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## Geographic Locations Survey of Clinical Psychologists in Canada

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### **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS SURVEY OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN CANADA**

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## Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine the number of psychologists currently providing services in rural Canada. A secondary goal was to compare this distribution with that of psychiatrists in rural settings.

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### Definitions of "Urban" and "Rural":

The Statistics Canada definitions of urban and rural were used in this study (Bollman, 1996). Urban Canada refers to the population living within Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census Agglomerations (CAs). A CMA is a very large urban area, known as the urban core, together with adjacent urban and rural areas. CMAs have urban core populations greater than 100,000 and include all neighboring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the work force commutes into the urban core. A CA is a large urban area, known as the urban core, together with adjacent urban and rural areas having a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core. CAs have urban core populations of between 10,000 and 100,000 and include all neighboring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the work force commutes into the urban core.

Rural and small town (RST) Canada refers to the population living outside commuting zones of larger urban centres, specifically, outside CMAs and CAs. Thus, RST Canada represents the non-CMA and non-CA population. Everything outside of urban areas are considered rural (Bollman, 1996).

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### Method:

Using these definitions, data from the most recently available provincial and territorial lists of registered psychologists were tabulated. These data were then compared with that of psychiatrists in urban and rural settings. The psychiatric data was obtained from the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

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## Results:

Results are presented in [tables 1 to 3](#). (Note that in some cases the numbers do not tally, e.g., there are 79 psychologists in Newfoundland, but the tables list 60 as urban and 16 as rural. This is because the location of some psychologists was not included in the list published by the regulatory body.)

[Table 1](#) shows the province/territory (P/T) total populations, number of psychologists and psychiatrists, and ratios of P/T citizens to the two professions. (Note that the Northwest Territories and Yukon data are combined in the table). [Tables 2](#) and [3](#) represent the same data by P/T for urban and rural populations, respectively.

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## Summary:

Overall, the data shows that there are more psychologists than psychiatrists practising in rural areas of Canada. Prince Edward Island and Quebec, in particular, have ratios of 7,667 and 4,030, respectively. In contrast, Saskatchewan, with its single rural psychologist, has an extremely high ratio (1 psychologist for the entire rural population of 428,565 persons). For the remaining provinces and territories, the average ratio is 17,974. This is substantially lower than the ratio of individuals to psychiatrists. In the combined territories and Prince Edward Island, no psychiatrists are reported serving in rural settings.

For rural Newfoundland, Quebec, and Alberta, the ratio of psychologists to psychiatrists is roughly 15 to 1 (14.67) (see [Table 4](#)). For rural Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, and the territories, the ratio is approximately 5 to 1 (5.5). For rural Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, the ratio is about 2 to 1 (1.75).

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## REANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Some authors (e.g., Bollman, 1996) point out the inadequacy of the Statistics Canada definitions. As mentioned above, CAs have urban core populations of between 10,000 and 100,000 and include all neighboring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the work force commutes into the urban core. Can the definition of RST be expanded to include small, relatively isolated communities that fall within Statistics Canada's definition of CA?

At the lower extreme, there are many locations in Canada where the "urban" core population is in the 10,000 to 25,000 range, and, although people commute from

neighboring areas to work in the core, the actual number, as opposed to the proportion, is quite small. One example is North Battleford, Saskatchewan, which has a population of 14,051, and is virtually isolated. The town is 133 kilometers from Saskatoon, and there are only nine small villages within a 50 kilometer radius. Though considered a CA by Statistics Canada, it is reasonable for the purposes of this study to classify it as rural. Pembroke, Ontario, with a population of 14,177, is another example. Pembroke is 150 kilometers from Ottawa, and has three small towns and a small number of villages within a 50 kilometer radius. Powell River, BC, is another small, relatively isolated community that is perhaps better classified as rural. More obvious examples are Whitehorse, YT (population of 19,157, with 1,908 in surrounding environs), and Yellowknife, NT (population 17,275).

In light of these examples, which represent a subset of small Canadian communities, it seems quite reasonable to expand the original definition of RST Canada. For the purposes of this reanalysis, then, a small city, town, or village was considered rural if the population is less than 25,000 individuals *and* if it is more than 50 kilometers away from a CMA or large CA (population greater than 25,000 and/or within 50 kilometers of a CMA). This is the "Revised Definition".

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### **Results:**

The re-tabulated data based on the Revised Definition are shown in [Table 5](#).

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### **Summary:**

Though this reanalysis precludes comparison with psychiatrists, it does present a more accurate picture of the distribution of registered psychologists in rural Canada. The number of psychologists serving rural areas roughly doubles in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia. In the combined territories the number increases by a factor of 3.5, clearly a truer representation of psychologists serving in these areas. Small to moderate increases are seen in Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, and Alberta. The ratio of persons to psychologists remains high in Saskatchewan. These ratios decrease by about 30 percent in Quebec and Ontario.

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**Table 1:**

Provincial and Territorial Total (Urban and Rural) Populations, Total Number of Psychologists and Psychiatrists, and Ratio of Population to Health Professional

		Psychologists		Psychiatrists	
	Population	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
NF	551,792	79	6,985	38	14,521
PE	134,557	16	8,410	6	22,426
NS	909,282	196	4,639	110	8,266
NB	738,133	177	4,170	32	23,067
QC	7,138,795	6,184	1,154	934	7,643
ON	10,753,573	2,005	5,363	1,641	6,553
MB	1,113,898	206	5,407	125	8,911
SK	990,237	70	14,146	38	26,059
AB	2,696,826	1,417	1,903	226	11,933
BC	3,724,500	822	4,531	483	7,711
NT/YK	95,168	14	6,798	2	47,584
CANADA	28,846,761	11,186	2,579	3,635	7,936

**Table 2:**

Provincial and Territorial Urban Populations, Number of Psychologists and Psychiatrists in Urban Settings, and Ratio of Urban Population to Health Professional

		Psychologists		Psychiatrists	
	Population	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
NF	244,868	60	4,081	37	6,618
PE	73,225	8	9,153	6	12,204
NS	557,614	170	3,280	98	5,690
NB	380,149	146	2,604	28	13,577
QC	5,543,060	5,555	998	905	6,125
ON	9,157,435	1,895	4,832	1,620	5,563
MB	742,560	193	3,848	117	6,347
SK	561,672	66	8,510	37	15,180
AB	2,002,352	1,355	1,478	222	9,020
BC	3,147,837	772	4,078	468	6,726
NT/YK	39,083	10	3,908	2	19,542
CANADA	22,449,855	10,230	2,195	3,540	6,342

**Table 3:**

Provincial and Territorial Rural Populations, Number of Psychologists and Psychiatrists in Rural Settings, and Ratio of Rural Population to Health Professional

		Psychologists		Psychiatrists	
	Population	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
NF	306,924	16	19,183	1	306,924
PE	61,332	8	7,667	0	-----
NS	351,668	25	14,067	12	29,306
NB	357,984	23	15,565	4	89,496
QC	1,595,735	396	4,030	29	55,025
ON	1,596,138	93	17,163	21	76,007
MB	371,338	13	28,565	8	46,417
SK	428,565	1	428,565	1	428,565
AB	694,474	62	11,201	4	173,619
BC	576,663	24	24,028	15	38,444
NT/YK	56,085	4	14,021	0	-----
CANADA	6,396,906	665	9,619	95	67,336

**Table 4:**  
Ratio of Psychologists to Psychiatrists in Rural Settings

	Psychologists	Psychiatrists	Ratio
NF	16	1	16.0
PE	8	0	-----
NS	25	12	2.1
NB	23	4	5.8
QC	396	29	13.7
ON	93	21	4.4
MB	13	8	1.6
SK	1	1	1.0
AB	62	4	15.5
BC	24	15	1.6
NT/YK	4	0	-----
CANADA	665	95	7.0



**Table 5:**

Distribution and Ratio of Rural Populations to Psychologists, Statistics Canada and Revised Definitions

	Population	Statistics Canada		Revised Def'n	
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
NF	306,924	16	19,183	34	9,027
PE	61,332	8	7,667	9	6,815
NS	351,668	25	14,067	43	8,178
NB	357,984	23	15,565	50	7,160
QC	1,595,735	396	4,030	512	3,117
ON	1,596,138	93	17,163	129	12,373
MB	371,338	13	28,565	14	26,524
SK	428,565	1	428,565	2	214,283
AB	694,474	62	11,201	70	9,921
BC	576,663	24	24,028	58	9,943
NT/YK	56,085	4	14,021	14	4,006
<b>CANADA</b>	6,396,906	665	9,619	935	6,842

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**Sources and References:**

Bollman, R. D. (1996). *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 1  
 Statistics Canada.

Population Data from *Statistics Canada*, "Statistical Profile of Canadian Communities".

Geographic Location Data from *Microsoft Encarta*.