



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Statistical Digest of Rural England

Second and Empty Homes

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](#).

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Rural Housing

Second Homes

Second Homes are domestic dwellings owned by individuals who have another dwelling as their primary residence. Dwellings which are classified as second homes can receive a council tax discount of between 0% and 50%.

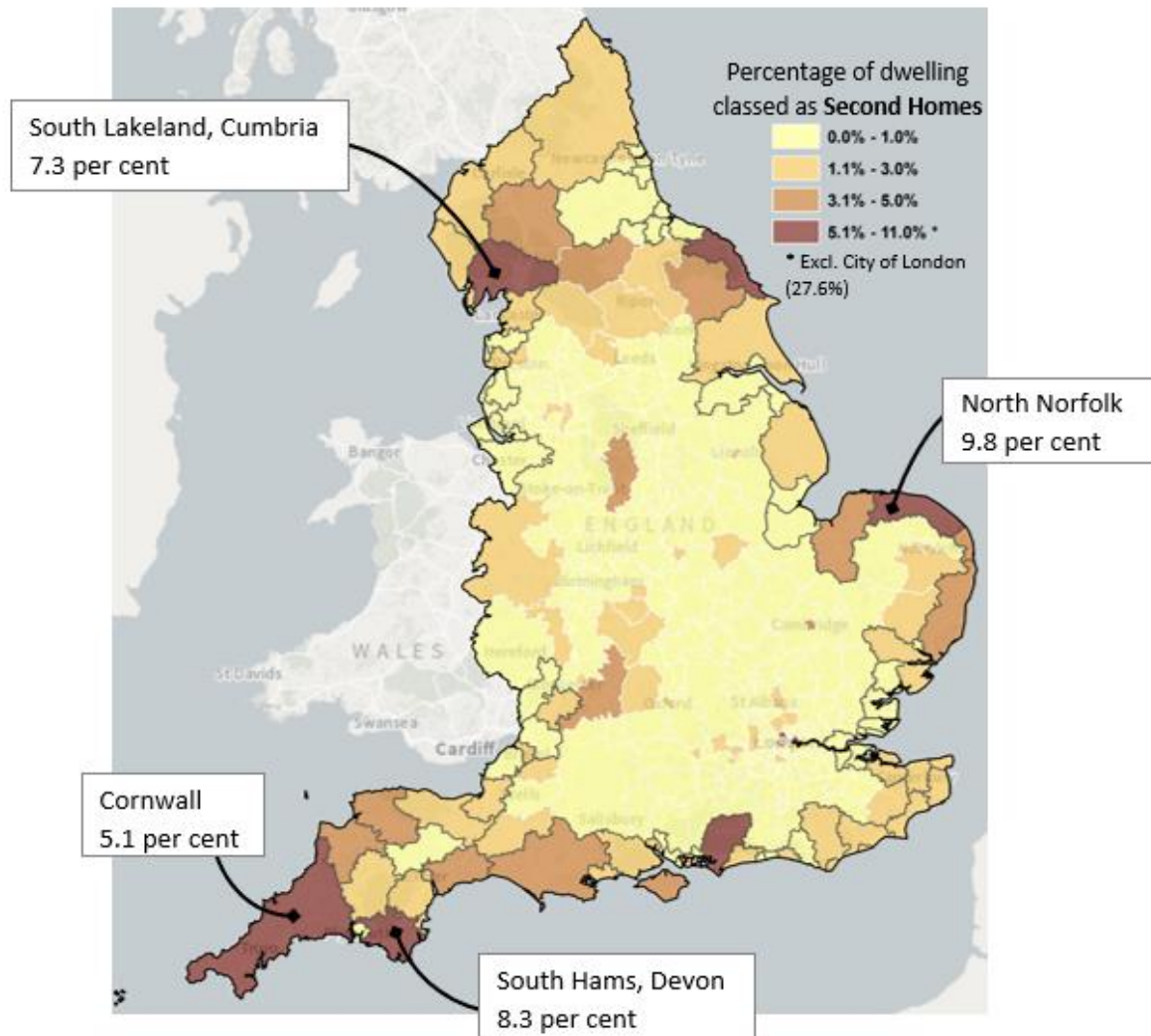
- In 2020, there were 263,000 dwellings classed as second homes in England, with 97,700 (37 per cent) in Predominantly Rural areas and 138,500 (53 per cent) in Predominantly Urban areas.
- In Predominantly Rural areas 1.8 per cent of dwellings are classed as second homes, which is twice that of Predominantly Urban areas (0.9 per cent) and Urban with Significant Rural areas (0.9 per cent).
- The difference is more pronounced in coastal areas, where 3.0 per cent of dwellings in Predominantly Rural and coastal areas are classed as second homes, compared with 0.9 per cent in areas that are Predominantly Urban and coastal.

Number and Percentage of Second Home by 2011 Local Authority Rural Classification, 2020

Rural Urban Classification	Number of second homes	Percentage of chargeable dwellings classed as second homes
Mainly Rural	51,700	2.4%
Largely Rural	46,000	1.4%
Urban with Significant Rural	26,800	0.9%
Urban with City and Town	52,600	0.8%
Urban with Minor Conurbation	3,100	0.3%
Urban with Major Conurbation	82,800	1.0%
Predominantly Rural	97,700	1.8%
Urban with Significant Rural	26,800	0.9%
Predominantly Urban	138,500	0.9%
England	263,000	1.1%

- Mainly Rural areas have the highest rate of second homes, with 2.4 per cent of dwellings classed as second homes, compared with 1.0 per cent in Urban areas with Major Conurbation (the most urban areas).
- Further tables on the estimates of second homes are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Percentage of dwellings classed as second homes by Local Authority District area in England, 2020. Coastal areas are highlighted with dark borders.



- The percentage of dwellings classed as second homes in all coastal areas was 1.7 per cent, more than twice the rate in all non-coastal areas (0.8 per cent).
- The areas with the highest percentage of dwellings classed as second homes, outside of London, were North Norfolk (9.8 per cent), Isles of Scilly (8.8 per cent), and South Hams (8.3 per cent), all of which are Mainly Rural areas.

Notes

Local Authority Districts have been defined as a coastal area if they are within 1 kilometre of the coastline of England.

Local Authority Districts 2020 boundary definition used.

The data source is the [Local Authority Council Taxbase England 2020 dataset](#), which consists of self-reported information for each local authority area on the total number of dwellings subject to council tax by tax band, as well as any exemptions, discounts, or premiums subject to the dwellings.

The second homes council tax discount was introduced in April 2013.

Empty Dwellings

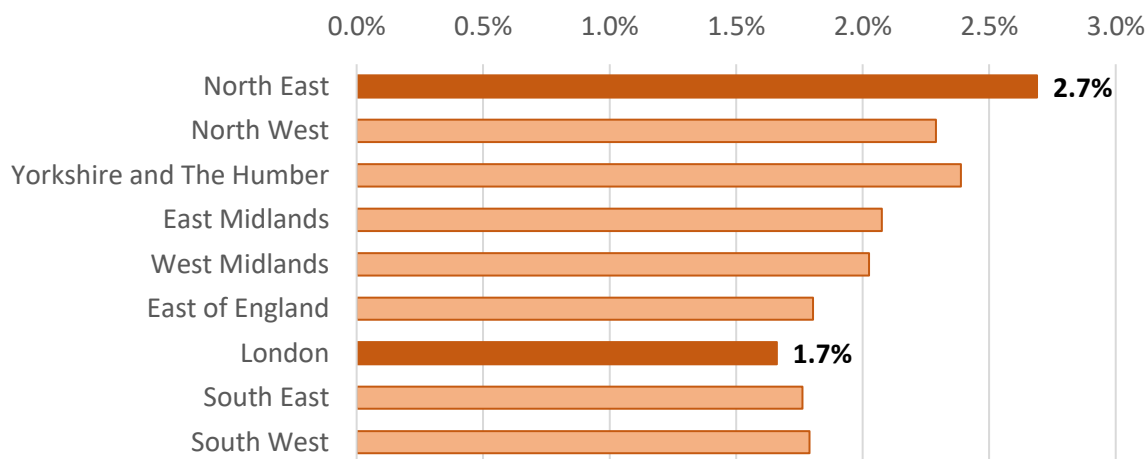
Empty Homes are domestic dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. Dwellings which are classified as empty homes can receive a council tax discount of between 0% and 100%, while those which have remained empty for between 2 and 5 years can be subject to a premium of up to 100% of their council tax rate, and dwellings which have remained empty for over 5 years can receive a premium of up to 200%, all at the discretion of each local authority.

- In 2020, there were 479,300 dwellings classed as empty homes in England, with 103,300 (22 per cent) in Predominantly Rural areas and 318,600 (66 per cent) in Predominantly Urban areas.
- The rurality of an area has little impact on the percentage of dwellings classed as empty across England, as Predominantly Rural areas have 1.9 per cent of dwellings classed as empty homes, while Predominantly Urban areas (2.0 per cent) and Urban with Significant Rural areas (1.8 per cent) have similar rates.
- The differences are more pronounced across the regions of England, where 2.7 per cent of dwellings are classed as empty in the North East, compared with 1.7 per cent in London.

Number and Percentage of Empty Dwellings by 2011 Local Authority Rural Classification, 2020

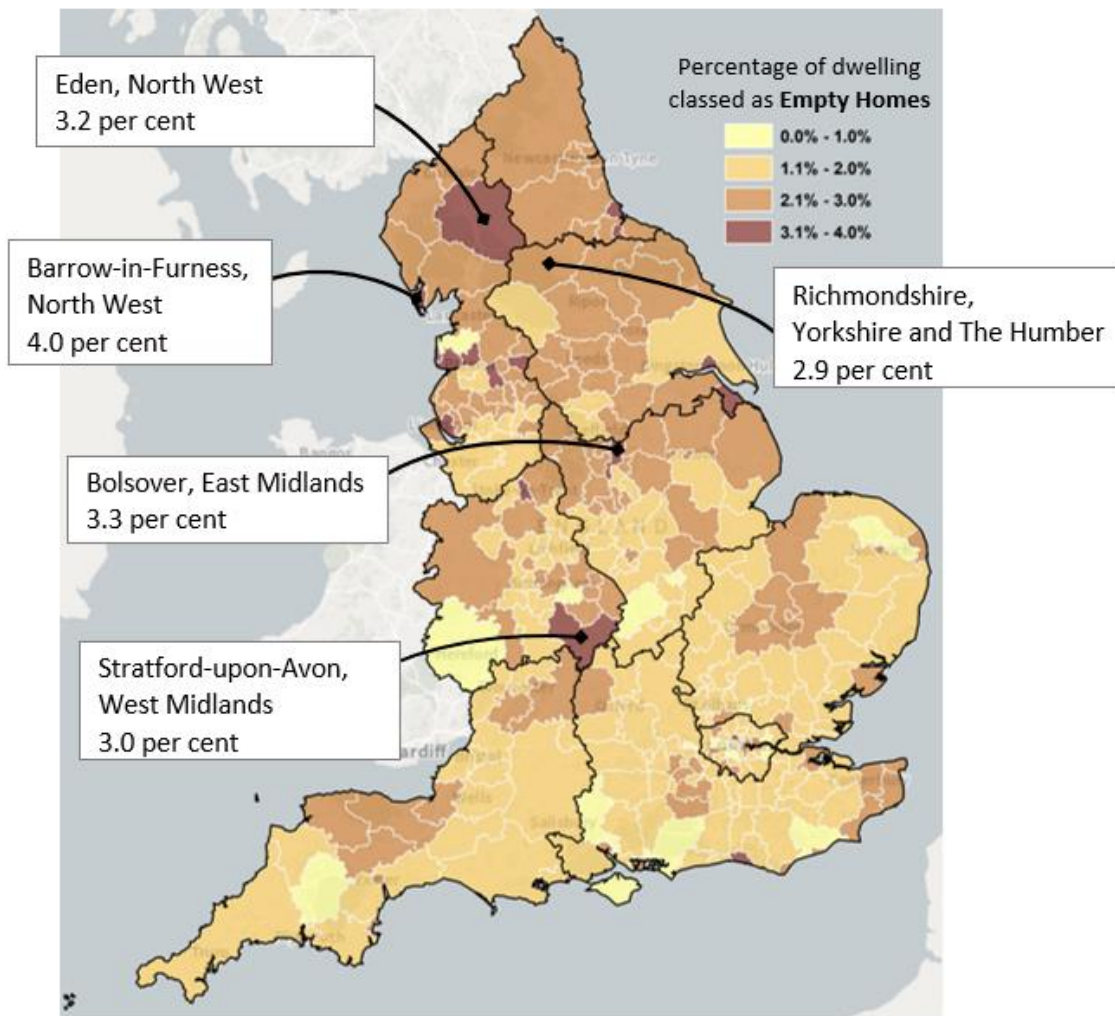
Rural Urban Classification	Number of empty dwellings	Percentage of chargeable dwellings classed as empty
Predominantly Rural	103,300	1.9%
Urban with Significant Rural	57,400	1.8%
Predominantly Urban	318,600	2.0%
England	479,300	2.0%

Percentage of chargeable dwellings classed as empty, by Region, England, 2020



- The regions of England with the highest percentage of empty dwellings are the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber, while the regions with the lowest percentage of empty dwellings are East of England, London, South East and South West.
- Further data tables on the estimates of empty homes are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Percentage of dwellings classed as empty by Local Authority District area in England, 2020. Regions are highlighted with dark boundaries.



- The areas with the highest percentage of dwellings classed as empty homes are Blackpool, City of London, and Barrow-in-Furness, all 4.0 per cent.
- The Predominantly Rural areas with the highest percentage of empty homes are Isles of Scilly, Eden (both 3.2 per cent), and Stratford-upon-Avon (3.0 per cent).

Notes

In 2020, 300 out of 314 authorities reported they were charging the premium on some of their empty dwellings. This was the first year where authorities have been asked to report the premium based on the length of time the dwelling had been empty, so some caution should be taken when interpreting the split of data. 247 authorities reported premiums for dwellings that have been empty for 2 to 5 years and 5 years and over. 53 authorities did not reported figures split between the two categories. In these cases, we have used the figures as reported.

Local Authority Districts 2020 boundary definition used.

The data source is the [Local Authority Council Taxbase England 2020 dataset](#), which consists of self-reported information for each local authority area on the total number of dwellings subject to council tax by tax band, as well as any exemptions, discounts, or premiums subject to the dwellings.