

Rural or Regional?

Working on the assumption that every region has its rural part, and that maybe 20% of the population outside London lives in a rural area (independent estimates of this proportion vary between one-in-ten and one-in-three), then the rural population would be distributed across the regions of England as illustrated in the table below. On this basis, Rural England would have a population larger than any City Region or Regional Development Area (including London).

A Regional Approach to Rural

	Pop'n (k)	%	Rural (20%)	%
North East	2545.10	5.08	509.02	5.97
North West	6827.20	13.63	1365.44	16.00
Yorkshire and the Humber	5038.80	10.06	1007.76	11.81
East Midlands	4279.70	8.54	855.94	10.03
West Midlands	5334.00	10.65	1066.8	12.50
East	5491.30	10.96	1098.26	12.87
South East	8110.20	16.19	1622.04	19.01
South West	5038.20	10.06	1007.64	11.81
Rural (20%)			8532.9	100.00
London	7429.20	14.83		
England	50093.80	100.00		

Government and Community?

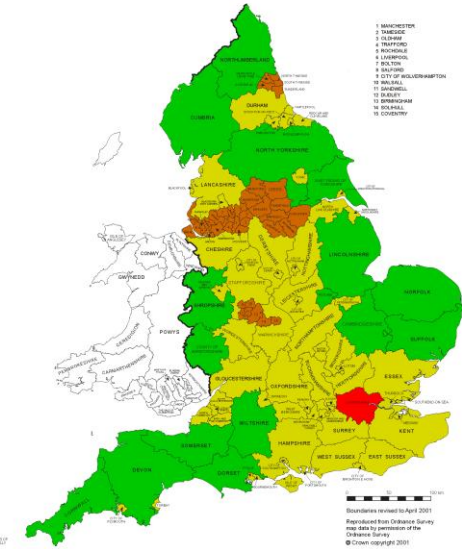
There is considerable and continuing debate about the prospective form of Local Government in England. Options canvassed have included Regional Assemblies and City Regions (with or without Elected Mayors) both instead of or as well as Unitary Authorities (including counties and districts, and not excluding enhanced recognition for Parish Councils). There seems to be general agreement that a palpable sense of community performs a valuable role in conferring consensual legitimacy on administrative decision-making. However there also seems to be a general presumption that a shared locality is automatically the best basis for a sense of community and that geographical proximity is essential for economic integrity and cohesion. These presumptions result in a potentially damaging disregard for the rural community and the economy of the countryside. The boxes to right and left give alternative bases for identification of an English rural community which transcends the administrative convenience of regional definition. By sub-dividing and subsuming the rural economy amongst the regions, the economic significance of the countryside is dissipated and obscured.

Made by Stephen Parsons, Stephanie Masters & Robert Bullard

AGRICULTURAL ENGLAND



The rural areas shown in the map are the most agricultural parts of England; with more than half the farming, and a population equivalent to that of London.



Breakdown of Weekly Household Spending (%)

	London	Rural	Town & Suburb	Metro-urban
1 Food & non-alcoholic drinks	9.3	10.1	10.7	11.3
2 Alcoholic drinks, tobacco & narcotics	2.2	2.5	2.9	3.5
3 Clothing & footwear	5.4	4.9	5.5	6.5
4 Housing (net), fuel & power	11.5	7.9	9.1	10.0
5 Household goods & services	6.8	8.1	7.3	6.6
6 Health	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.9
7 Transport	12.7	15.7	14.5	12.4
8 Communication	2.9	2.4	2.7	3.0
9 Recreation & culture	12.2	13.8	14.1	14.6
10 Education	2.2	1.5	1.1	[-]
11 Restaurants & hotels	9.0	7.5	8.5	9.0
12 Miscellaneous goods & services	8.1	8.4	7.9	7.8
13 Other expenditure items	16.7	16.1	14.5	13.4
Total expenditure	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The Economic Significance of the Countryside

The data in the tables presented here are derived from the annual survey of household expenditure 'Family Spending 2004-05', published by the UK Office of National Statistics. In the ONS classification, 14% of households are in London, 16% in rural areas, 10% in metropolitan-urban centres and the rest (60%) elsewhere in towns and suburban parts of the country. Looking at the spending figures, there is little difference in the breakdown of household expenditure but there are considerable differences in the absolute spending levels. The average weekly spending of households in London and the countryside is very similar: at around £487 per week it is 35% more than the average metro-urban household, and 20% above households everywhere else.

These disparities remain even when spending on transport and housing costs (arguably naturally higher in London and the countryside) are taken out of the account. Together, the households occupying the capital and the countryside of England are an economy apart from the rest.

Weekly Household Spending (£)

	London	Rural	Town & Suburb	Metro-urban
1 Food & non-alcoholic drinks	45.20	48.90	42.46	40.30
2 Alcoholic drinks, tobacco & narcotics	10.70	12.00	11.34	12.50
3 Clothing & footwear	26.20	23.80	21.69	23.40
4 Housing (net), fuel & power	55.90	38.50	35.94	35.70
5 Household goods & services	33.30	39.50	29.06	23.70
6 Health	5.60	5.90	4.83	3.30
7 Transport	61.80	76.40	57.65	44.30
8 Communication	14.10	11.50	10.62	10.70
9 Recreation & culture	59.60	67.40	56.05	52.20
10 Education	10.90	7.10	4.37	[3.90]
11 Restaurants & hotels	43.90	36.40	33.63	32.20
12 Miscellaneous goods & services	39.40	41.00	31.50	28.10
13 Other expenditure items	81.30	78.10	57.73	48.00
Total expenditure	487.90	486.40	396.87	358.50