

Remote and Metropolitan Areas Index

Age Cohorts	Younger, Mid-age and Older
Surveys	All
Derived Variable	RRMA (DEMO-044)
Definition	Categories for Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas
Source Items (Index Numbers)	Residential postcode - PCODE (DEMO-0416)
Statistical form	Categorical variable
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Background

The ALSWH samples were drawn at random from women included in the Medicare database administered by the Health Insurance Commission (HIC). The study design included over sampling of women from rural and remote areas (approximately twice the population proportion) to allow estimates of various parameters within non-urban populations. The locality measure on which sampling was based was the RRMA (Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas) Index developed by Department of Primary Industries and Energy and Department of Human Services and Health and used nationally for the Australian census at the time the ALSWH was designed (Table 1).¹ The RRMA index reflects distance from both service centres and from other people.²

Table 1 1991 Australian Census classification of for rural, remote and metropolitan areas (RRMA)

Zone	Class	Urban centre population	Abbreviation
Metropolitan	Capital city		M1
	Other metropolitan centre	≥100 000	M2
Rural	Large rural centre	25 000 to 99 999	R1
	Small rural centre	10 000 to 24 999	R2
	Other rural area	<10 000	R3
Remote	Remote centre	≥5 000	Rem1
	Other remote area	<5 000	Rem2

Source Item

RRMA categories are derived from residential postcode.

Derived Variable

The codes and classes for the RRMA index are:

Code	Class
1	Capital city
2	Other metropolitan centre
3	Large rural centre
4	Small rural centre
5	Other rural area
6	Remote centre
7	Other remote area

Categorisation of RRMA

Various methods have been used to categorise RRMA for statistical analysis (Table 2). The categories used for the ALSWH sampling and the categories recommended by the Rural Health and Palliative Care Branch of Department of Health and Ageing for the 2003 Research Syntheses³ both reflect physical remoteness. The 2004 definition reflects the availability of services.⁴

Recommendation for usage

It is recommended that analyses that aim to estimate population parameters or to adjust for confounding with locality use the ALSWH sampling categorisation. The 2004 definition is recommended for analyses of urban-rural-remote migration and of the availability of health services.

Table 2 RRMA allocation to various categories

ALSWH Sampling based on 1991 Census	Research Synthesis 2003	Urban-rural-remote migration 2004
<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Urban</i>
○ Capital city (1)	○ Capital city (1)	○ Capital city (1)
○ Other metropolitan centre (2)	○ Other metropolitan centre (2)	○ Other metropolitan centre (2)
<i>Large rural centre</i>	<i>Large rural centre</i>	<i>Large and small rural towns plus remote centres</i>
○ Large rural centre (3)	○ Large rural centre (3)	○ Large rural centre (3)
		○ Small rural centre (4)
		○ Remote centre (6)
<i>Small rural centre</i>	<i>Small rural centre</i>	
○ Small rural centre (4)	○ Small rural centre (4)	
	○ Other rural area (5)	
<i>Other rural and remote</i>	<i>Remote & Other rural</i>	<i>Other rural areas and other remote areas</i>
○ Other rural area (5)	○ Remote centre (6)	○ Other rural area (5)
○ Remote centre (6)	○ Other remote area (7)	○ Other remote area (7)
○ Other remote area (7)		

References

1. Department of Primary Industries and Energy and Department of Human Services and Health (1994). Rural, remote and metropolitan areas classification: 1991 Census edition. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004. Rural, regional and remote health: a guide to remoteness classifications. AIHW cat.no. PHE 53. Canberra:AIHW.
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/9993> 24 November 2004
3. Health in rural and remote areas. Selected findings of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. P Warner-Smith, J Ford, E Fraser, N Grove S Gregory and C Lee. June 2003. (Summary available at
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/wha/Reports/syntheses_reports.html on 24 November 2004)
4. Larson A, Bell M & Young AF. (2004). Clarifying the relationships between health and residential mobility. Social Science and Medicine, 2004; 59, 2149-2160