



Indicators for rural community well-being, services, and quality of life



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Preface

This is the first edition of CSA R113, *Indicators for rural community well-being, services, and quality of life*.

This Standard was prepared by the CSA Technical Committee on Indicators for Rural Community Well-Being, Services, and Quality of Life, under the jurisdiction of the CSA Strategic Steering Committee on Organizational Management and Sustainability, and has been formally approved by the Technical Committee.

This Standard has been developed in compliance with Standards Council of Canada requirements for National Standards of Canada. It has been published as a National Standard of Canada by CSA Group.

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CSA R113:22

Indicators for rural community well-being, services, and quality of life

0 Introduction

Climate change, global economic trends, aging demographics, population migration, and the adoption of new disruptive technologies are affecting all regions in Canada. However, their manifestations and effects in rural areas are often quite different than in urban ones. Although Standards exist for indicators of quality of life in urban contexts, many of these are not readily applicable to rural contexts. In order to understand and address the particular nature of rural challenges and opportunities, rural communities need practical approaches to relevant data and analysis. Common rural characteristics such as sparse population, lack of infrastructure, and distance from the comprehensive services available in urban centres require a rurally oriented approach to indicators of community well-being and sustainability. In addition, while advances in open data and e-government initiatives have potentially increased access to rural data, small communities typically lack the capacity to access, analyze, and utilize data effectively. For data to be used effectively to understand and address rural challenges and opportunities, an approach that is sensitive to rurality is necessary. The rurality of a location is influenced by both density and distance. Low-density locales, or those that are a long distance from higher-density areas, often do not have access to the same goods and services as those higher-density areas. For the purposes of this Standard, therefore, the term “rural” includes other locales, such as communities in Canada’s North, which are also characterized by low density, long distances to density, or both.

A preliminary standardization landscape review revealed that although there are some indices and reports on national or urban well-being and sustainability, there are currently no Canadian Standards to guide rural and small-town communities in the consistent collection, reporting, and use of economic, environmental, and social data. International, regional, or National Standards in other countries were examined during consideration of the development of this Standard. Internationally, there are two Standards: ISO 37101 and ISO 37120, along with some related Standards for smart cities and resilient cities, but no equivalent Standard for rural communities.

For data to be useful in support of evidence-based decision-making, rural and small-town municipalities and related organizations need the ability to derive relevant data-driven insights in a consistent manner with limited resources. A standardized approach to a core set of rural community indicators is a key component that can facilitate turning data into understanding and understanding into action — to support well-being, prosperity, and sustainability in rural and small-town communities across Canada.

While there are some frequently used indicators of quality of life that are common to rural and urban populations (e.g., in the area of public health), rural and small-town communities often have different demographic, economic, and environmental concerns compared to urban areas. For example, access to basic services are frequently identified as high priorities in rural and small-town communities but are rarely mentioned in urban studies, so the assessment of conditions in rural communities often requires rural-specific indicators, or rural-driven data collection for common indicators. Similarly, indicators selected for measuring access to services might not be sensitive to rural conditions such as lack of roads or public transportation. The wide variety of specialized or ad hoc approaches to rural data have