes: Graphs show, for each outcome, the marginal effects and confidence intervals associated with living in the countryside or a small village (rural area) or a medium to large town, relative to the base category of cities and city suburbs. Results from two separate regressions are plotted. Each regression includes controls for gender, age, native versus non-native, educational attainment, ease of making ends meet (as a proxy of poverty) and employment, and the Member State in which the respondent is located. Models were estimated using a logit model with survey weights applied.

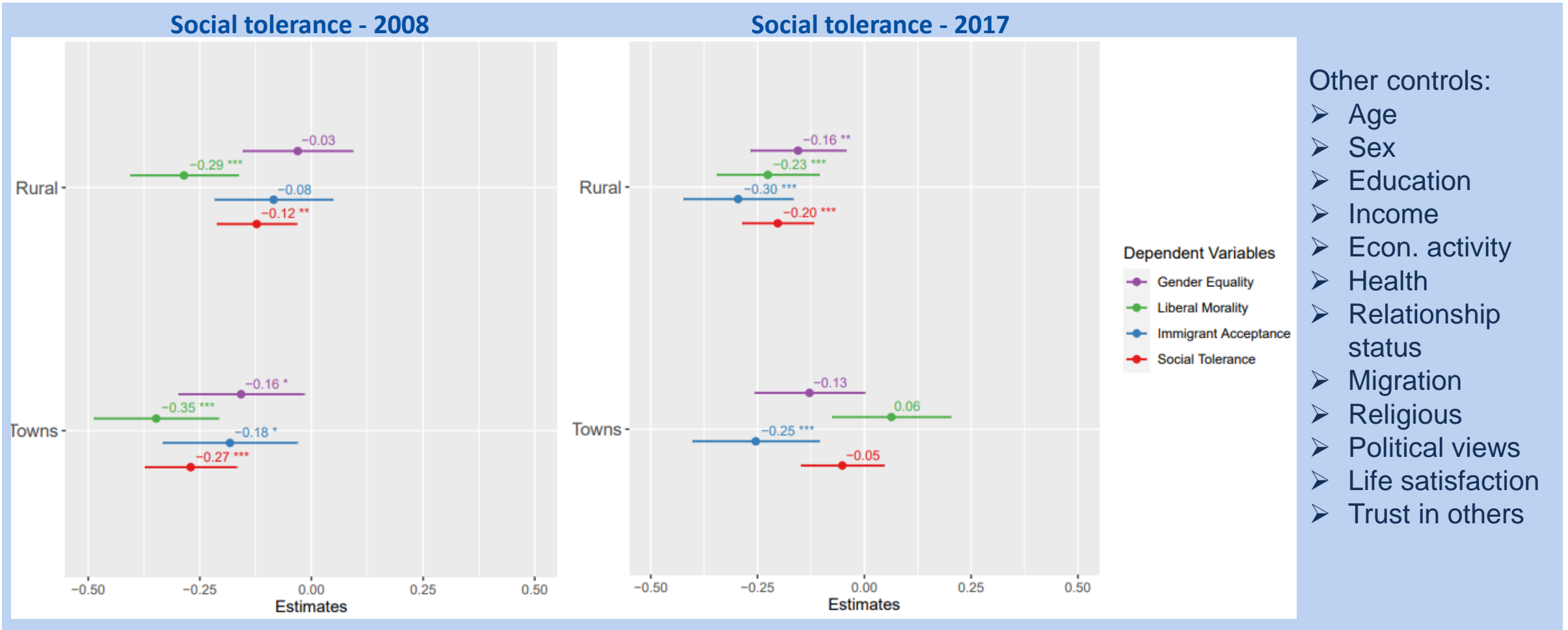
Source: Authors' calculations, based on the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey

Divide in values and tolerance – European Values Survey

Index	EVS survey question	Values
Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EVS08: A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works or EVS17: When a mother works for pay, the children suffer ○ EVS08 and EVS17: A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children ○ EVS08 and EVS17: When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women 	Average of the values recorded on a scale of 1–10
Liberal morality	<p>Can this always be justified, never be justified, or something in between?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Euthanasia (terminating the life of the incurably sick) ○ Homosexuality ○ Abortion ○ Divorce ○ Having casual sex ○ Prostitution 	Average of the values recorded on a scale of 1–10
Immigrant acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EVS08: Immigrants take jobs away from natives in a country and EVS17: Immigrants take jobs away from [nationality] ○ EVS08 and EVS17: Immigrants make crime problems worse ○ EVS08 and EVS17: Immigrants are a strain on a country's welfare system 	Average of the values recorded on a scale of 1–10

➤ In addition to looking at each three indices separately, we combine them into a social tolerance index.

Divide in values and tolerance - Results



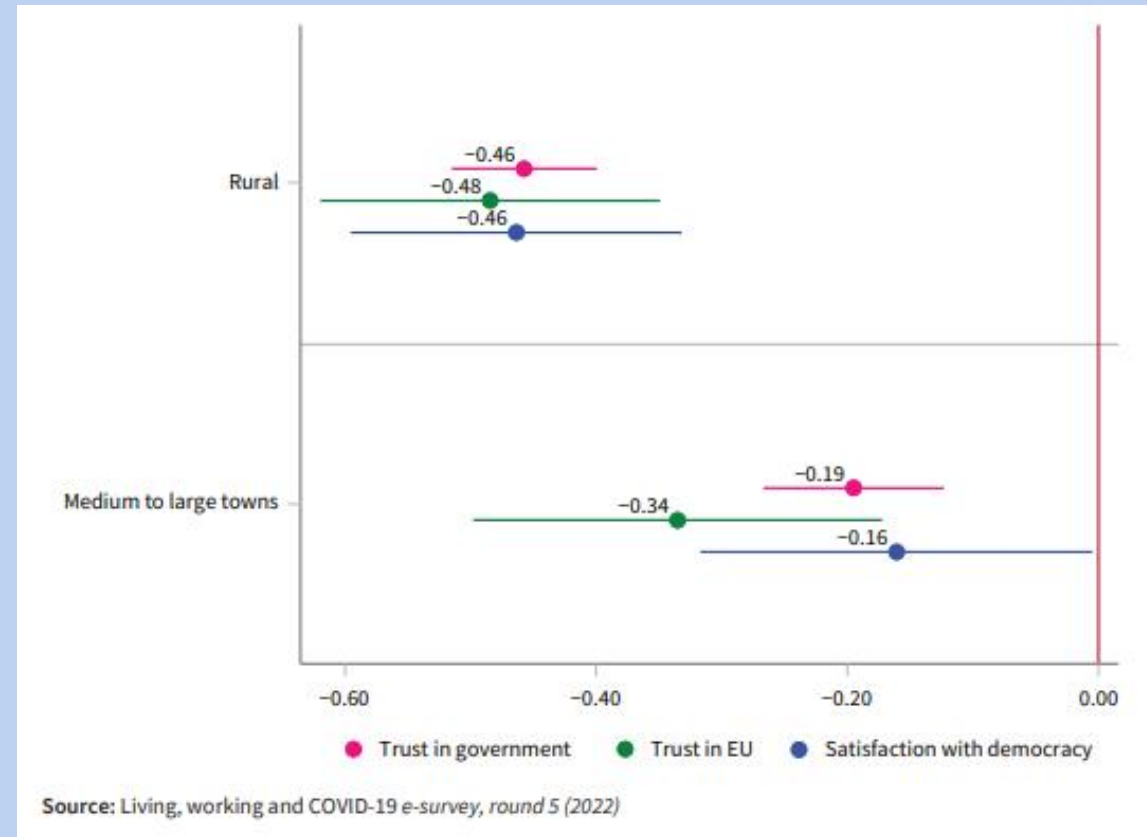
Political participation and satisfaction with democracy

- We consider two types of political participation:

Formal participation	Voted
	Attended a meeting
	Contacted a politician
Informal participation	Protested
	Signed a petition
	Commented online
	Boycotted a company or product

- Results show that rural residents engage less in informal political activities.

Trust in government and satisfaction with democracy



Conclusions and policy pointers

Socioeconomic gaps between rural and urban communities have profound implications for how rural and urban residents feel and behave.

It is essential that rural communities foster the necessary human capital to be resilient to changing macroeconomic conditions → investment in education and training.

A shift in public service provision to online methods could bridge the growing gap in services → improved digital connectivity in rural areas is essential.

The voices of rural communities must be amplified → rural residents must be involved in all stages of investment plans.

Innovative solutions to rural depopulation and declining services are widespread across Europe → Member States must learn from each other to scale and tailor these solutions.



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