

Article

House building data, UK: July to September 2019

Quarterly and annual time series data on the building of new housing in the UK, its constituent countries and English regions, including starts and completions.

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1 . Introduction

This release provides [data on newly built dwellings in the UK](#), specifically on starts and completions. 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. Statistics about each individual country and the English regions are also included here. Individual country-level statistics are 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 the 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 for England and completions by private and public sector from 1920 in calendar years. Data for Scotland are not included in this release because the equivalent data are not available for the other countries.
3. Data for calendar years 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.

We publish these statistics quarterly and they reflect 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 the NHBC to identify the intended final tenure of the property (that is, the basis for the sector information). This may lead to an undercount of social sector new house building and an overcount for the private sector. Within the social sector, it may also lead to an undercount of local authority new house building and an overcount for the registered social landlord sector. Therefore, the sector data should be treated with caution.

3 . Future plans

We are aiming to provide users with a better understanding of new house building across the UK in subsequent releases, including what data sources are available. We will work with the Welsh Government and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to explore whether these 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.