



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Statistical Digest of Rural England

Broadband

This document is part of the larger compendium publication the [Statistical Digest of Rural England](#), a collection of rural statistics on a wide range of social and economic government policy areas.

The Statistical Digest of Rural England is an official statistics publication meaning these statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found on the [Code of Practice web pages](#).

These statistics allow comparisons between the different rural and urban area classifications. The Rural-Urban Classification is used to distinguish rural and urban areas. The Classification defines areas as rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.

More information on the Rural-Urban Classification can be found on the [Rural-Urban Classification web pages](#).

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

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Last updated: 24th June 2021

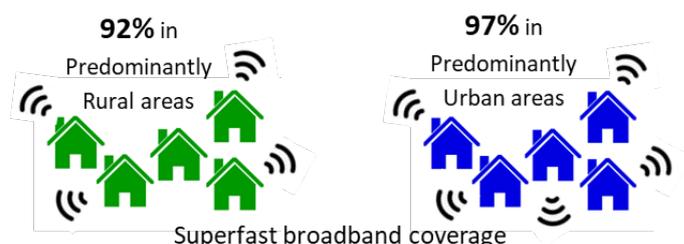
Broadband

- Availability of broadband is important for a wide range of activities. It can be used to access central services, for social activities, for businesses to operate and hence for economic development.
- Data used in this section are at Local Authority level. Some caution should be used when considering these results as the data will not distinguish where within an authority the better broadband speeds and coverage can be found such that faster broadband (and better coverage) could be within the urban areas of predominantly rural Local Authorities and vice versa.
- The following analysis uses data from Ofcom's Connect Nations report. It should be noted that the definition of 'rural' differs between the two publications. Within this Digest the Official Statistics classification is used which defines areas as rural if they are outside settlements below 10,000 resident population and open countryside. The Connected Nations report uses the Locale classification (a third-party data source based on analysis of 2011 census output areas) which defines rural areas as those settlements with a population under 2,000. Further information can be found in the methodology document here:
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2020/main-report>

- Overall, average broadband speeds in rural areas tend to be slower than those in urban areas. In 2020 the average speed in Predominantly Rural areas was 54 Mbit/s compared with 81 Mbit/s in Predominantly Urban areas. This is because:
 - There is less superfast broadband in rural areas; and
 - Rural premises are typically further away from cabinets, with long copper line connections, leading to slower performance.

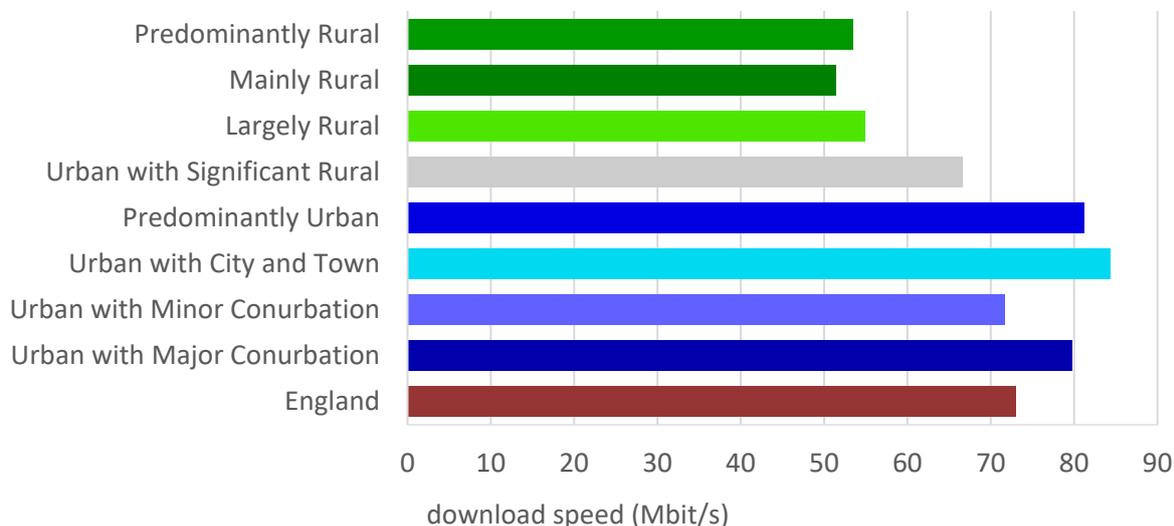
However, there are pockets of excellent broadband availability in rural areas following targeted investment via the Rural Community Broadband Fund and other community led schemes.

- For illustration, for a household with the average broadband speed in Predominantly Rural areas of 54 Mbit/s downloading a film (via On Demand) would take around 2 minutes and 15 seconds, while for a household with the average broadband speed in Predominantly Urban areas of 81 Mbit/s it would take around 1 minutes and 30 seconds (assuming a size of 858MB for a typical film). For a household with a download speed of 10Mbit/s (the minimum speed to be considered a decent broadband service) the download time jumps to 12 minutes.
- In 2020, 0.9 per cent of premises in Predominantly Rural areas were not able to access a decent broadband service (delivering a download speed of at least 10Mbit/s and upload speed of at least 1 Mbit/s). This compares with just 0.3 per cent of premises in Predominantly Urban areas.
- Superfast broadband (defined as delivering a download speed of at least 30Mbit/s) is available for 92 per cent of premises in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with 97 per cent in Predominantly Urban areas.



Broadband speed

Average download speed (in Mbit/s) where broadband and speed information are available, by Local Authority rural urban classification in England, 2020



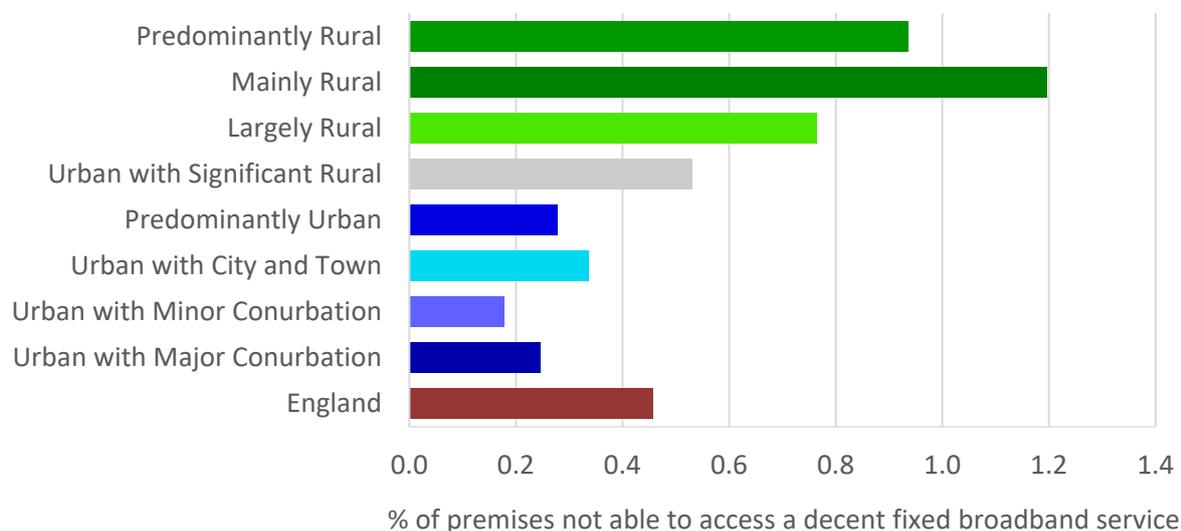
- Where broadband and speed information are available, average broadband speeds in Predominantly Rural areas tend to be slower than those in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2020 the average broadband speed in Mainly Rural areas was 51 Mbit/s compared with 84 Mbit/s in Urban with City and Town areas.
- Speeds vary because it is harder for network operators to recoup the fixed costs necessary for upgrading exchanges and cabinets in rural areas, where there are lower population densities, and therefore fewer end subscribers.

Average download speed (in Mbit/s) where broadband and speed information are available, by rural urban classification in England, 2020

	Mbit/s
Mainly Rural	51
Largely Rural	55
Urban with Significant Rural	67
Urban with City and Town	84
Urban with Minor Conurbation	72
Urban with Major Conurbation	80
Predominantly Rural	54
Predominantly Urban	81
England	73

Broadband coverage

Percentage of premises not able to access a decent fixed broadband service¹, by Local Authority rural urban classification in England, 2020



¹ Defined as delivering a download speed of at least 10 Mbit/s and upload speed of at least 1 Mbit/s.

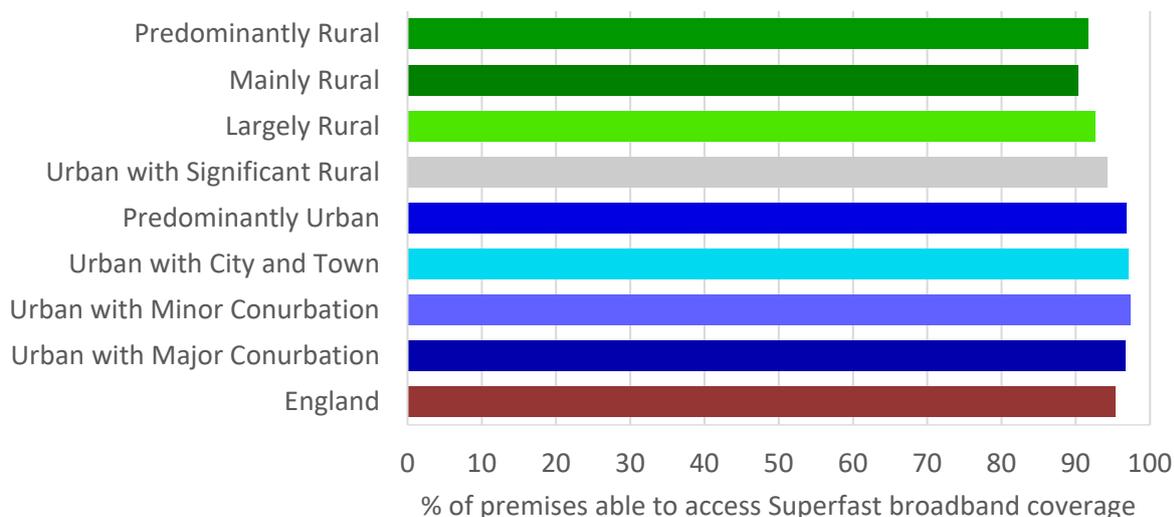
- In 2020, 0.9 per cent of premises in Predominantly Rural areas were not able to access a decent broadband service. This compares with 0.3 per cent of premises in Predominantly Urban areas.
- This provision worsens the more rural an area is so in Local Authorities classed as Mainly Rural the percentage of premises unable to access a decent broadband service rises to 1.2 per cent.

Percentage of premises not able to access a decent fixed broadband service¹, by rural urban classification in England, 2020

	% of premises
Mainly Rural	1.2
Largely Rural	0.8
Urban with Significant Rural	0.5
Urban with City and Town	0.3
Urban with Minor Conurbation	0.2
Urban with Major Conurbation	0.2
Predominantly Rural	0.9
Predominantly Urban	0.3
England	0.5

¹ Defined as delivering a download speed of at least 10 Mbit/s and upload speed of at least 1 Mbit/s.

Percentage of premises that have access to Superfast broadband coverage¹, by rural urban classification in England, 2020



¹ Defined as delivering a download speed of at least 30 Mbit/s

- In 2020, 92 per cent of premises in Predominantly Rural areas have access to Superfast broadband coverage, compared with 97 per cent of premises in Predominantly Urban areas.
- Availability differs slightly within rural areas ranging from 90 per cent of premises having availability in Mainly Rural areas increasing to 93 per cent of premises in Largely Rural areas.

Percentage of premises that have access to Superfast broadband coverage¹, by rural urban classification in England, 2020

	% of premises
Mainly Rural	90
Largely Rural	93
Urban with Significant Rural	94
Urban with City and Town	97
Urban with Minor Conurbation	97
Urban with Major Conurbation	97
Predominantly Rural	92
Predominantly Urban	97
England	95

¹ Defined as delivering a download speed of at least 30 Mbit/s.

Notes:

Figures are based on OFCOM Local Authority level data. Average speeds for fixed broadband are weighted by the number of connections while coverage data are weighted by the number of premises.

Source: OFCOM, www.ofcom.org.uk, Ofcom Connected Nations Report, 2020 ([infrastructure-2020](#)).

Department for Culture, Media and Sport publish quarterly Broadband Performance Indicators, which are available online:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/broadband-performance-indicators

They show the number of premises covered per £million of broadband delivery programme expenditure.