

2 RURAL STATISTICS: APPENDICES

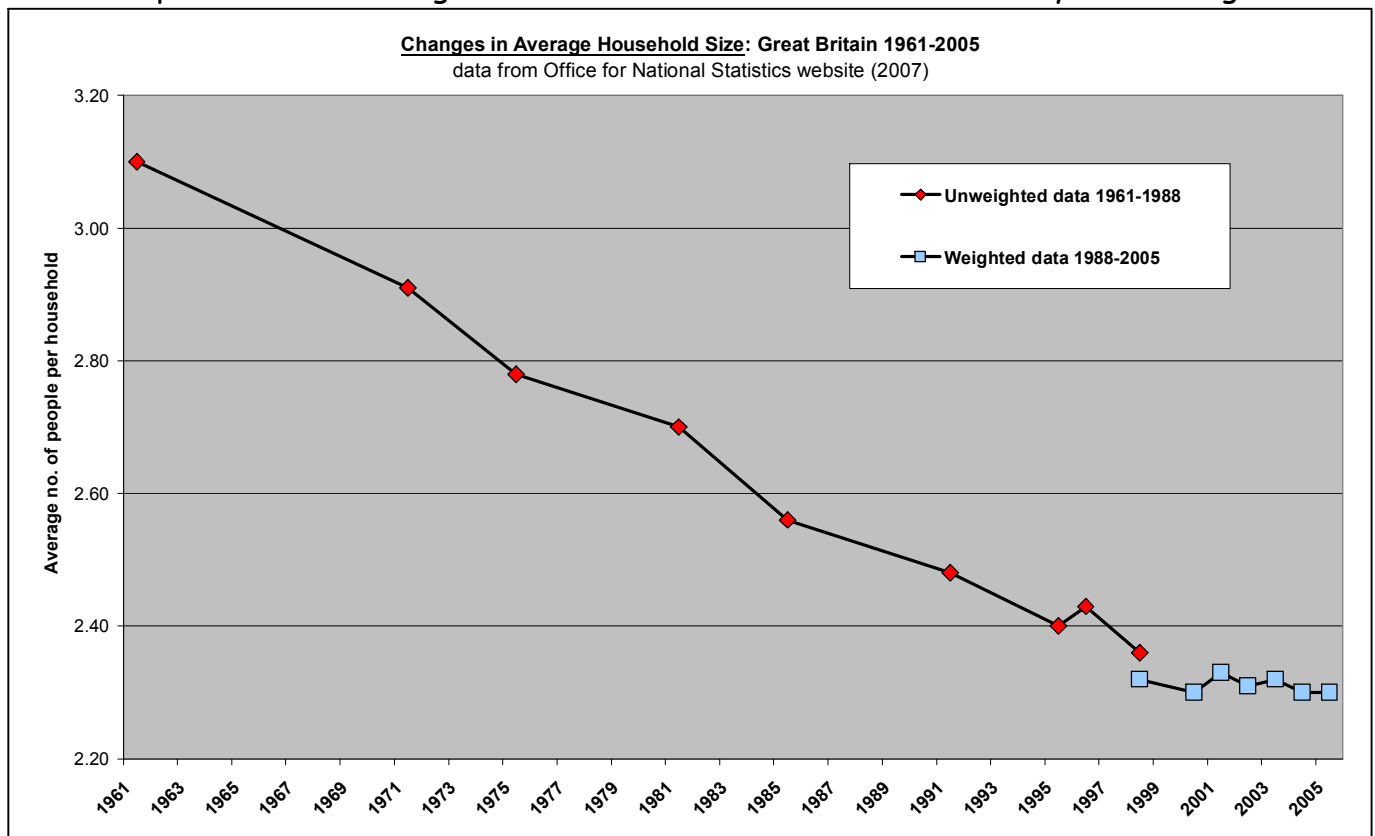
Appendix 5: "HOUSEHOLDS & HOUSEHOLD SIZES"

A certain amount of information is available on the distribution within England of *households* and their *sizes*. Part of the reason for looking briefly at this is because of claims that are sometimes made regarding the relative sizes of rural households compared to their urban equivalents. Interestingly, completely opposite - and therefore mutually contradictory - claims have been made ... albeit from different sources:

- Rural households ought to be, on average, larger than urban households because more traditional patterns of family life and accommodation are to be found in rural England. A corollary of this claim is that there should be a lower *proportion* of rural to relative urban households, by comparison with proportions of actual *people* who live in each area.
- Rural households ought to be, on average, smaller than urban households because the urban population - especially in cities - includes the vast majority of ethnic groups (including international migrants & their descendant families) that support larger family, and therefore household, sizes. This claim would have the opposite corollary to the first - a higher proportion of households in rural areas.

In fact, both these claims are likely to be inaccurate, as the social & demographic context of England (and Britain as a whole) is far more complex, This involves changing patterns of family living, decreasing family size, increasing rates of separation & divorce, increased longevity & the imbalance in survival between male & female as age increases.

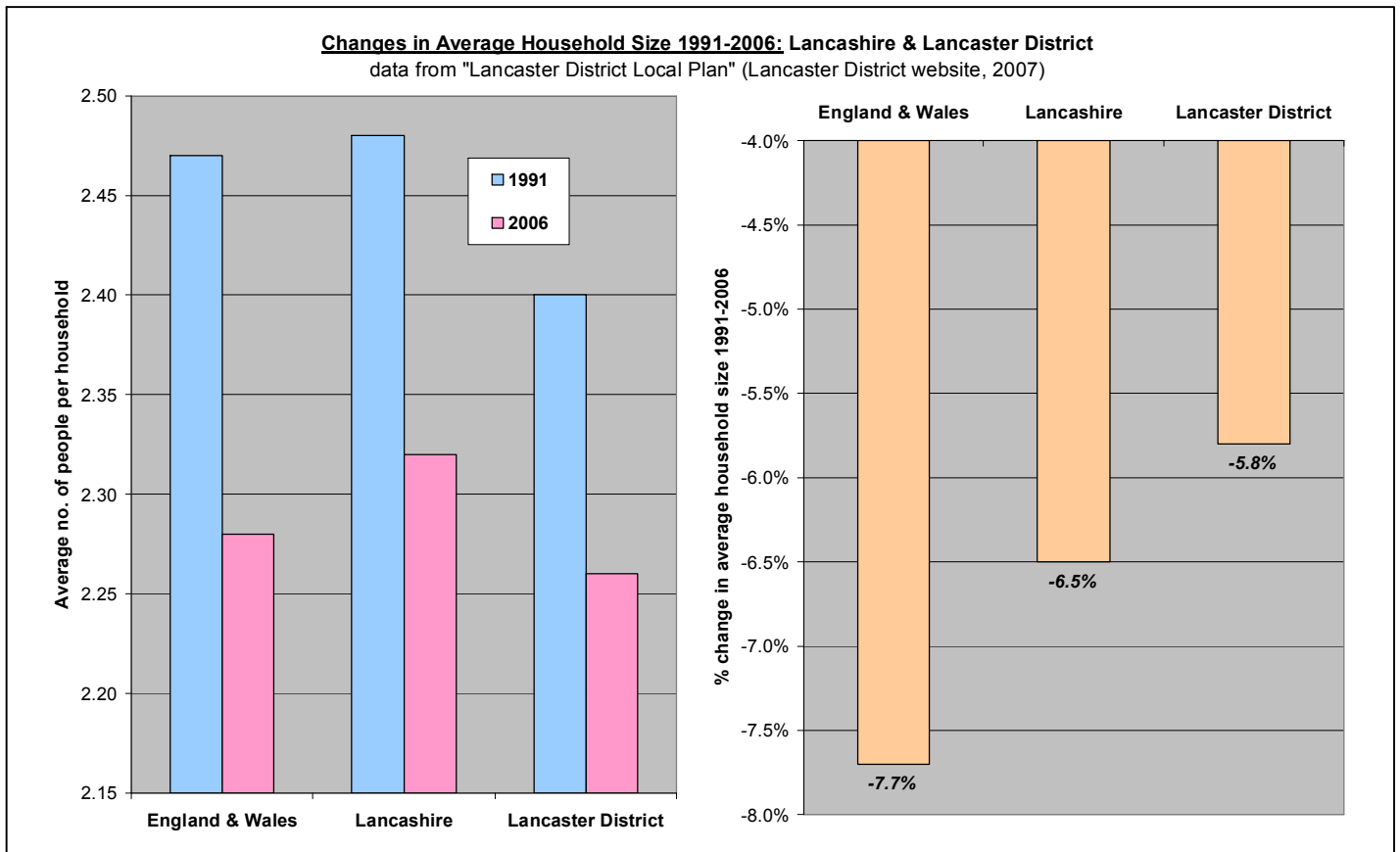
The first point to acknowledge is that household size has been steadily decreasing:



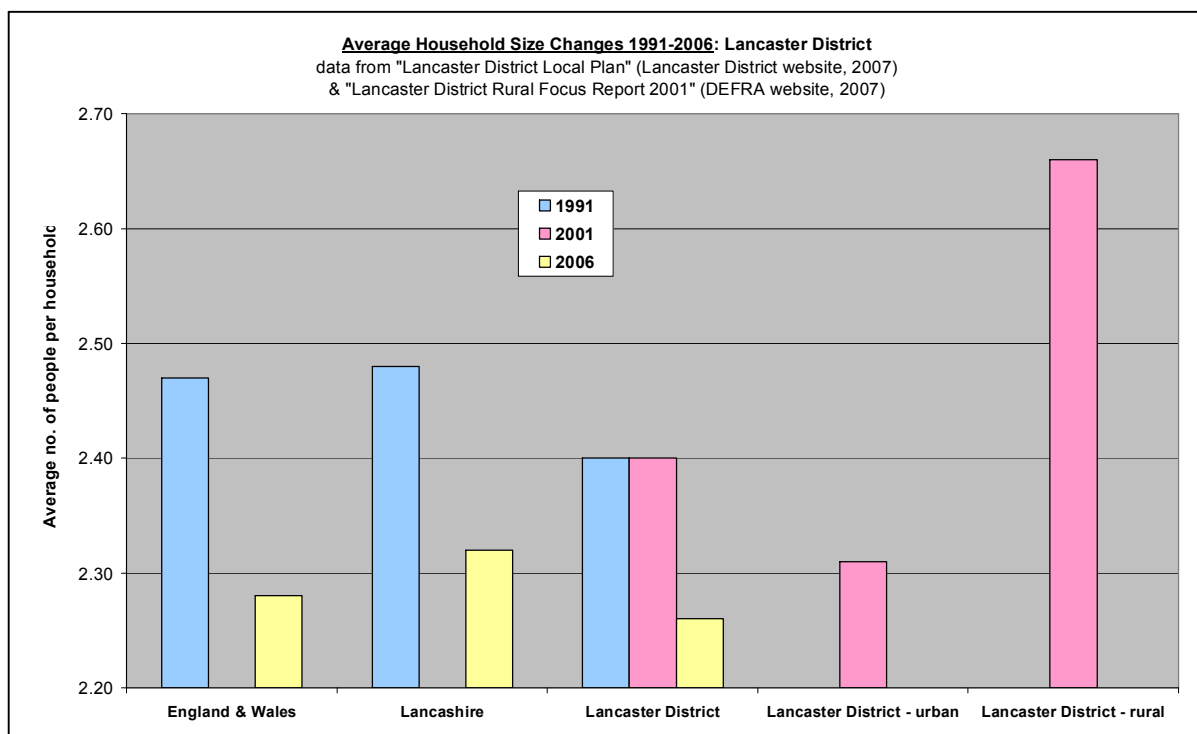
[CLICK HERE](#) -> for a larger image

The pattern in Great Britain, which England is likely to parallel although with slightly lower (but statistically insignificant) actual figures, is of a reduction in average household size of 25% over a 44-year period (1961-2005). Unfortunately, very little of the data from which to get a picture of *rura*/household size changes is available in the public domain. Only one example can be provided: comparing Lancaster District (a Significant Rural [SR] district in the NE region) & Lancashire County with England as a whole

[\[CLICK HERE -> for the Lancaster District "Rural Focus Report"\]](#)



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



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 for a larger image

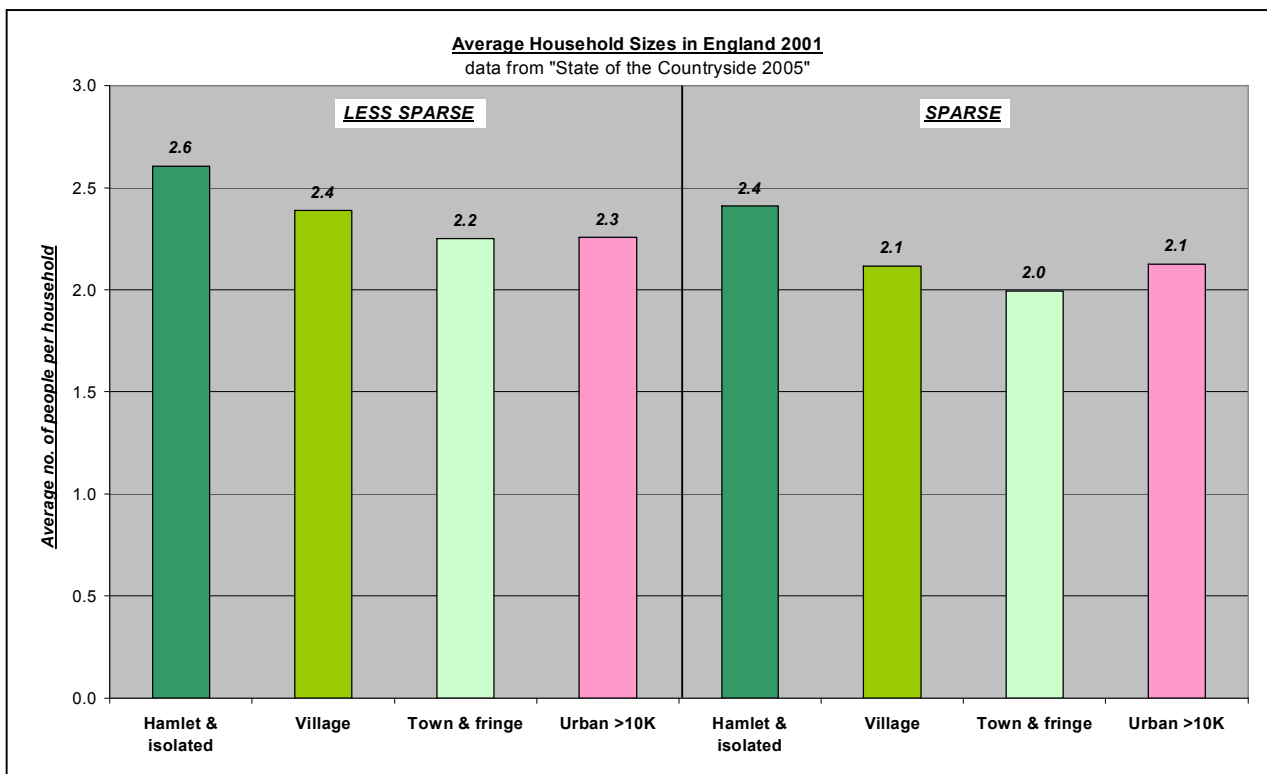
Despite being classified as "Significant Rural", Lancaster district actually only has an overall rural population of 28.7%. It is unlikely to be representative in any way of rural England as a whole. Over a 25 year period, the average household size of Lancaster district decreased by 5.8% - rather less than the decrease for either Lancashire County or England overall. In addition, figures for 2001 revealed that the average rural household size for Lancaster district (2.40) was 10% higher than the urban figure (2.66).

This leads on to comparison of actual rural & urban household figures that *are* available - figures for a single year, based on the 2001 Census.

SPARSITY	Area classification	No. of Households	Population	Average Persons per Household
Less sparse	Hamlet & isolated	529,981	1,379,415	2.6
	Village	1,377,375	3,286,515	2.4
	Town & fringe	1,881,043	4,230,769	2.2
	Urban >10K	17,522,999	39,528,861	2.3
Sparse	Hamlet & isolated	60,481	145,734	2.4
	Village	116,471	246,346	2.1
	Town & fringe	109,417	218,211	2.0
	Urban >10K	48,507	103,092	2.1

There are small overall differences between rural & urban household sizes. The 'bottom line' is that households in sparse areas are smaller than those in corresponding less sparse areas (12.5% at maximum). The biggest difference between rural & urban household size is

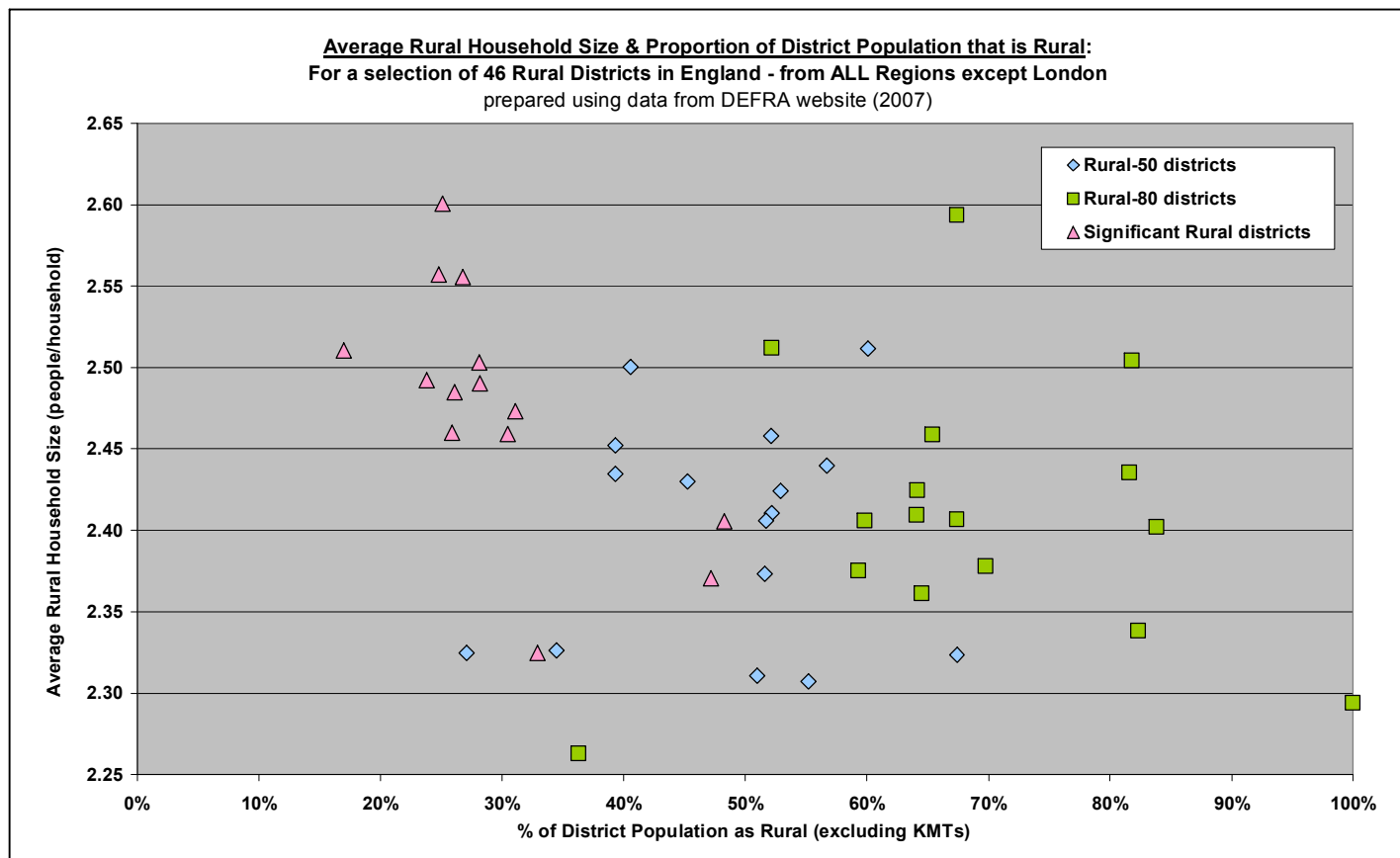
[CLICK HERE](#) -> for a larger table



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the same, at 12.5%, found for the most isolated & dispersed category of rural settlements. It is hard to say how significant this difference is ... but it is a real one. It probably represents the existence of a higher proportion of older people living in sparsely populated areas & dispersed settlements than in larger towns & urban areas - so bringing down the average number occupying each household.

A more informative & representative picture can be obtained by looking in more detail, i.e. at the household size figures for specific rural districts and assessing them on the basis of the actual rural population of the individual districts.



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

This survey has taken a selection of districts from each of the English regions (except London): 2 from each rural district category - Rural 80 (R80), Rural 50 (R50) and Significant Rural (SR). [[CLICK HERE](#) -> for a table explaining these categories] In each case the districts from each region chosen had (a) one of the *highest* rural populations, and (b) one of the *lowest* rural population. The one exception was for the NE region, which has no SR districts. This gives a total of 42 districts: 16 Rural 80, 16 Rural 50 & 14 Significant Rural.

[CLICK HERE](#) -> for a table of these districts

From the 'scatter plot' of the results for these 46 districts two conclusions can be drawn:

- Generally, the higher the rural population, the lower the average household size
- The higher the rural population, the broader the range of average household sizes

No conclusions can be drawn about the relative sizes of rural & urban households from this presentation. To do that, the same sample of rural districts has to be analysed in a different way; by comparing the average household sizes for the separate rural & urban populations of each district. Rather than comparing with the national 'average' figures for rural & urban household sizes, this method allows an estimate of the differences in occupancy at a level likely to be relevant for policy-making & planning. All the districts from each of the three rural categories are looked at together, to give an idea of any consistency across the whole country.

The results for the most rural category of district are given below:

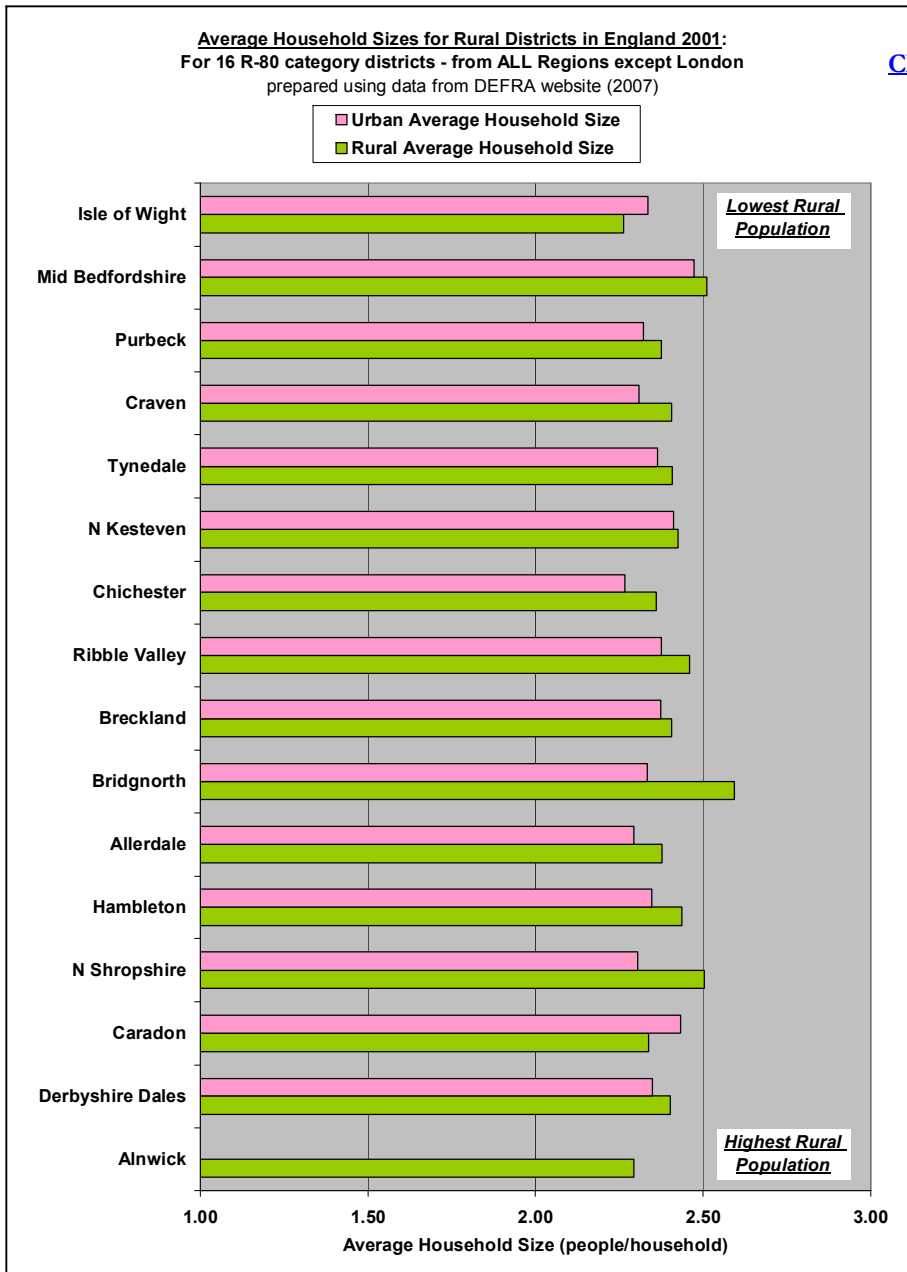
Average Household Sizes for Rural Districts in England 2001:
 For 16 R-80 category districts - from ALL Regions except London
 prepared using data from DEFRA website (2007)

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

It is immediately clear that with two exceptions (Caradon district in SW Region & Isle of Wight in SE Region) the average rural household size is larger than that of the urban counterpart. The differences vary between 0.5% and 11.1%, with the rural household size being on average 2.8% higher than for urban. (Alnwick district in NE Region cannot be included, as it has no urban population.) The same general results are found for the R50 & SR districts surveyed:

[CLICK HERE](#) -> for R50 chart
[CLICK HERE](#) -> for SR chart

In other words, rural households are generally larger than their urban counterparts within the same geographical area (district).

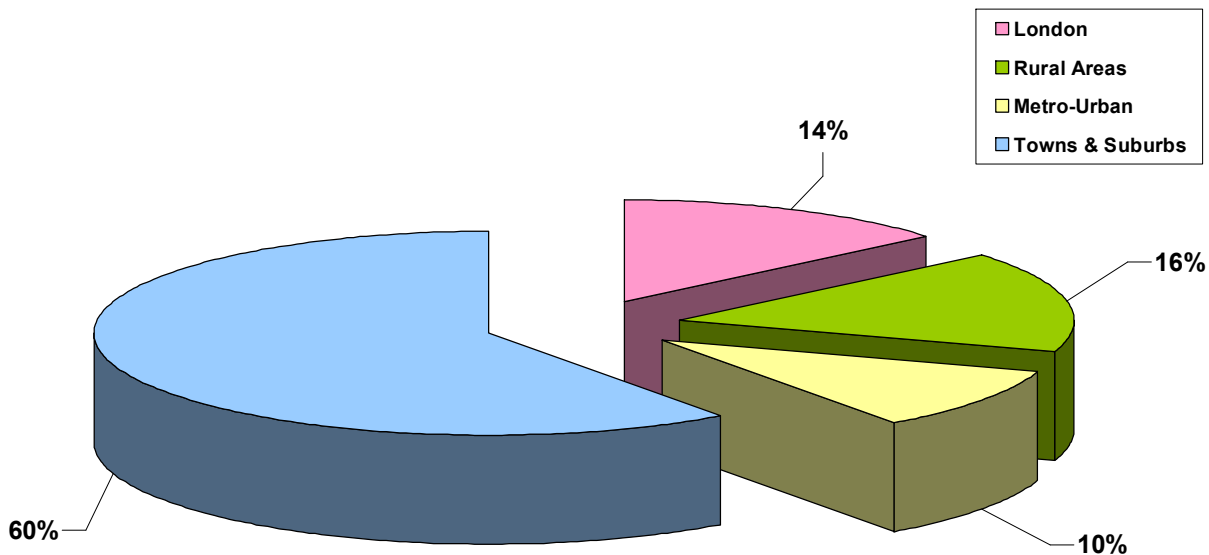


It is also possible to present the same information for rural/urban household sizes so as to provide comparisons within each region:

- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for East of England (EE) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for East Midlands (EM) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for North East (NE) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for North West (NW) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for South East (SE) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for South West (SW) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for West Midlands (WM) districts
- [CLICK HERE](#) -> for Yorkshire & Humber (YH) districts

Three regions - East of England, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humber - show rural household having consistently greater size than that urban households in the rural districts surveyed. One region - North East (which has no Significant Rural districts) shows the biggest range of, & the biggest variation between, district household sizes.

Distribution of Households in England 2004-05
prepared using data from ONS website (2007)



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

From the 2001 Census, we know that 19.4% of England's population is defined as rural, living in three different categories of rural settlement:

- Rural Towns - 9.0% of England's population (46.4% of the *rural* population)
- Rural Villages - 7.3% of England's population (37.6% of the *rural* population)
- Dispersed Rural - 3.1% of England's population (16.0% of the *rural* population)

[\[CLICK HERE\]](#) -> for a table detailing this information]

We would expect a similar distribution of households between urban & rural areas. But it is unfortunate that the available data, as presented in the chart above, is not accessible in the same categories settlement categories at present. "London" and "Metro-urban" are clearly urban categories, while the general category "Rural" speaks for itself. However, it is impossible to decide how much of the "Towns & Suburbs" category would represent settlements that - by the new government definitions of rurality - fall into a general "rural" location. All we can say is that at least 16% of households in England are rural! An educated guess might be that perhaps one-quarter of the "Towns & Suburbs" category represents settlements of less than 10,000 population (the "cut-off" point for the rural definition). If this were true, then 31% of England's households could be considered "rural" - substantially more than would be expected simply on the basis of the percentage of people living in rural areas.

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[CLICK HERE](#) -> to return to Unit 2.04:
"The 'Make Up' of - and Changes to - the Rural Population"

[CLICK HERE](#) -> to return to breakdown of Unit 2

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