

DATA GEM: Are You in an Urban or Rural Area?

Transcript

Hello, I'm Monica Dukes, a Data Dissemination Specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau. Discovering if your area of interest is in a rural or an urban area is important to grant writers and for infrastructure planning for things like internet access, roads, and hospitals.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not officially define what constitutes a Rural Area but does define the boundaries for Urban Areas. In this Data Gem, learn which data tools are available to discover if your service area or address is in an urban or rural location and which tool is best for your needs. These tools will help you determine what may be considered a Rural Area.

The first thing you need to understand is that the Census Bureau has no official definitions or boundaries for rural areas, but we do for Urban areas. So, if your service area is not within the boundaries of an urban area, it is considered rural by default. However, it should be noted that different funding organizations may require additional criteria to define whether you can classify your area as Rural.

We have 3 ways you can look up your area; only one of them has estimates, but again, this is for urban areas only.

First, let's visit Geocoder by typing geocoding.geo.census.gov into your favorite browser.

The advantage to Geocoder is that you can type in an address and quickly see a list of every geography that address resides in.

First, select Find Geographies, you will have several options. You could upload a batch of addresses, for example, but for today, we will select One Line Address Processing.

Type an address into the address bar and click on get results. I will use the Tennessee State House as an example. Type 600 Charlotte Ave, Nashville, TN 37243.

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When you scroll down, you will see all the geographies associated with this address, and here we see Urban area listed and the geocode number for which urban area.

Now, let's type in another address for a local Police Department, 144 N 2nd St, Selmer, TN 38375 . Scrolling down, to the geographies section. If you don't find Urban Area in the list, your address does not fall into an urban area. Therefore, it would be considered rural. It's that simple!

The next tool I'd like to show you is TIGERweb. Find it at tigerweb.geo.census.gov. The benefits to using TIGERweb are that you can also type in an address, but here you can see a map of the area, and zoom in. You can also add additional geographic layers to see how geographies relate.

Click on the TIGERweb Applications Tab. You will then see the three TIGERweb applications listed.

TIGERweb, TIGERweb Decennial, and TIGERweb Economic Census. Each of these options list which geographical boundaries are available within that application.

We will select the first application, TIGERweb, which has the most recently updated geographies.

Since we are looking to see if our address falls in an Urban or Rural area, check the box for Urban Areas in the left menu.

Let's type in the address for the Tennessee State House again type 600 Charlotte Ave., Nashville, TN 37243 and hit enter, then select the address that pops up.

If the blue dot of the address is in a white, non-highlighted area, then it's RURAL. If the blue dot is in a purple highlighted area, then it's URBAN.

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Zooming out, we can see the borders of the urban area.

If I wanted to select another geo, such as Census Tracts, for example, click on Layers at the top left and then check the box for Census Tracts and Blocks in the left menu to see which tracts overlay the urban area.

Zooming in, you may notice some tracts are partially in the purple-shaded urban area and partially outside of it.

Urban areas are not beholden to other geographic boundaries. Some even cross state lines.

Finally, we will go to data.census.gov. The benefit to this tool is that you can get a data profile for an urban area.

We are going to select Advanced Search, select the Maps tab, then select Layer.

Scrolling down, you will see the many layers that are available, but we are looking for Urban Area 2020. I will use the Search Bar to type in Urban Area. And as you can see, 3 have populated, but we will select Urban Area 2020.

Today we are looking for Firestone-Frederick Urban Area in Colorado. And as we zoom into Colorado, you will see that the urban areas are shown in red. We will continue zooming in until we find Firestone-Frederick.

We will hover over the urban area, and by clicking on it, we can then select it.

This Urban Area includes several separate, unconnected sections, located here, here, and here. Urban Areas are one of the few geographies where this phenomenon can occur.

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If we click on it again and choose View Profile, you will see some basic demographic, economic, social, and housing data.

So, what about Rural areas, you ask?

Well, since we don't define rural area boundaries, we don't produce data specific to those areas.

However, you can draw or select multiple geographies to create your area using the Select tool in data.census.gov. For example, you can select one or more geographies that most closely align with your area, such as census tracts or counties.

Watch our Data Gem, "How to Access Data for Your Neighborhood in Just a few Clicks" to learn more tips on how to get Rural Area data in data.census.gov.

The Data Gems just mentioned are linked below this video. I hope you found your favorite method to discover urban and rural areas. For more videos like this, visit census.gov forward slash academy, and while you're there, subscribe to join our community. Thank you!