

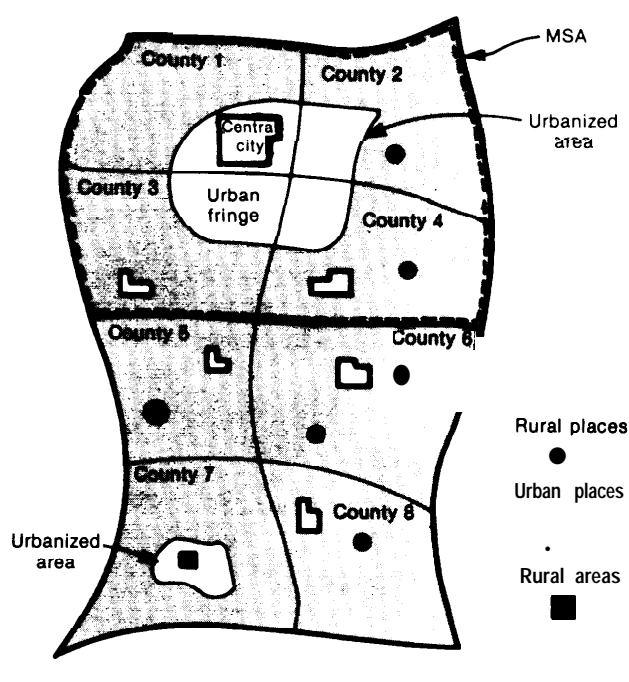
## 4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN/RURAL AND METROPOLITAN/NONMETROPOLITAN DESIGNATIONS

Conceptually, the urban/rural and metro/nonmetropolitan designations are quite different. Urban/rural are geographic designations based on population size and residential population densities, while the MSA concept embodies both a physical element (a city and its built-up suburbs) and a functional dimension (a more-or-less unified local labor market) (21). The Census-defined urban population and the MSA population intersect but are by no means identical; they are even less congruent geographically. Common to both are residents of most urbanized areas, the densely settled area that forms the nucleus of the MSA (see figure 3).<sup>1</sup> The Census' urban population includes the urbanized area population and those living outside urbanized areas in places with 2,500 or more residents. The MSA population generally includes all those living in the county or counties that contain the urbanized area and the residents of additional counties that are economically integrated with that metropolitan core. Forty percent of the 1980 rural population lived in MSAs, and 14 percent of the MSA population lived in rural areas (see table 7). About one-fourth of farm residents live in MSAs (55).

"Rural area," "nonurbanized area," and "nonmetropolitan area" have all been used to display vital and health statistics or to implement Federal policies in health and other areas. These "rural" definitions can be analyzed in terms of how well they include "rural areas" and how well they exclude "urban areas." The Census-defined "rural area" is the most specific measure, since it excludes urbanized areas and places with 2,500 residents or more. Thus, few would argue that an area designated as rural according to the Census definition is really urban. However, some might argue that the Census definition would

incorrectly classify as urban small towns which are located far from a large population center. In contrast, the "nonurbanized area" definition includes as rural all territory outside of its densely populated area, regardless of population size. Thus, while all "rural areas" would be included, some cities and towns of as large as 40,000 residents would also be included, as well as some outer suburbs of large urban areas.

**Figure 3---The Relationship Between Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Urbanized Areas, and Urban and Rural Areas**



Counties 1 through 4 comprise the MSA.

Urbanized areas form the nucleus of the MSA and can span two or more counties (e. g., counties 1 through 4). There are a few urbanized areas in non-MSA counties (e. g., county 7).

Urban areas include urbanized areas and places (e. g., cities and towns) with 2,500 or more residents. Such places are called urban places.

Rural places are located outside of urbanized areas and have fewer than 2,500 residents.

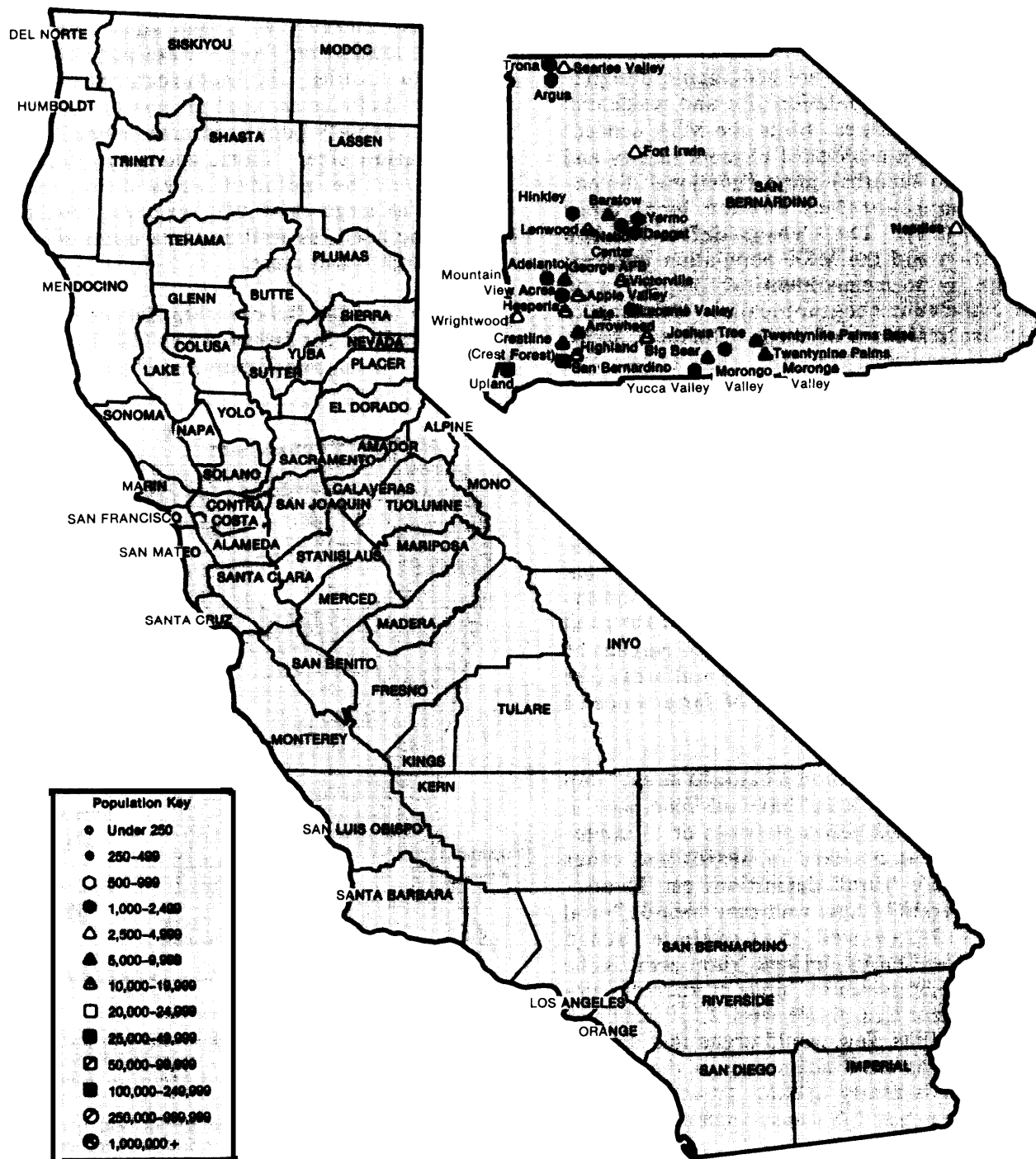
Rural areas are the residential territory (shaded gray) left after urbanized areas and urban places are excluded. The MSA has rural areas within it.

SOURCE: Office of Technology Assessment, 1989.

<sup>1</sup> There are a few urbanized areas outside of MSAs.

<sup>2</sup> A small number of rural residents of extended cities are excluded from the urban and urbanized area population.

Figure 4--- Map of California Counties: San Bernardino County



SOURCE: American Map Corporation, Business Control Atlas 1988 (Maspeth, New York: American Map Corporation, 1988).

The nonMSA designation falls in between the other two designations. If nonMSAs are used to define rural areas, some large towns and cities located outside of MSAs<sup>3</sup> would be included as rural while small towns and sparsely populated areas within MSAs would be excluded from the rural category. This exclusion is less a concern in the Eastern United States, where counties are relatively small,<sup>4</sup> and such towns would generally be expected to be relatively close to an urbanized area. However, in some of the large counties in the West, some areas within an MSA are far from an urbanized area (e.g., San Bernardino County--figure 4).

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**3** There are at least 100 places with populations of 25,000 or more outside of MSAs.

**4** A typical county in the East has a land area of 400 to 600 square miles. West of the Mississippi River there are great variations, but the average county land area is just over 1400 square miles excluding Alaska (29).

**Table 7.--Population Inside and Outside of MSAs by Urban and Rural Residence (1980)**

	Population	Percent of MSA/nonMSA
U.S. total	226,545,805	
Inside MSAs	149,430,623	100.0
Urban	145,442,528	85.8
Urbanized areas	137,481,718	81.1
Central cities	66,222,207	39.1
Urban fringe	71,259,511	42.1
Rural	23,988,095	14.2
Outside MSAs	57,115,182	100.0
Urban	21,608,464	37.8
Rural	35,506,718	62.2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, Volume 1. Characteristics of the Population, 1981, table 6, pp. 1-39.