

# THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RURAL CRIME

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# Introduction

*Alistair Harkness, Jessica René Peterson, Matt Bowden,  
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'Rural', most crudely, is defined as 'non-urban', but this dichotomous delineation is grossly inadequate because it neglects the consideration of the nuances of geography, demography, attitudes, culture and issues of access both tangible and amorphous. These are vitally important considerations: there exists significant cultural and spatial separation between urban and rural because what is taken for granted in the city is not accessible or available outside of it.

There exists, most certainly, definitional difficulties about rural that will never go away. Should we just consider physical and demographic measures, such as population size and density, accessibility and remoteness? Such imprecision is typified by the existing definitions even within the same jurisdictions by different organizations and agencies of the same governmental units. Adopting a 'one size fits all' approach is unwise, though, as a universal measure will not account for the non-homogenous nature of geographic location, both within and across jurisdictions.

For instance, a coastal location in Australia dominated with former city dwellers cannot be easily compared to a rapidly populated boom town in Canada reliant on imported labour, to a primarily agricultural community in Ireland with multiple generations of the same families present, to the Yanomamo and Kayapo and other tribes in the rain forest regions of South America, nor to a remote settlement in the Siberian region of Russia or in the state of Alaska in the United States. Indeed, different places have different cultural origins – as scholars such as Hayden, Weisheit et al, Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, Ceccato, Harkness (see suggested readings) and many other scholars already have observed. Hence, the rural can also be considered a state of mind as much as a particular place found on a map. There is just no way to define all the diversity of rural localities with a single word, sentence, paragraph and, perhaps, even in a single book.