

# Rural and Urban Statistics in England: Guidance Notes

## Introduction

The purpose of this guidance note is to explain how to use the Rural/Urban Definition and the Local Authority (LA) classification, with particular emphasis on how to use them to produce a rural/urban view from Government Statistics. There are technical documents available for both the definition and the classification and these should be consulted for a more detailed overview of the methodology.

Rural Urban Definition –

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/rural-urban-method.pdf>

LA Classification –

[http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/laclassifications\\_technicalguide.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/laclassifications_technicalguide.pdf)

and for details on recent updates

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/laclassifications-techguide0409.pdf>

## Defining rural

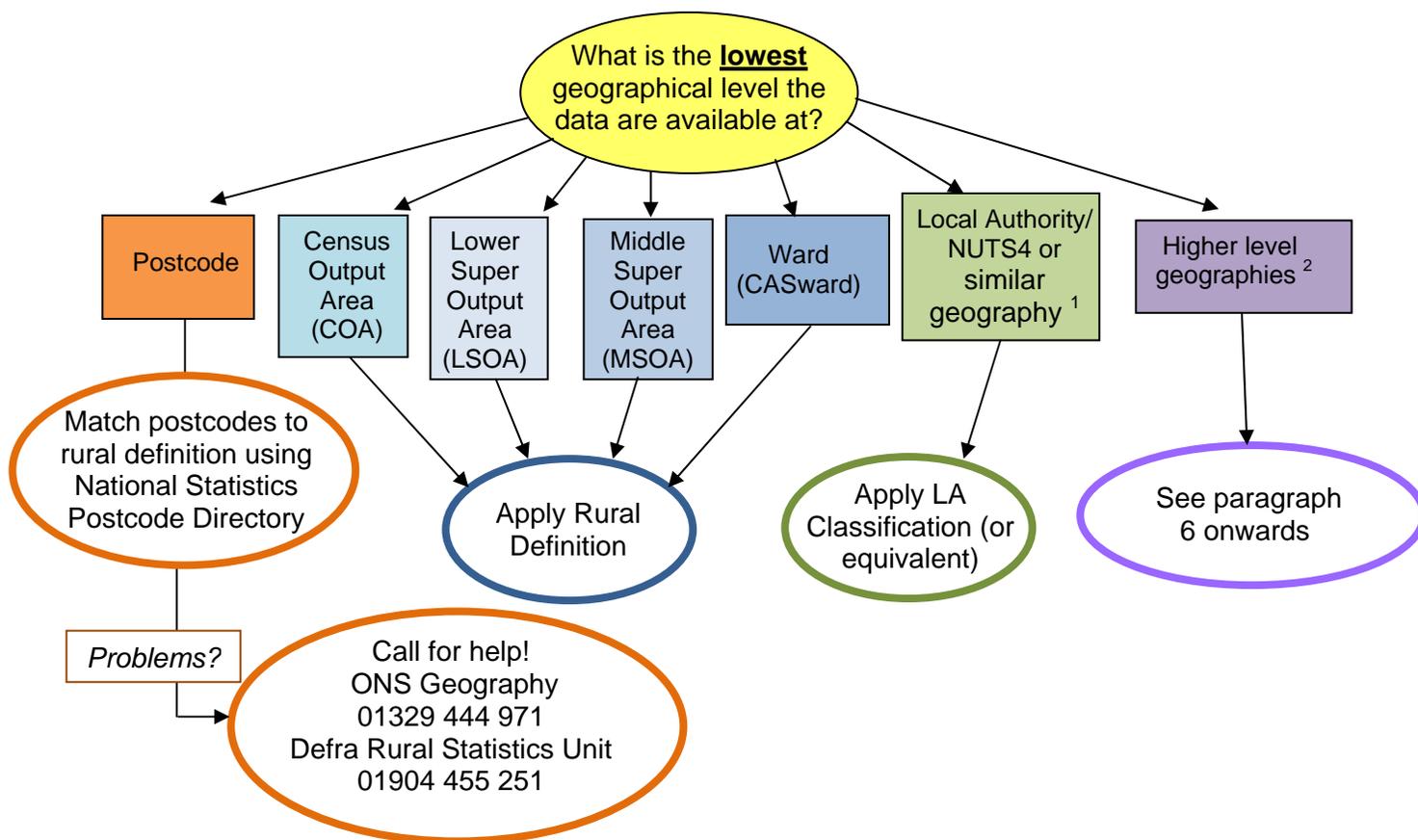
The Rural/Urban Definition, an official National Statistic introduced in 2004, defines the rurality of very small census based geographies. Census Output Areas forming settlements with populations of over 10,000 are *urban*, while the remainder are defined as one of three *rural* types: *town and fringe*, *village* or *hamlet and dispersed*. The Definition also applies to Wards and Super Output Areas.

According to the Rural/Urban Definition, at Census 2001 there were 9.5 million people living in rural settlements in England.

Where data is only available for larger geographies, such as Local Authorities, the Definition cannot be used. Instead, it forms the basis of the Local Authority Rural/Urban Classification. This categorises Local Authorities based on the number or proportion of their population living in urban centres or in rural settlements and large market towns.

The three urban categories differ according to the number of residents living in urban centres, with Major Urban being the “most” urban authorities, with a combined population of 17.2 million at Census 2001. This is followed by Large Urban (7.3 million) and Other Urban (6.7 million). Of the rural categories, Rural-50 authorities have between 50 and 80 percent of their population living in rural settlements or large market towns. 5.8 million people live in this category. Rural-80 authorities have at least 80% of their population in rural settlements and large market towns. 5.7 million people live in these authorities. The remaining category, Significant Rural, indicates that a district has between 26 and 50 percent of its population in rural settlements and large market towns. There are 6.4 million people in this category.

## Which 'rural' or 'urban' to use and when to use it – the Definition or the Classification?



There are **four** basic principles to consider when applying a rural or urban marker to datasets. These are:

1. Always use data generated from the Definition, if available, in order to produce rural and urban totals.
2. Only consider using LA data and the LA Classification if that is the lowest level for which data are available.
3. To generate a 'rural' total from LA data combine the statistics for R50 and R80 districts to produce this total and present it as 'Predominantly Rural'.
4. When producing a rural total derived from LA data always present the total within the wider context by generating additional totals for 'Significant Rural' (SR) and 'Predominantly Urban' (OU, MU and LU)<sup>3</sup>.

### Notes

1. Similar geographies include Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Parliamentary Constituencies and Primary Care Trusts (PCT).
2. Higher level geographies include Counties, Fire Authorities, National Parks, Passenger Transport Authorities, Police Authorities, Waste Disposal Authorities and NUTS3 statistical regions.
3. This is to maintain a uniform approach. Historically there have been inconsistencies across different analytical areas, with either SR on its own or SR+OU forming a "mixed" category.

## Using data with similar geographies

5. Data will also be classified in the six way splits for the following groups that have similar geographies to the LA classification:

- [Primary Care Organisations](#)
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (to follow)
- Parliamentary constituencies (to follow)

## What to do where data are at higher level geography

6. The exact criteria from the LA Classification cannot be applied to groups with higher level geographies. This is because they generally have higher populations and, by using the current methodology, it would result in most of these geographies being allocated to either Large Urban or Rural-50. However, by using similar criteria to the Classification, it is reasonable for the higher level geographies to be assigned to the following three categories in the order stated:

Classification	% Urban	% Rural
Predominantly Urban	$\geq 74\%$	$< 26\%$
Predominantly Rural	$< 50\%$	$\geq 50\%$
Significant Rural	$< 74\%$	$\geq 26\%$

7. The three category Classification is published for the following higher level geography groups:

- Counties
- Fire Authorities
- Passenger Transport Authorities
- Police Authorities
- Waste Disposal Authorities
- National Parks
- NUTS3 statistical regions

See [http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/Datasets\\_higher\\_geographies.xls](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/Datasets_higher_geographies.xls)  
and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-defn/nuts3-classification.xls>

8. Where there is a mix of data available (i.e. LA districts and counties), the lower level geography will firstly need to be combined to produce the three way classification of 'Predominantly Rural' (R50 and R80), 'Significant Rural' (SR) and 'Predominantly Urban' (OU, MU and LU) before then adding the data for the higher level geography.

9. For the other countries in the UK, see the following websites:

Scotland:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

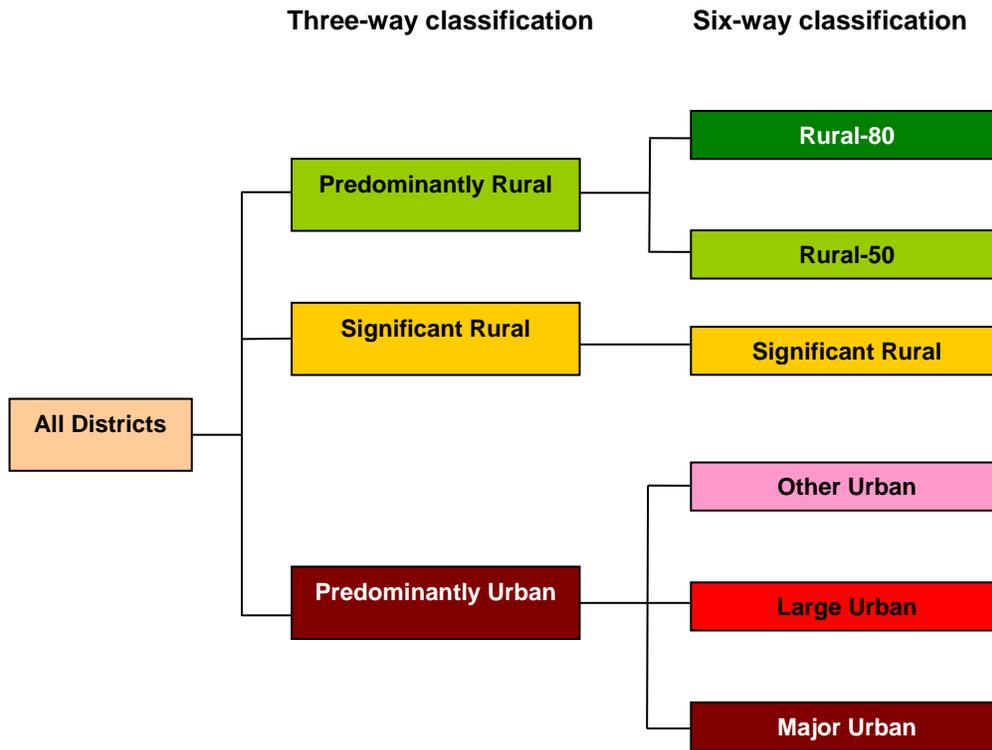
Wales:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/agric2008/hdw20080313/?lang=en>

Northern Ireland:

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/urban\\_rural/ur\\_gaz.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/urban_rural/ur_gaz.pdf)

## Aggregating the Rural Urban Classification



## Aggregating the Rural Urban Definition

