Proximity to services and amenities in Rural and Small Town Canada (ProximityRST) database, 2023

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Even with the widespread digitalization of our society, physical proximity to services and amenities remains a major determinant of community sustainability and people's quality of life. Some examples of such services and amenities are education, healthcare, libraries and parks. In recent years, Statistics Canada has carried out work to develop such measures of proximity, leading to the release of the first nationwide Proximity Measures Database (PMD) in 2020, followed by a new version in June 2023.

Today, Statistics Canada is launching a new database on Proximity to service and amenities in Rural and Small Town Canada (ProximityRST). This database builds on the conceptual framework developed for the PMD, while extending "proximity" beyond walkability to accommodate the driving distances that residents of rural communities typically experience when accessing services and amenities. Rural and small town refers to areas in towns or municipalities outside the commuting zone of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations.

This database includes nine measures of access to services and amenities as well as an aggregate measure that combines the individual measures.

Note to readers

The Proximity to service and amenities in Rural and Small Town Canada (ProximityRST) database includes nine measures of access to services and amenities as well as an aggregate measure that combines the individual measures. The ProximityRST measures are computed at the dissemination-block (DB) level, providing sub-municipal granularity. To augment their analytical potential, the measures are also provided at the municipal level.

Proximity measures are based on a gravity model that accounts for the distance between a reference DB and all the DBs in which the service is located (within a given distance) and the size of the services. The measure also accounts for the presence of services within the DB of reference.
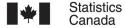
Note that, although the rural proximity measures include only DBs located outside of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations (CMAs/CAs), services located in CMAs/CAs are still included when they are within the driving distance used in the specification of each measure.

Three key methodological changes have been made to this adaptation of the earlier Proximity Measures Database (PMD) to rural areas:

- access to services and amenities has been defined in terms of short driving distances, as opposed to walking distances;

- distances used for determining proximity have been extended from a range of 1.5 km to 10 km in the PMD to a set range of 15 km;

- as service availability tends to be highest in urban areas, therefore minimizing the range of rural variation, the ProximityRST measures are computed only for DBs outside CMAs/CAs.

The data sources used for the ProximityRST are a combination of open data sources and Statistics Canada data holdings. Based on the most recent data available, the data used include 2021 Census geographies, the 2021 OpenStreetMap road network, an update of all input data sets for amenities such as the Business Register, and data from authoritative open data providers.

The product "Rural Data Viewer," part of *Statistics Canada - Data Visualization Products* (**71-607-X**), is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; **infostats@statcan.gc.ca**) or Media Relations (**statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca**).