

Rural Data at Statistics Canada

Taking stock and looking forward | 2025

Community Data Learning & Networking Event

Thunder Bay, Ontario

May 8, 2025

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Delivering insight through data for a better Canada



Statistics
Canada

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Meeting the information needs of Canadians

Rural and small town Canada is home to more than 6.3 million Canadians, contributing to Canada's wealth, heritage and overall prosperity

Rural and small town communities face challenges, such as infrastructure maintenance, internet service, housing affordability, skilled worker shortages and climate change

There is a longstanding data gap impacting informed decision-making and programs

Rural Data Lab (2021 to Present)

Established in partnership with the **Centre for Rural Economic Development / Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada**

1. To meet the growing call for granular and location-specific data
2. Serve the information needs of rural stakeholders and data users



Rural Data Lab

A collaborative space where external partners and professionals with diverse expertise work to develop innovative statistical products and experiment with advance analytical techniques to deliver cutting-edge data solutions and tools for Canadians

Mission

1. Engage and collaborate with new and existing partners for rural data development and analyses
2. Champion the expansion of rural disaggregation across statistical programs at Statistics Canada
3. Explore opportunities to advance new emerging technologies and methodologies to produce meaningful granular data for rural stakeholders and data users
4. Build subject matter expertise and a team of dedicated rural data analysts



Rural Data Lab | Strategic work pillars

1

Data Development

Produce comprehensive rural statistics to address and fill existing data gaps by integrating data from traditional and alternative sources

Collaborate with external and internal partners in data collection, development and validation

2

Data Accessibility

Leverage existing statistical frameworks to enhance user access to data

Build user-friendly platforms and tools to facilitate interaction with the data

3

Data Analysis

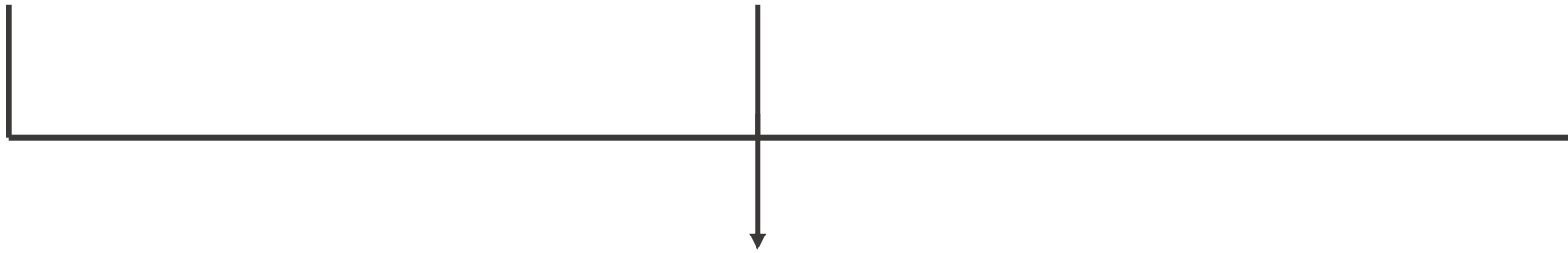
Transform rural data into analytical insights

Provide meaningful analytical insights to support rural stakeholders (experts and non-experts)



Defining rural Canada | Dimensions of rurality

(Small) population size ↔ (Low) population density ↔ (Large) distance to agglomerations



Different socio-economic and environmental landscapes

Diverse opportunities and challenges



Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador

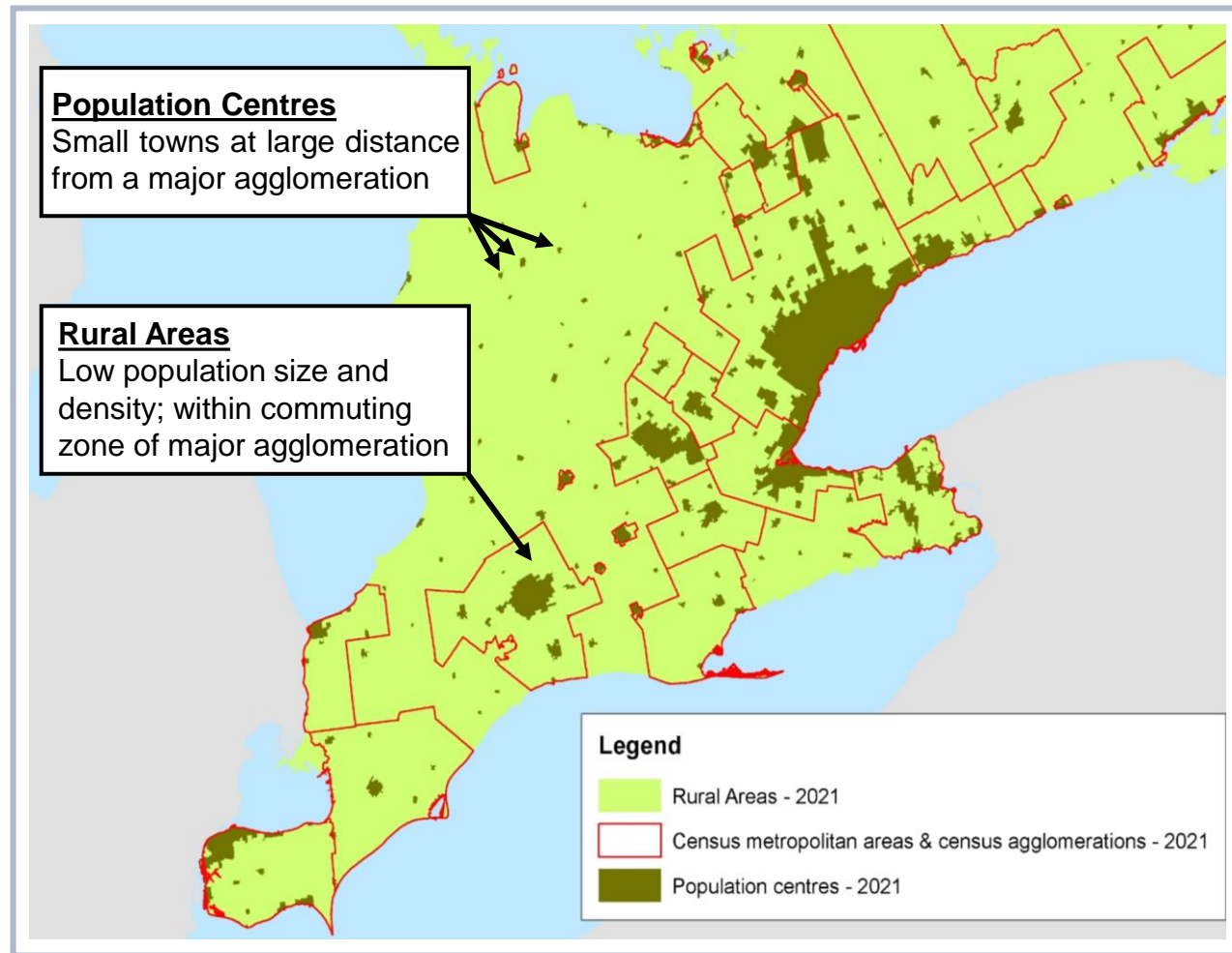


Milton, Ontario



Town of Elrose, Saskatchewan

Two prevailing definitions of rural



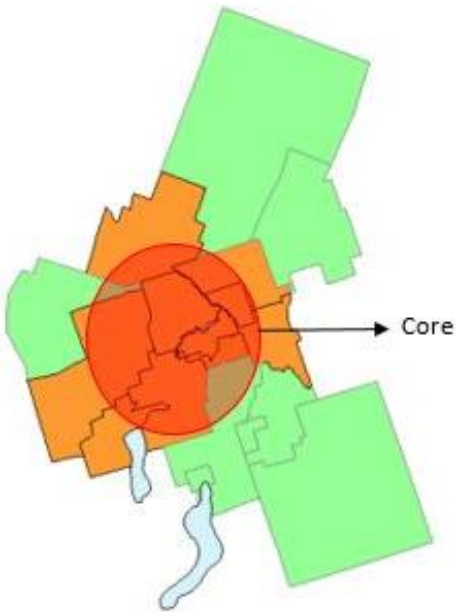
Rural areas

- Standard definition of the **Census of Population** (population and density driven)
- Areas outside population centres (population ≥ 1000 and density of ≥ 400 people per km²)
- Includes area in the commuting zones of metropolitan regions

Rural and small town (RST)

- Areas **outside** Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Census Agglomerations (CA) [non-CMA/CA]
- Definition with greater emphasis on distance from metropolitan areas
- Includes small population centres outside the commuting zones of metropolitan areas
- Excludes rural areas inside CMAs/CAs

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Census Agglomeration (CA)



Census subdivision	General term for municipalities, municipal equivalent and Reserves
Census agglomeration	Core population of at least 10,000
Census metropolitan area	Total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the core

CMA or CA are formed by one or more adjacent CSDs centered on a population centre (core)

CSDs are included in the CMA or CA if they meet at least one of seven criteria, which are ranked in order of priority

1. Delineation core rule
2. Forward commuting flow rule
3. Reverse commuting flow rule
4. Spatial contiguity rule
5. Historical comparability rule
6. Manual adjustments
7. Merging adjacent CMAs and CAs and secondary core rule

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. [Illustrated Glossary - Census metropolitan area \(CMA\) and census agglomeration \(CA\)](#)

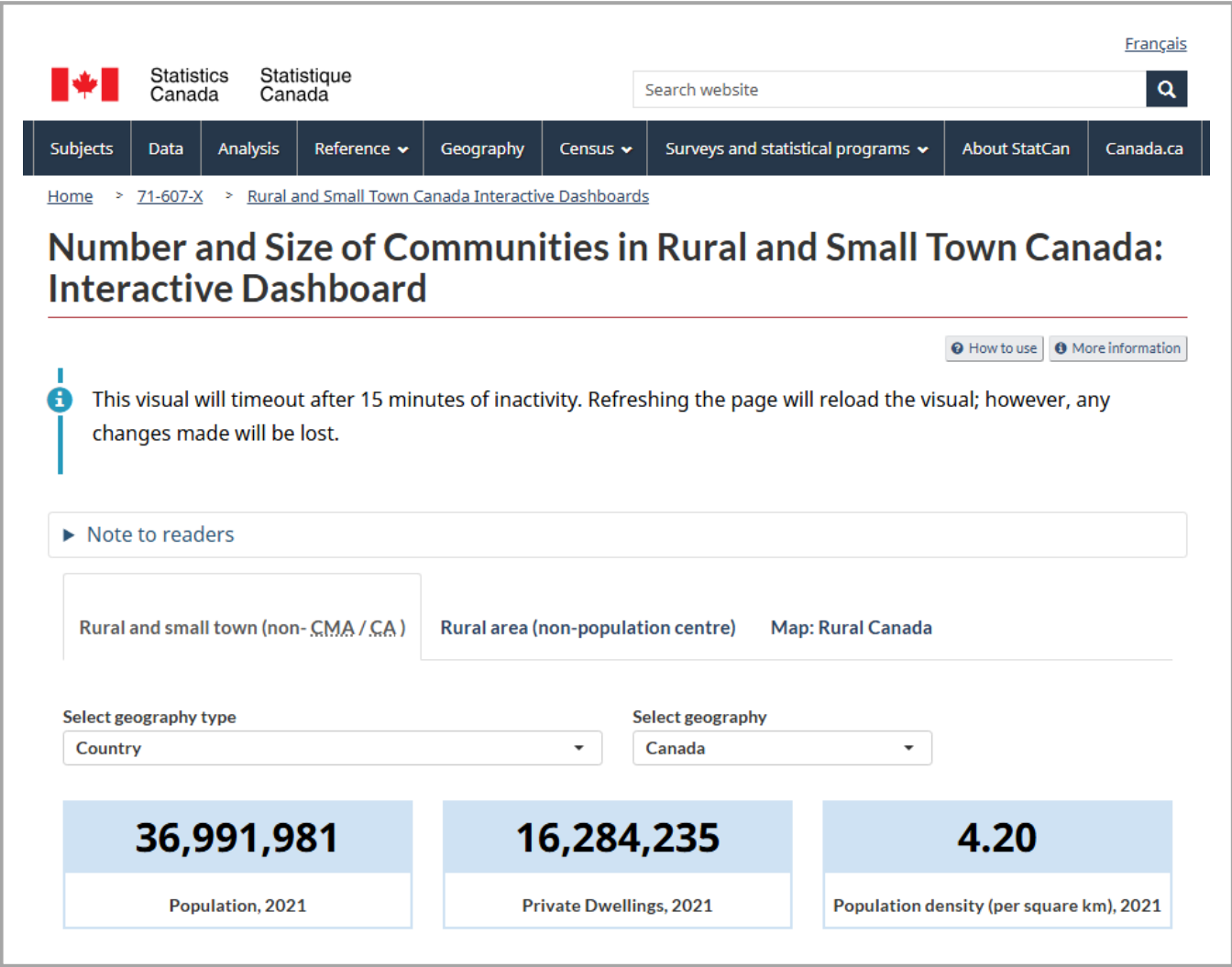


Number and Size of Communities in Rural and Small Town Canada: Interactive Dashboard

Designed to provide information on the number and size of rural communities based on definition of

- 1. Rural and small town (non-CMAs/CAs)
- 2. Rural areas (Census non-population centre)

	RST (non-CMA/CA)	Rural Areas (non-population centre)
Population (2021)	5,957,695	5,485,184
% change (2016 to 2021)	2.6%	3.0%



CMA/CA and RST are the most used geographic disaggregation at Statistics Canada

Housing	Ownership type and property use (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)	Employment insurance	Beneficiaries receiving regular benefits (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)
Construction	Building permits (CMA and non-CMA)	Indigenous	Proportion of the school age population with Indigenous identity (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)
Labour market	Indicators of employment, unemployment, labour force participation and job vacancies (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)	Health	Birth-related indicators (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)
Business	Canadian Business Counts (CSD)	Income	Income of families and individuals (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)
Demography	Annual Demographic Estimates (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)	Charitable donations	Tax filers with charitable donations (CMA/CA and non-CMA/CA)

Rural Canada Statistics Portal

Rural Canada Statistics portal was launched in August 2021 and is updated on a regular basis

A single-window approach for rural data and analyses

- 1 Rural data catalogue
- 2 Featured products and analyses
- 3 Up-to-date key indicators (e.g., population, employment, unemployment etc.)
- 4 Rural focused interactive dashboards
- 5 Rural data insights and analyses (e.g., Outlook of rural businesses)
- 6 Rural Data Viewer interactive Canada map to view select rural datasets
- 7 Dedicated Rural Client Services inbox for enquiries
- 8 Subscribe to rural data mail distribution list for updates

The screenshot shows the Rural Canada Statistics Portal homepage. At the top is a blue header with the 'RURAL CANADA STATISTICS' logo. Below the header is a navigation bar with social media links and a 'Sign up to My StatCan' button. The main content area is divided into several sections, each highlighted with a red box and a number:

- 1** Find data on: A grid of icons representing different data categories: Business performance and ownership, Health, Information and communications technology, Labour, income and spending, Population and demography, and Society and community. A link 'Browse all data on Rural Canada' is at the bottom.
- 2** Features: A large image of a rural landscape with a city skyline in the background. Below the image is a 'Rural Canada Housing Profiles, 2023' section with a 'Play' button.
- 3** Key indicators: A section titled 'Key indicators' with a note: 'Note: For the key indicators listed below, "rural" or "rural and small town" refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas or census agglomerations.' It lists three indicators: Rural population (2021 Census of Population) at 5,957,695 persons, Rural employment (2024) at 2,741.1 thousand persons, and Rural unemployment rate (2024) at 5.3%. A link 'More key indicators' is at the bottom.
- 4** Rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards: A section titled 'Rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards' with a list of dashboard topics: Number and Size of Communities, Business Counts, Business Conditions, Trade, and Employment Insurance Beneficiaries. A link 'More rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards' is at the bottom.
- 5** Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin: A section titled 'Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin' with a graphic of a rural landscape. The text states: 'The Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin offers analytical services that provide insight into the socioeconomic landscape of rural and small town communities in Canada.'
- 6** Rural Data Viewer: A section titled 'Rural Data Viewer' with a map of Canada. The text states: 'Visualize databases relevant to rural and small town Canada in the interactive mapping application Rural Data Viewer.'
- 7** Enquiries and custom services: A section titled 'Enquiries and custom services' with a graphic of a headset. The text states: 'Send your questions or requests for custom data products related to rural and small town Canada to Rural Client Services.'
- 8** Subscribe to our mailing list for rural data: A link 'Subscribe to our mailing list for rural data' is located in the top right corner of the main content area.

Rural and small town Canada Interactive Dashboards

10 interactive dashboards

- Business Counts
- Business Conditions
- Trade
- Employment by industry
- Business profiles
- Non-profit organizations
- Number and size of communities
- Annual demographic estimates
- Employment insurance beneficiaries
- Housing profiles


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Subjects Data Analysis Reference ▼ Geography Census ▼ Surveys and statistical programs ▼ About StatCan Canada.ca

Home > 71-607-X


Rural and Small Town Canada Interactive Dashboards




Economy Society Environment




Business Counts in Rural and Small Town Canada




Business Conditions in Rural and Small Town Canada




Trade in Rural and Small Town Canada



Employment by industry in rural Canada



Rural Canada Business Profiles



Rural Canada Non-Profits

► Related resources

Housing in rural and small town Canada

Rural Canada Housing Profiles: Interactive Dashboard



[Rural Canada Housing Profiles: Interactive Dashboard](#)

Rural Canada Housing Profiles (RCHP) database

- (1) Residential building permits
- (2) Investment in residential building construction
- (3) Residential property characteristics
- (4) Occupied private dwelling characteristics
- (5) Private household characteristics

Based on data from four (4) statistical programs:

- (1) 2021 Census of Population
- (2) Canadian Housing Statistics Program
- (3) Building Permits Program
- (4) Investment in Building Construction Program



Housing in rural and small town Canada | Key highlights **2023**

>32,000

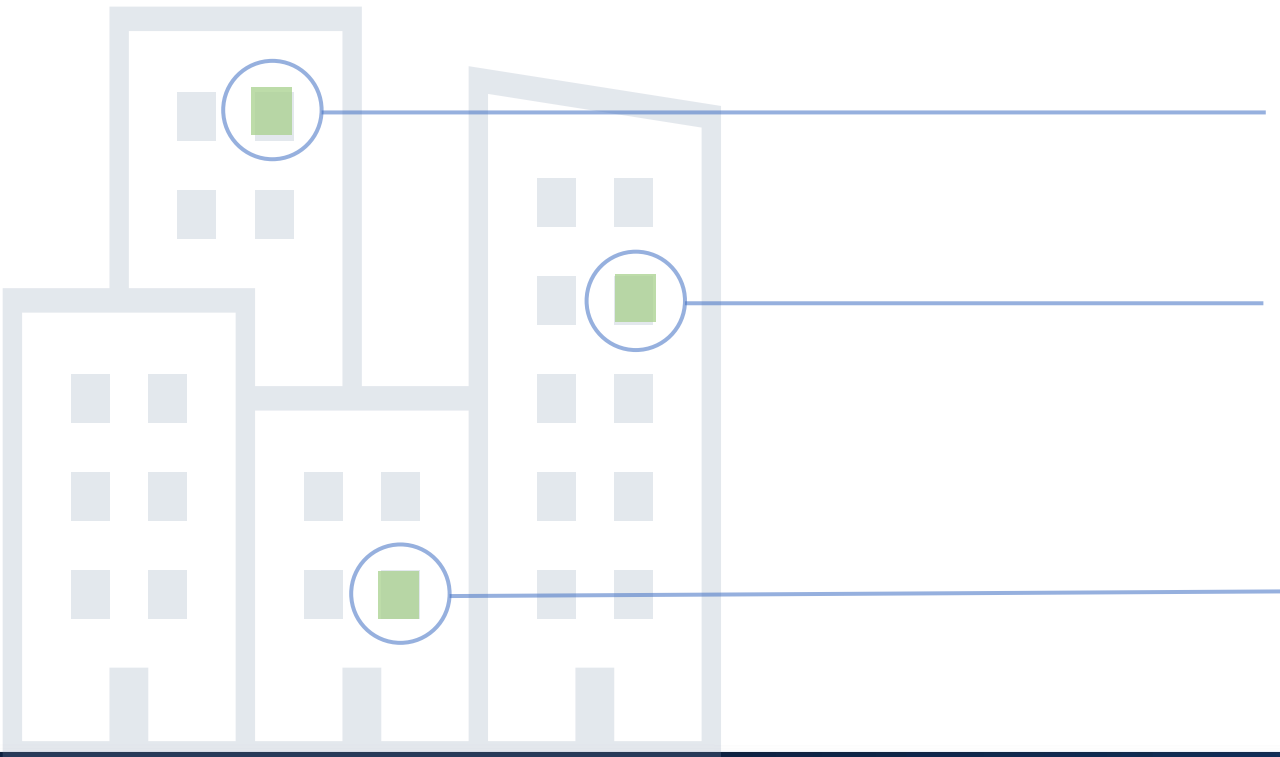
Residential building
permits issued

\$11.8 bn

Value of residential
building permits

76.3%

Single homes



Nearly **\$27 billion invested** in residential building construction (about 16.5% of the national total)

Alterations and improvements accounted for 54.1% of the investment value

New construction represented 41.6% of the investment value

Source: Statistics Canada. 2025. Rural Canada Housing Profiles, 2023.



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Rural Data Viewer

An interactive Canada map providing a rural perspective on priority topics in rural and small town Canada

1. **Labour market indicators** from the Labour Force Survey
2. **Remote work opportunities in rural Canada by sector (goods and services)** based on the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions
3. **ProximityRST** offering nine measures of access to services and amenities in rural Canada
4. **Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy in rural Canada**, presenting information on business location, number of employees, and value
5. **Regional gross domestic income, 2010 to 2021** by economic region to analyze economic activity in rural and urban areas

Rural Data Viewer

This map displays the content of select databases relevant to the [Rural Canada Statistics Portal](#).

Enter the name of a municipality, census subdivision (CSD) or region in the search bar below. A detailed table for the selected geography will appear below the map. To change the database visualized on the map, click the layers icon (🗨️) on the left-side of the map.

Enter region name or ID:

☐ Search new area

☐ Add comparison area(s) to the table below

Note: Census subdivision (CSD) is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes (e.g., Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). Regions can be provinces, rural/urban provincial divisions, or other geographies.



Rural proximity to services and amenities

ProximityRST

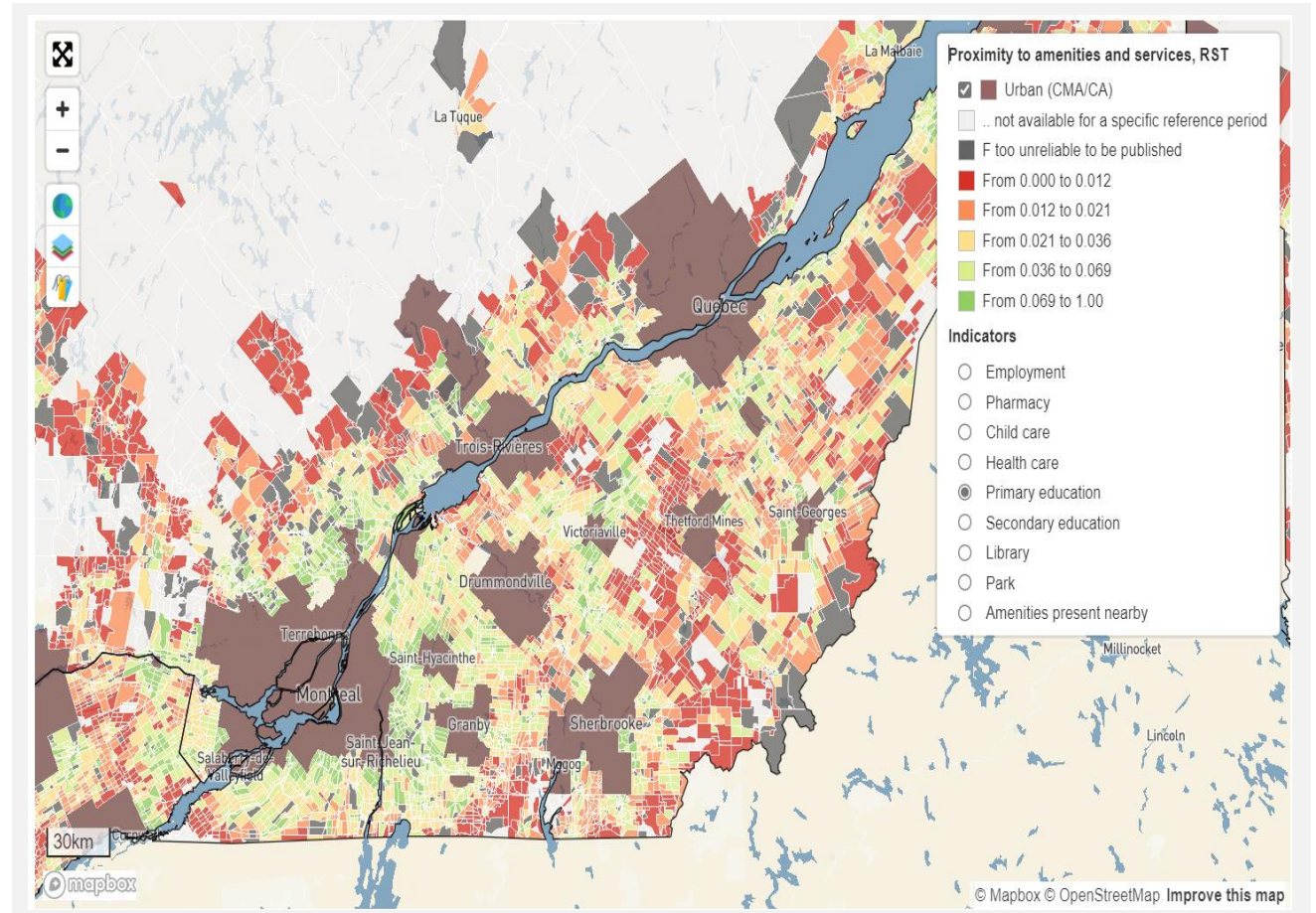
Proximity to service and amenities in Rural and Small Town Canada (ProximityRST) provides a detailed and granular look at access to amenities and services for all rural areas in Canada

Extends the concept of "proximity" beyond walkability, to accommodate the driving distances that residents of rural communities typically experience

Covers three-quarters of the rural population

Nine measures of access to services and amenities

Available through the Rural Data Viewer



Rural proximity to services and amenities | Key highlights **2023**

Key highlights

Most rural and small town residents have access to employment (80.4%) and parks (79.2%) within 15km driving distance

A smaller percentage of the rural population are in proximity to pharmacies (58.3%) and libraries (57.0%)

Rural and small town residents in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are less likely than those in other provinces to have access to health care and pharmacies (33.8% and 20.6%, respectively)

Proximity to services and amenities vary significantly across rural and small town communities even at similar population sizes (See Chart 1)



Chart 1. Percentage of population within 15 km from each service or amenity within 15 km, selected communities.

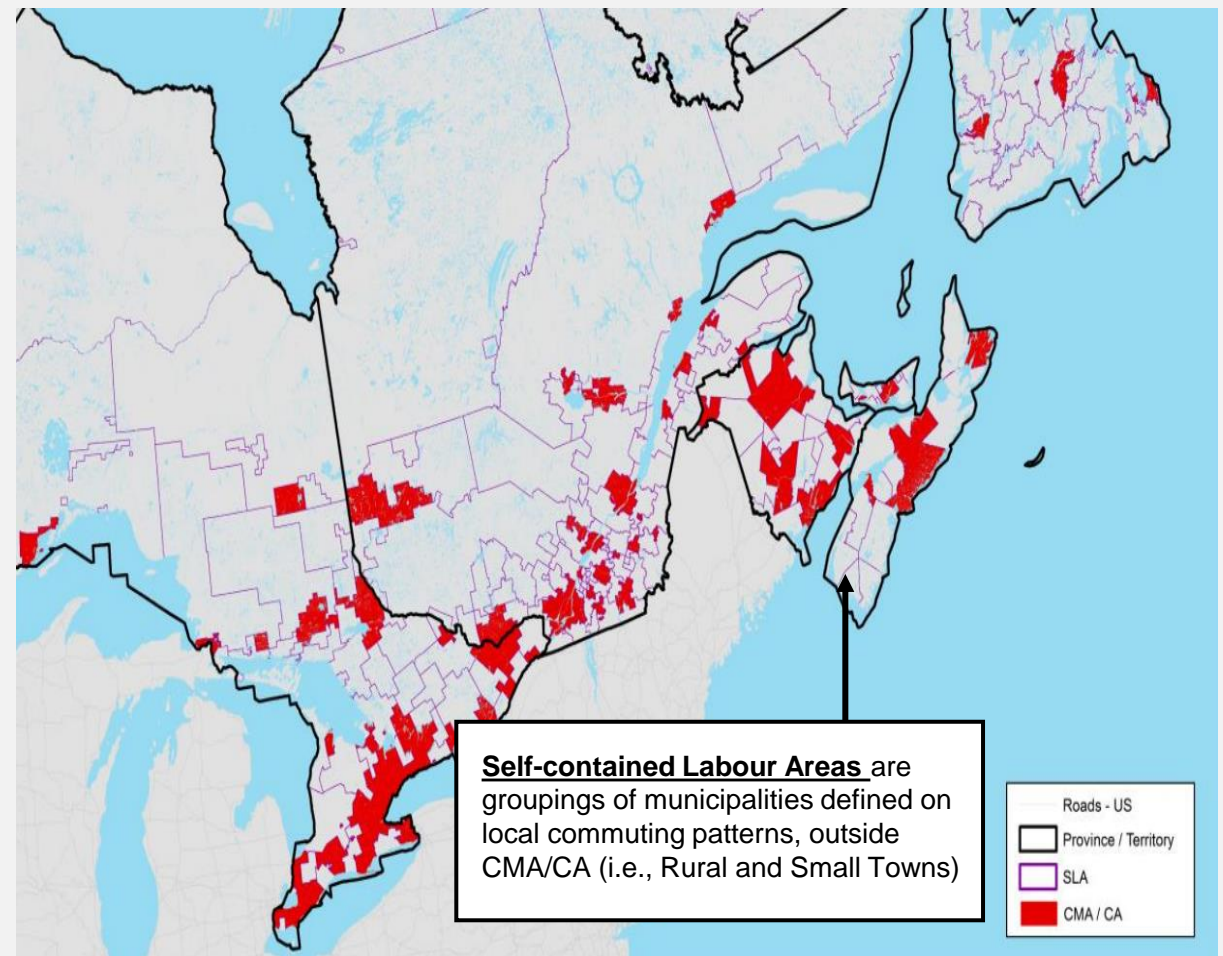
Exploratory projects to expand rural data| Self-contained Labour Areas

Self-contained Labour Areas (SLAs)

SLAs are geographic units designed to reflect real, local labour markets in rural regions

Each SLA is a self-contained area where most people both live and work based on commuting patterns

On average, SLAs are **90% or more self-contained**, meaning that most residents work in that area and that most of the jobs in that area are filled by local residents



Source: OECD. 2020. [Delineating Functional Areas in All Territories](#), OECD Territorial Reviews.



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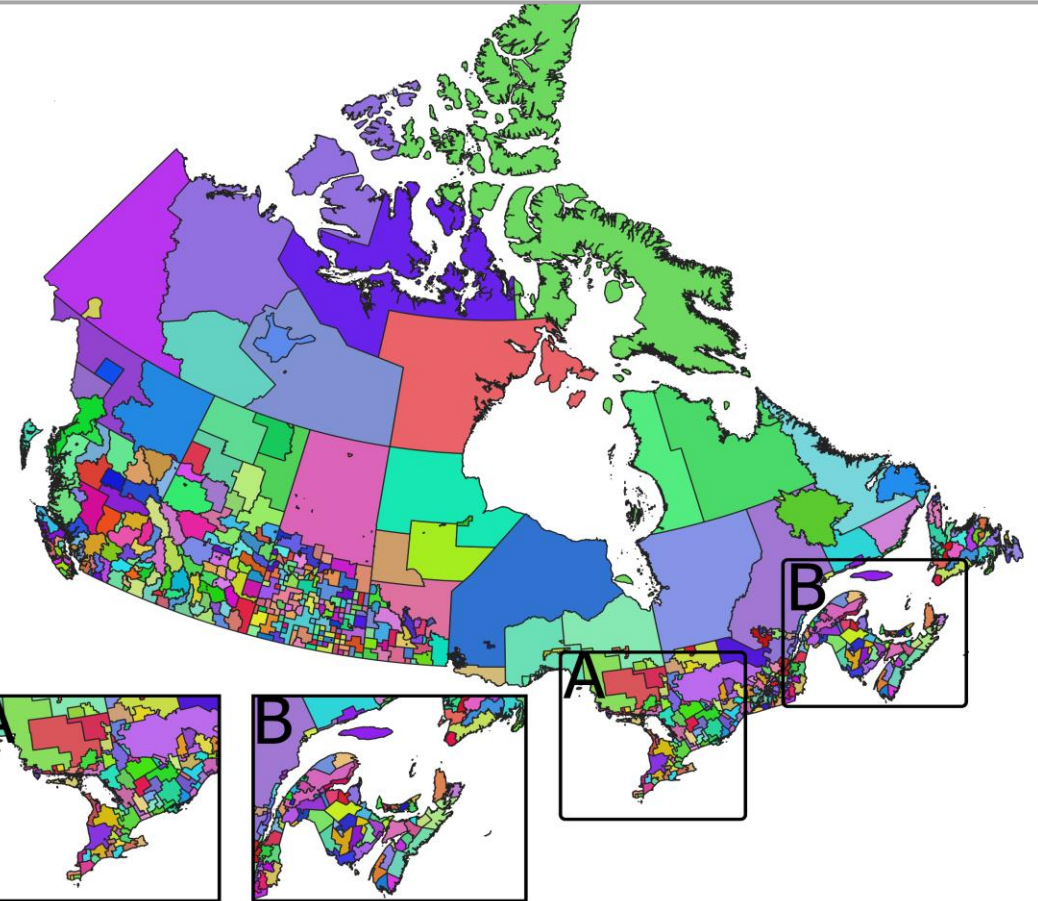
Exploratory projects to expand rural data| Self-contained Labour Areas

Purpose and use

Consolidates approximately **4000** rural communities to under **500 SLAs**, making statistics possible even where sample sizes are small

Enables rural labour market indicators that reflect local conditions, avoiding broad provincial or rural averages

Developed to complement the CMA/CA geography and provide a similar solution for rural and small town areas



Map. Statistics Canada. Self-contained labour areas, 2016.

Exploratory projects to expand rural data| Self-contained Labour Areas

Purpose and use

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Developed to complement the CMA/CA geography and provide a similar solution for rural and small town areas

Broader applications

Due to high self-containment, SLAs are used to proxy other factors such as access to services, amenities, and infrastructure quality

SLAs are contiguous and cover all rural and small town Canada

Developed in collaboration with the Statistical Geomatics Centre of Statistics Canada



Exploratory projects to expand rural data| Small Area Estimation

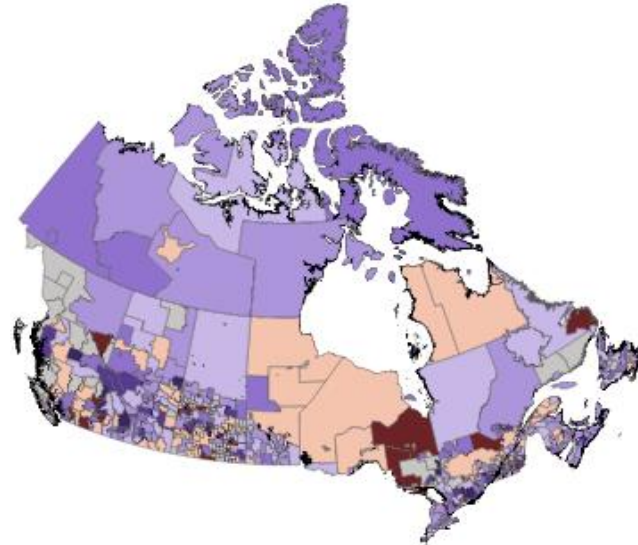
Small Area Estimation (SAE)

A statistical technique used to estimate population characteristics for small geographic areas, where sample sizes are too small to generate reliable estimates

Combines data from a survey sample with auxiliary data from other sources to build a statistical model and estimate population characteristics for the small area

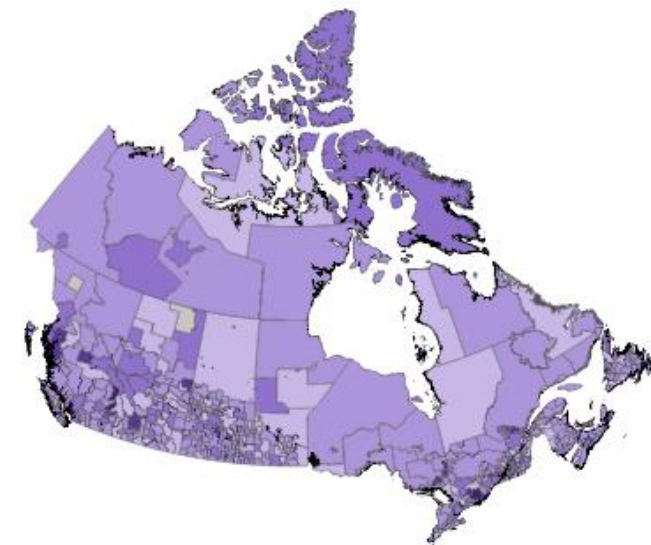
An innovative method to uncover diverse rural conditions, as opposed to a single estimate encompassing all rural regions

Without SAE



0 % 100 % > 0 to 20 % 20 to 40 % 40 to 60 % 60 to 80 % 80 to < 100 %

With SAE



> 0 to 20 % 20 to 40 % 40 to 60 % 60 to 80 % 80 to < 100 %

Map. Direct and final estimate of the service sector for remote work opportunities, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, first quarter of 2022.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2024. [Enhancing data for rural Canada: Small area estimation of remote work opportunities.](#)

Remote work opportunities in rural labour markets

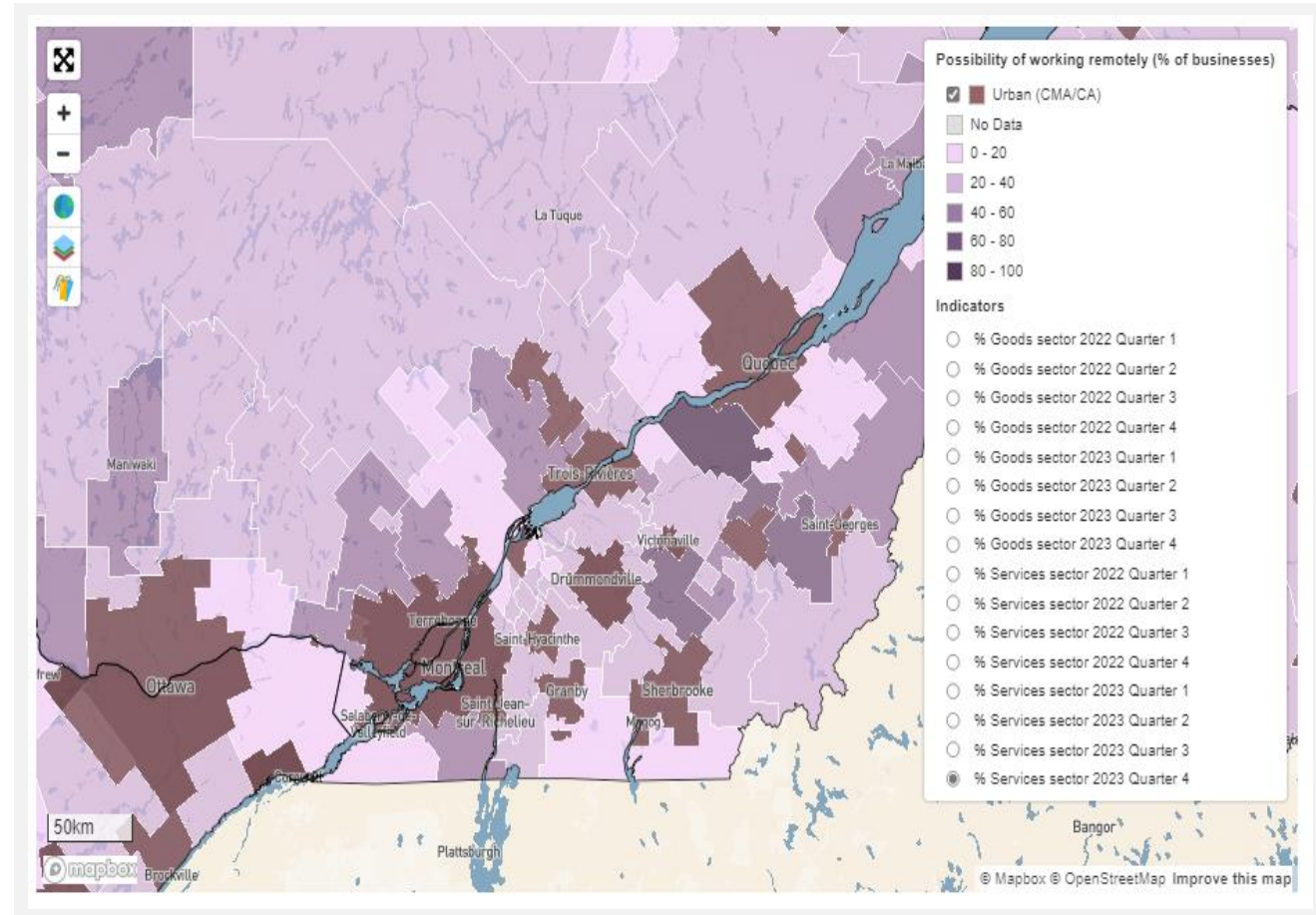
Small area estimates of opportunities of working remotely in rural labour markets (goods or services)

Application of SAE methods to the **Canadian Survey on Business Conditions** by self-contained labour areas

Estimates the proportion of businesses within the general industrial sector that primarily offer remote work opportunities to their work force

Provides additional value to the survey data by filling data gaps where sample sizes are too small to yield reliable results

Available on the Rural Data Viewer



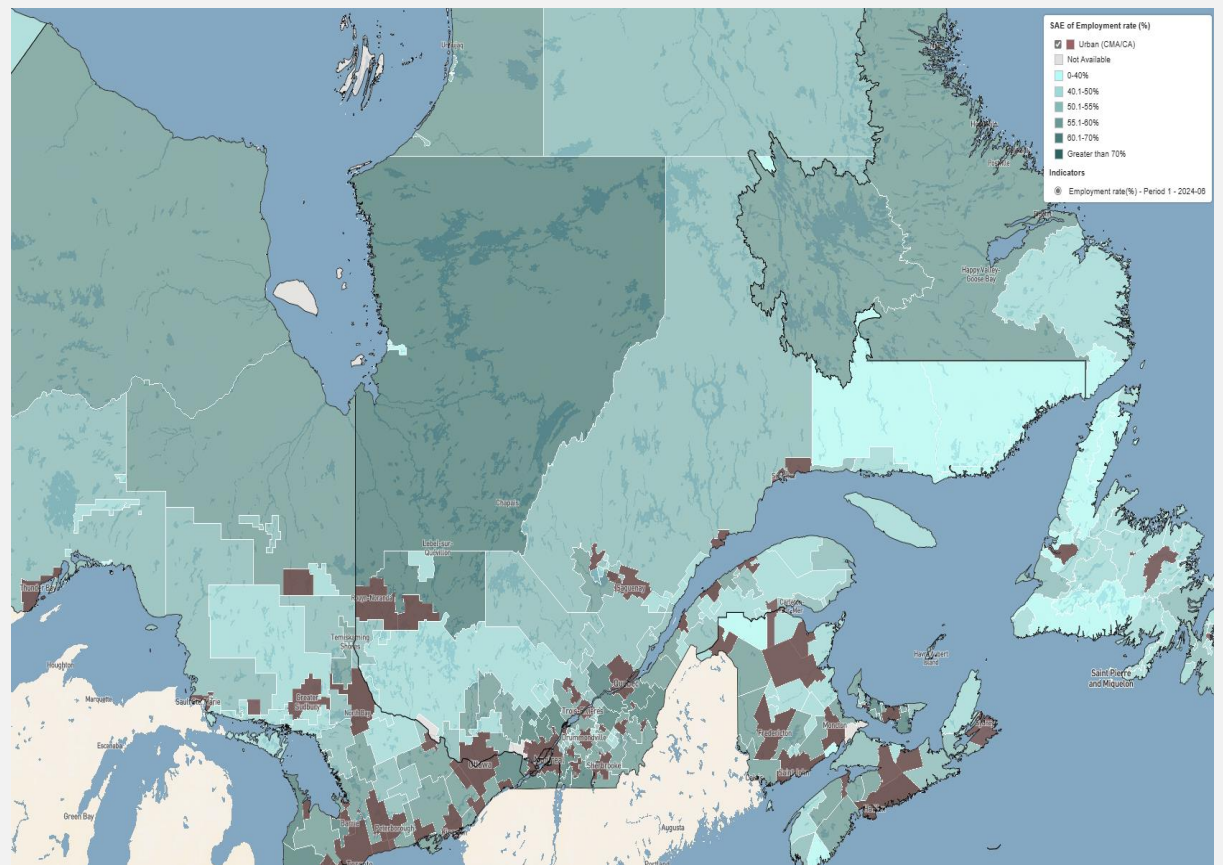
Labour market indicators by self-contained labour areas

Small area estimates of employment and unemployment rates

Application of the SAE methods to produce reliable monthly estimates of labour force characteristics directly from the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** by self-contained labour areas

Advanced modelling method that expands existing LFS data to enhance data quality and generate new insights for rural and small town areas

Available through the Rural Data Viewer and an interactive dashboard



Insights on rural and small town businesses

Rural Canada Business Profiles: Interactive Dashboard

[How to use](#) [More information](#)

Small-sized Business

Medium-sized Business

Revenue and number of businesses

Expenses items

Balance sheet items

Select geography:

Canada

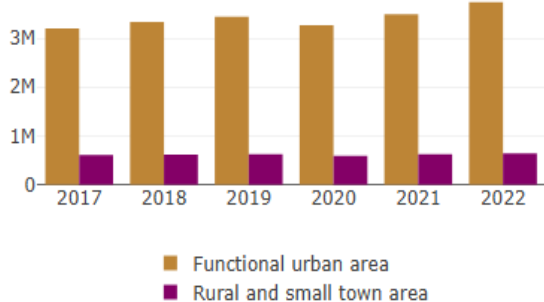
Select industry:

All industries

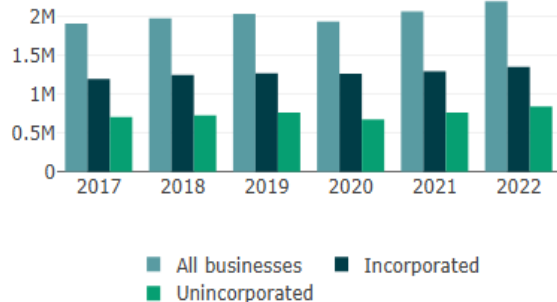
Select business characteristics:

Total number of businesses

Total number of businesses for All industries for Canada by Location



Total number of businesses for All industries for Canada by Incorporation status



The **Rural Canada Business Profiles (RCBP)** database provides financial profiles for Canadian **Small and Medium-Sized** businesses, with annual revenues ranging from \$30,000 to \$20 million

- 24 data tables
- Reference period: 2017 to 2022

Businesses in rural and small town Canada, 2022

	Number	Revenue
Small (annual revenue of \$30,000 to \$5,000,000)	320,585	\$158.3 billion
Medium (annual revenue of \$5,000,001 to \$20,000,000)	9,572	\$88.8 billion
Total	330,157	\$247.1 billion

Rural Canada Business Profiles: Interactive Dashboard

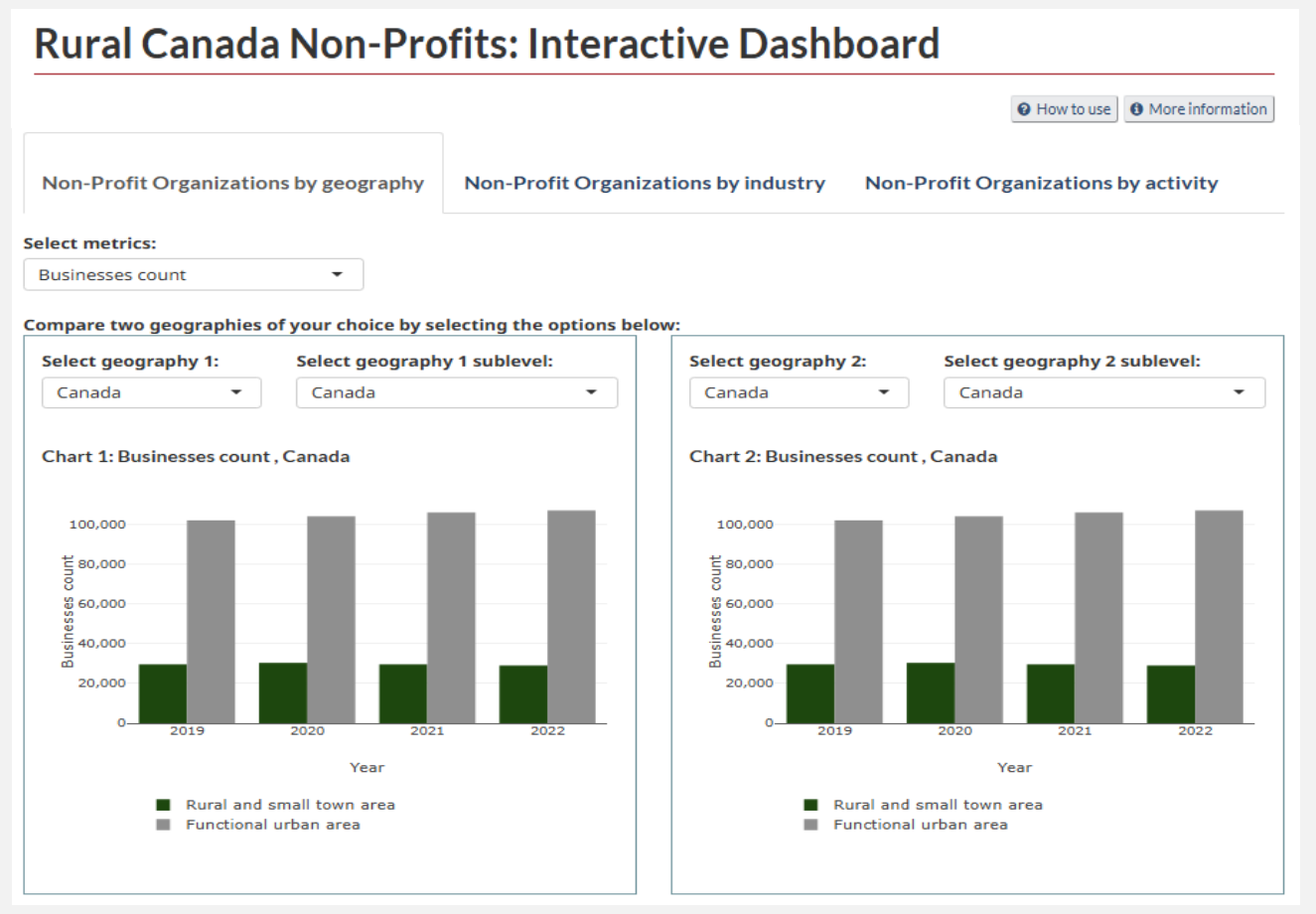


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Non-profit organizations in rural and small town Canada



The **Rural Canada Non-Profits (RCNP)** database provides estimates on the number, revenue, and employment of active non-profit organizations in Canada

- 3 data tables
- Reference period: 2019 to 2022

Non-profit organizations in Canada, 2022

	Rural and small town	Urban
Number	29,010	106,956
Revenue	\$28 billion	\$311 billion
Employment	453,407	3.3 million

Rural Canada Non-Profits: Interactive Dashboard



Achievements through collaborative work

The screenshot shows the 'RURAL CANADA STATISTICS' website. At the top, there's a blue header with the logo and title. Below it, a navigation bar includes social media icons and a 'Sign up to My StatCan' button. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Find data on' with icons for Business performance and ownership, Health, Information and communications technology, Labour, income and spending, Population and demography, and Society and community; 'Features' with a video player showing 'The outlook of rural businesses, first quarter of 2025'; 'Key indicators' with a table of statistics; and 'Rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards' with a list of dashboard topics.

RURAL CANADA STATISTICS

Explore data, analyses and tools focused on the vibrant rural and small town communities and regions of Canada.

Follow: [Social Media Icons] Sign up to [My StatCan](#) to get updates in real-time.

Subscribe to our mailing list for rural data

Find data on

- Business performance and ownership
- Health
- Information and communications technology
- Labour, income and spending
- Population and demography
- Society and community

[Browse all data on Rural Canada](#)

Features

The outlook of rural businesses, first quarter of 2025

Item 7 of 7

Key indicators

Note: For the key indicators listed below, "rural" or "rural and small town" refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas or census agglomerations.

Rural population (2021 Census of Population)	5,957,695 persons
Rural employment (2024)	2,741.1 thousand persons
Rural unemployment rate (2024)	5.3%

[More key indicators](#)

Rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards

- Number and Size of Communities
- Business Counts
- Business Conditions
- Trade
- Employment Insurance Beneficiaries

[More rural and small town Canada interactive dashboards](#)

Outputs since 2021

- Rural databases
 - [Rural Canada Business Profiles](#)
 - [Rural Canada Non-profits](#)
 - [Rural Canada Housing Profiles](#)
 - [Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy \(CEWS\) Regional and Community-level Database](#)
 - [Proximity to services and amenities in Rural and Small Town Canada \(ProximityRST\)](#)
- Data visualization tools
 - [Rural and Small Town Canada Interactive Dashboards](#)
 - [Rural Data Viewer](#)
- Quarterly analysis of [rural business conditions](#)
- Experimental methodologies
 - [Small area estimation of remote work opportunities](#)
 - [Small area estimates of employment and unemployment rate for self-contained labour areas](#)
- Outreach and communication
 - Rural data workshop: [Open Data for Rural Communities: Measuring Access to Services](#)
 - [E-mail distribution list](#) for rural data
 - Presentations and conferences

...and more to come!



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Rural Data Lab | Looking forward

1

Extend rural disaggregation to statistical programs

Explore funding possibilities for rural data development and analysis through new and ongoing partnerships

2

Facilitate dialogue and collaboration with rural stakeholders

Establish common standards in data collection and a set of standard geographic definitions

3

A shared rural data strategy

Align efforts to support sustainable development and informed decision-making



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Data Service Centre

The Data Service Centre (DSC) offers to data users a complete range of services

The DSC assists data users:

- With simple and free data requests, technical and methodological questions
- With complex requests requiring research, extraction or customization of data from multiple sources
- By producing customized reports, analyses and maps
- By offering standard and customized workshops for data users of all levels of expertise
- Through various outreach activities such as webinars, newsletters, presentations, information sessions and open houses

For any questions, contact :

- 1-800-263-1136
- infostats@statcan.gc.ca



Rural Data Lab

Rural Client Services

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