

Youth migration and wellbeing in rural communities

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The migration of young people out of rural communities is an ongoing source of concern in many parts of Australia. This concern often focuses on the implications for rural communities: if youth are leaving, will a community survive? In this paper we argue for a wellbeing-centric way of thinking about youth migration. We examine the interrelationships between the place a young person lives in, their desire to migrate or to stay in a community, and their wellbeing, drawing on data from the Regional Wellbeing Survey, a nationwide survey of more than 10,000 people living in rural and regional Australia. Based on this, we begin to articulate when and why migrating or not migrating is associated with better or poorer wellbeing, and the wellbeing-related factors that may be driving the decision to migrate or stay. When added to the already well understood drivers of youth migration, such as the need to migrate for study or employment, this provides a more holistic understanding of youth migration and wellbeing in rural areas.