

Non-domestic rating: Stock of properties including business floorspace

Background Information



Valuation Office
Agency

Contents

Scope and content of the data	Page 1
Data information and methodology	Page 3
Background notes	Page 6
Data Quality	Page 7
Use made of the data	Page 7
Metadata	Page 8
Timeliness and Punctuality	Page 8
Relevance	Page 8
Coherence and Comparability	Page 8
Accessibility and Clarity	Page 9
Confidentiality, Transparency and Security	Page 9
Further Information	Page 9
Glossary	Page 9

Scope and content of the data

This release contains statistics relating to stock of properties including business floorspace for England and Wales. The statistics provide information on the number and value of the stock of rateable properties (known as “hereditaments”), as well as the floorspace and RV per m², broken down by sector, geographic location, special category, property type and rateable value band. Previously, these statistics were reported in two separate publications, [stock of properties collection](#) and [business floorspace statistics](#). Further information is provided below.

Stock of properties including business floorspace for England and Wales

These tables include:

- Total rateable value by property description and country on the Central Rating List (Table SOP1.0)
- Number of rateable properties and total rateable value by property type and country (Table SOP1.1)
- Number of rateable properties and total rateable value by sector type and rateable value band by country (Tables SOP2.0 to SOP2.2)
- All property types: number of rateable properties and rateable value by administrative area (Tables SOP3.0 and SOP3.1)

- Retail sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by administrative area (Tables SOP4.0 and SOP4.1)
- Office sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by administrative area (Tables SOP5.0 and SOP5.1)
- Industrial sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by administrative area (Tables SOP6.0 and SOP6.1)
- Other sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by administrative area (Tables SOP7.0 and SOP7.1)
- Total number of rateable properties, total rateable value and average rateable value by special category (Table SC1.0)
- Total: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by administrative area (Tables FS1.0 and FS1.1)
- Retail sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by administrative area (Tables FS2.0 and FS2.1)
- Office sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by administrative area (Tables FS3.0 and FS3.1)
- Industrial sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by administrative area (Tables FS4.0 and FS4.1)
- Other sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by administrative area (Tables FS5.0 and FS5.1)
- Number and total rateable value of properties without a floorspace, by administrative area (Tables FS6.0 and FS6.1)

The following tables have only been provided in CSV format:

- Total: number of rateable properties and rateable value by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables SOP_OA1.0 and SOP_OA1.1)
- Retail sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables SOP_OA2.0 and SOP_OA2.1)
- Office sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables SOP_OA3.0 and SOP_OA3.1)
- Industrial sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables SOP_OA4.0 and SOP_OA4.1)

- Other sector: number of rateable properties and rateable value by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables SOP_OA5.0 and SOP_OA5.1)
- Total: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA1.0 and FS_OA1.1)
- Retail sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA2.0 and FS_OA2.1)
- Office sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA3.0 and FS_OA3.1)
- Industrial sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA4.0 and FS_OA4.1)
- Other sector: floorspace and rateable value per metre squared by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA5.0 and FS_OA5.1)
- Number and total rateable value of properties without a floorspace by country, region, county, local authority district and middle and lower super output areas (Tables FS_OA6.0 and FS_OA6.1)

New tables for 2020 publication:

- Total: number of rateable properties and rateable value by special category and area (SCAT_AREAS_N_all and SCAT_AREAS_RV_all)
- Rateable value £0-£11,999: number of rateable properties and rateable value by special category and area (SCAT_AREAS_N_lt12 and SCAT_AREAS_RV_lt12)
- Rateable value £12,000-£14,999: number of rateable properties and rateable value by special category and area (SCAT_AREAS_N_1215 and SCAT_AREAS_RV_1215)
- Rateable value £15,000-£50,999: number of rateable properties and rateable value by special category and area (SCAT_AREAS_N_1551 and SCAT_AREAS_RV_1551)
- Rateable value £51,000+: number of rateable properties and rateable value by special category and area (SCAT_AREAS_N_gt51 and SCAT_AREAS_RV_gt51)

Data information and methodology

Categories

For the purpose of this release, 'Sector' consists of the following categories: Retail, Industrial and Office (RIO), which is a categorisation commonly used by those in the surveying

profession. Properties are mapped to a RIO sector based on its SCat code, which is an operational code used by the VOA to classify a property’s use for administrative purposes.

VOA statisticians have, in conjunction with operational colleagues, mapped each SCat code to one of the three categories. The ‘Other’ category was created to cover SCat codes which could not be readily assigned to ‘Retail’, ‘Office’ or ‘Industry’.

While the VOA endeavours to keep these codes up-to-date, in some cases there may be a change in a property’s use which the VOA is not made immediately aware of. These statistics are based on the data recorded on the VOA systems at 31 March 2020.

SCat codes were assigned to categories where the floorspace data met certain criteria:

- Where more than 70% of the records had recorded floorspace and the average RV of all rateable properties was within a tolerance range of the average RV of rateable properties with floorspace.
- Where more than 30 records had floorspace and the ratio of averages is within stricter tolerances.
- And, in a few exceptional cases, where fewer than 30 records with floorspace and the ratio is within even stricter tolerances.
- Failing these checks, the SCat was assigned to the properties without a floorspace category. Excluded properties are included in the properties without a floorspace table (FS6.0, FS6.1, FS_OA6.0 and FS_OA6.1).

Category look-up table

A metadata Scat code lookup file is available on the release page.

Properties by sub-sector

In addition to the 4 sectors, the SCat codes have also been mapped to 18 sub-sectors, within the overall Retail/Office/Industrial/Other categories as shown in table SC1.0. In some cases – particularly “Offices” – we have not been able to identify a more detailed breakdown. This is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Sector and sub-sector categories

Sector	Sub-sector
Retail	Financial and Professional Services
	Shops
Office	Offices
Industry	General Industrial
	Storage & Distribution
	Other
Other	Assembly and Leisure
	Education
	Health
	Hotels, Guest & Boarding, Self-Catering etc.
	Non Residential Institutions
	Offices*
	Other
	Retail
	Residential Institutions

	Storage & Distribution
	Transport
	Utilities

* These are offices that are part of a specialist property, and so have been attributed to “Other” sector rather than the “Office” sector.

Floorspace and RV per m²

Statistics presented in these tables (Tables FS1.0 to FS6.1 and table FS_OA1.0 to FS_OA6.1) are consistent with the relevant rating list so those for 2001-2005 are based on the 2000 rating list; 2006-2010 are based on the 2005 rating list; 2011-2017 are based on the 2010 rating list and 2018-2020 are based on the 2017 rating list.

The floorspace in a particular location or sector can change for a number of reasons, including but not restricted to: demolished properties; new entities; reconstitution and alterations. RV per m² will further be impacted by the outcome of successful challenges to valuations and Valuation Office Reports (VORs).

Properties without a floorspace valuation are not included in total floorspace and RV per m² tables and in most instances the Valuation Office does not have a recorded floorspace for these as it is not used for valuation purposes. In the majority of cases, these properties are included in the ‘Other’ sector. Tables FS6.0, FS6.1, FS_OA6.0 and FS_OA6.1 show the number of properties and the total RV of properties without a floorspace.

A metadata file is available on the release page showing the categories where excluded properties exist.

Imputing for missing floorspace

For rateable properties with no available floorspace data that are assigned to a floorspace category, the floorspace has been imputed using the following steps:

- The RV per m² was aggregated for all records with floorspace in each Rating List (i.e. combining the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 for the 2000 List), for each SCat code and region (or for the whole of Wales).
- Where such an RV/ m² would be derived from a low number of cases, a broader average (e.g national SCat average, or regional sub grouping of SCat codes of comparable properties) was calculated.
- Since all rateable properties without exception have RV data, the missing floorspace was then estimated by dividing the RV by the relevant mean RV/ m².

Geo-referencing

Statistics for tables SOP_OA1.0 to SOP_OA5.1 and FS_OA1.1 to FS_OA6.1 are built up from postcode to output area, rather than billing authority code as in tables SOP1.0 to SOP7.1 and FS1.0 to FS6.1.

Aggregated statistics are presented at various geographies (e.g. region, local authority/unitary authority and middle super output area / lower super output area). All geographic variables are assigned by matching VOA records to the February 2020 version of the National Statistics Postcode Lookup (NSPL) file.

Not all rateable properties can be geo-referenced in this way. Where this has occurred we have identified these cases as “unmatched” in the tables. There are some minor differences between statistics for billing authority and local authorities because of this unmatched category and there are some properties that may be contained within one local authority but administered by a different billing authority.

Other issues

The VOA measurement conventions follow the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Code of Measurement Practice. The floorspace measurement convention used for different properties is given below. Some properties in certain areas do not comply with this code and follow established local practice.

- Retail premises and offices: Net internal area (NIA): Includes most space useful to the business of an occupant, and excludes common areas, stairwells, and foyers. The lift shafts, walls and columns of a property are also excluded.
- Factories and warehouses: Gross internal area (GIA): Includes all internal area, but excludes external walls.
- Other: There are recommendations for different types of premises and depending on the type, measurement can be NIA or GIA.

The impacts of summarising floorspace data measured on different conventions, as may occur in the Other category, has yet to be fully explored.

Background notes

Valuation officers of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) are required, by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, to compile and maintain rating lists specifying a rateable value (RV) for each relevant non-domestic rateable property (also known as a hereditament) in England and Wales. These rateable values provide the basis for national non-domestic rates bills, which are issued by local billing authorities.

The VOA collects information on rateable properties. A rateable property is a property on which rates may be charged and is the unit to which the VOA assigns RV. In general rateable properties are buildings or premises within buildings, appropriate for or used for single occupation. Rateable properties can be occupied or vacant. This has no impact on RV, although it can affect the level of rates levied on a property. All the statistics in this release relate to rateable properties.

The RV of a property is broadly the value at which a property might be expected to be let for one year. It is based on a range of factors including use, location and age, but a major determinant of rental value is the size (total floorspace) of the property.

For many of the more common types of commercial properties, the VOA measures the floorspace of the property as part of the detailed internal surveys that it undertakes to assess RVs.

As part of the valuation process, each rateable property is assigned a Special Category (SCat) code. Over time, this has become one of the key variables for classifying properties and it forms the basis of the category assignments in this series.

Non-domestic rateable properties fall into either a local rating list or a central rating list. There is a single local rating list for each billing authority in England and Wales, and there are two

central rating lists, one for England and one for Wales. The central rating lists contain the rating assessments for the network property of major transport, utility and telecommunications undertakings and cross-country pipelines. There is a single entry in one of the rating lists (either for England or Wales) for each company named in the Central Rating List Regulations 2005. There are separate regulations and lists for [England](#) and [Wales](#). The current rating lists came into effect on 1 April 2017.

There is a single aggregate rateable value shown for all the property occupied by the named ratepayer that falls within their definition in the regulations. Any property occupied by a central rating list ratepayer that falls outside the definition will be shown individually in a local rating list.

Rates on central rating list rateable properties in England are paid directly to Housing, Communities and Local Government, and in Wales to the Welsh Government.

Data quality

Suitable data sources

The information supplied in the tables is based upon administrative data held within the VOA's operational database. All administrative data are subject to processing and process errors and as such, while the VOA has made every effort to ensure accuracy of the data underpinning this publication, it is possible that some errors remain.

Validation and processing steps are undertaken on the data, for instance imputing for floorspace where it is missing and assigning categories. The data are then geo-referenced (assigned to geographic areas) and the final statistical outputs generated.

Assured quality

Our quality assurance follows the approach set out in the VOA Quality Policy which is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voa-quality-policy/voa-quality-policy>

As part of the production of this publication, quality assurance takes place:

- During the valuation of properties.
- As part of the creation of the data which underpins the publication.
- As part of the coding which produces the publication outputs.
- As part of automated and manual checks of outputs.
- Using a comprehensive QA Check List and a QA Issues Log.

Use made of the data

This publication is being released as part of a drive towards making the VOA's data more accessible as well as continuing to improve, and make more consistent, presentation of information in order to assist users conducting their own analysis of VOA data. The data are used to inform government policy and conduct analyses to support the operations of the VOA.

In a wider context this publication supports BAs' requirements for information in respect of the Business Rates Retention Scheme contained within the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which can be found at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents>.

We will keep under review the format of this summary document to improve the presentation of our statistics and welcome feedback from users on the usefulness of the information provided in this summary. Please forward any comments to the [Statistics Inbox](#).

Metadata

A metadata table for the csv tables is available on the release page.

A metadata table that provides a lookup between special category and primary description where there are five or more properties is available on the release page.

Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

Releases are always punctual, and published on the pre-announced dates. Pre-announcement of the precise date will occur at least four weeks before publication. The month of publication is pre-announced in our [statistics release calendar](#).

This publication is published on an annual basis within four months of the last day of the reference period.

Relevance

The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs.

It is important that the statistics produced are relevant to user needs and that they meet the needs of users, both in coverage and in content. These statistics evolved largely in response to Freedom of Information requests and parliamentary questions and were further developed with input from a NDR Statistics Advisory Panel which consisted of key users of the data.

Coherence and Comparability

Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain, for example, geographic level.

These statistics are drawn from the same source, and use a coherent and consistent methodology.

The floorspace statistics presented in this release are not directly comparable with the first, published in 2012 and the second published in 2016, for several reasons:

- Historic figures in this release (for example statistics representing the Rating Lists as at 1 April 2000) are compiled using the latest data available (extracted 31 March 2020), using revised methodology (see [geo-referencing](#)) and this will include

backdated assessments or other amendments not reflected in earlier statistical series.

- In order to make this publication consistent with the stock of properties, the mappings of SCat codes have been reassigned between sectors since the first and second releases reflecting the latest operational expertise based on latest practices in valuation. In addition to this we have reassigned several SCat codes that were previously included in the other category to the excluded category. This is because they were impacted by missing floorspace and no longer satisfied the conditions which would allow missing values to be imputed.

Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, and accompanying advice.

The release is available free of charge. All official statistics are made available primarily as Excel spreadsheets with data available in an open format (CSV versions) and a background information document.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

Access to the data and release prior to its publication is limited to the statistics production team only. Occasionally, valuation experts may be consulted as part of the quality assurance process. The list of pre-release recipients is published alongside the release.

Further information on the VOA Confidentiality and Access policy is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuation-office-agency-confidentiality-and-access-policy/valuation-office-agency-confidentiality-and-access-policy>

Further Information

Timings of future releases are regularly placed on the Agency's website at the following location:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements?utf8=%E2%9C%93&organisation%5B%5D=valuation-office-agency>

For further information on the area codes used in this release, please refer to the ONS's website:

http://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets?q=Guide+to+Presenting+Statistics+Administrative&sort_by=name&sort_order=asc

Glossary

Area code – a unique identifier for administrative geographies as specified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Assessment – an entry in the rating list is often referred to as an assessment.

Assessment reviews – these are generally referred to as “reports”, and relate to instances where the VOA will review the entry in the rating list when new information becomes available (either from within the VOA, or from the relevant billing authority).

Billing authority (BA) – a local authority empowered to collect non-domestic rates on behalf of itself and other local authorities in its area. In England, shires, metropolitan districts, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, unitary authorities, London boroughs and the City of London are BAs.

Billing authority code – a unique identifier for BAs.

Central rating list – the VOA’s list of rateable values for companies named in the Central Rating List Regulations, primarily for the network property of major transport, utility, and telecommunications undertakings and cross country pipelines. There are separate lists for England and Wales.

Compiled list – the rating list as it comes into effect following revaluation; for the 2010 rating list this is the list as at 1 April 2010 and for the 2017 rating list it is the list as at 1 April 2017.

IPP – Interested Person Proposal. A proposal by the ratepayer or agent acting on their behalf to alter the local rating list entry.

Local rating list(s) – the VOA’s lists of all the non-domestic rateable properties in England and Wales. There is a separate local list for each BA.

Rateable property (also known as hereditament) – a unit of non-domestic property that is, or may become, liable to non-domestic rating and thus appears in the local rating list. The area of a property included in a rateable value calculation can cover all of one property, only part of a property or be several separate units in one building or site.

Rateable value (RV) – a monetary value assigned to every rateable property within a rating list, broadly based on the annual rent for which a rateable property could have been let on the open market at a set date.

Rating lists – There are 353 Local Rating Lists in England and Wales, one for each Local Billing Authority. There are two Central Rating Lists, one for England and one for Wales.

Region – a geographical unit formerly referred to as Government Office Region (GOR). The GOR framework was the primary classification for regional statistics and comprised nine regions of England, which, combined with the devolved administrations, collectively spanned the United Kingdom. From 1 April 2011 the term GOR was dropped in favour of region. This release comprises English regions and Wales.

Sector – a grouping of SCat codes. More information can be found under ‘category’, in the data information and methodology section of this document here.

Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) – reduces the amount of non-domestic rates the business will need to pay on that property. The following link provides more information on SBRR: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/small-business-rate-relief>.

Special category (SCat) code – a classification of property detailing the basis on which it was rated.

Valuation Office report (VOR) – a report (assessment review) initiated by the VOA to review an entry in the local rating list. These could typically be attributable to a demolition, new property build or other physical change to a property.

Valuation officer – an employee of the VOA and the officer authorised by statute to compile and maintain rating lists.