

WHAT IS THE RURAL COMMUNITY?

There is no universally recognised definition of “rural”. Rural areas are commonly thought of as areas outside of urban areas (cities and towns).

Statistics New Zealand classifies urban areas as those with a population of 1000 people or more and has divided New Zealand into three urban and four rural profiles. The rural profiles are based on an area’s degree of urban influence – particularly the degree to which people living in the area work in the area or work in a nearby town or city.

While Statistics New Zealand’s rural classifications are a useful basis for making comparisons between urban and rural, in practice government officials use a range of criteria to define “rural”.

Generally the further people and businesses are from urban areas the more likely issues of low population density and isolation will affect their ability to live and work in a particular rural area.

Māori are an intrinsic part of the rural community and are underpinned by a distinctive culture and value system. Nationally, the proportion of rural people who identify themselves as Māori is slightly higher than in the general population. The proportion of Māori is much higher in some isolated rural areas such as the Gisborne District (about 30 percent) and in Northland (about 70 percent).

The rural community is diverse and dynamic. Its prosperity and demography varies significantly between and within regions, and also over time. Factors that influence its prosperity and makeup include: the economic viability of the current land use; proximity to urban areas; the desirability of the area as place to live; and the cultural history of the area.

In addition to the effects of low population density and isolation, diversity and dynamism need to be taken into account when considering the implications of proposed policies and the method and style of consultation and communication used.

Statistics New Zealand classification of urban and rural areas

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	POPULATION (%)	LAND AREA (%)	PEOPLE /SQ KM
Main urban area	Centres with resident population of 30 000 or more – comprises 16 main urban areas.	72.2	1.9	582.3
Satellite urban area	Urban communities located close to main urban areas.	3.0	0.2	253.9
Independent urban area	Towns and settlements without significant dependence on main urban centres (1000 residents or more).	11.0	0.6	274.6
TOTAL URBAN	Urban includes all cities, towns and urban areas with resident population of 1000 or more.	86.2	2.7	
Rural areas with high urban influence	Located close to main urban areas. Significant proportion of residents work in a main urban area. Includes market gardens and dairy farms that service urban centres.	2.6	2.9	14.1
Rural areas with moderate urban influence	Tend to cluster close to urban areas with a significant proportion of the residents working in an urban area.	3.6	8.0	7.0
Rural areas with low urban influence	The rural hinterland, the rich productive belt of New Zealand’s agricultural sector. Significant proportion of residents work in a rural area with a minimal dependence on urban areas in terms of employment.	5.7	33.3	2.7
Highly rural/remote areas	Includes mountainous areas, inhabited areas that are isolated from urban centres, much of New Zealand’s conservation estate, sparsely populated pastoral high country and a number of strong Māori communities, particularly in the North Island.	1.9	53.1	0.6
TOTAL RURAL	Includes towns under 1000 resident population.	13.8	97.3	

Source: www.stats.govt.nz/urban-rural-profiles/default.htm

»»» MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RURAL PROFILING

For more information visit: www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/rural-nz/

»»» FEEDBACK WELCOMED

MAF welcomes feedback on this document. Suggestions on how the document could be improved would be greatly appreciated.

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