



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Count of Traveller Caravans, July 2021 England

Technical Notes



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Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/luhc>

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Data collection

The Traveller Caravan Count publication is compiled from information submitted by local authorities in England in order to provide local data on the number and seasonal movement of caravans. The count of traveller caravans' publication is collected on a particular count day, providing a snapshot of the number of caravans on the day of the count. Local authorities carried out the July 2021 count on or around 22 July 2021.

The count takes place twice a year, in January and July, to reflect winter residence and summer travelling trends. A local authority representative will visit traveller caravan sites and carry out a manual count. Information is collected about caravans on authorised socially rented sites, authorised privately funded sites, unauthorised developments (sites on land owned by travellers for which planning permission has not been granted) and unauthorised encampments (sites on land not owned by travellers and which do not have planning permission). This information is then submitted by local authorities in England via a series of online forms accessed on the department's centralised data collection platform, DELTA since January 2018 (prior to that data was submitted on a different data collection platform, Interform). This data is collected and published bi-annually. A count of Travelling Showpeople's caravans or moveable dwellings is included in the January count only and a count of New Affordable Residential Pitches is included in the July count only.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no count was carried out in July 2020 or January 2021. The pandemic has also negatively impacted the response rate for the July 2021 collection, with data providers citing staff turnover/shortages and illness as key issues preventing them from carrying out the count. Further information on non-response is provided in the next section.

The traveller caravan count covers data on the number of caravans and traveller sites in England; it does not cover the number of occupants residing in these caravans or caravan sites or the potential causes for any observed change.

The information in this release is based on data returned to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by local authorities in England. Users should note that revisions may have been made to figures from previous counts in this release as a result of updated data being received. This release presents the most accurate data on the

number of traveller caravans in England and the accompanying live tables should be used for historic comparisons.

Data quality

Things to note on this release

The July 2021 count is the first count to take place since January 2020; the July 2020 and January 2021 counts were cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the majority of authorities were able to carry out a count for this release, Covid-19 has impacted response rates, with the TCC response rate slightly lower than in previous years at 85 per cent (historically, the response rate has been around 90%). Data providers cited staff turnover and illness as key issues preventing them from carrying out the count.

The Traveller Caravan Count is included on the Single Data List, a list of all the datasets that local government must submit to central government. The majority of local authorities do carry out the count and return information to DLUHC. Those that have not done so for this collection are listed below, with long-term non-responders marked with an asterisk (*):

Arun, Babergh, Barnsley, Boston, Breckland, Cornwall*, Crawley, Croydon, Dover, East Hampshire, East Hertfordshire, Eastbourne, Enfield*, Epsom and Ewell, Guildford, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon*, Hyndburn, Isle of Wight, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kirklees, Knowsley, Lambeth, Lancaster, Lewes, Lewisham, Liverpool, Mid Suffolk, Middlesbrough, Newham, Nottingham, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Reigate and Banstead, Rossendale, Runnymede*, Slough, Southwark, Spelthorne*, Sutton, Tamworth, Tendring, Torbay, Waltham Forest, and Winchester.*

More detail about the Single Data List is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-local-councils-more-transparent-and-accountable-to-local-people/supporting-pages/single-data-list>

From July 2021, the national figure has included imputed values for local authorities who are considered 'long-term non-responders', i.e. the authority has not submitted data for at least the previous three consecutive counts. Figures for the long-term non-responders

have been carried forward from the last July submission for the national figure only to ensure national headline figures are representative. Prior to this, long-term non-responders were taken to be zero across the local authority area. Figures going back as far as the January 2018 count have been revised for comparison (the inclusion of such authorities results in a 3 per cent increase in the England estimate for January 2020 for example).

Assessment of data quality

In 2015, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published a [regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data](#). To assess the quality of the data provided for this release, the department has followed that standard. The standard is supported with an [Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#) which provides useful guidance on the practices that can be adopted to assure the quality of the data they utilise.

The Traveller Caravan Count statistical release is produced by DLUHC based on data provided by local authorities.

DLUHC instruct data providers in how to review their data before submission, however, the level of quality assurance applied can vary considerably across authorities, with some data providers not meeting quality standards. The data are further quality assured in detail by the statisticians responsible for this publication, who perform further detailed validation and checks, spotting and correcting any errors identified. These checks involve comparisons with data provided, published or historical data.

Operational context and administrative data collection

The data source for the Traveller Caravan Count statistical release is the Traveller Caravan Count (TCC) return. Data are submitted by local authorities in England in order to provide local data on the number and seasonal movement of caravans. The count of traveller caravans' publication is collected on a particular count day, providing a snapshot of the number of caravans on the day of the count. Local authorities carried out the July 2021 count on or around 22 July 2021.

Communication with data supply partners

There are regular contacts with the data suppliers for this release to ensure that there is a common understanding of what information is being supplied. Communication with suppliers is managed through a number of channels and forums including direct contact, and the Central Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Housing and Planning sub-groups, which are attended by local authority representatives.

QA principles, standards and checks by data suppliers

The TCC statistical release is badged as Official Statistics. For the Traveller Caravan Count collection, local authorities are required to report the number of caravans at site level. To assist authorities in submitting their data accurately, the department provides a list of sites they have previously submitted data for ('reference data'), and also offers local authorities the option to provide their data by 'bulk upload' (i.e. in a spreadsheet format). The data collected by the department undergoes a process of scrutiny to ensure that the published count is as accurate as possible. The department follows up late returns and conducts validation checks which are outlined further below in the section on data quality. Despite best efforts, missed records or double counting may still occur if local authorities misunderstand the instructions on the form or simply because some authorities have a large number of sites and find it very time consuming to sufficiently quality assure their data. Figures provided by local authorities are subject to additional quality assurance by the department to minimise the risk of inaccurate data.

Work to improve the quality assurance process for this release, in particular to make it easier for local authorities to quality assure their own data, is ongoing, in consultation with the relevant CLIP groups.

Produces' QA investigation and documentation

Whilst providers are expected to carry out their own checks before the data are submitted for this publication, further quality assurance is carried out once the data are received by the statisticians responsible for this publication.

The quality assurance carried out by the department involves checking the data submitted by local authorities for duplicate sites, reviewing figures across different site types, ensuring that they sum correctly and checking for unlikely combinations of caravan counts, for

example. Any large proportional or absolute changes in total caravans at site level between annual counts are checked with the relevant local authorities. Whilst queries are raised with producers, if necessary, to seek further clarification, there may be a degree of inaccuracy in reporting due to non-response and reporting errors by local authorities that have submitted data. Some figures are also imputed due to one of the following reasons:

- Local authority non-response
- Incomplete or insufficient returns
- Inability to carry out count due to not being able to access sites

Site and pitch level data are then aggregated to produce local authority figures as published in the live tables. Where data has been taken from previous years' counts rather than the most recent, this is also indicated in the accompanying live tables. The data, report and tables are quality assured independently by another statistician in the production team. Further final checks are performed to the final product. These checks use a clear checklist approach to ensure the figures are consistent across the release and live tables, with each check being systematically signed off when it has been completed.

Imputation

Overall, for the July 2021 count, 263 (85 per cent) of the 309 English local authorities with housing responsibilities (at the time of the count) responded or submitted at least some figures. If a local authority did not submit a return for the July 2021 count, figures for the number of caravans across tenure type from the previous July count were taken without adjustment. If the local authority had also not submitted a return for the previous count before that, figures for the number of caravans are taken from the next most recent July count. This is repeated for three counts: July 2019, July 2018 and July 2017 (note that the previous three consecutive counts does not include the July 2020 count which was cancelled due to Covid-19). If a local authority has not submitted a return within this period (i.e. for three of the previous consecutive counts) then the figures will be replaced with “..” to indicate that the number of caravans is not reported for this authority. From July 2021, the national figure has included imputed values for local authorities who are considered ‘long-term non-responders’, i.e. the authority has not submitted data for at least the previous three consecutive counts. Figures for the long-term non-responders have been

carried forward from the last July submission to ensure national headline figures are representative. Prior to this, long-term non-responders were taken to be zero across the local authority area. Figures going back as far as the January 2018 count have been revised for comparison.

Symbols

- * Data imputed due to non-submission or data quality issues - data has been carried forward from most recent submitted data (up to 3 counts of the same season)
- .. Data not submitted for at least 3 previous consecutive counts (values are still imputed for England total)
- a Authority abolished 31st March 2019
- b Authority abolished 31st March 2020
- c Authority abolished 31 March 2021
- d Authority created 1st April 2019
- e Authority created 1st April 2020
- f Authority created 1st April 2021

Definitions

The Traveller Caravan Count was previously known as the 'Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count', however, there has been no change in the coverage of the count. It continues to include caravans lived in by Traditional and Ethnic Gypsies and Travellers as well as members of the non-traditional New Traveller groups who live in caravans or other moveable dwellings. The department does not collect information on the ethnicity or any other characteristics of caravan occupants.

Data providers/local authorities: the Traveller Caravan Count is a mandatory submission for all authorities with housing responsibilities in England. Since April 2019,

when there were 326 local authorities with housing responsibilities in England, restructuring and mergers of some authorities has resulted in changes to the total number of local authorities over time. At the time of the July 2021 count there were 309 local authorities with housing responsibilities in England. This change has been reflected in the accompanying live tables online, with footnotes indicating where authorities have been abolished or newly created. Current boundaries are also reflected in Map 1 of the release.

Definition of 'Gypsy/Traveller' : a) a person with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan; and b) all other persons of a nomadic habit life, whatever their race or origin including - i) such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and ii) members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).

Definition of 'caravan': a) all mobile homes, caravans, trailers and other living vehicles on Gypsy/Traveller sites and encampments, whether or not they meet the strict legal definition of a caravan b) touring caravans on Gypsy and Traveller sites and encampments even if not lived in permanently c) tents, benders or yurts where these are the 'permanent' living accommodation of Gypsies or Travellers.

Definition of a 'pitch': an area of land on a Gypsy and Traveller site normally occupied by one licensee family, sometimes referred to as a plot. Pitches can vary in size and the maximum number of caravans able to be located at each pitch depends on the size of the pitch, but must not exceed four caravans on any one pitch.

Types of sites: Local authorities carry out counts of caravans on traveller sites in England which provide a snapshot of caravans on the day of the count. Counts take place twice a year, in January and July, to capture information about the number of caravans on:

- authorised public sites – operated by local authorities and private registered providers of social housing, including housing associations, trusts and cooperatives;
- authorised private sites – privately funded sites with planning permission;
- unauthorised developments – sites on land owned by travellers for which planning permission had not been granted at the time of count; and

- unauthorised encampments – sites on land not owned by travellers and which do not have planning permission.

Types of unauthorised sites: Unauthorised sites are classified as either 'Tolerated' or 'Not Tolerated'

- A 'Tolerated' site is one where the local authority has decided not to seek the removal of the encampment, and where the encampment has been, or is likely to be, allowed to remain for an indefinite period of time.
- Some examples of a site which would be classified as 'Not Tolerated' are where:
 - A planning enforcement notice has been served (including Temporary Stop Notices),
 - The results of a planning enquiry are pending,
 - An injunction has been sought,
 - The compliance period has been extended.

Transit, residential/permanent and Travelling Showpeople pitches/sites:

Transit pitches/sites are authorised sites that are used for short stays by Gypsies and Travellers. The sites are usually provided on a permanent basis (but intended for temporary use by residents) by local authorities and have basic amenities and services, such as water supply, shared toilets, washing facilities/utility room and waste disposal. They may be used for days or weeks, up to a maximum of three months. The length of stay generally varies between 28 days and 13 weeks. Residents are then unable to return to that site for a further three to six months. This requirement is written into the Licence Agreement under the Mobile Homes Act 1994. Gypsies and Travellers have to pay for a pitch on a transit site.

Residential pitches/sites are either provided by local authorities or are owned by Gypsies and Travellers themselves. The sites are used as long-term residences. Sites often contain a number of separate pitches, occupied by each Gypsy or Traveller household, although single pitch sites are also common. Council-owned residential sites are managed by either the local authority or a local housing partner and have a number of amenities, including water supply, electricity, individual toilets and utility rooms.

Travelling Showpeople pitches/sites often need to combine residential, storage and maintenance uses. Typically a site comprises areas set aside for the Showpeople's accommodation - usually caravans and mobile homes - and areas where vehicles and fairground equipment can be stored, repaired and occasionally tested. Many Showpeople's sites are run on a private rental basis with one Showperson acting as landlord to their fellow Showpeople. Alternatively, land is bought and subdivided into half acre 'plots' or 'yards', which are then sold on to other Showpeople.

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. Where a local authority notifies the department of an error in the information they have submitted after publication of the release a decision on whether to revise immediately, at the next publication or not at all will be made based upon the impact of any change and the effect it has on the interpretation of the data.

Scheduled Revisions

We do not currently have scheduled revisions for this release. Revisions to historic data will be made only where there is a substantial revision, such as a change in methodology or definition.

Revisions in this release

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Other information

Uses of the data

The data are collected to inform central government and local authority policy, the delivery of local services for the traveller community, and their sites and encampments. In particular, figures are used by DLUHC and other government departments to identify the need for site provision and in tackling unauthorised encampments and developments as well as by the sector to monitor change over time.

We are keen to know about how external stakeholders use these data and so would appreciate feedback from users sent directly to housing.statistics@communities.gov.uk

Related Statistics

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is part of a cross-government working group, including devolved administrations and the Office of National Statistics,

working to improve the trustworthiness quality and value of housing and planning statistics across the UK. This working group has published action plan to make the planned improvements on house building statistics clear and transparent to users.

Details of this work and how you can provide feedback are available via the Government Statistical Service website: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/working-with-users-2/housing-and-planning-statistics/>

Devolved administration statistics

The Welsh Government collects and publishes statistics on traveller caravans in Wales. Published information is available at:

<https://gov.wales/gypsy-and-traveller-caravan-count>

The Scottish Government collects and publishes information on travellers in Scotland and further details are available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/gypsiestravellers>

A review of the evidence base is available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/GypsyTravellerScotland>

Information on traveller accommodation in Northern Ireland is available at:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Advice-for-Travellers/Accommodation-for-Travellers>

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. Responses should be addressed to the contact given in the first page of the release.

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>

The Department routinely discusses planning and related statistics with representatives of local authorities in the Central Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Housing and Planning Statistics Sub-group(s). More details of CLIP are available at

<https://www.local.gov.uk/oursupport/research/partner-organisations/central-local-information-partnership-clip>