Rural-Urban Classification Examples

The 2020 Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) classification contains 10 primary and 21 secondary codes. Few, if any, research or policy applications need the full set of codes. Rather, the system allows for the selective combination of codes to meet varying definitional needs. The combinations listed here are not a definitive list but are meant to offer suggestions to users.

This document contains two tables. Table 1 focuses on rural-urban classifications that can be created using the primary RUCA codes. Table 2 focuses on rural-urban classifications that can be created using the secondary RUCA codes. For more information on the aspects of the RUCA codes that can be used to modify them for varying definitional needs, see the Users' Guide section of the Rural-Urban Commuting Area codes webpage.

Table 1. Example rural-urban definitions using primary RUCA codes

Rural-urban categories	RUCA codes	Rural-urban categories	RUCA codes
2-level primary commuting		*2-level 30 percent primary commuting*	
Metropolitan	1–3	Metropolitan	1–2
Nonmetropolitan	4–10	Nonmetropolitan	3–10
4-level primary commuting		*4-level 30 percent primary commuting*	
Metropolitan	1–3	Metropolitan	1–2
Micropolitan	4–6	Micropolitan	4–5
Small town	7–9	Small town	7–8
Rural	10	Rural	3, 6, 9, 10
7-level primary commuting		*7-level 30 percent primary commuting*	
Metropolitan central	1	Metropolitan central	1
Metropolitan outlying	2–3	Metropolitan outlying	2
Micropolitan central	4	Micropolitan central	4
Micropolitan outlying	5–6	Micropolitan outlying	5
Small town central	7	Small town central	7
Small town outlying	8–9	Small town outlying	8
Rural	10	Rural	3, 6, 9, 10

RUCA = Rural-Urban Commuting Area.
Note: Central census tracts are located in the urban core of an urban area, while outlying census tracts are connected to the urban core through commuting.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service

Table 2. Example rural-urban definitions using secondary RUCA codes

Rural-urban categories	RUCA codes
2-level 30 percent commuting	
Metropolitan	1.0, 1.1, 2.0, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 10.1
Nonmetropolitan	3.0, 4.0, 5.0, 6.0, 7.0, 7.2, 8.0, 8.2, 9.0, 10.0, 10.2, 10.3
4-level 30 percent commuting	
Metropolitan	1.0, 1.1, 2.0, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 10.1
Micropolitan	4.0, 5.0, 7.2, 8.2, 10.2
Small town	7.0, 8.0, 10.3
Rural	3.0, 6.0, 9.0, 10.0
5-level 30 percent commuting	
Metropolitan central	1.0
Metropolitan outlying	1.1, 2.0, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 10.1
Micropolitan central	4.0
Micropolitan outlying	5.0, 7.2, 8.2, 10.2
Rural	3.0, 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0, 10.0, 10.3
7-level 30 percent commuting	
Metropolitan central	1.0
Metropolitan outlying	1.1, 2.0, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 10.1
Micropolitan central	4.0
Micropolitan outlying	5.0, 7.2, 8.2, 10.2
Small town central	7.0
Small town outlying	8.0, 10.3
Rural	3.0, 6.0, 9.0, 10.0

RUCA = Rural-Urban Commuting Area.

Note: Central census tracts are located in the urban core of an urban area, while outlying census tracts are connected to the urban core through commuting.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service