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*Links updated and text added

Construction of the 1992-94 Urbanicity variable

The zip code of the respondent's home was held on the dataset. Data is held on the US Census Bureau website which classifies zip codes by urbanicity for the 1990 census. The following describes the 1990 census rural and urban definitions.

¹URBAN AND RURAL DEFINITIONS

Source: US Census Bureau

Released: Oct. 1995

URBAN AND RURAL

The Census Bureau defines "urban" for the 1990 census as comprising all territory, population, and housing units in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more persons outside urbanized areas. More specifically, "urban" consists of territory, persons, and housing units in:

1. Places of 2,500 or more persons incorporated as cities, villages, boroughs (except in Alaska and New York), and towns (except in the six New England States, New York, and Wisconsin), but excluding the rural portions of "extended cities."
2. Census designated places of 2,500 or more persons.
3. Other territory, incorporated or unincorporated, included in urbanized areas.

Territory, population, and housing units not classified as urban constitute "rural." In the 100-percent data products, "rural" is divided into "places of less than 2,500" and "not in places." The "not in places" category comprises "rural" outside incorporated and census designated places and the rural portions of extended cities. In many data products, the term "other rural" is used; "other rural" is a residual category specific to the classification of the rural in each data product.

In the sample data products, rural population and housing units are subdivided into "rural farm" and "rural nonfarm." "Rural farm" comprises all rural households and housing units on farms (places from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold in 1989); "rural nonfarm" comprises the remaining rural.

¹ Urban and Rural Definitions. (1995, October 1). Census Bureau. Retrieved June 1, 2015.

The urban and rural classification cuts across the other hierarchies; for example, there is generally both urban and rural territory within both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas.

In censuses prior to 1950, "urban" comprised all territory, persons, and housing units in incorporated places of 2,500 or more persons, and in areas (usually minor civil divisions) classified as urban under special rules relating to population size and density. The definition of urban that restricted itself to incorporated places having 2,500 or more persons excluded many large, densely settled areas merely because they were not incorporated. Prior to the 1950 census, the Census Bureau attempted to avoid some of the more obvious omissions by classifying selected areas as "urban under special rules." Even with these rules, however, many large, closely built-up areas were excluded from the urban category.

To improve its measure of urban territory, population, and housing units, the Census Bureau adopted the concept of the urbanized area and delineated boundaries for unincorporated places (now, census designated places) for the 1950 census. Urban was defined as territory, persons, and housing units in urbanized areas and, outside urbanized areas, in all places, incorporated or unincorporated, that had 2,500 or more persons. With the following three exceptions, the 1950 census definition of urban has continued substantially unchanged. First, in the 1960 census (but not in the 1970, 1980, or 1990 censuses), certain towns in the New England States, townships in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and Arlington County, Virginia, were designated as urban. However, most of these "special rule" areas would have been classified as urban anyway because they were included in an urbanized area or in an unincorporated place of 2,500 or more persons. Second, "extended cities" were identified for the 1970, 1980, and 1990 censuses. Extended cities primarily affect the figures for urban and rural territory (area), but have very little effect on the urban and rural population and housing units at the national and State levels--although for some individual counties and urbanized areas, the effects have been more evident. Third, changes since the 1970 census in the criteria for defining urbanized areas have permitted these areas to be defined around smaller centers.

Documentation of the urbanized area and extended city criteria is available from the Chief, Geography Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233.

Extended City

Since the 1960 census, there has been a trend in some States toward the extension of city boundaries to include territory that is essentially rural in character. The classification of all the population and living quarters of such places as urban would include in the urban designation territory, persons, and housing units whose environment is primarily rural. For the 1970, 1980, and 1990 censuses, the Census Bureau identified as rural such territory and its population and housing units for each extended city whose closely settled area was located in an urbanized area.

For the 1990 census, this classification also has been applied to certain places outside urbanized areas.

In summary presentations by size of place, the urban portion of an extended city is classified by the population of the entire place; the rural portion is included in "other rural."

URBANIZED AREA (UA)

The Census Bureau delineates urbanized areas (UA's) to provide a better separation of urban and rural territory, population, and housing in the vicinity of large places. A UA comprises one or more places ("central place") and the adjacent densely settled surrounding territory ("urban fringe") that together have a minimum of 50,000 persons. The urban fringe generally consists of contiguous territory having a density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile. The urban fringe also includes outlying territory of such density if it was connected to the core of the contiguous area by road and is within 1 1/2 road miles of that core, or within 5 road miles of the core but separated by water or other undevelopable territory. Other territory with a population density of fewer than 1,000 people per square mile is included in the urban fringe if it eliminates an enclave or closes an indentation in the boundary of the urbanized area. The population density is determined by (1) outside of a place, one or more contiguous census blocks with a population density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile or (2) inclusion of a place containing census blocks that have at least 50 percent of the population of the place and a density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile. The complete criteria are available from the Chief, Geography Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233.

The data was downloaded and matched to the zip codes held on the dataset for respondents aged over 17. Although the majority of zip codes were clearly urban or clearly rural, a small percentage included both rural and urban dwellers. In this case the strategy adopted by the National Centre for Educational Statistics was used and the zip code was classified according to whether the highest percentage of households in the respondent's residential area were urban or rural.

*"2. In the National Household Education Surveys Program, **urbanicity** is based on the Census classification for the highest percentage of households in the respondent's residential ZIP Code. **Urbanicity** is designated by the following terms:*

- Urbanized area: a place and the adjacent densely settled surrounding territory that combined have a minimum population of 50,000.*
- Urban, outside of urbanized areas: incorporated or unincorporated places outside of urbanized areas that have a minimum population of 25,000, with the exception of rural portions of extended cities.*
- Rural: all areas that are not classified as urban."*

About 13.7% of values were missing, either because the zip code was a missing value in the dataset or because it was not in the census tables, due perhaps to respondent or data error. Over one third of the missing values on urbanicity occurred in the final trauche of the survey (approx one eighth of the sample). The missing value rate was much higher among older people. Over 10% of people aged over 65 had missing values on the zip code of home variable compared with about 5% of respondents aged between 18 and 65.

	Freq	%	Valid%	Cum%
-8 MISSING	1099	14.5	14.5	14.5
0 RURAL	1403	18.5	18.5	33.0
1 URBAN	5069	67.0	67.0	100.0
Total	7571	100.0	100.0	