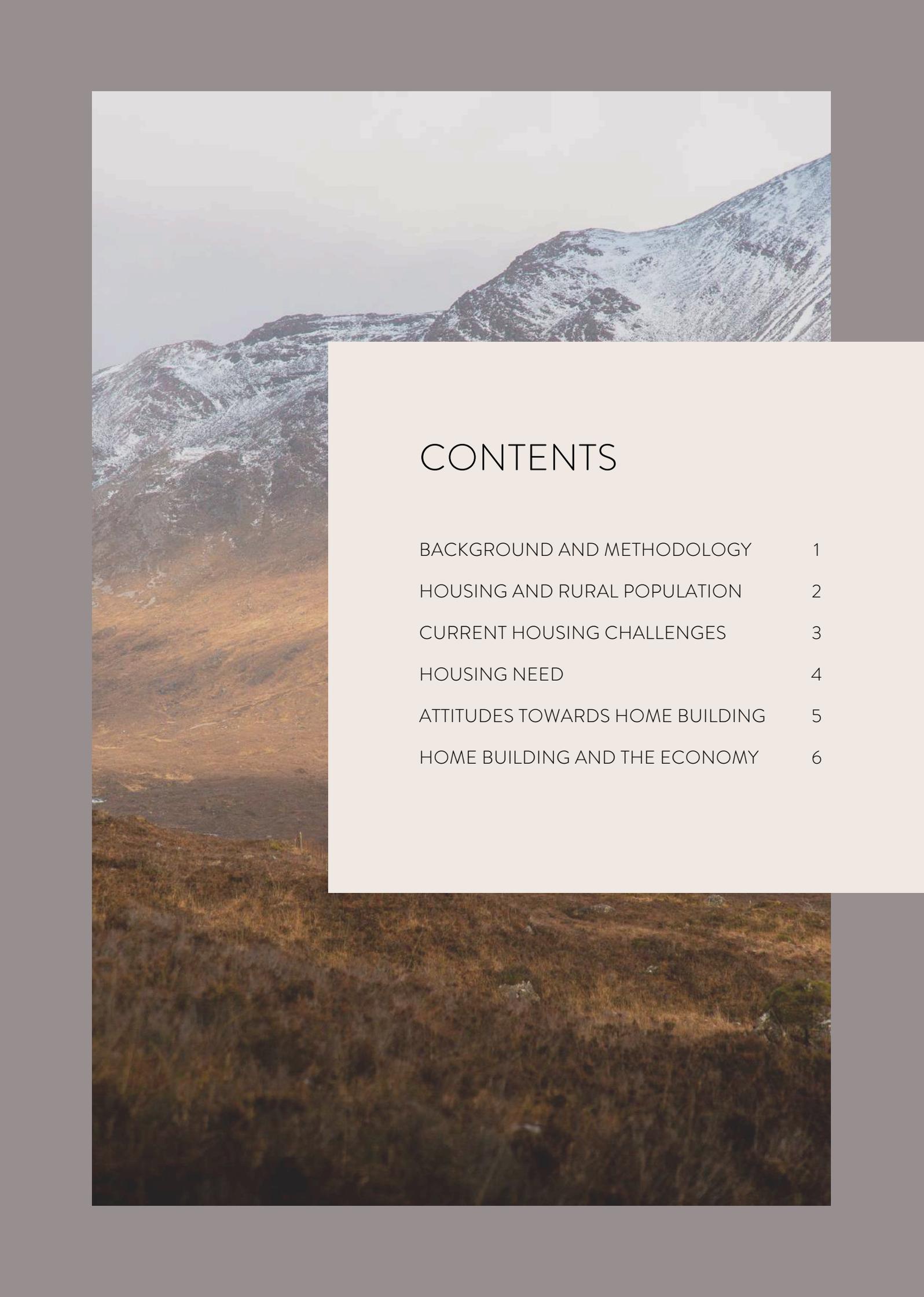


SCOTLAND'S RURAL VOICE

RURAL HOUSING

September 2025





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SCOTLAND'S RURAL VOICE

RURAL HOUSING

Scotland's Rural Voice is a new, regular survey, examining the experiences of rural Scots as they face challenges from an ageing and, in some areas, shrinking population. Such crises risk straining already fragile public services and infrastructure and require actions to address.

Conducted online between 18th-22nd July 2025, the first wave of Scotland's Rural Voice provides a timely snapshot of opinions amongst 2,000 rural residents from across Scotland. To ensure robustness, 1,000 urban residents were also surveyed, enabling comparisons on issues and priorities by area. Results are weighted to the population of rural and urban areas, respectively¹, by age and gender.

This report explores perceptions of and attitudes towards housing in rural communities, and is produced by Diffley Partnership and Homes for Scotland.



¹ [Rural and urban categories have been calculated using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, six-fold.](#)



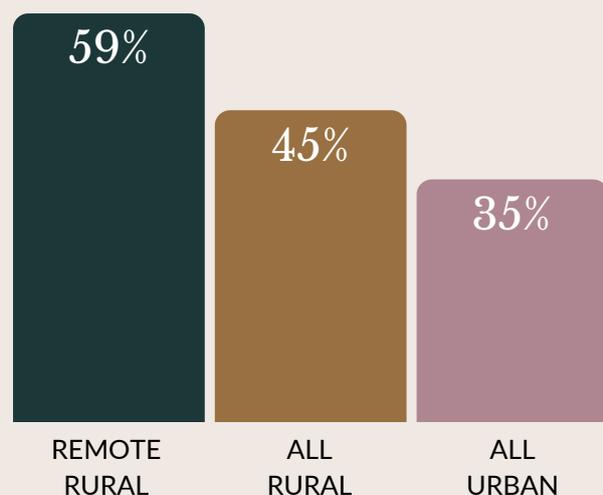
HOUSING AND RURAL POPULATION

Nearly half of rural Scots (45%) view the lack of available housing stock in rural areas as a key factor driving people to move away.

This figure is eleven percentage points higher than the proportion of urban residents who mentioned lack of housing as a potential motivating factor for rural emigration (35%), emphasising the importance of more housing stock within rural communities. In particular, those in the most isolated rural areas (remote rural) (59%) are much more likely to mention lack of housing as a main reason why people would move to a more urban area of Scotland than those in accessible rural areas (40%).

What do you think are the main reasons why people from rural communities might move to more urban areas of Scotland?

LACK OF AVAILABLE HOUSING STOCK IN RURAL AREAS



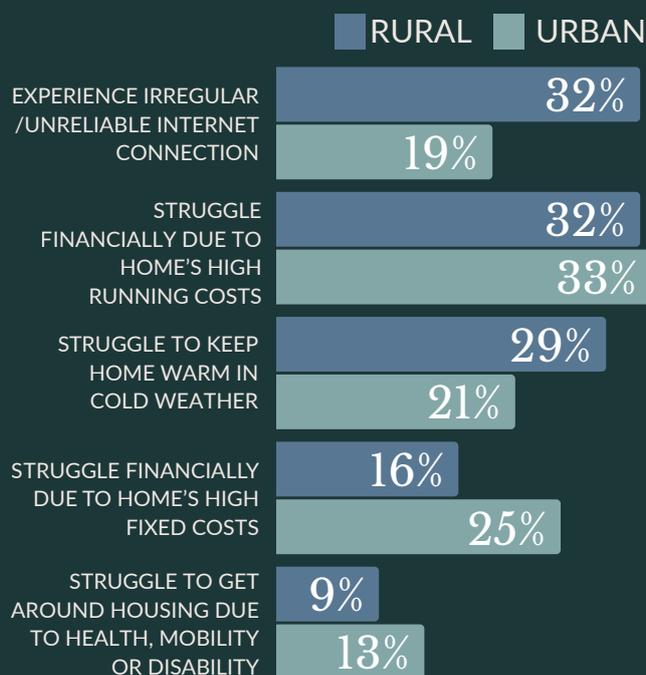
BASE: REMOTE RURAL (507), (RURAL (1,984), URBAN (1,333)

CURRENT HOUSING CHALLENGES

A sizable majority (63%) of rural Scottish residents report that they experience at least one challenge with their current housing, significantly more than the proportion of urban residents (58%) who say the same. Just over one in three (37%) rural residents say they do not face any housing challenges.

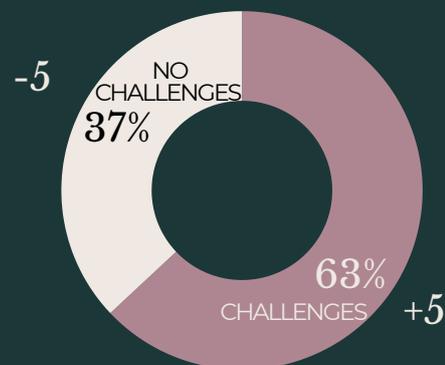
The most frequently reported challenges relating to housing for rural Scots are unreliable internet connection (32%), financial struggles due to their home's high running costs (32%), and struggles to keep their home warm enough (29%). Financial struggles due to their home's high fixed costs and struggles getting around their house due to health, mobility and disability are common for 16% and 9% of rural residents, respectively. Crucially, rural

Proportion of respondents experiencing each challenge



BASE: RURAL (1,984), URBAN (1,333)

Thinking about the different challenges faced by some households, which of the following, if any, apply to you and your household?



BASE: RURAL (1,984), URBAN (1,333)
 NOTES: Figures outside chart represents difference from Urban sample

residents report more unreliable internet and heating issues than urban peers, with those in the remote rural areas worse affected by these challenges than accessible rural.

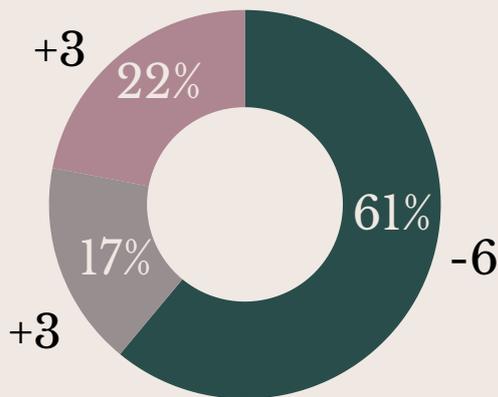
In rural areas, younger residents, particularly those 16-34 (24%), more frequently struggle with fixed costs like rent or mortgage than those 65+ (8%), while those in social grades C2DE (38%) are more likely to struggle with high running costs than those in ABC1 (28%). In addition, households with children are more likely to report financial housing struggles than those without. Such trends reflect the disproportionate impact of high costs of living challenges on some demographics in rural areas.

HOUSING NEED

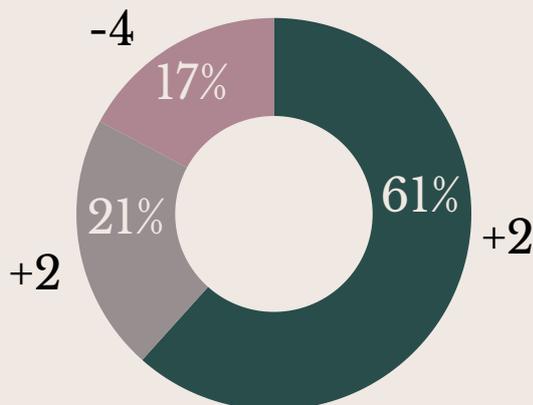
Proportion of rural respondents that agree/disagree with each statement

■ AGREE
 ■ NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
 ■ DISAGREE

I AM SUPPORTIVE OF NEW HOUSING BEING BUILT



MORE NEW BUILD HOMES THAT ARE ENERGY EFFICIENT AND WARM ARE NEEDED IN MY AREA



BASE: RURAL (1,969), URBAN (1,306)

NOTES: Don't knows excluded, figures outside chart represents difference from Urban sample

Rural residents are supportive of new housing being built in their area, with over six in ten (61%) of those that express an opinion agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”) with this statement. Around one in five (22%) disagree, while only one in six (17%) neither agree nor disagree. Turning to demographics, urban residents (67%) are slightly more likely to support new homes being built in their area. Among rural residents, those in remote rural areas are more supportive of home building in their area (75%) than those in accessible rural areas (56%), perhaps reflecting the sizable impact of lack of available housing on remote rural areas. However, a majority in all rural areas are still supportive.

As energy efficiency and home heating are core challenges of rural housing, a majority of six in ten (61%) rural residents agree that more new build homes that are energy efficient and warm are needed in their area. Over three in four (78%) of those in remote rural areas agree with this statement, compared to over half (56%) of those accessible rural areas. Rural residents in the Highlands and Islands are more likely to agree with this statement (75%) than those in most other Scottish Parliamentary regions. In addition, older generations (45+) are more likely to agree with this statement (66%) than those that are 16-34 (44%).



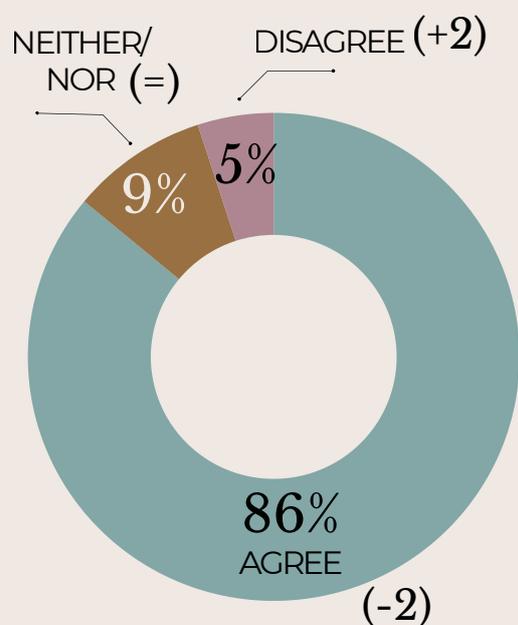
ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOME BUILDING

Expanding the number of available homes for local residents drives demand for home building. The vast majority of rural residents agree that home building should provide affordable homes for local residents, with well over eight in ten (86%) agreeing (either “strongly” or “somewhat”), similar to the 88% of urban Scots that say the same.

Particular need for homes in remote and rural communities may influence demand for home building, as more of those in remote rural areas (91%) agree that home building should provide affordable homes for local residents than those in accessible rural areas (85%).

And still thinking about your local area, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about home building?

HOME BUILDING SHOULD PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS



BASE: RURAL (1,963), URBAN (1,305)
 NOTES: Don't knows excluded, figures outside chart represents difference from Urban sample



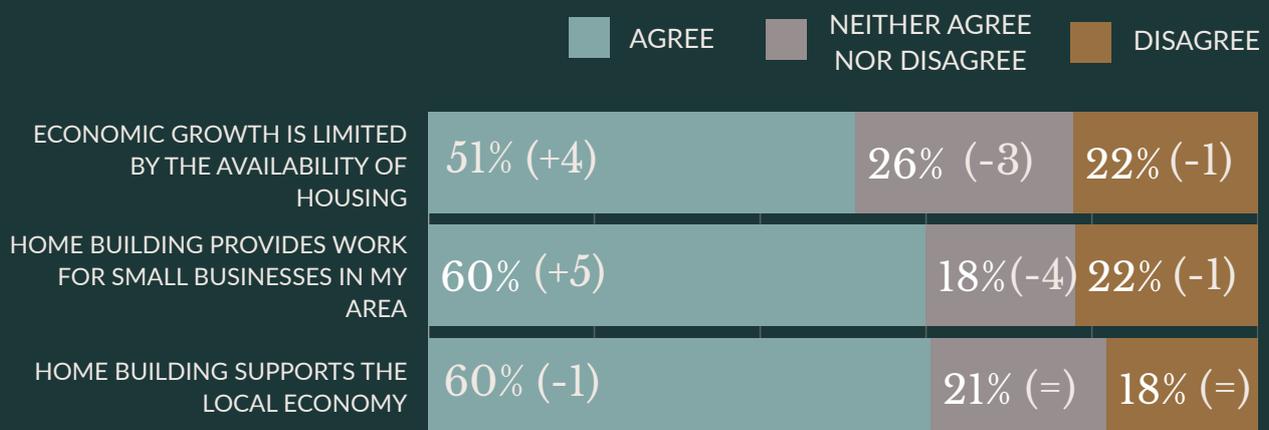
HOME BUILDING AND THE ECONOMY

Rural residents view housing and home building as critical to their local economy.

Overall, half (51%) of rural residents agree (either “strongly” or “somewhat”) that economic growth in their area is limited by the availability of housing. Agreement is more pronounced among remote rural residents compared to those in accessible rural areas (67%; 46%). Among rural respondents, women are also more likely to agree relative to men (56%; 47%), as are those 35+ compared to those 16-34 (54%; 37%).

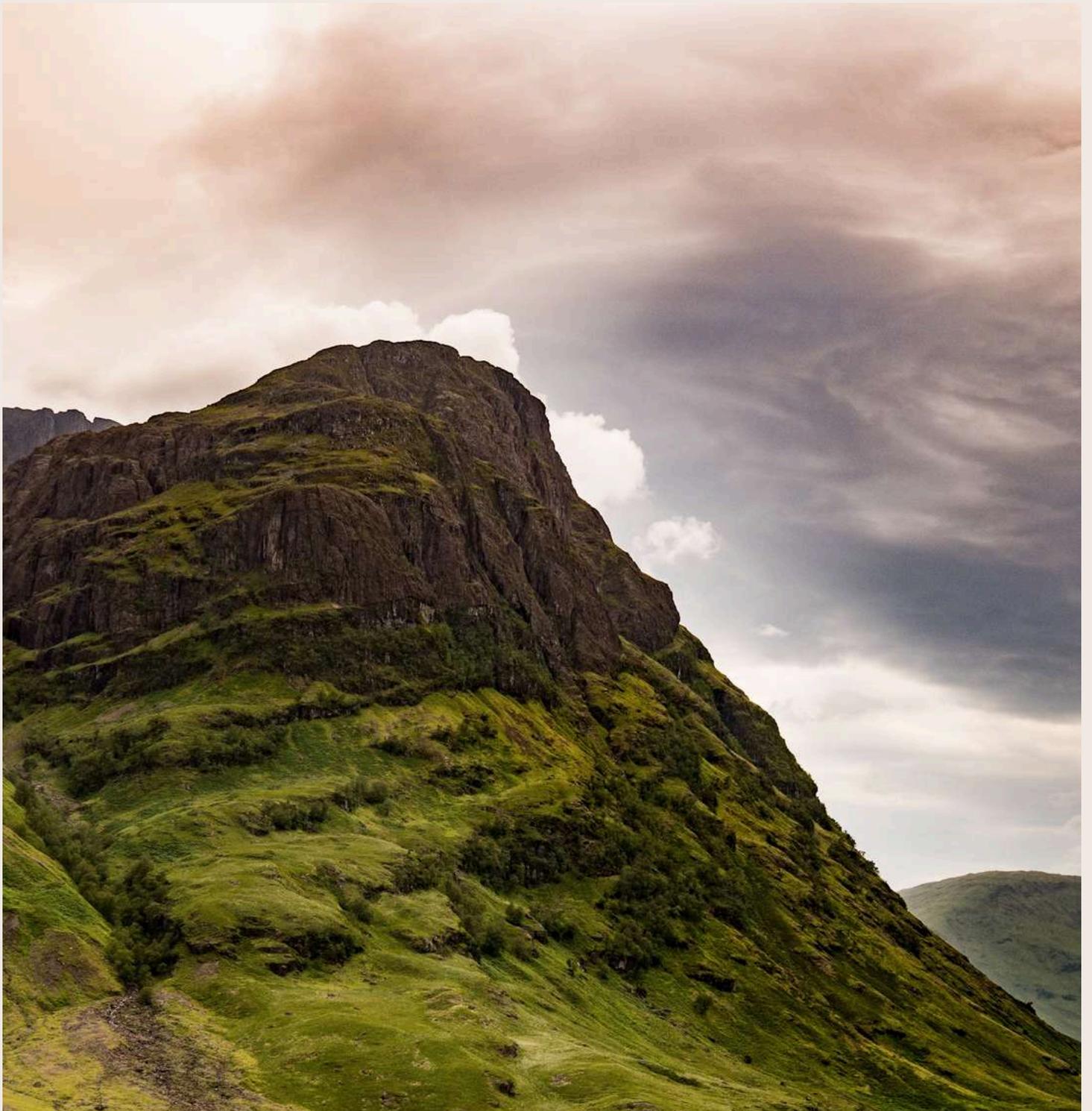
Looking at the impact of home building specifically, six in ten agree home building provides work for local small businesses (60%) and supports the local economy (60%). Agreement with both statements is especially high in remote rural regions, particularly the Highlands and Islands Scottish Parliamentary region, compared to all others. Furthermore, more of those in rural areas than urban agree that home building provides work for small businesses in their area, emphasising the importance of the home building industry in terms of job creation.

Proportion of rural respondents that agree/disagree with each statement, and difference between urban respondents



BASE: RURAL (1,897), URBAN (1,171)

NOTES: Don't knows excluded, figures in parentheses represents difference from Urban sample



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 **Diffley**
Partnership
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