



Rural, Urban and Suburban Codes Documentation

Introduction:

These notes describe our Rural, Urban and Suburban code product.

Overview of the Definitions:

Occasionally we've received requests for zip codes with a classification of whether it was rural, urban or suburban, but couldn't find any official definition of what constitutes each category. In 2006, we had a client request this and started doing some research when we found that the Dept. of Defense had come up with the following definition:

Urban: Zip with 3,000+ persons per square mile

Suburban: 1,000 - 3,000 persons per square mile

Rural: less than 1,000 persons per square mile

We figured that this was a good starting point, but as we coded our records, based solely on population, it became apparent that this wouldn't work. Some records met the suburban or rural definitions, but were located very close to a large city and really should have been coded differently. We went back and forth testing various combinations of population density and distance from major population centers. What we thought would be relatively simple became complex and tedious to develop.

We believe the product we've created to be useful to marketers and others needing a guideline on what type of area a zip is located in. Because of the subjective nature of these definitions, one could argue that some zips should be coded other than what we have. We will consider any suggestions.

A few things to note about this product:

- We use Census counts and estimations to calculate the population per zip. The count is the population count in 2000 and estimations are what the Census Bureau believes the current population to be.
- The Census wasn't counted based on zip codes and the counts are based on what the Census calls a ZCTA (Zip Code Tabulation Area) and is approximate.
- Some zip codes weren't around in 2000, so we don't have figures for them.

*... when only **great** data will do!*



- Zip codes such as regular and military PO Boxes obviously don't have populations, so those records aren't marked.
- Some locations such as Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Island, and the South Pacific territories don't have population counts, therefore we don't code those records.
- The pricing of this product is for a one-time, as-is, version of the data. It's up to the purchaser to determine if the data fits their needs. We recommend getting the demo version of the data and testing it thoroughly.

File Layout:

We provide the files in a comma-delimited text format, plus an Excel file. The layout is as follows:

- Zip code.
- City
- County
- State
- Type code (b=Business/Private Zip Code, e=PO Boxes, m=Military). We include this so that when you see a record which doesn't have a Rural, Urban or Suburban code, it's probably coded as one of these. If this type code field is blank, then it's for general delivery.
- Rural code (R=Rural, U=Urban, S=Suburban).

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