

Sub-national consumption statistics: Data at postcode level

Introduction

In June 2014, DECC published a short sub-national user feedback request report. The report outlined DECC's proposals to make some changes to the presentation, content and methodology of sub-national consumption statistics¹. Some of the changes that were put forward were based on previous user feedback along with other suggested improvements.

One of the suggested improvements was to publish domestic consumption statistics at postcode level for both electricity and gas. This article describes in a little more detail the methodology used and what will be published.

Domestic consumption statistical dataset for Great Britain at postcode level

DECC publish sub-national gas and electricity consumption estimates, using meter point electricity and gas consumption data for all meters in Great Britain, based on data provided by energy suppliers and other energy industry representatives. DECC have already published the 2013 gas and electricity domestic consumption data at Local Authority level (December 2014) and at Lower/Middle Super Output Areas level (January 2015)².

Using the underlying data for both fuels, we have verified the postcode information provided against the National Statistics Postcode Lookup file (NSPL)³, which is a directory of all valid postcodes in the Great Britain. This has been completed in a three stage process. Firstly, the full postcode has been checked against the NSPL. If the full postcode has matched up correctly against the NSPL, it is considered a valid postcode. The second stage deals with the invalid postcodes, i.e. a full postcode that has not been successfully matched against the NSPL. At this stage we matched a partial postcode against the equivalent on the NSPL. A partial postcode is the first half of a postcode and usually contains a maximum of 4 characters. Unsuccessful matches at this point, lead to the final stage, which is to allocate the meter point to an 'unallocated' category for Great Britain.

The datasets show the number of meters and total domestic consumption at postcode level (a combination of full and partial postcodes will be shown in one list, for reasons described above) and 'unallocated' meters in Great Britain. This data is provided at a finer geographical level detail, and so there are a number of disclosure issues. We have therefore, re-allocated meters and consumption to partial postcodes, if a full postcode contains less than 6 meters. We have also re-allocated partial postcodes that are disclosive to the 'unallocated' category for Great Britain (this affected around 150 electricity and gas meters each). Although meters at postcode districts level (partial postcodes) are less likely to be disclosive, the full postcode can still be deduced if the dataset contains a list of the majority of full postcodes within a postcode district.

The final non-disclosive datasets were published on the sub-national consumption statistics webpages for electricity⁴ and gas⁵ on Thursday 26 March 2015. Since the file sizes are large, the online datasets have been split across several files. These are experimental statistics. If users find the datasets useful, we will assess the possibility of publishing updates every other year.

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www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/320488/sub_national_user_feedback_request.pdf

² www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change/about/statistics#sub-national-energy-consumption-statistics

³ www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/products/postcode-directories/-nspp-/index.html

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/collections/sub-national-electricity-consumption-data

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/collections/sub-national-gas-consumption-data

Future developments

There are a number of other upcoming developments for sub-national consumption statistics, which DECC are keen to explore later in 2015, these include, publishing similar statistics at Parliamentary Constituency level and gas consumption data, which has not been weather corrected.

Feedback

DECC welcomes your feedback on the postcode level statistics as well as future developments, and are keen to learn how useful these datasets are and how they have been used. We would also welcome feedback about other geographic breakdowns users may find helpful and will assess the possibility of publishing these in future.

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