



Reading Between the Lines

Data-Driven Perspectives on Rural and Urban Dynamics in the Northwest

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What do we risk misunderstanding about people & places when we put them into binary categories?



Lots of details.

Today's discussion on how more granular sampling can help tailor strategies to reach universal program goals.



COMMON DATA FRAMEWORKS

and the trade-offs between binary and multiple category classifications.

01



COMPARING RESULTS

from the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance's 2024 study of NW consumers.

02



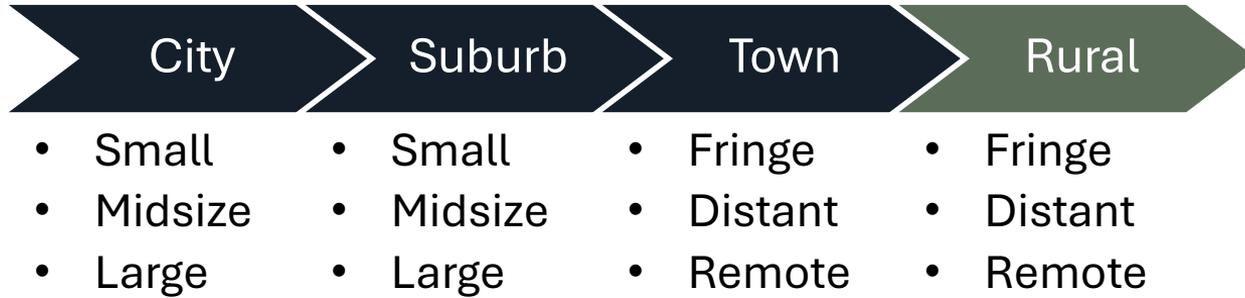
NEW IDEAS FOR PROGRAMS

to meet common goals but address local realities: lessons from targeted universalism.

03



National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Data Set: An Overview



Census UA Data Key

- Urban
- Rural

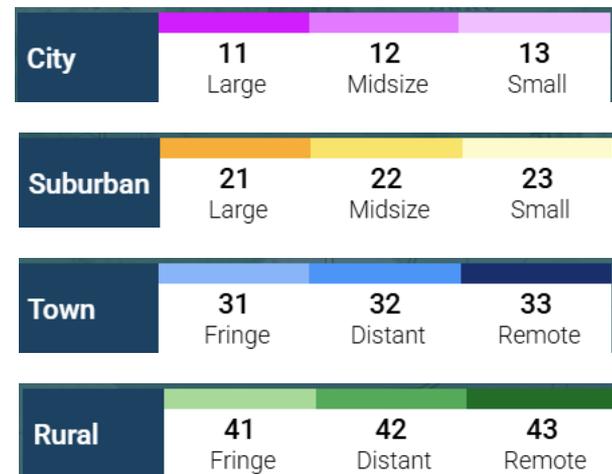
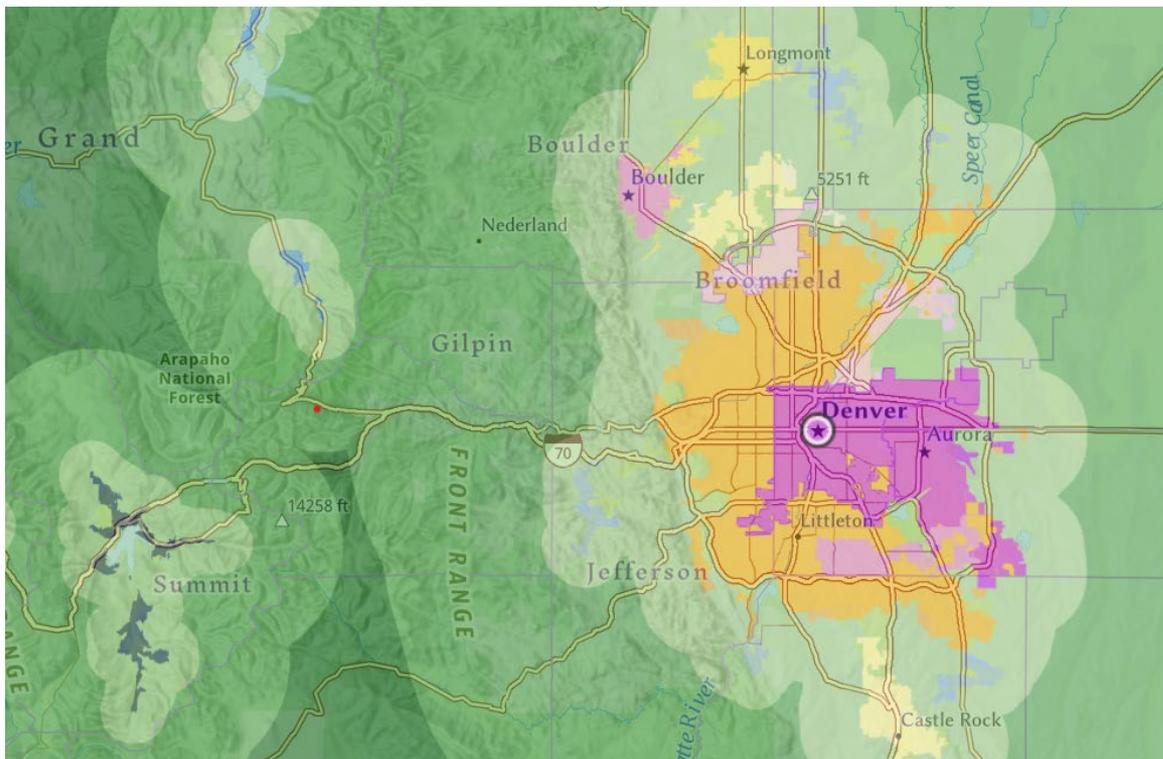
Strengths

- More granularity = more distinct market transformation characteristics and outcomes
- Uses widely accepted data set (Census Urban Areas (UA) + Office of Mgmt & Budget Principal Cities)

Weakness

- Available at Census Block, while most sources use Census Tract or County

NCES Locale Map of Denver Area

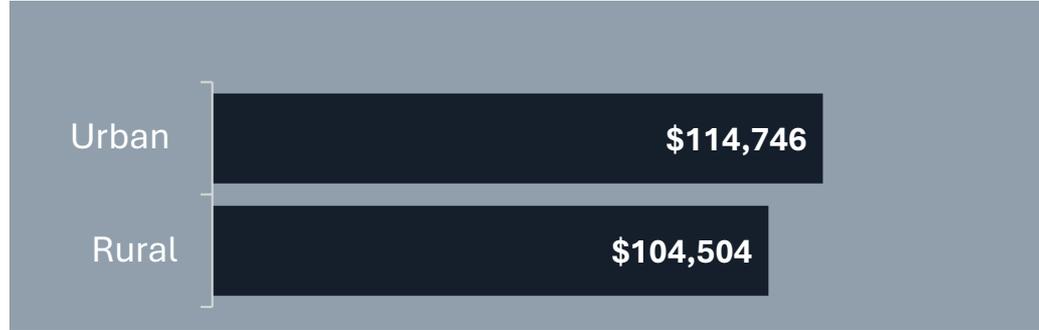


National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Lookup map
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/maped/LocaleLookup/>

When Analyzed Using **Census Urban Areas Data Set...**

Note: Data includes Idaho,
Montana, Oregon,
Washington

Mean Household (HH) Income



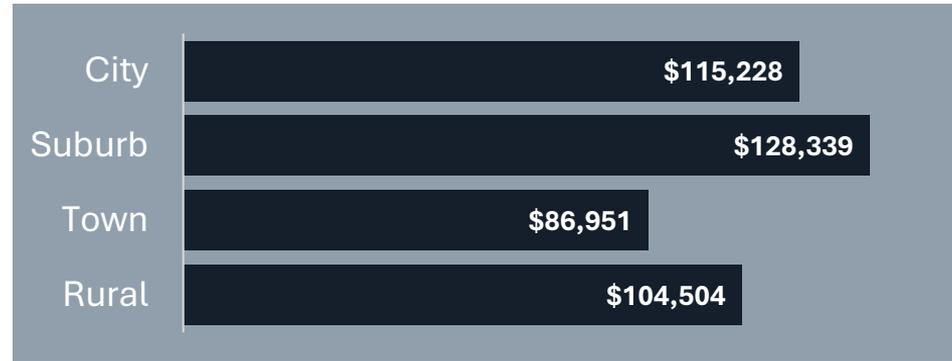
...urban mean household
income is **~10% higher** than
rural.



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Using **NCES**
Locales data,
results are
different.

Mean Household (HH) Income

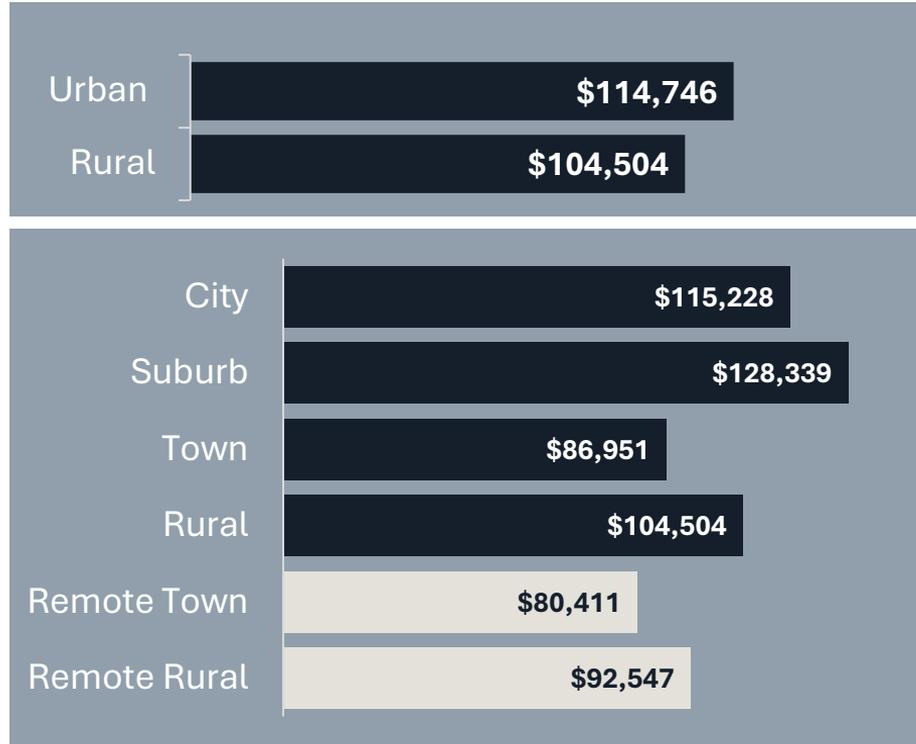


Urban relative to rural hh income stays about the same, but suburban is **50% higher** than town.



Differences are even more dramatic when we include remote locales.

Mean Household (HH) Income



Suburban hh income is **60% higher** than remote town.

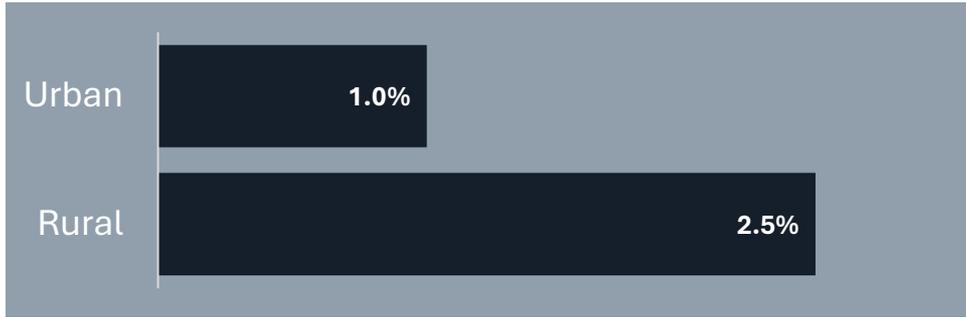


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When Analyzed Using **Census Urban Areas Data Set...**

Note: Data includes Idaho,
Montana, Oregon,
Washington

Percent American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)



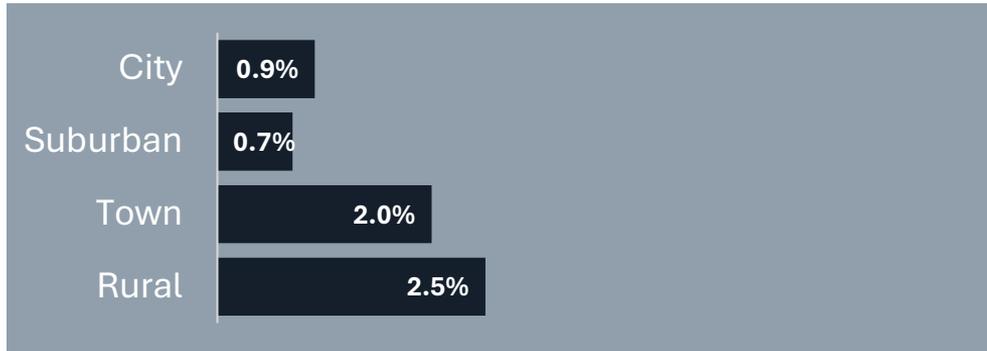
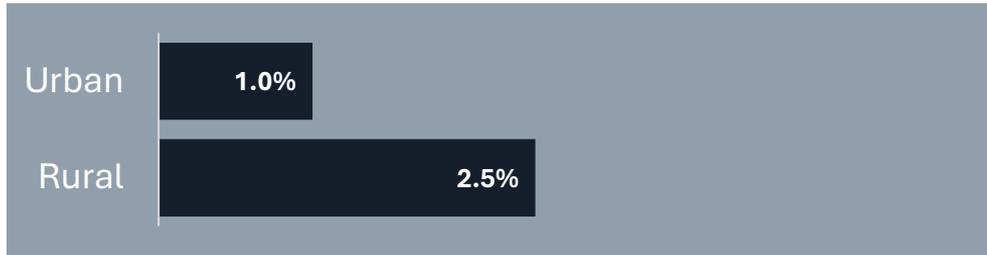
...rural areas have **~150% more people** who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native than urban.



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Using **NCES**
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Percent Population Identifying as AI/AN

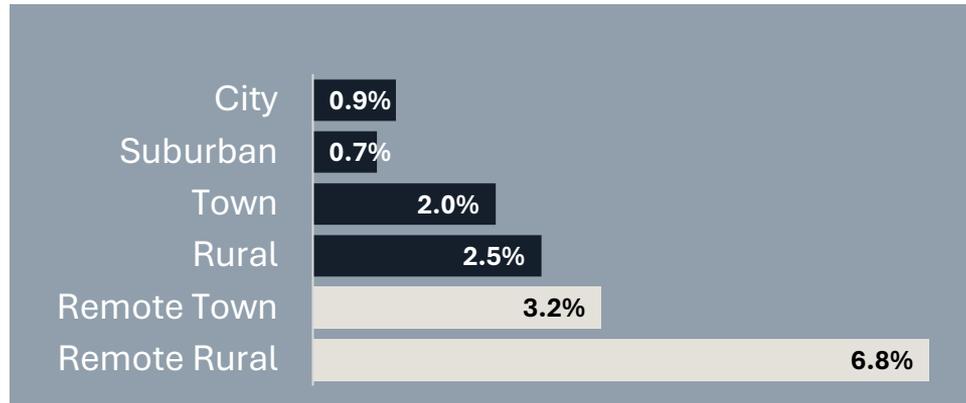
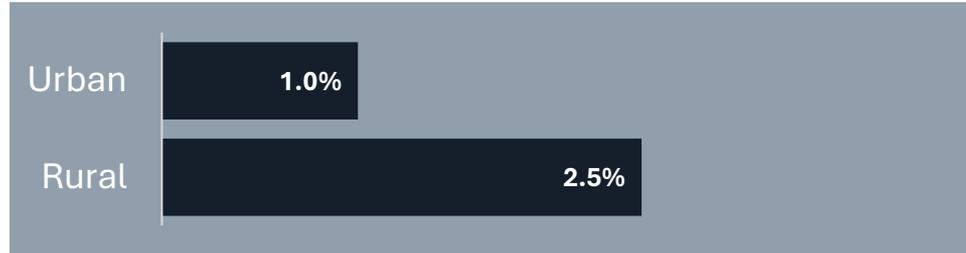


The use of NCES data shows a significant population of AI/AN in towns, **otherwise unseen.**



Differences are even more dramatic when we include remote locales.

Percent Population Identifying as AI/AN



A sizeable share of remote town and rural populations identify as AI/AN.



Targeted universalism sets **universal goals** (e.g., increased and accelerated energy efficiency adoption) while using **targeted strategies** tailored to the needs of specific groups and places (e.g., City, Suburban, Town, Rural).

Implications for Program Strategies

Tailored approaches
for each locale

Acknowledges local
barriers

More likely to meet
universal goal



Why it Matters

- Recognizes **structural, cultural, and geographic differences** across rural, town, suburban, and urban communities.
- Avoids one-size-fits-all solutions that may **delay or prohibit** progress toward universal goals.

The Approach

- Used a **granular classification framework** to better understand community-specific barriers.
- Ensured strategies were **locally adaptive** but aligned with **broader outcomes**.



Check out NEEA's Northwest Market Characterization Report on [neea.org](https://neea.org/resource/northwest-market-characterization-study/):
<https://neea.org/resource/northwest-market-characterization-study/>

Thank you!

