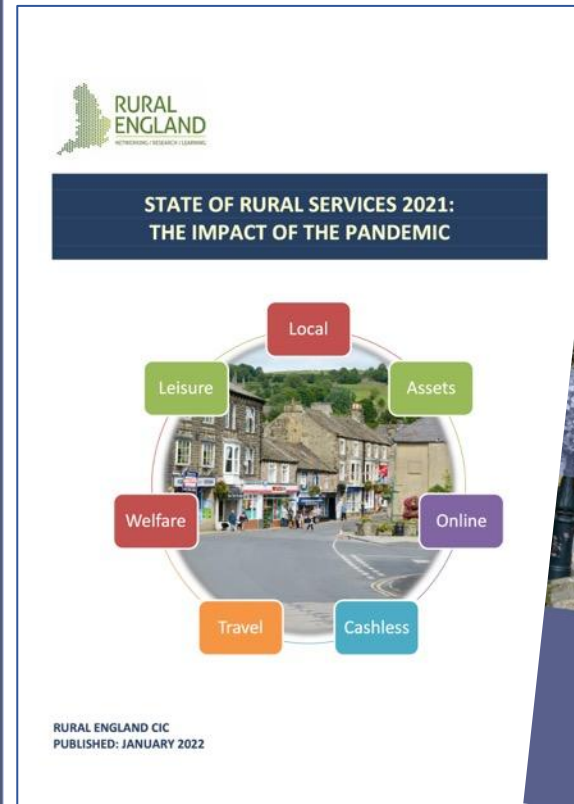


State of Rural Services Report 2025

Professor Martin Phillips



State of Rural Services Report 2025



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Economic Services

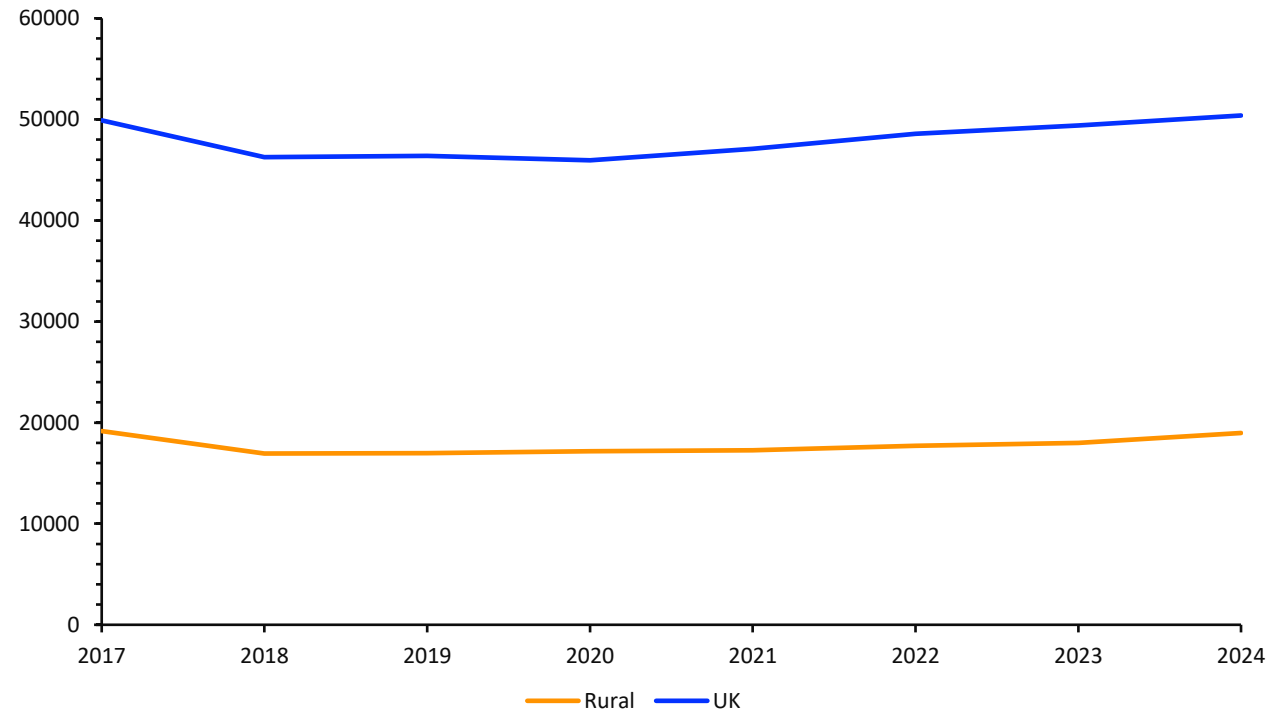


- 49% of rural convenience stores are lone retail outlets in area (Association of Convenience Stores, 2025)



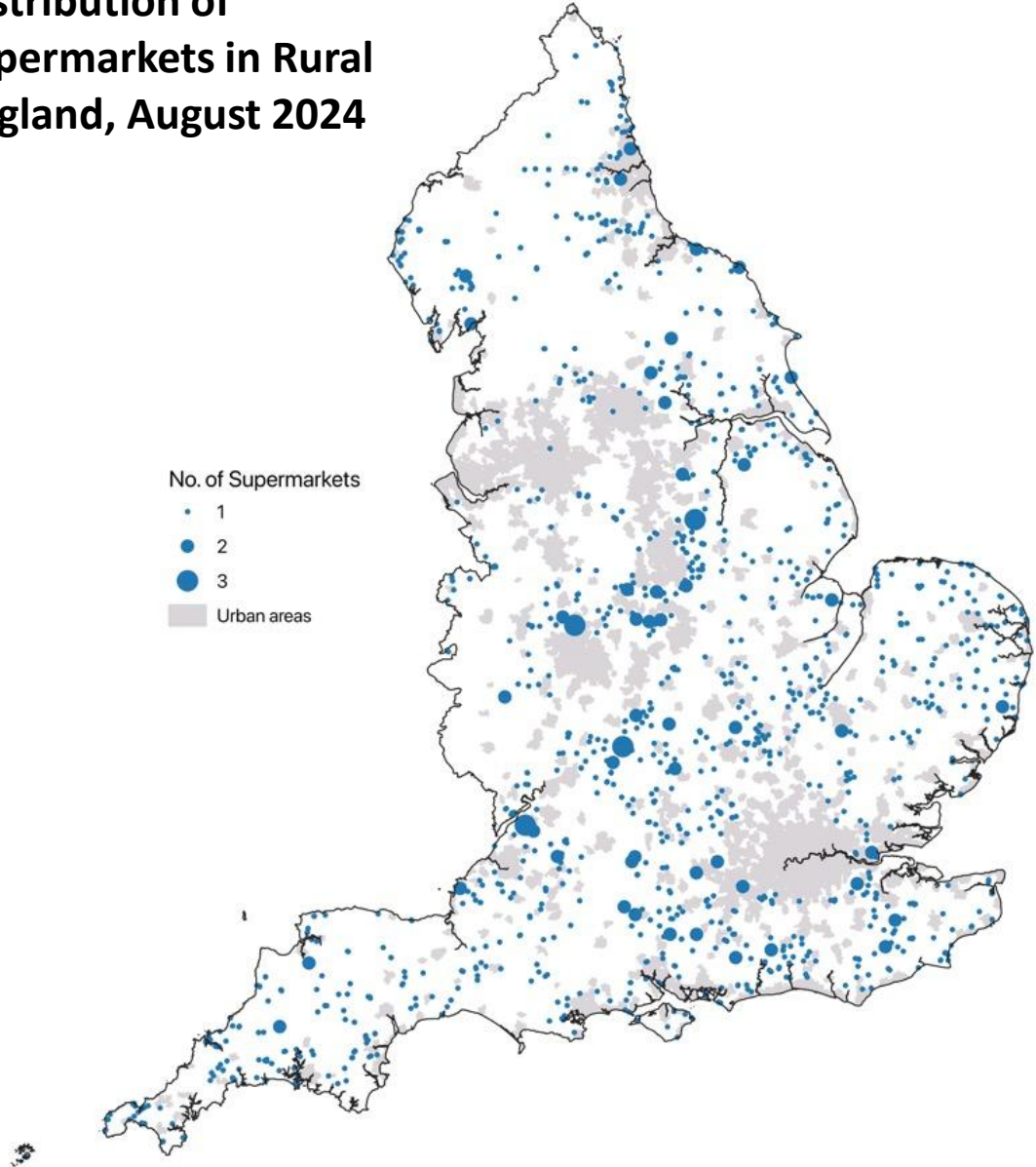
- “increasingly act as miniature highstreets” (Association of Convenience Stores, 2025, p. 1)

Number of Convenience Stores in the UK and Rural Areas of the UK, 2017-2023



Distribution of
supermarkets in Rural
England, August 2024

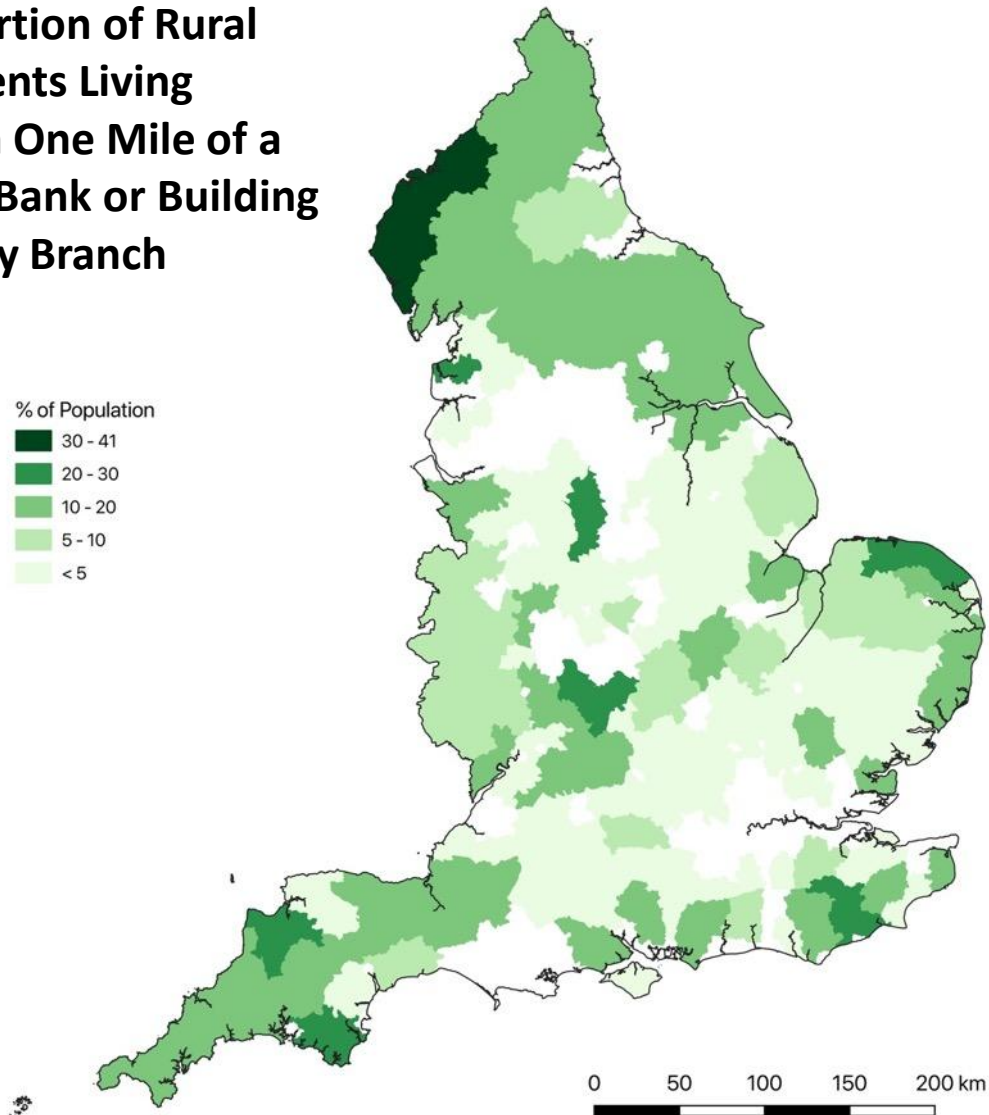
Economic Services



Rural Urban Character	No.	%	Co-op	Tesco	Morrisons	Spar
Major Conurbation	1333	19.9	195	272	103	43
Minor Conurbation	84	1.3	22	8	9	5
City & Town	3786	56.5	726	610	434	273
City & Town in Sparse Setting	42	0.6	6	3	6	8
Town & Fringe	941	14.1	403	114	77	143
Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting	107	1.6	39	9	7	19
Village	220	3.3	36	7	18	75
Village in Sparse setting	29	0.4	12			14

Economic Services

Proportion of Rural Residents Living within One Mile of a Large Bank or Building Society Branch



- 645 and 410 bank branch closures in UK between 2023 and 2024, and 4,057 between 2018 and 2024 (Wilson 2022)
- Cash now only accounts for 12% of all payments in the UK compared to 28% in 2018 (UK Finance 2024)

Educational, Welfare and Cultural Services

BBC NEWS

Protest over potential village school closure



Parents are protesting the proposed closure of Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School

Sabah Choudhry

South of England

A protest has taken place over an authority's plan to close a small village school.

Hampshire County Council wants to shut Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School near Andover, Hampshire, which has two classes and 24 children on its register.

Source: BBC (2025) Local News, Hampshire and Isle of Wight 21 October 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8xydxnj60>



Rural families across Great Britain are facing a deepening crisis in childcare, according to the latest findings from the **2024 Childcare Survey** conducted by **Coram Family and Childcare**. As costs escalate and availability plummets, the need for targeted, effective solutions has never been more urgent.

Source: Rural Services Network (2025) A closer look at the 2024 Childcare Survey <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/a-closer-look-at-the-2024-childcare-survey>



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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurstud



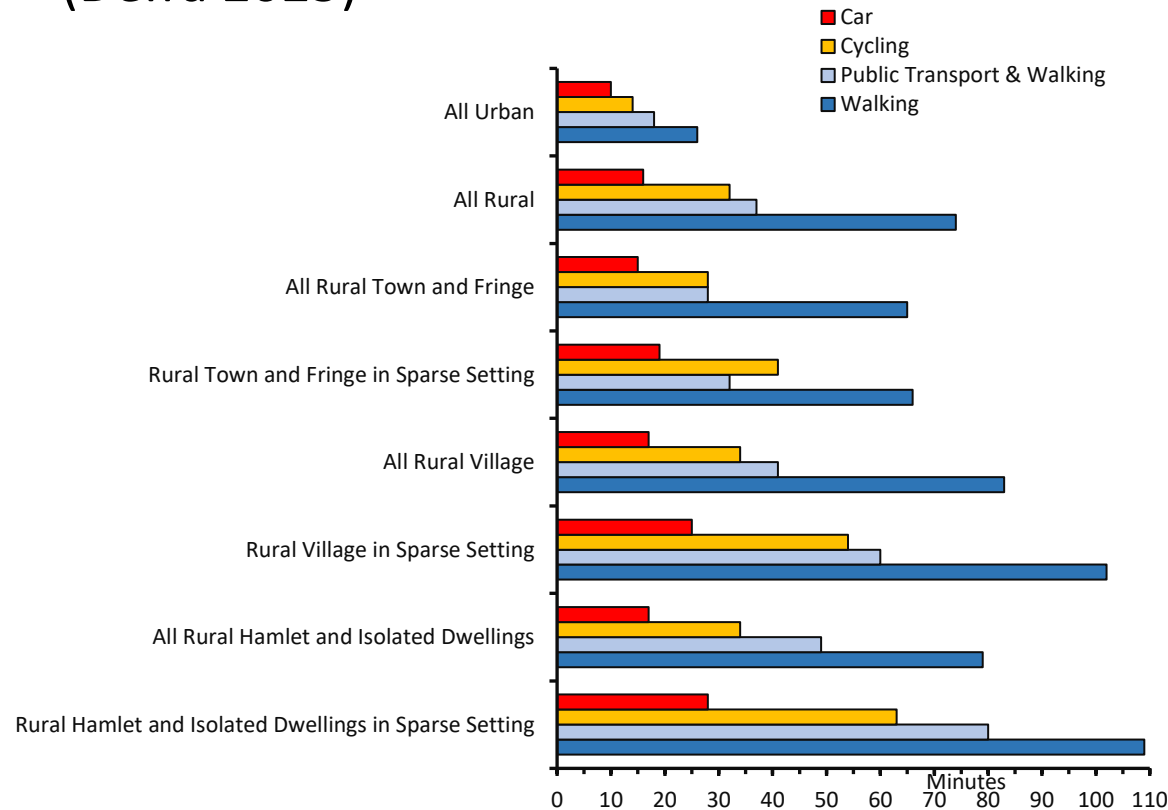
Still bleeding: The variegated geographies of austerity and food banking in rural England and Wales

Jon May^{a,*}, Andrew Williams^b, Paul Cloke^c, Liev Cherry^a

Source: BBC (2025) Local News, Hampshire and Isle of Wight 21 October 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8xydxnj60>

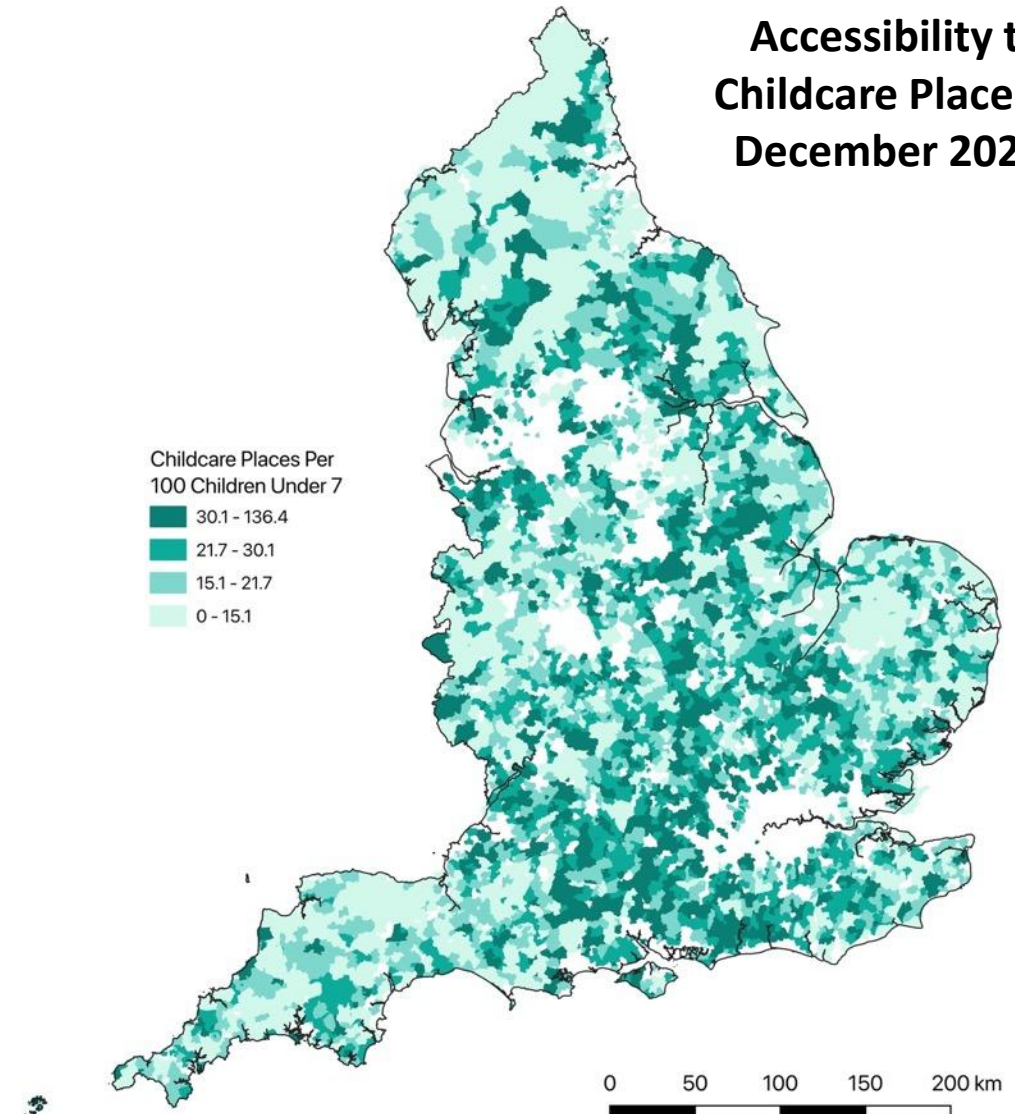
Educational, Welfare and Cultural Services

- Just over 5,800 schools in Predominantly Rural constituencies in 2024, a decline of 42 from 2015 (Defra 2025)



Average Minimum Time to Reach a Further Education Institution, Rural and Urban Areas, 2019

**Accessibility to
Childcare Places,
December 2023**

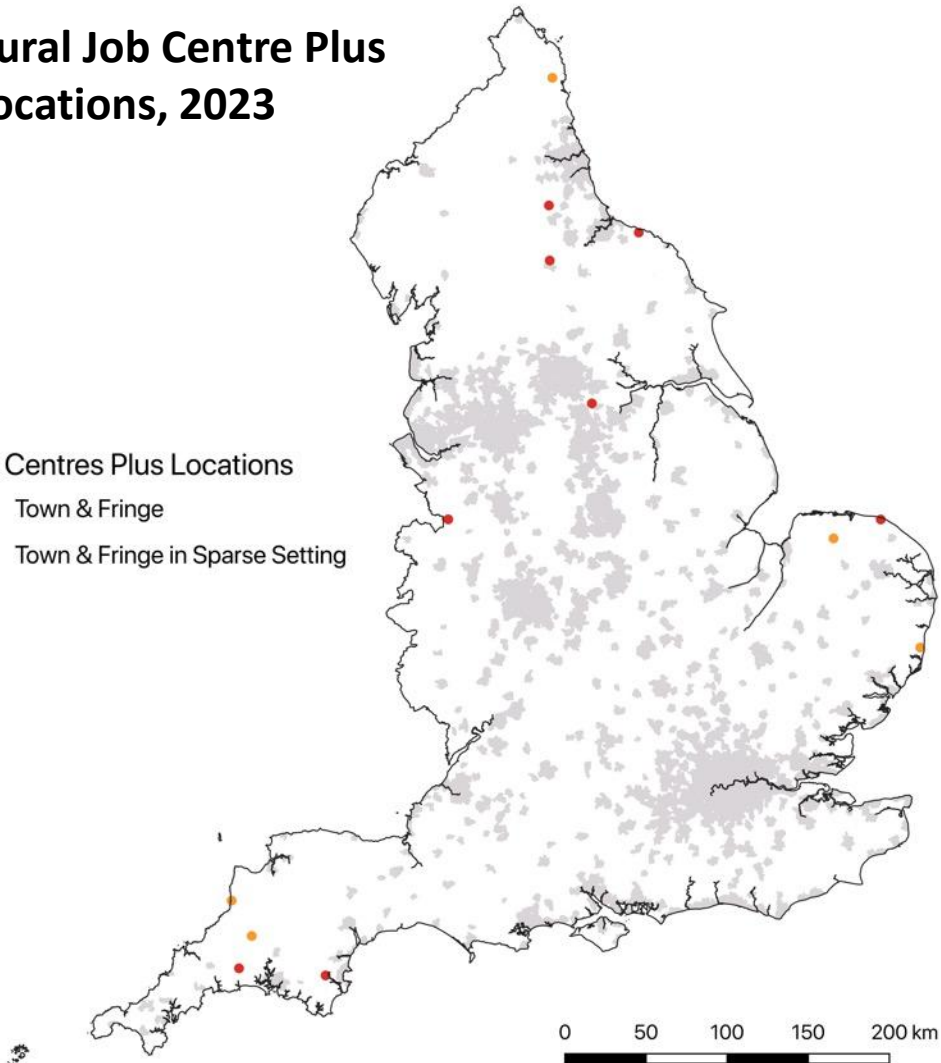


Educational, Welfare and Cultural Services

**Rural Job Centre Plus
Locations, 2023**

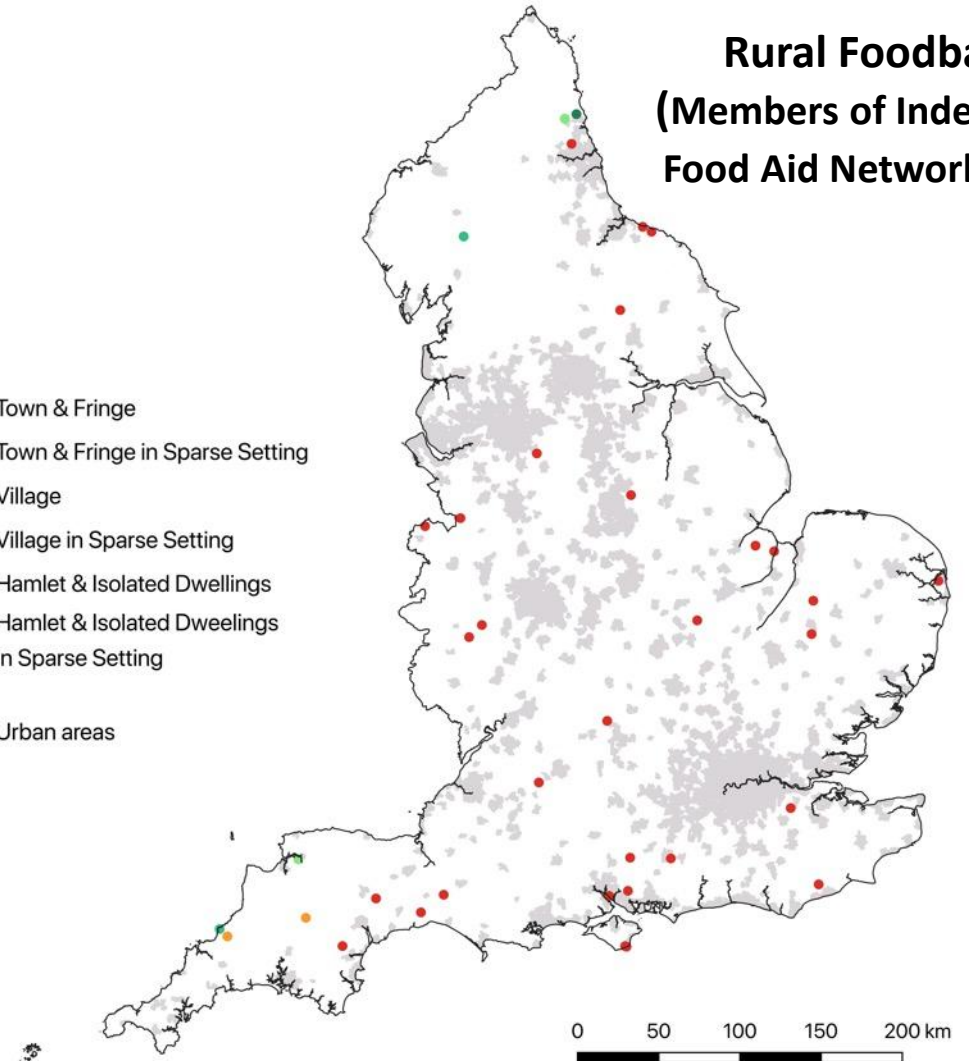
Job Centres Plus Locations

- Town & Fringe
- Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting



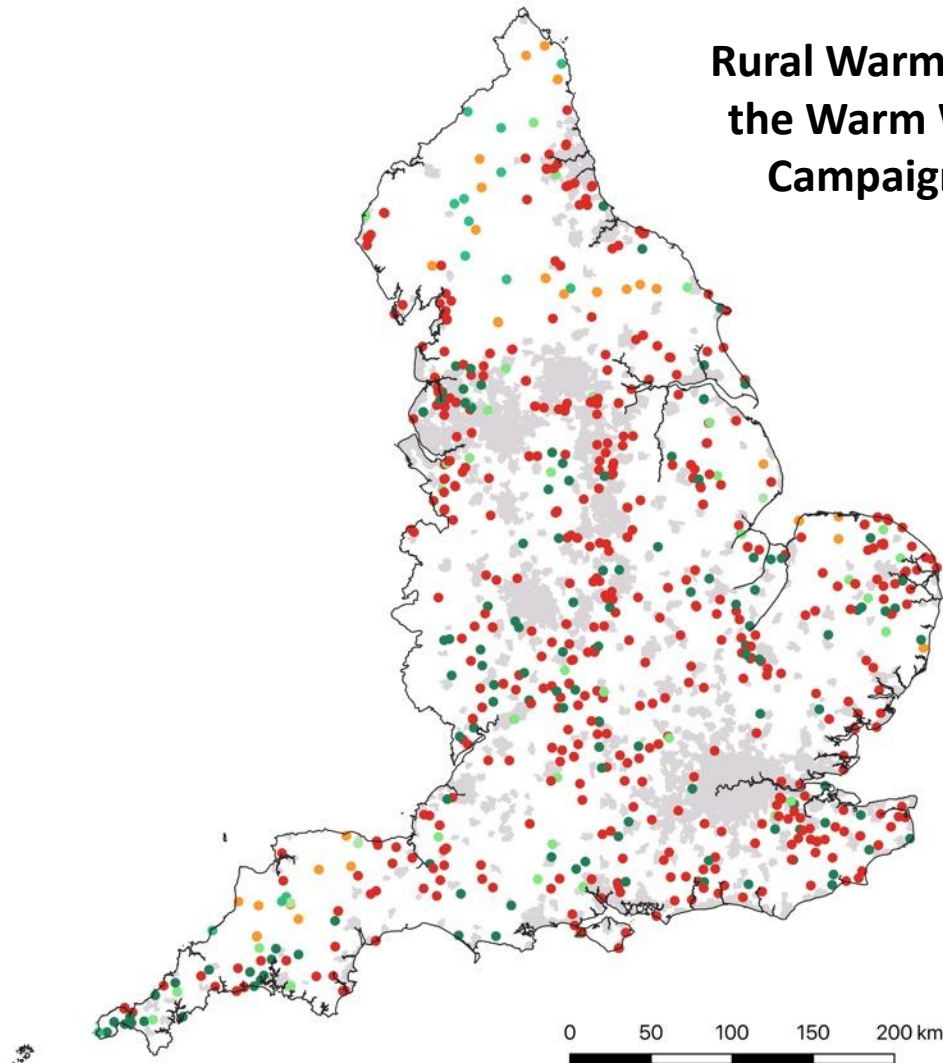
**Rural Foodbanks
(Members of Independent
Food Aid Network), 2024**

- Town & Fringe
- Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting
- Village
- Village in Sparse Setting
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings
In Sparse Setting
- Urban areas

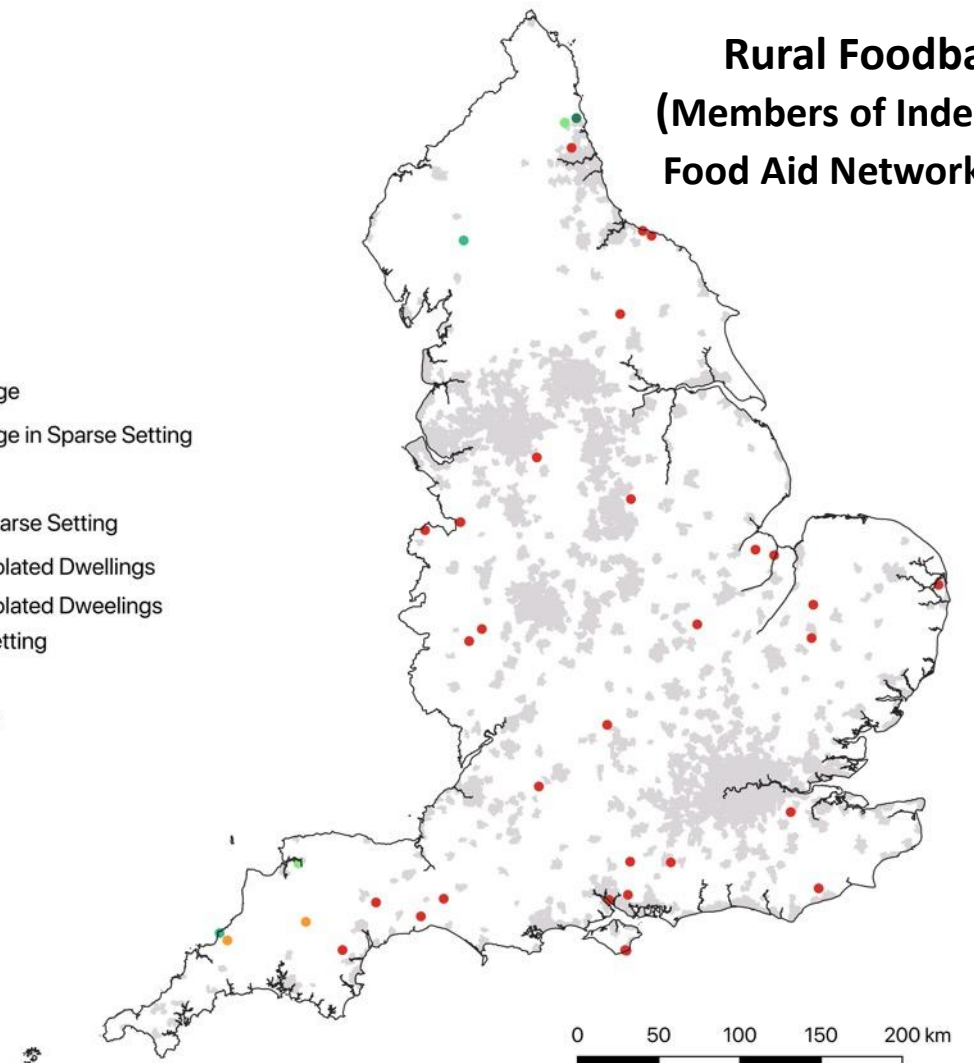


Educational, Welfare and Cultural Services

**Rural Warm Spaces in
the Warm Welcome
Campaign, 2024**



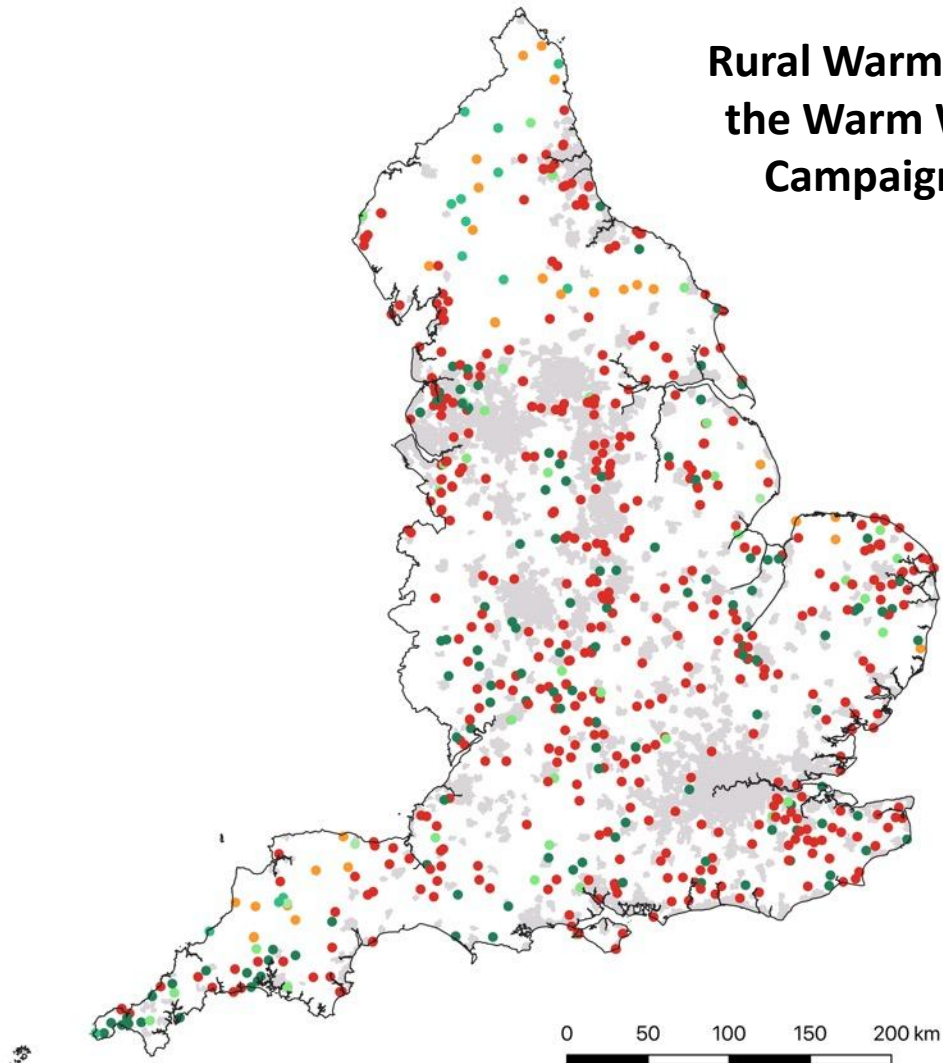
**Rural Foodbanks
(Members of Independent
Food Aid Network), 2024**



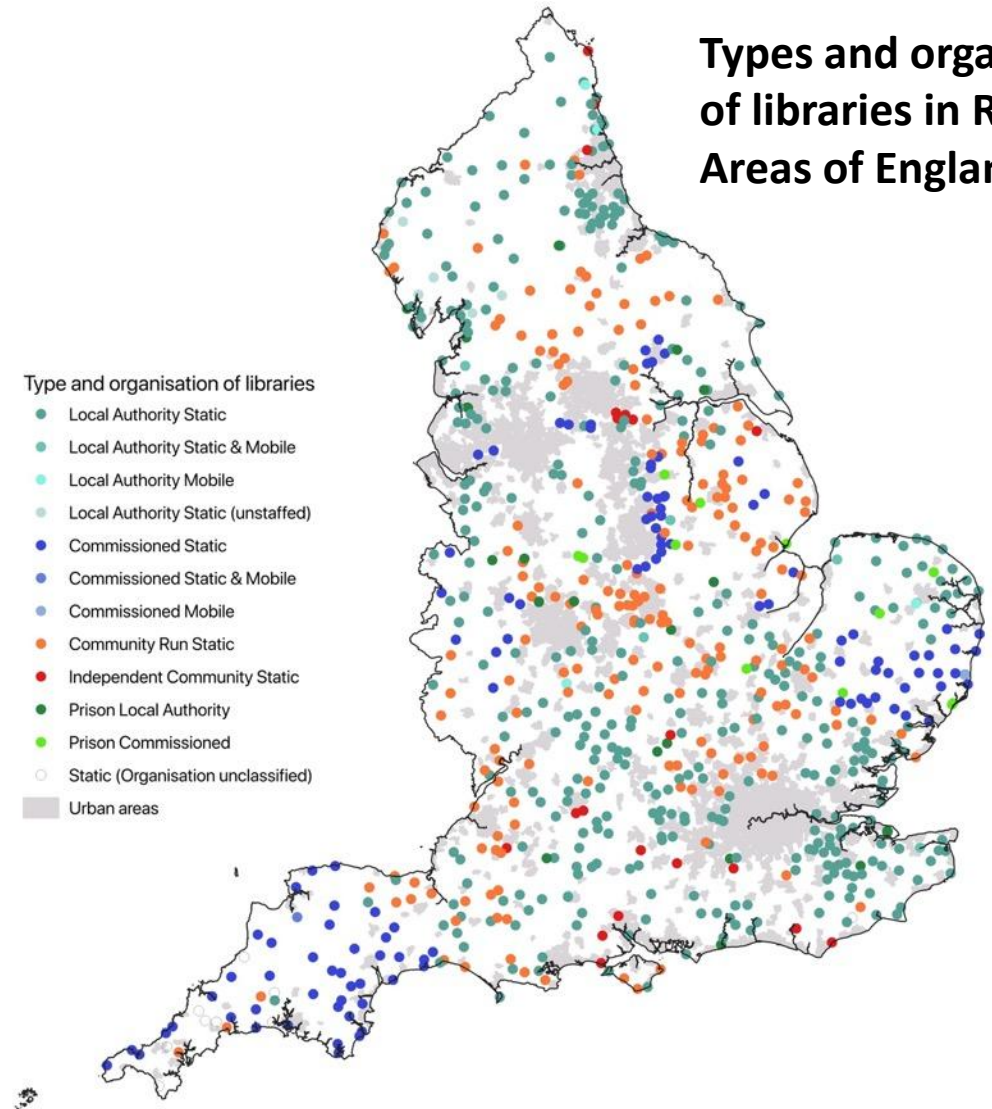
- Town & Fringe
- Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting
- Village
- Village in Sparse Setting
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings In Sparse Setting
- Urban areas

Educational, Welfare and Cultural Services

Rural Warm Spaces in the Warm Welcome Campaign, 2024



Types and organisation of libraries in Rural Areas of England 2023



Health Care

The Telegraph

Hundreds of villages lose their GP surgery as crisis grows across country



Sylvia Oliver is among residents of Fetcham in Surrey who fear a future without a local village GP Credit: Julian Andrews

Hundreds of villages have lost their GP surgery amid a deepening crisis across the country, an investigation reveals. Experts say rural and coastal areas were being hit particularly hard by a national shortage of family doctors, forcing elderly and vulnerable patients to travel further for their care. The figures reveal 1,946 villages which are at least three miles from the nearest GP practice – 162 more than was the case just two years ago.

Source: Laura Donnelly L., Scott, P. and Bodkin, H. (2019) Hundreds of villages lose their GPO surgery as crisis grows across the country, The Telegraph, 29th June. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/06/25/hundreds-villages-lose-gp-surgery-crisis-grows-across-country/>

The Telegraph

Rural heart attack patients wait 50pc longer for ambulances

'Heartbreaking' rural-urban divide means some patients face lengthy waits of up to 1 hour 40 minutes for category two calls



According to new figures, heart attack patients in rural areas wait longer for ambulances Credit: Reuters

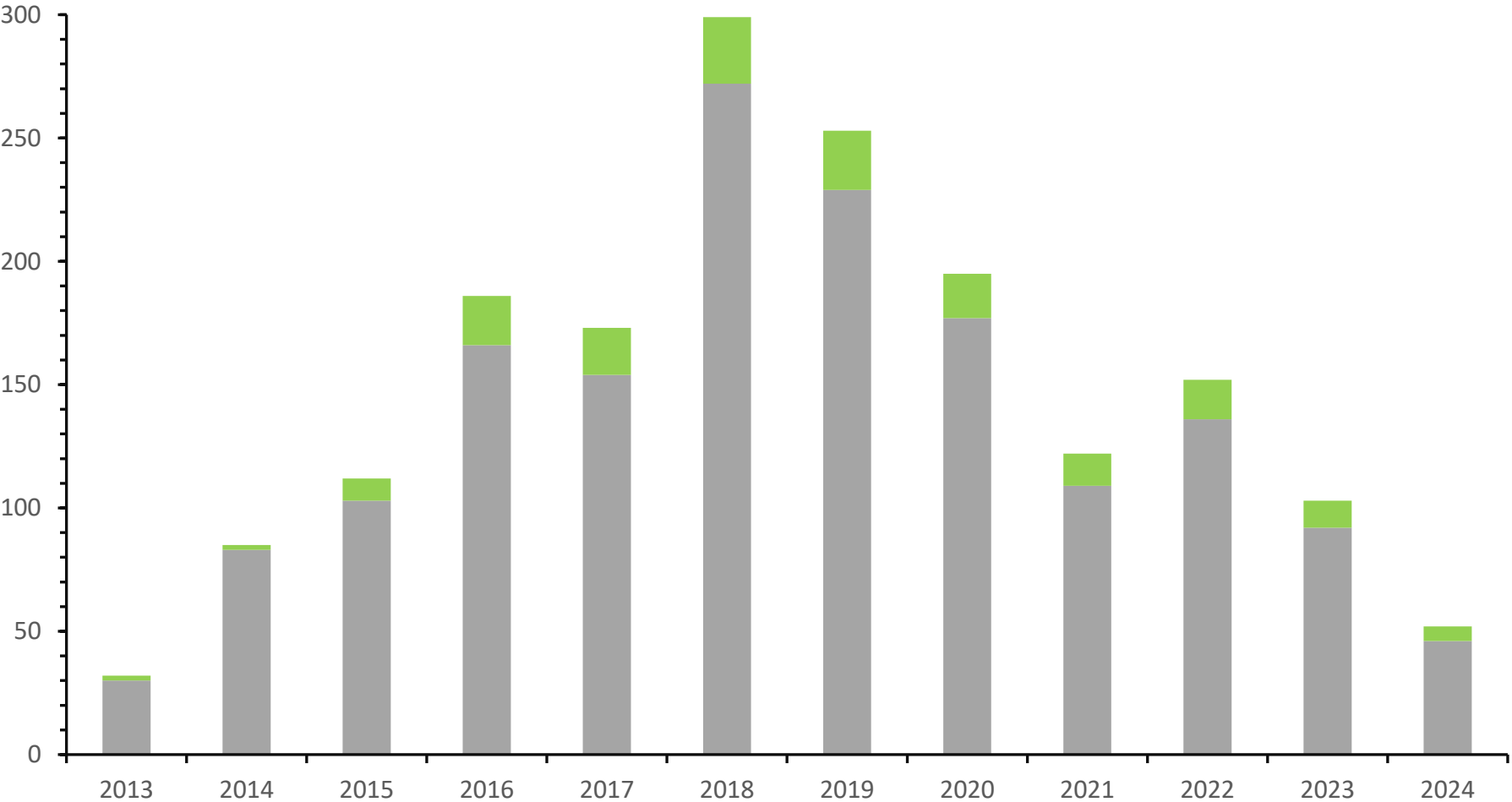
Heart attack patients in rural areas will wait nearly 50% longer for an ambulance than those in towns and cities, with those in the worst areas waiting for 15 minutes, new figures reveal.

On average, people in rural areas have to wait 12 minutes and 31 seconds for an ambulance to arrive for the most serious category one call

Source: Martin, D. 2019) Rural heart attack victims wait 50 pc longer for ambulances. The Telegraph, 12th April . <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/12/rural-heart-attack-patients-wait-longer-ambulances/>

Health Care

Net Decline in GP Surgeries, 2013-2024



31.8% reduction
in number of GP
Surgeries in
Urban Areas

15.5% reduction
in number of GP
Surgeries in Rural
Areas

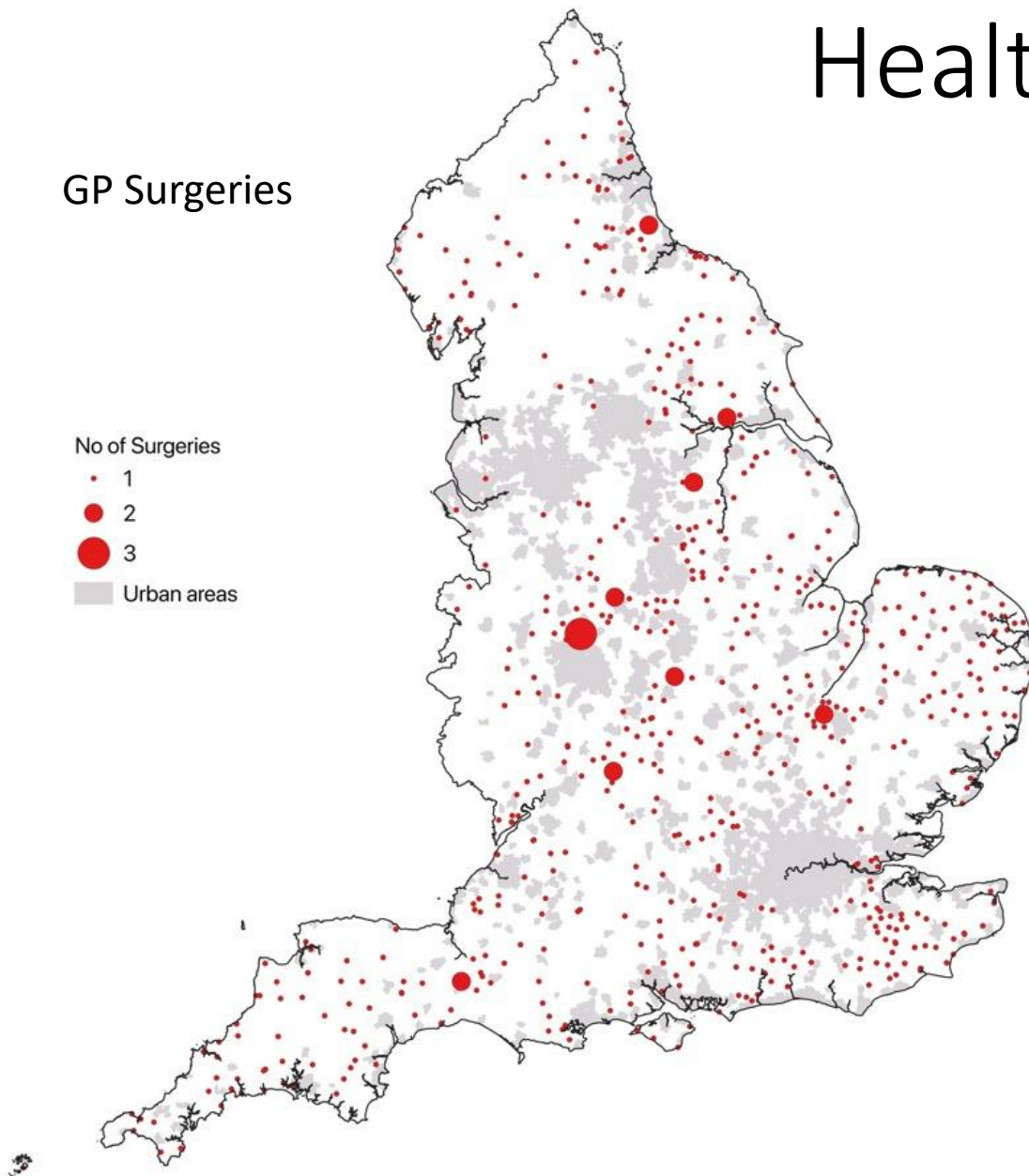
Health Care

GP Surgeries

No of Surgeries

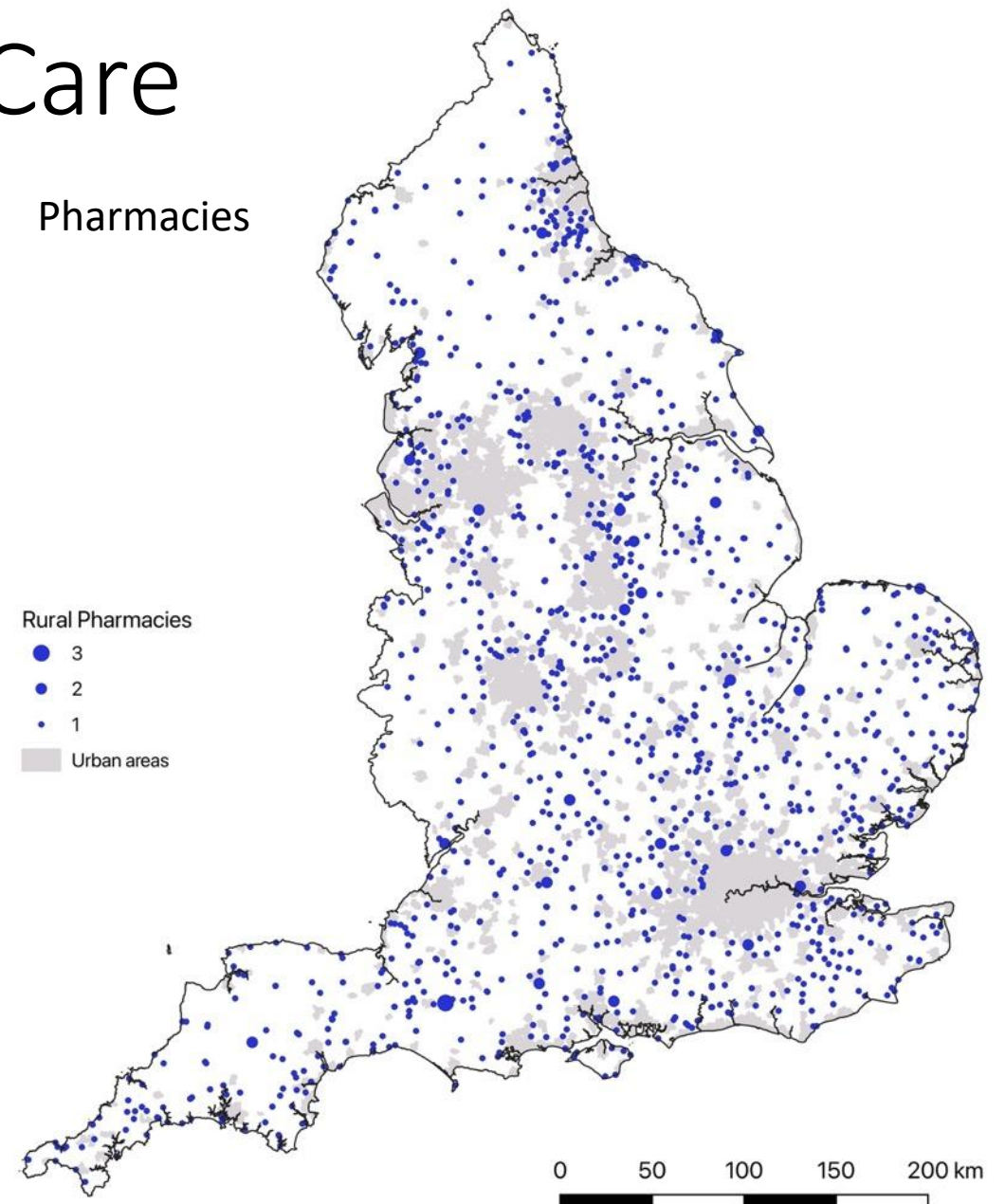
- 1
- 2
- 3

Urban areas



Health Care

Pharmacies



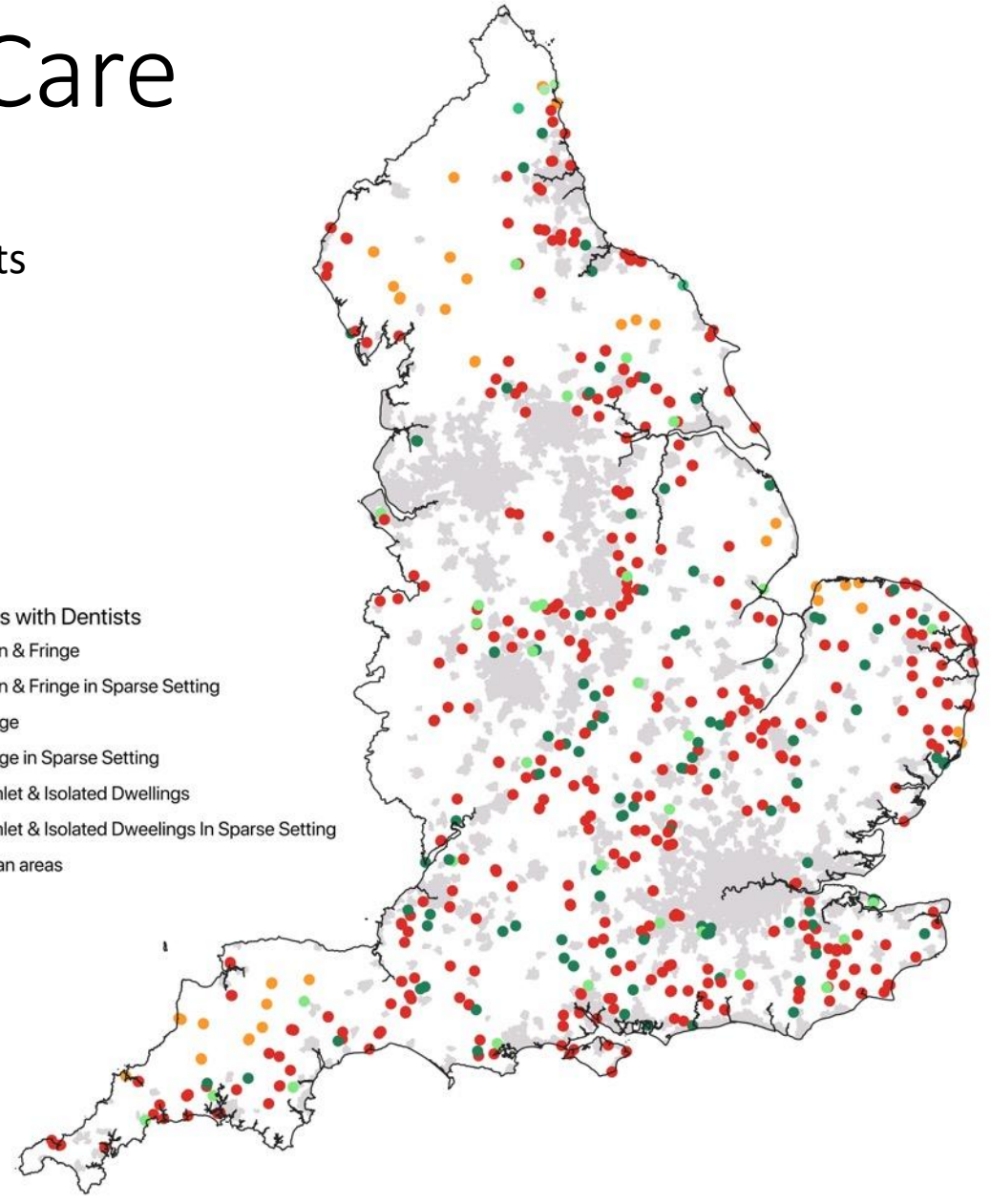
Health Care

Dentists



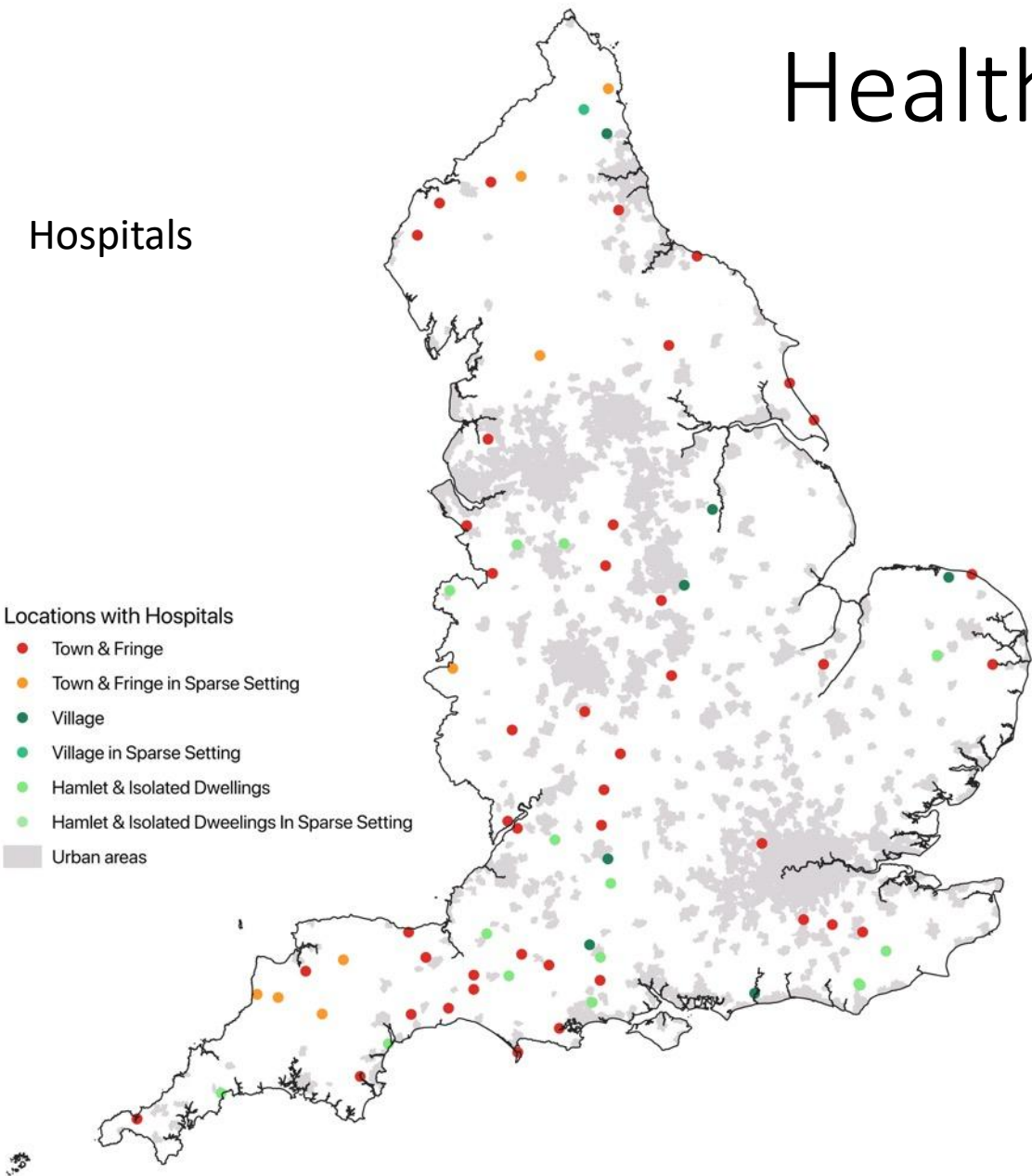
Locations with Dentists

- Town & Fringe
- Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting
- Village
- Village in Sparse Setting
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings In Sparse Setting
- Urban areas



Health Care

Hospitals



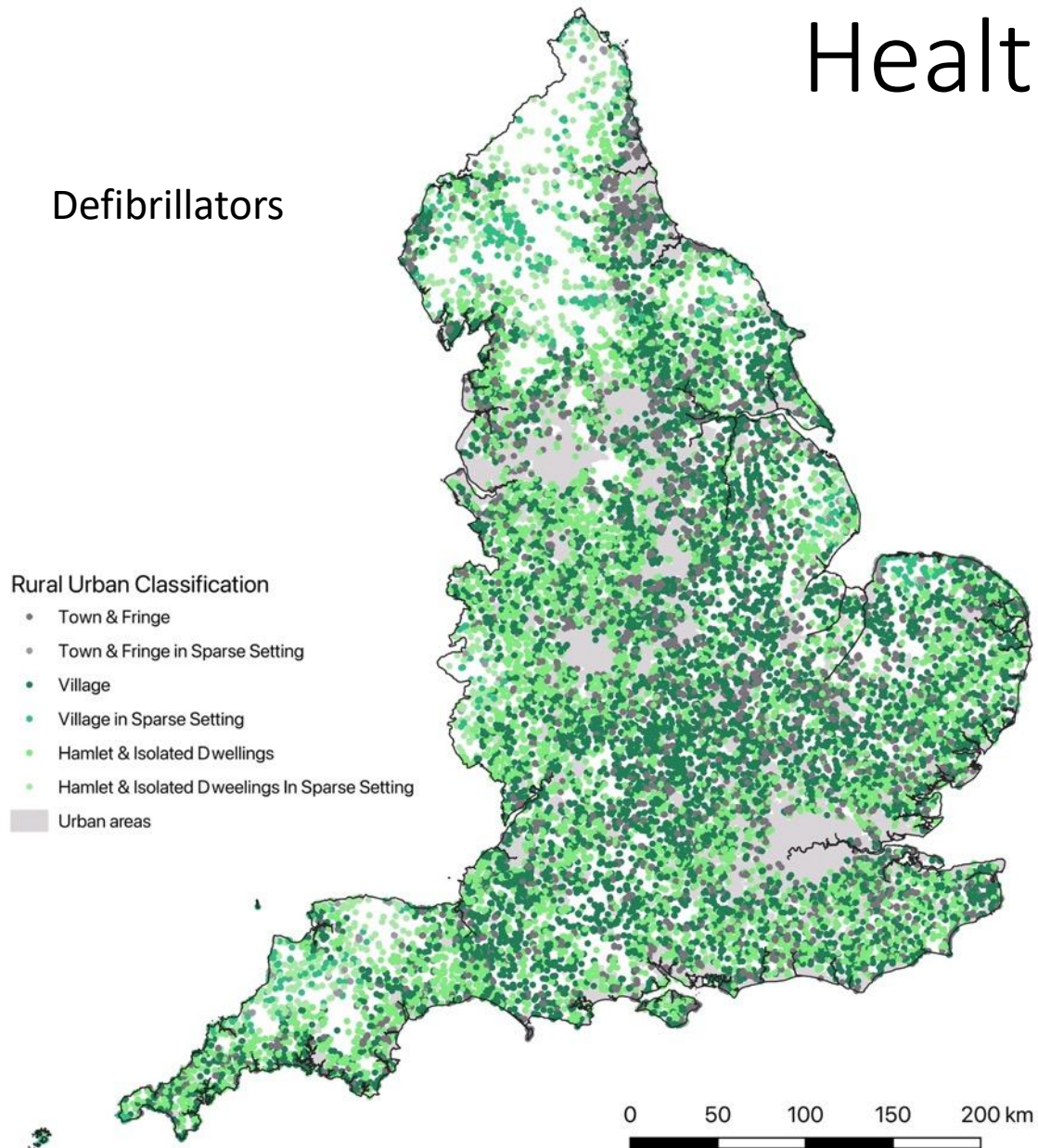
Ambulance Response Times

Rural Urban Character	Average Response Times April 2023 (Minutes: seconds)	
	Category 1	Category 2
Predominantly Urban	8:40	52:34
Urban with Significant Rural	10:17	58:17
Predominantly Rural	12:31	61:20

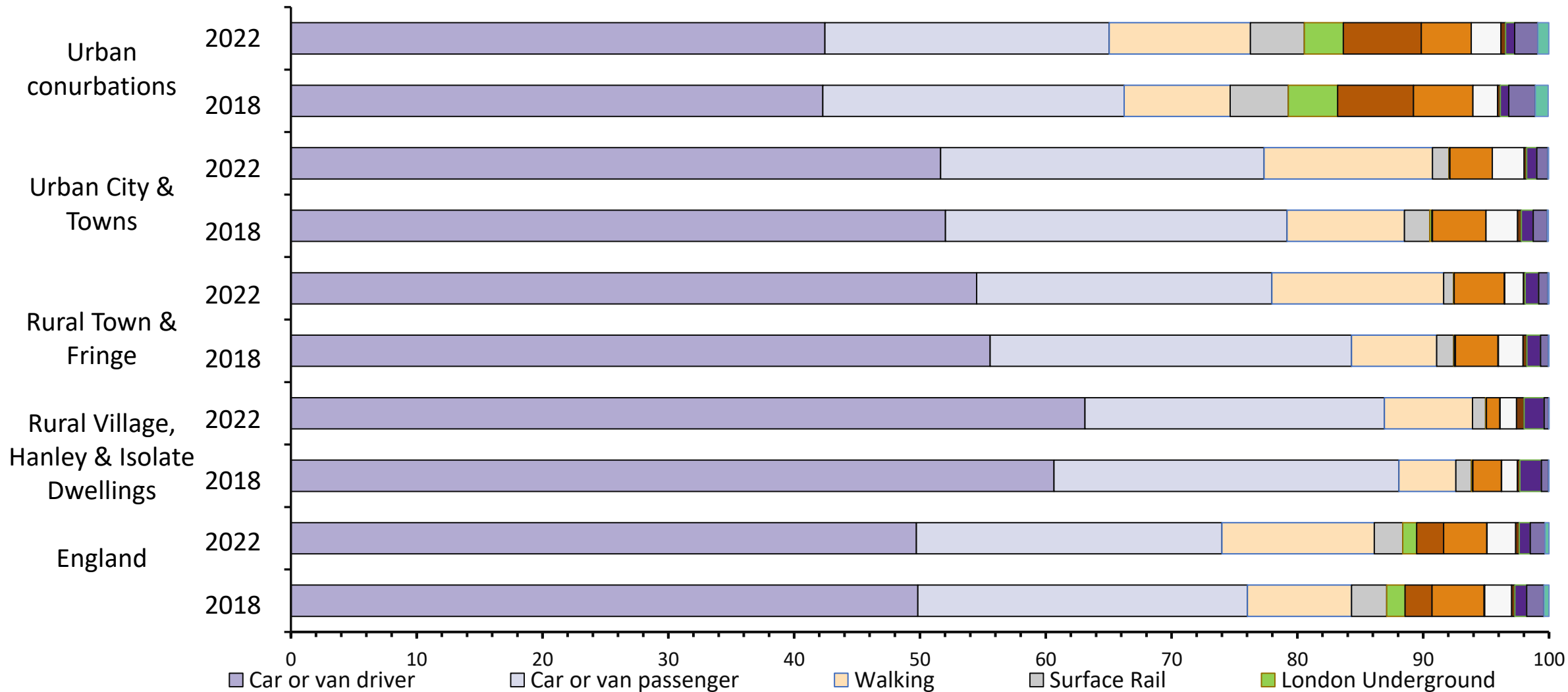
Source: derived from Liberal Democrats (2023a) 2023-04-11 Ambulance Waiting Times FOI. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18JLhyhzXB3Hy6v2xOXebWGllaiip_u9k/edit?gid=401656079#gid=401656079 (Last access date: 11/2/25)

Health Care

Defibrillators

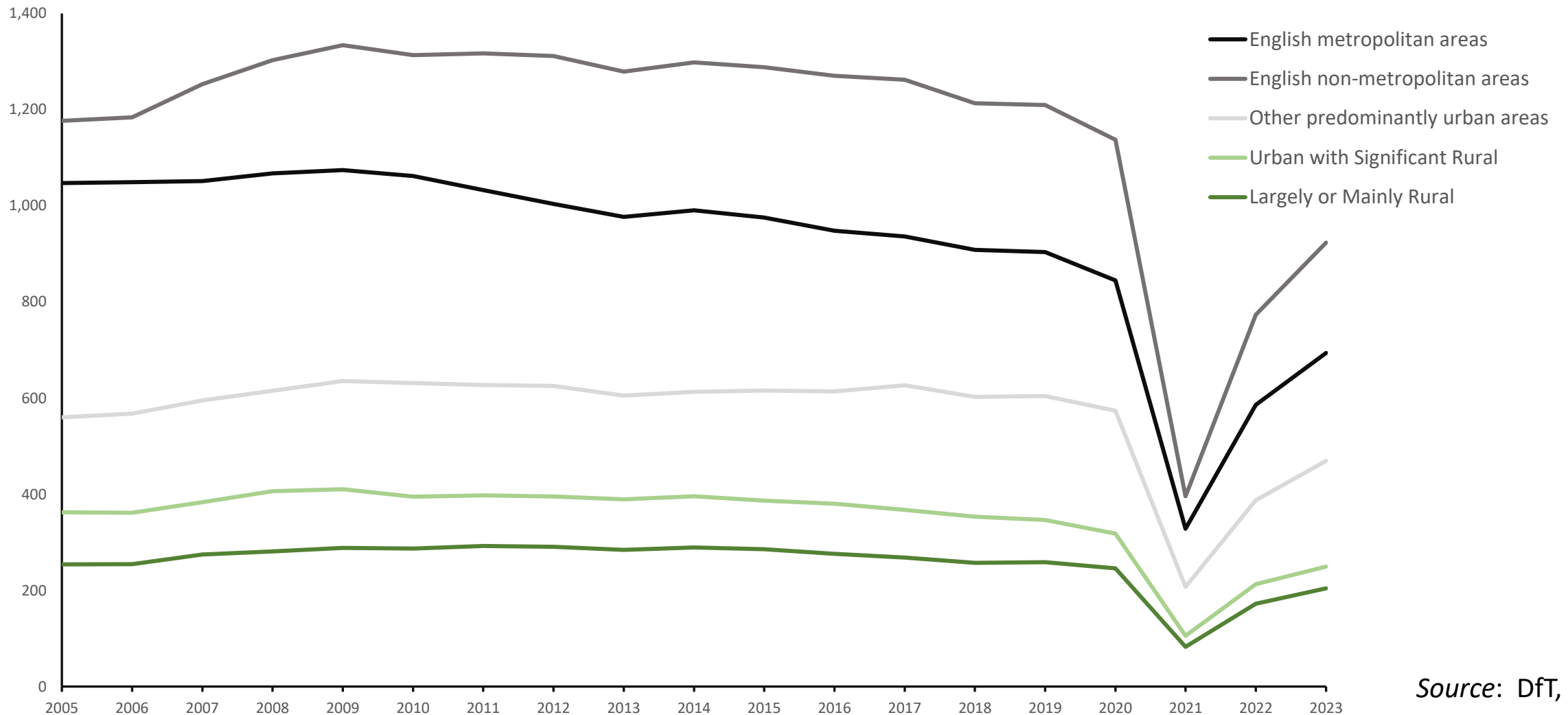


Transport and Communication Services



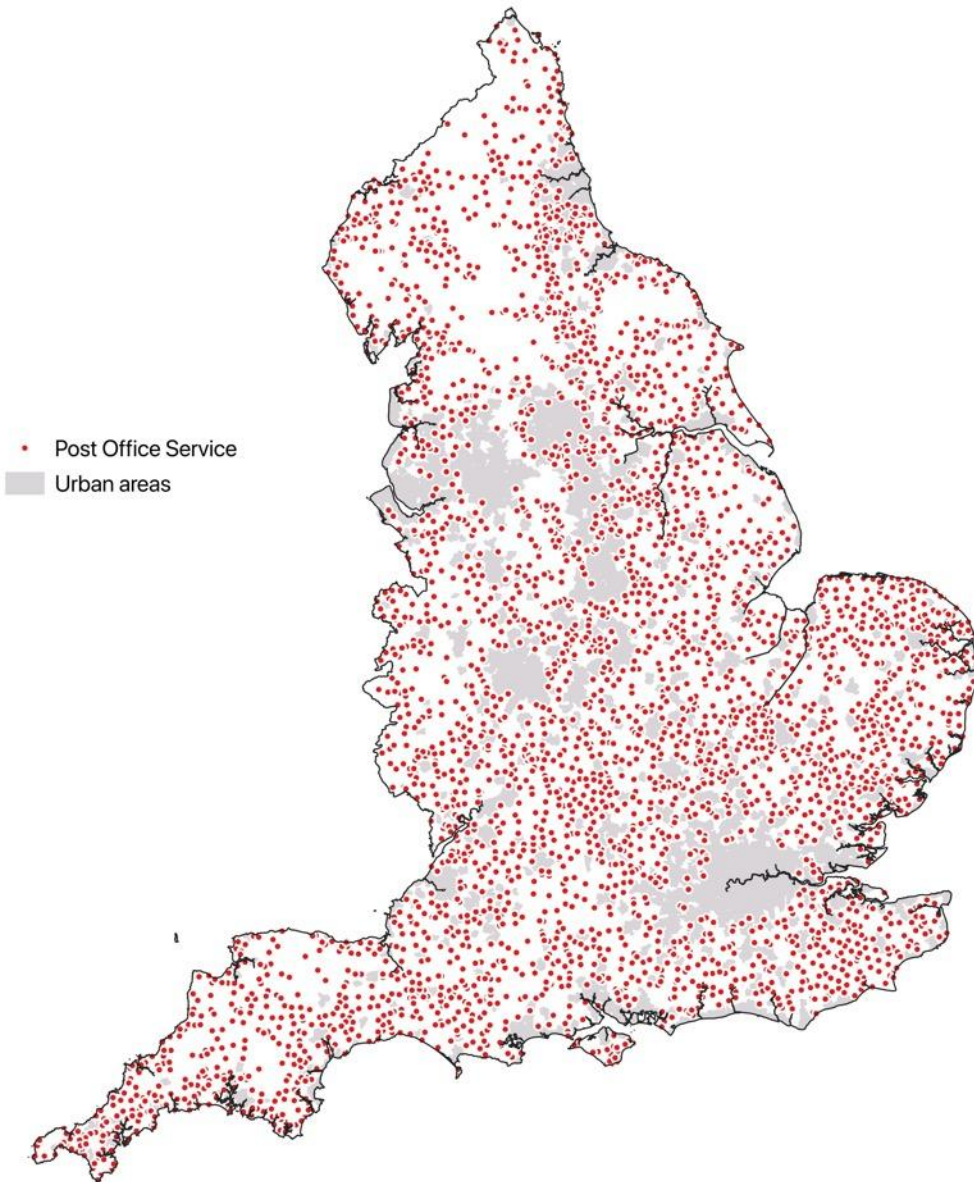
Transport and Communication Services

Number of passenger journeys on local bus services, 2005- 2023



Source: DfT, , 2023

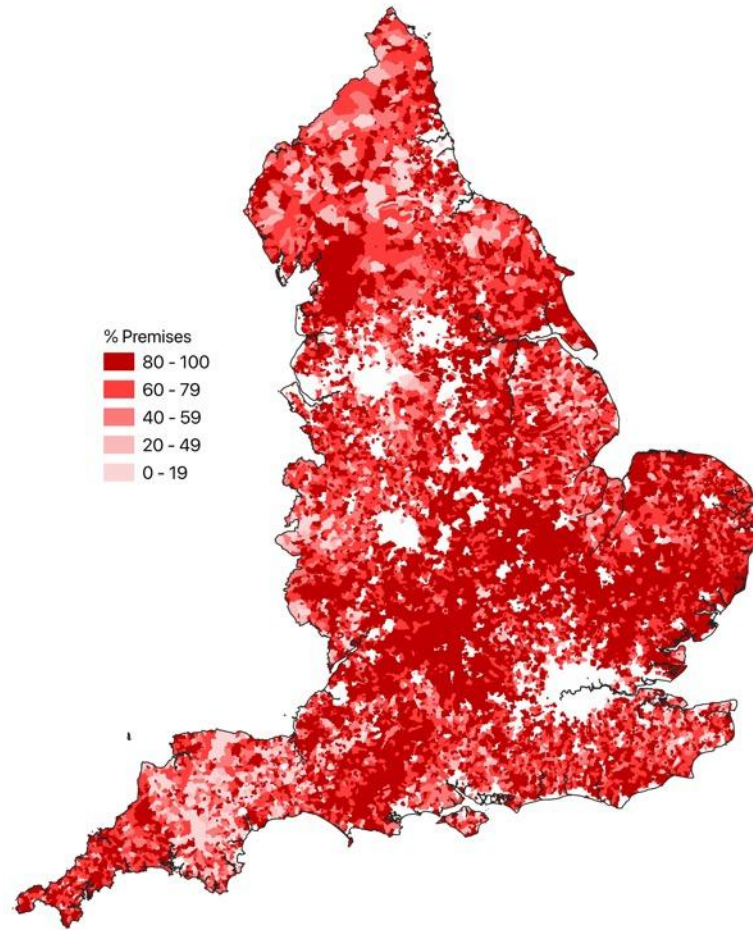
Transport and Communication Services



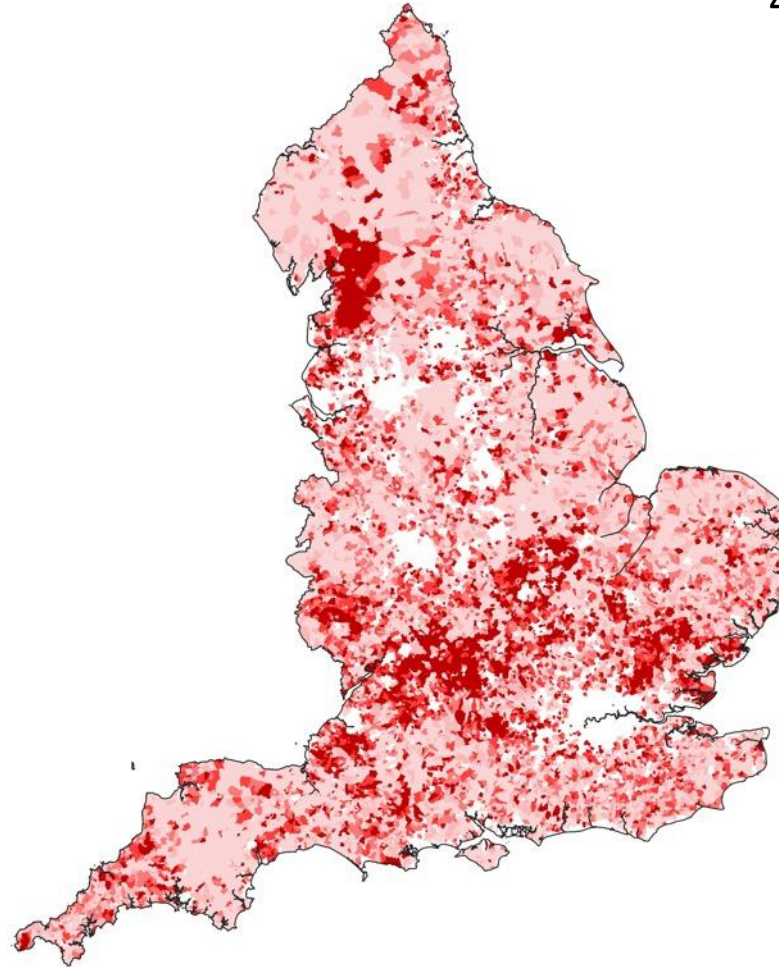
Urban-Rural Characteristics	% of Post Office Services	% of Directly Administered Branches
Major Conurbation	23.0	61.5
Minor Conurbation	2.8	2.1
City and Town	33.9	35.4
City and Town in Sparse Setting	0.1	0.0
Town & Fringe	15.4	1.0
Town & Fringe in Sparse Setting	0.8	0.0
Village	16.6	0.0
Village in Sparse Setting	2.3	0.0
Hamlets & Isolated Dwellings	3.9	0.0
Hamlets & Isolated Dwellings in Sparse Setting	1.1	0.0

Transport and Communication Services

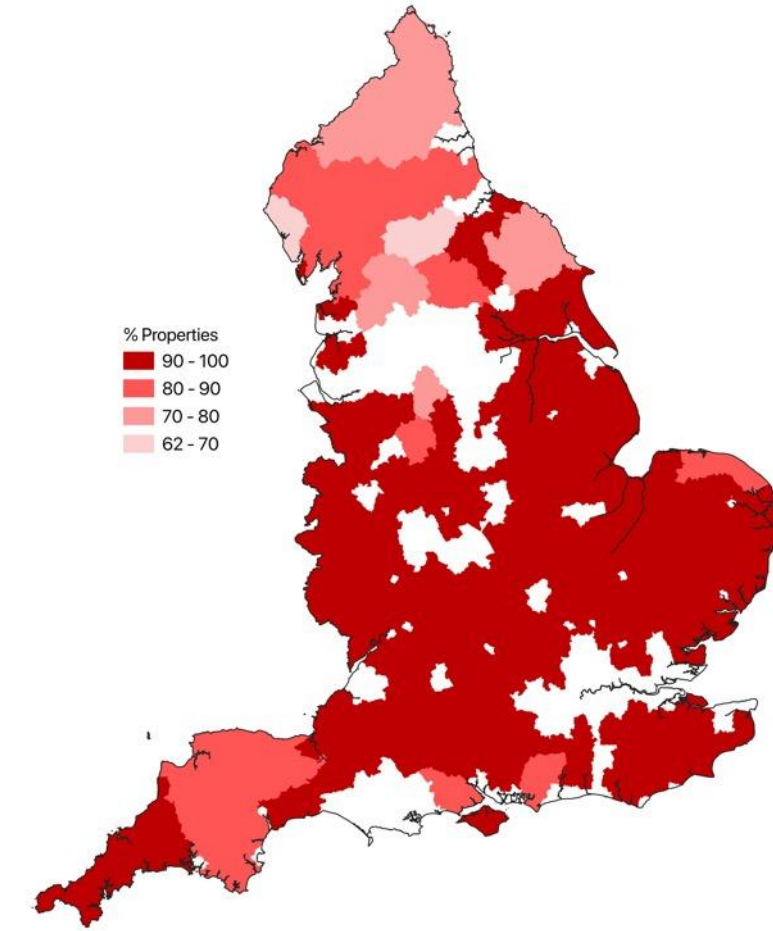
100MB Broadband



300MB Broadband



4G Outside from all Mobile Operators



Policy Implications

- ❑ Evidence of continuing decline in rural service provision (thinning of state in rural areas?)
- ❑ Need for recognition of social consequences of public transport decline and potential role of community transport to increase service accessibility
- ❑ Presence of continuing digital divides
- ❑ Much of diversity invisible within many published data