

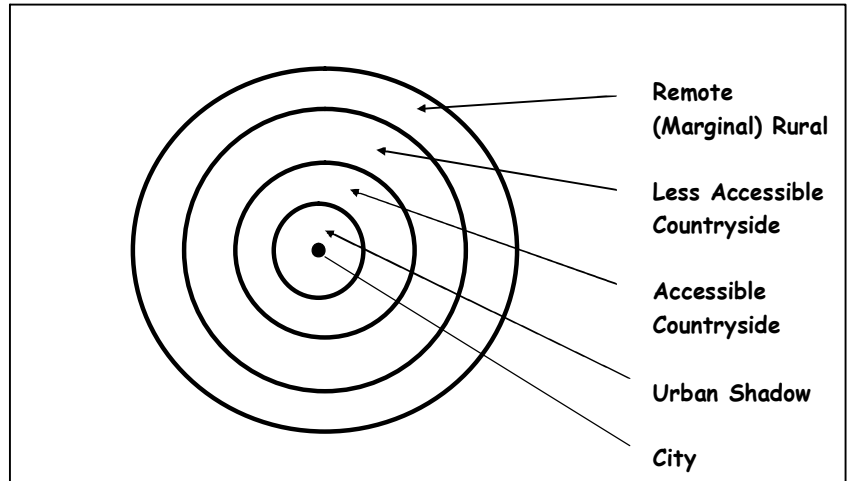
1b RURAL DEFINITIONS: CHURCH SURVEY

The Rural Church and Rural Definitions

(1) Russell's categories A. Russell "The Country Parish" (1986) p.3-7

Based, apparently, on national & local government custom, Russell defines *four* categories of rural area as part of a detailed look at the nature & function of Anglican rural parishes. These categories are perceived as an expanding series of concentric circles centred on a city or substantial urban community:

- Urban Shadow
- Accessible Countryside
- Less Accessible Countryside
- Remote (Marginal) Rural



[CLICK HERE](#) -> for larger image

(2) Self-designated Davies *et al.* "Church & Religion in Rural England" (1991) p.57-60

The "Rural Church Project" surveyed rural churches independently of the national census. It was recognised that the general statistics obtained should be correlated with rural categories *chosen by the rural church leaders themselves*:

- Totally rural
- Partly rural
- Small country town
- Part urban/non-rural
- Urban

(3) Francis' categories L.J. Francis "Church Watch" (1996) p.1-6

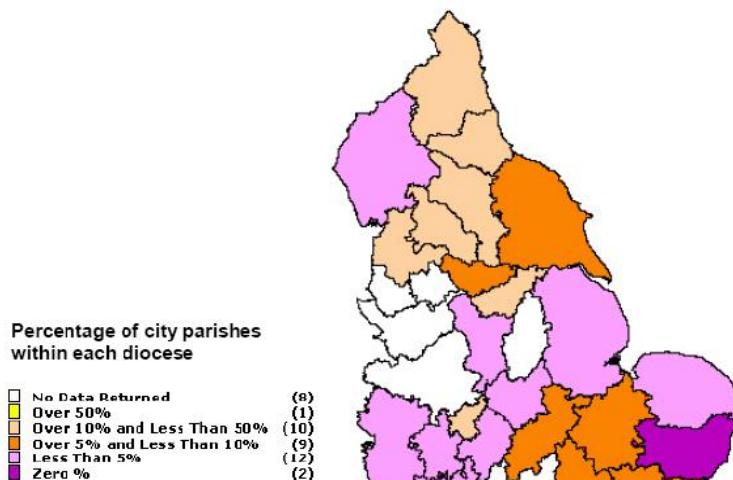
Like Russell, Francis is concerned with rural churches in their relationship to the communities in which they are found, rather than with rural areas as they stand. He uses Russell's fourfold categories as a "yardstick" with which to compare the results of his own work, which is based on *sevenfold* division. Each of these is, by Francis' definition, *rural* - though the last category ('Resorts') should contain communities far larger than would usually be considered 'rural':

1. Hamlets
2. Small Villages
3. Medium Villages
4. Large Villages
5. Suburban Villages
6. Market Towns
7. Resorts

(4) Church of England [CLICK HERE FOR](#) -> "Church of England Church Statistics 2003"
 The Church of England keeps annual figures for church attendance etc. Recently, they have provided yearly analyses of these figures in various ways. In particular they present their attendance & other figures in two forms that have significance for 'rural' issues:

- According to diocese. In itself this is not specifically geared to 'rural' categories. However, there is data on the type & distribution of parishes within each diocese. The result of this is that it is possible to designate, fairly accurately, each diocese on a scale of 'rurality'.
 - Rural
 - Semi-rural
 - Urban

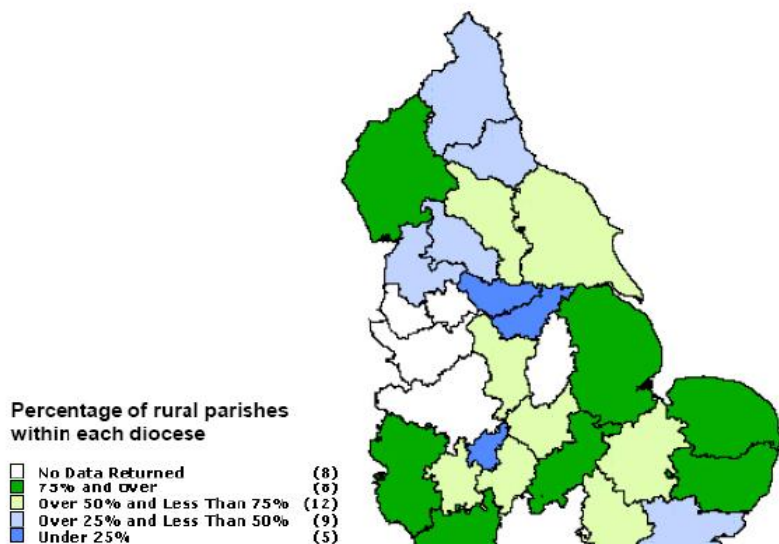
**CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESES:
 Percentage of City Parishes in each Diocese**



Data from Church of England, unpublished source

[CLICK HERE](#) -> for larger image

**CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESES:
 Percentage of Rural Parishes in each Diocese**



Data from Church of England, unpublished source

[CLICK HERE](#) -> for larger image

CHURCH OF ENGLAND: DIOCESAN DESIGNATIONS

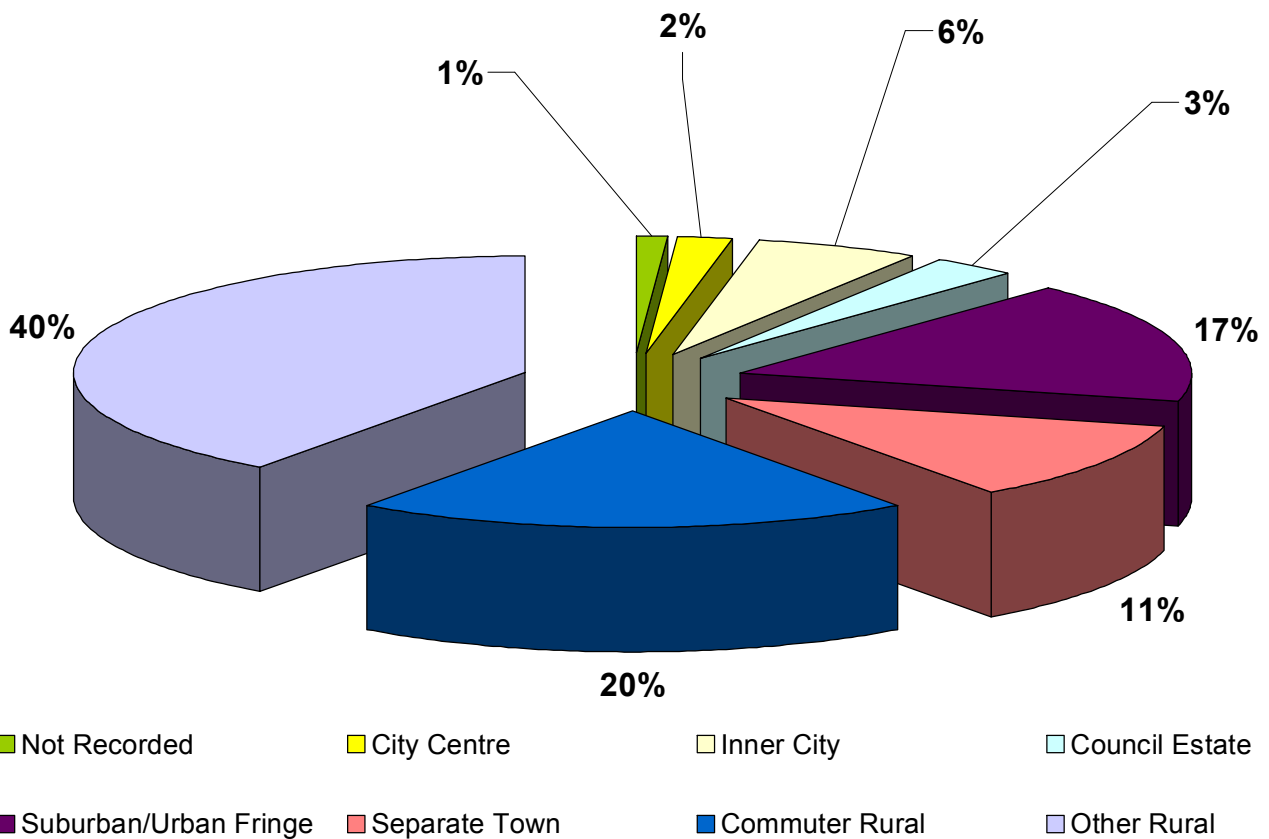
DIOCESE	% RURAL PARISHES	% CITY PARISHES	DESIGNATION
<i>Bath & Wells</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Birmingham</i>	<i><25</i>	<i>10-50</i>	Urban
<i>Blackburn</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>10-50</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Bradford</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>10-50</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Bristol</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>10-50</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Canterbury</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Carlisle</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Chelmsford</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>5-10</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Chester</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Rural)
<i>Chichester</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Coventry</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i><5</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Derby</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i><5</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Durham</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>10-50</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Ely</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	Rural
<i>Exeter</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	Rural
<i>Gloucester</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Guildford</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i><5</i>	Urban
<i>Hereford</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Leicester</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i><5</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Lichfield</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(semi-Rural)
<i>Lincoln</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Liverpool</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Urban)
<i>London</i>	<i><25</i>	<i>>50</i>	Urban
<i>Manchester</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Urban)
<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>10-50</i>	semi-Rural
<i>Norwich</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Oxford</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(semi-Rural)
<i>Peterborough</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	Rural
<i>Portsmouth</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>Ripon & Leeds</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>10-50</i>	Rural
<i>Rochester</i>	<i>25-50</i>	<i>5-10</i>	semi-Rural
<i>St. Albans</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	semi-Rural
<i>St Edmundsbury & Ipswich</i>	<i>>75</i>	<i>0</i>	Rural
<i>Salisbury</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Rural)
<i>Sheffield</i>	<i><25</i>	<i>10-50</i>	Urban
<i>Sodor & Man</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Rural)
<i>Southwark</i>	<i><25</i>	<i>10-50</i>	Urban
<i>Southwell</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Rural)
<i>Truro</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>0</i>	Rural
<i>Wakefield</i>	<i><25</i>	<i>5-10</i>	Urban
<i>Winchester</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	(Rural)
<i>Worcester</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i><5</i>	Rural
<i>York</i>	<i>50-75</i>	<i>5-10</i>	Rural

[CLICK HERE](#) -> for separate image

- By parish type. The Church of England employs its own social & geographical categories of rurality, to generate statistics that are relevant to its specific denominational needs. Some of these categories may well coincide, or overlap, with some of the other 'rural definitions' we have considered, but this is never clearly stated.

- City centre
- Inner city
- Council estate
- Suburban/urban fringe
- Separate town
- Commuter rural
- Other rural

Church of England: Parish Distribution by Geographical Location (2003)
 Unpublished Church of England source (2005)



[CLICK HERE](#) -> for larger image

The Church of England is not the only denomination in rural England, though it is the largest - both in terms of total attendance and number of churches. However no other denomination produces information akin to that of the Church of England. Some do keep annual (or, at least, regular) attendance records, but none present them in such a way as to identify 'rural' churches. And, certainly, none of them provide any definitions - 'working' or otherwise - of 'rurality'. Nevertheless, their numerical data does give helpful insights into the state of the Church in rural England.

[To be discussed later in Unit 4 "Rural Church Statistics"]

(5) Churches Information for Mission

"Christians: citizens & consumers" 2002, p.7-17

This detailed statistical survey of church life in England was carried out in 2001, in partnership with numerous denominations, individual churches and Christian organisations. No specific attempt was made to *define* either rural areas or rural churches in England but, as part of the analysis & presentation of the data obtained, use was made use of two different sets of geographical-social categories. It is clearly recognised that there are a range of 'rural' categories, which can be described/defined by both geography and other non-geographical determinants.

- The first of these had been employed by the Christian Research Association (see below) in earlier research ("**Religious Trends 3" Christian Research, 2001, Section 12.42**) and extended beyond strictly geographical description, These were the 'groups' produced for categorising Local Authorities [**as earlier**]:

• Rural Amenity	• Most prosperous
• Coast & Country Resorts	• Remoter Rural
• Essential Service Centres	• Education Centres & Outer London
• Ports & Industry	• Manufacturing Centres
• Inner London	• Mixed Urban
• Growth Areas	• New & Developing Areas
• Coalfields	• Established Manufacturing Fringe

- The second series of categories were provided for church leaders participating in the survey to select the single most appropriate geographical category describing their church location. It has considerable similarities with the categories employed by the Church of England in designating the location of its parishes [**as earlier**]:

City Centre	Inner City
Large Town	Small Town
Suburban/City Fringe	Council Estate
Other Built-up Area	Rural Commuter
Rural Non-commuter	Other

(6) Bowden's "Ministry in the Countryside" 2nd Edition (2003) p.66-58

Published in 2003, much of the text of this study is the same as the 1st edition of 1994. However, the author clearly felt justified in retaining the earlier material largely unchanged. No *new* definitions of 'rural' were advanced but Bowden discussed some of those already in widespread use. Bowden made 2 key points in terms of rural definitions & the church:

- 'Market towns' are a unique category, which cannot be categorised solely on the basis of population size (which may vary enormously)
- The local inhabitants should have the opportunity to 'define' their community. (Of course, this is impossible at the level, say, of the national census; but it should be incorporated in any studies of local 'rural' churches & their communities.)

(7) Christian Research Association

"Rural Churches Today & Tomorrow" (Brierley, 2004) and

"Religious Trends No.5: 2005-2006" (Christian Research, 2005), Section 2.24

Here, just two categories of "rural" are used when considering the Church:

- Commuter (or Dormitory) Rural [elsewhere called "Rural Amenity"]
- Remoter Rural

It appears that this choice of categories is based on the previous Local Authority system of definitions [as earlier], although the naming of the rural categories changes within this 2004 paper - and may also reflect the so-called "Tarling definition" [as earlier]. However this is not made explicit. The data & conclusions contained within this report, *and the broader survey(s) upon which it is based*, have been widely publicised and used to 'measure' or predict the Church's numerical strength in rural areas (e.g. "State of the Countryside 2001" p. 24). This is discussed in detail later.

Both Russell and Francis are key works discussing the place & role of the church in rural communities, so their definitions & categories will be considered more closely later. [See Unit 3 "Rural Communities"] However they are not the only 'church' definitions of 'rural' available (e.g. the Church of England). Also there are basic differences between Russell's & Francis' classifications:

- Russell's definitions all exist in relation to the "urban"
- Russell's definitions assume that rural communities are, in some sense, to be identified in terms of their "accessibility" (however that is defined)
- Francis' definitions consider community size as well as geographical context

In both cases, though, the categories are rather arbitrary and lack precision (e.g. how "large" is a *large village*). They remain essentially qualitative definitions.

FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

List the various descriptions of rural 'categories' used in this section.
What benefits might arise if *all* churches & Christian bodies used the same ones?

This survey highlights well the problem of *rural definition* that faces anyone studying rural communities & rural churches. While a 'standard definition' or set of categories for 'rural' does now exist, it is not yet in widespread use [as discussed earlier]. As we shall see when considering rural churches - and their statistics - more specifically, the situation becomes even more confusing. [To be discussed later in Unit 4 "Rural Church Statistics".] Different churches or organisations use the same or similar terms, but - in the absence of detailed descriptions in each case - it remains difficult to tell if they actually refer to the same entities.

FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

What significant emphases are brought out by these 'church' reflections on 'rural'?

It is hard to make substantive comparison of reports or statistics from different bodies. This is made more difficult when different reports may reach distinct, or even contradictory, conclusions. And, even where clear rural categories (e.g. "commuter rural") are used, other supposedly *non-rural* categories (e.g. "small town" or "separate town") that are employed may well include substantial rural components - at least, according to official definitions [as discussed earlier].

FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

List the key things *you feel* distinguish the 'rural church' from those in non-rural areas. Do all of these things arise because the church is *rural*? Or are some related to more incidental features of the 'rural church'? (E.g. because many rural churches are small)

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to go to Unit 1a. "RURAL DEFINITIONS: GENERAL SURVEY"

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to go to 'Module #01 Unit 1 FINAL ASSIGNMENT'

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to return to the start of Unit 1b

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to go on to the start of Unit 2 "RURAL STATISTICS: A SUMMARY"

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to return to the Project website "Home Page"