



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Collection rates and receipts of council tax and non-domestic rates in England, 2020-21 (Revised)

Technical Notes



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National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). It is the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities's statisticians' responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in May 2010 following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority against the previous code.

Since the last review by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Included details about the responsible statistician and the known uses of the data
- Annual review of the validations
- Ensuring that the data collected are fit for purpose.

Data collection

The QRC4 data collection is the final in a series of forms issued throughout the year to obtain data about the amounts of council tax and non-domestic rates collected each quarter by local authorities. The QRC4 form additionally collects data about the council tax and non-domestic rates due to be collected and the amounts actually collected (both in respect of the current year and other years), from which an in-year collection rate can be calculated. It also collects data relating to arrears and write-offs.

The QRC4 was issued in April 2021 to all billing authorities in England to report on the 314 billing authorities that were in existence in 2020-21.

Data quality

Things to note on this release

This Statistical Release contains National Statistics and as such has been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. National Statistics products undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer demands.

The information in this release is based on data returned to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on behalf of 314 out of 314 billing authorities in England on the final Quarterly Return of Council Taxes and Non-Domestic Rates (QRC4) returns. These were submitted between April and June 2021. The data are collected using legislative powers that require all billing authorities to return completed forms. The forms should be completed in accordance with the guidance provided, however this guidance is open to interpretation by local authorities when they complete the forms.

Figures are subjected to rigorous pre-defined validation tests both within the form itself, while the form is being completed by the authority, and then by the DLUHC as the data are received and stored.

Finally, the release document, once prepared, is also subject to intensive peer review before being cleared as fit for the purposes of publication.

Definitions

A list of terms relating to local government finance is given in the glossary at Annex G of *Local Government Finance Statistics England 2016*. This is accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-finance-statistics-england>

The most relevant terms for this release are explained below.

Arrears – unpaid council tax or non-domestic rates that, in the opinion of the billing authority, can still be collected. They also include costs the local authorities have incurred in attempting to collect unpaid council tax or non-domestic rates.

Billing authority – in 2020-21, they were the 314 local authorities empowered to set and collect council tax, and manage the Collection Fund, on behalf of itself and local authorities in its area. They are also empowered to collect non-domestic rates. In England, shire and metropolitan districts, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, unitary authorities, London Boroughs and the City of London are billing authorities. Other types of authority are either precepting authorities or levying bodies.

Business rates retention - the business rates retention scheme was introduced in April 2013. The local government sector (local authorities and fire and rescue authorities) can now keep at least half of any business (non-domestic) rates revenue to invest in local services.

Council tax – a local charge (or charges) set by the billing authority in order to collect sufficient revenue to meet their budget and the precepts issued by the precepting authorities. It is calculated based on the council tax band assigned to the dwelling.

Localisation of council tax support – introduced on 1 April 2013 to provide support to low-income council taxpayers and replaced council tax benefit (where claimants were

liable for the full charge, but it was paid by government). It is a locally set discount (claimants are only liable for part of the charge but have to pay it themselves).

National non-domestic rates (NNDR) – also known as **business rates**, they are a means by which local businesses or organisations contribute to the cost of local authority services. Liable properties include public buildings, pipelines and advertising hoardings, as well as businesses. Some non-domestic properties, such as agricultural land and associated buildings, and churches, are exempt. The national multiplier paid by businesses has been set by the Government.

Net collectable debit (NCD) - the income that authorities should collect in the year if everyone who is liable for either council tax or non-domestic rates pays what they should. This includes not only those who are liable to pay for the whole year but also those who are liable to pay for part of the year. It reflects the amount payable after discounts (council tax) and reliefs (non-domestic rates) are applied.

Precepting authority – this can be either a local precepting authority such as parish or town council, or a major precepting authority such as a county council in two-tier areas, police authorities, fire and rescue authorities and the Greater London Authority.

Technical Reforms to Council Tax – from 1 April 2013 several reforms were made to council tax discounts in a move to give local authorities more control over the level of discounts set in their area. These reforms replaced council tax exemptions for short term empty properties, and properties undergoing major structural repair with a new discretionary discount which allowed local authorities to offer a discount of between 0 and 100% on all empty properties.

An Empty Property Premium was also introduced in 2013 which allows local authorities to charge an additional council tax premium. In 2020-21 the premium was changed to allow a premium of up to 100% on properties which had been empty for between 2 and 5 years and up to 200% for dwellings that had been empty for more than five years.

Write-offs - the amounts of council tax or non-domestic rates local authorities no longer considered recoverable - this does not include any provision for bad debts. In this release the figures for council tax write-offs should include court costs or administration costs that have also been written off.

Revisions policy

This policy has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Revisions Policy and can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistical-notice-dclg-revisions-policy>

It covers two types of revisions that the policy covers, as follow:

Non-Scheduled Revisions

Where a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation, imputation or dissemination process, the statistical release, live tables and other accompanying releases will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.

Scheduled Revisions

There are no scheduled revisions.

Revisions in this release

Revisions have been made to the June 2021 publication to include data on arrears that had not been submitted by South Ribble at the time of publication; confirmation of the provisional data relating to receipts that had been received from South Ribble; and amendments relating to court costs received from Chorley. Revisions have been made to tables 6 to 8 in the release and to the drop down local authority level table. Data relating to the quarterly receipts for South Ribble will be published within the next release of the live tables.

Other information

Uses of the data

The data in this Statistical Release are essential for a number of different purposes. A central and immediate purpose is to provide the Secretary of State, Ministers, HM Treasury and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) with the most up to date information available on the amount of council tax and non-domestic rates collected by local authorities and their performance as shown by collection rates. The data are important sources for various evidence-based policy and financial decisions and answering numerous parliamentary questions.

The figures are used by the ONS in compiling the Public Sector Finances and National Accounts, which are used to set fiscal and monetary policy. The data are collected quarterly during the year and estimates for England are provided to the ONS. These data are published on a quarterly basis and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-local-government-finance>

In addition, it is used by local authorities and their associations, other government departments, members of the business community and the general public. The live tables also provide a local authority breakdown of figures relating to the specific billing year and the collection of finance regardless of the year to which it relates.

Because the statistical release includes data for individual authorities, it enables the public (including both council tax and non-domestic rate payers) to compare its authority with others in the same type or locally.

Related Statistics

The Statistical Release can be found at the following web address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-tax-statistics>

Timings of future releases are regularly placed on the Department's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics>

For a fuller picture of recent trends in local government finance, readers are directed to the latest edition of Local Government Finance Statistics England which is available from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-finance-statistics-england>

Devolved administration statistics

Both the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government also collect council tax data. Their information can be found at the following websites:

Scotland:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Local-Government-Finance>

Wales:

English: https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research?topic=Local%20government&lang=en&_ga=2.105214470.425459137.1561456247-2072796245.1561456247

Welsh:

https://llyw.cymru/ystadegau-ac-ymchwil?topic=Local%20government&lang=en&_ga=2.105214470.425459137.1561456247-2072796245.1561456247

User engagement

Users are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and encouraged. These should be sent to grc.statistics@communities.gov.uk

The Department's engagement strategy to meet the needs of statistics users is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-strategy-to-meet-the-needs-of-statistics-users>