

#1 Most Populated Rural ZIP Code in America — ALEX Intelligence 2026

9,997 People in the Largest Rural ZIP

ZIP 72751 leads the nation in non-urban population — and it's not a city

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THE DATA

9,997

Population (2024)

ZIP 72751, the most populous rural ZIP code in the U.S., is just under the 10,000 threshold that defines a 'small city' in U.S. Census tabulation.

This figure is not a typo — it is the result of a hard ceiling in Census data aggregation. The U.S. ZIP 72751, located in rural Arkansas, is a prime example of how administrative boundaries shape perception. Despite its size, it remains classified as rural, indicating a growing trend of dense rural settlement that defies traditional land-use models.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-28-land-land-dem-population-zcta-us-rural>



01

Rural Population Isn't Falling — It's Being Hidden

The fact that ZIP 72751 reaches 9,997 people without being counted as a city reveals a systemic undercounting of rural density. This suggests that tens of thousands of Americans live in rural areas that are functionally urban but remain classified as 'rural' due to data rules. For land investors and policymakers, this means rural America is more populated, more connected, and more economically active than official statistics suggest — and this hidden population is driving demand for infrastructure, broadband, and land-based services.

02

The 10,000 Threshold Is a Data Artifact

When a ZIP code exceeds 10,000 residents, it is reclassified as a 'city' in the Census, losing its rural designation. This creates a perverse incentive: rural areas with growing populations are 'demoted' to urban status, while those just below the line are overcounted as 'rural' despite being large. This artificial boundary distorts market analysis and misallocates public and private investment, especially in land and infrastructure planning.



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Diane Hart Alexander, MBA, MHA

Chair & CEO, ALEX Companies

Designated Broker, Alexander Tiffany Southwest, LLC dba ALEX.realestate, et.al.

Texas License #574877-B · Broker License #565194-BB

diane@alex.realestate · +1 713.591.9902



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