

Article

House building data, UK: 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). This release also includes data for the UK's constituent countries and English regions.

Contact:
Nigel Henretty
better.info@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 447934

Release date:
24 April 2020

Next release:
To be announced

Notice

9 November 2020

The supply of house building data has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The primary purpose of this release is to provide collated statistics for the UK and Great Britain, but because not all countries are currently able to produce data for more recent quarters, producing the latest UK and Great Britain statistics is not possible.

We are aiming to update this release in February 2021 to follow the next publication of England data by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). We will announce this on the [ONS release calendar](#) when known.

More up-to-date figures for individual countries are available in the "You might also be interested in" links.

Table of contents

- 1. [Introduction](#)
- 2. [Quality and methodology](#)
- 3. [Future plans](#)

1 . Introduction

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 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 the next release.

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

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 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (until June 2019).

The statistics presented in this release do not cover all parts of total new housing supply. For example, they do not include conversions and changes of use. See the [Limitations of the data 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. This release is published two to four weeks after all the countries have published their house building statistics.

Statistics about each individual country and the English regions 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 . Quality and methodology

These statistics are based on administrative data sources. Table 1 presents information about the data sources, and the frequency and time series for which data are available from each of the four UK countries.

Table 1: Country-level data for permanent dwellings available for each UK country, by sector

	Frequency	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Sources		Local authority new build form returns	Local authority building inspectors	Local authority new build form returns	District Council Building Control
		National House Building Council (NHBC)	National House Building Council (NHBC)	Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme	
		Approved inspector data returns			
Starts, by sector ¹	Quarterly	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards	April-June 1974 onwards	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards
	Quarterly (seasonally adjusted ²)	Jan-Mar 2000 onwards	Not available	Not available	Not available
	Financial year	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards
	Calendar year	1946 onwards	Not published ³	Not published ³	Not published ³
Completions, by sector ¹	Quarterly	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards	April-June 1974 onwards	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards	Jan-Mar 1978 onwards
	Quarterly (seasonally adjusted ²)	Jan-Mar 2000 onwards	Not available	Not available	Not available
	Financial year	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards	1969/70 onwards
	Calendar year	1946 onwards	1946 onwards	1945 onwards ²	1949 onwards

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes

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 come directly from the producers of the statistics in each country. These may differ from the discontinued tables formerly produced by MHCLG.

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.

3 . Future plans

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. In addition, MHCLG is [conducting a consultation on proposed changes to house building statistics for England](#), which includes changing the title of the release to "Housing supply; Indicators of new supply". The consultation is open until 26 May 2020.