

Article

House building data, UK: update to October to December 2019

Time series data on starts and completions of new build dwellings in the UK, on a quarterly and annual basis (formerly produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

Contact:
Nick Woodhill
better.info@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 651731

Release date:
1 March 2021

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Overview](#)
2. [Data](#)
3. [Data sources and quality](#)
4. [Future developments](#)
5. [Related links](#)

1 . Overview

This release provides [data on newly built dwellings in the UK](#), specifically on starts and completions.

These quarterly statistics refer to the period October to December 2019, which is the last quarter before cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) were confirmed in the UK. It will not be possible to assess any impact of the coronavirus on the number of newly built dwellings in the UK until data from the devolved administrations become available.

The data supply for future quarterly data is likely to be affected by the coronavirus. Therefore, we cannot yet confirm the date of the next publication, but will announce future publications on the [ONS release calendar](#) when known.

In previous releases we have included data for the English regions, but these data are now published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and can be found in [Table 217](#).

A dwelling is counted as “started” on the date work begins on the laying of the foundation, and as “completed” when it becomes ready for occupation or when a completion certificate is issued. This release was previously published by MHCLG, until June 2019.

The statistics presented in this release do not cover all new housing supply. For example, they do not include conversions and changes of use. See Limitations of the data in the Data sources and quality section for further information.

Statistics in this release relate to the UK. They are created by aggregating previously published data from the four UK countries.

Statistics about each individual country are also included here. Individual country-level statistics are also available separately from the producers of each country’s statistics. Those individual country datasets include statistics for small geographical areas, which are not presented in this release.

To provide consistency with the UK figures that were previously published by MHCLG, this release contains quarterly and annual data (for both calendar and financial years).

2 . Data

[UK house building: permanent dwellings started and completed](#)

Dataset | Released 1 March 2021

Time series data on starts and completions of new build dwellings in the UK, on a quarterly and annual basis.

[Live tables on housing supply: indicators of new supply](#)

MHCLG Table 217

Permanent dwellings started and completed by tenure and region (quarterly).

3 . Data sources and quality

These statistics are based on administrative data sources. There follows information about the data sources, the frequency and data time series for which data are available from each of the four UK countries.

England

Sources

- local authority new build form returns
- National House Building Council (NHBC)
- approved inspector data returns

Starts, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): Jan to Mar 2000 onwards
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: 1946 onwards

Completions, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): Jan to Mar 2000 onwards
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: 1946 onwards

Wales

Sources

- local authority building inspectors
- National House Building Council (NHBC)

Starts, by sector¹

- quarterly: Apr to June 1974 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): not available
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: not published³

Completions, by sector¹

- quarterly: Apr to June 1974 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): not available
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: 1946 onwards

Scotland

Sources

- local authority new build form returns
- Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme

Starts, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): not available
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: not published³

Completions, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): not available
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: 1945 onwards²

Northern Ireland

Sources

- District Council Building Control

Starts, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): not available
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: not published³

Completions, by sector¹

- quarterly: Jan to Mar 1978 onwards
- quarterly (seasonally adjusted²): Jan to Mar 2000 onwards
- financial year: ending 1970 onwards
- calendar year: 1949 onwards

Each publication of these statistics reflects revisions made in the source data from each country. This ensures that statistics for the UK are consistent with latest statistics in each constituent country.

Uses and users

The datasets in this release give timely information relating to starts and completions of new dwellings in the UK. They are used to inform government housing policy, and for housing market analysis and research. They are also used by forecasters and decision-makers, including at the Bank of England. The compilation of the UK data in this release also allows international comparisons of housing supply.

Limitations of the data

These statistics provide a timely indicator of housing supply, however, there are limitations of coverage and comparability. For England, more comprehensive (but less frequent) measures of [changes to the size of the dwelling stock](#) are published annually by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). These provide a fuller measure of new housing supply based on additional sources, including building control, site visits, and Council Tax and planning databases.

In addition, there are limitations of comparability across the UK in these statistics. Each country produces its own statistics on house building, which are subject to revisions and have variations in sources and how the data are collected and processed. For example, a small amount of data for England is missing and therefore imputed.

For England, figures on new build dwelling starts and completions are from records kept for building control purposes. The house building figures reflect the sector of the developer building the dwelling rather than the intended final sector. This may lead to an undercount of housing association and local authority starts and completions recorded in these tables and a corresponding overcount of private enterprise figures. This problem is more likely to affect starts than completions.

For Wales, data are based on the reports of local authority building inspectors and the National House Building Council (NHBC), a private approved inspector; it does not include information from other private approved inspectors. It is sometimes difficult for building control officers and NHBC to identify the intended final tenure of the property (the basis for the tenure information). This may lead to an under-count of social sector new house building and an over-count for the private sector. Within the social sector, it may also lead to an under-count of local authority new house building and an over-count for the registered social landlord sector. Therefore, the sector data should be treated with caution.

Notes for Data sources and quality

1. "Sector" refers to new dwellings constructed by private enterprises, housing associations, or registered social landlords and local authorities. Other data providers may use the term "tenure". Statistics on starts for Wales are not available split by sector from the financial year ending 2012.
2. Seasonally adjusted quarterly data published for England, and completions by private and public sector from 1920 for Scotland, are not included in this release because the equivalent data are not available for the other countries.
3. Data for calendar year can be derived from aggregating quarterly data.
4. Data for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are taken directly from the producers of the statistics in each country. These may differ from the discontinued tables formerly produced by MHCLG.

4 . Future developments

We are working with the Welsh Government and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to explore whether the additional data sources can be used to improve quarterly house building statistics. If you have any feedback on the development of these statistics, email better.info@ons.gov.uk.

5 . Related links

[Housing supply: net additional dwellings](#)

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publication | Annual

This collection brings together all documents on housing supply: net additional dwellings (formerly known as “net supply of housing”).

[New house building](#)

Welsh Government publication | Quarterly

Information on the number of new dwellings started and completed.

[Housing statistics](#)

Scottish Government publication | Quarterly

Statistics that include affordable housing, new housing supply, rents in the private sector, local authority housing, and social housing.

[New dwelling statistics](#)

Department of Finance (Northern Ireland) publication | Quarterly

Land & Property Services (LPS) receives information from Building Control in each council in Northern Ireland (NI). This information contains the number of recorded new dwellings (houses and apartments) started and completed.