



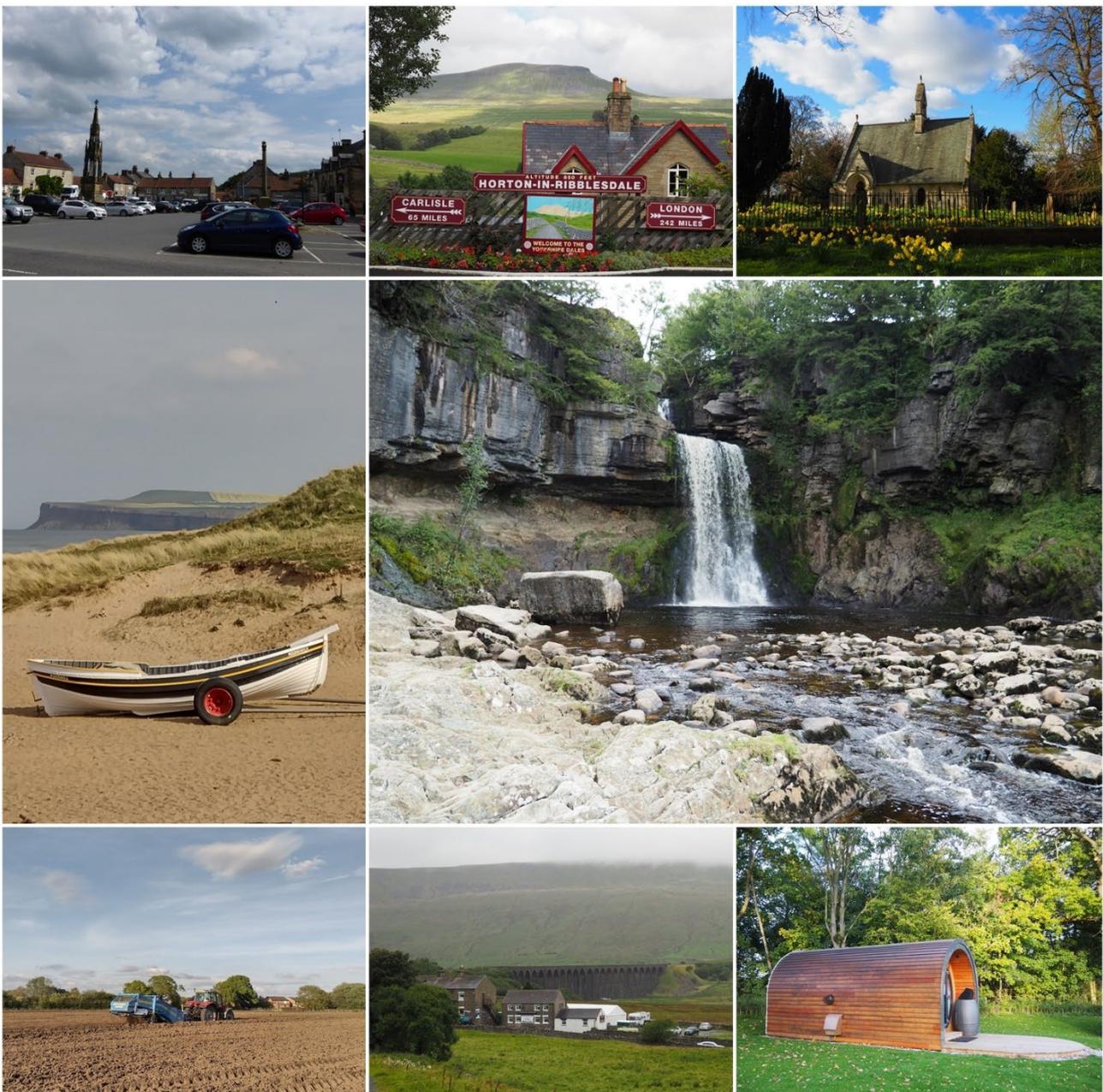
Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



# Statistical Digest of Rural England:

## 7 – Rural Economic Bulletin

February 2026





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### Cover photos

		Ward 2011	Rural-Urban Classification
TL	Helmsley marketplace	Helmsley	Larger rural: Further from a major town or city
TC	Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station with Penyghent behind	Penyghent	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
TR	St Giles Church, Skelton	Rural West York	Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city
CL	Fishing Boat, Marske-by-the-Sea with Hunt cliff in the distance	St Germain's; Saltburn	Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city
CR	Thornton Force Waterfall, Ingleton Waterfalls Trail	Ingleton and Clapham	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
BL	Farmer working the fields in Knapton	Rural West York	Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city
BC	Remote pub at Ribbleshead viaduct	Ingleton and Clapham	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
BR	Glamping pod in the North York Moors	Pickering East	Larger rural: Further from a major town or city

All cover photos provided by Martin Fowell.

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# About the Statistical Digest of Rural England

The Statistical Digest of Rural England (hereafter the Digest) is a collection of statistics on a range of social and economic topics and provides broad comparisons between Rural and Urban areas by settlement type. For more information on our classifications, including maps and diagrams explaining the classification, see Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas.

The Digest has been restructured into thematic reports and incorporates the previously separate publication the [Rural Economic Bulletin](#).

The Digest consists of the following thematic reports:

1. Population
2. Housing
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Communities and Households
5. Connectivity and Accessibility
6. Education, Qualifications and Training
7. Rural Economic Bulletin
8. Energy

Appendix 1 shows the sub-themes within each of the 8 Digest reports. Thematic reports will be updated individually and not every report will be updated every month.

The most recent updates for this theme are shown in Table 1. In February 2026, several sections were updated to reflect new analysis: “Employment”, “Earnings”, “Redundancies”, and “Unemployment-related benefits”.

Please note: the section “Analysis of small and medium enterprises from the Longitudinal Small Business Survey”, which was originally within the Business section, has been moved to Appendix 3 at the end of the report, as the analysis relates to 2015 and will not be updated, however it is still valuable.

**Table 1: Update monitor for Rural Economic Bulletin subsections**

where “✓” indicates the topic has been updated, “✗” indicates the topic has not been updated, and “New” indicates a new topic with analysis not previously included within the Digest.

Section	Feb 2025	Jul 2025	Oct 2025	Dec 2025	Feb 2026
Employment	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Earnings	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Redundancies	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Unemployment-related benefits	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Business demographics	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Businesses by industry	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Business survival and growth	New	✗	✗	✗	✗
Innovation and investment	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

## Official Statistics

These statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which sets out eight principles including meeting user needs, impartiality and objectivity, integrity, sound methods and assured quality, frankness and accessibility.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found at: [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

This publication has been compiled by the Rural Statistics Team within the Rural and Place Team in Defra:

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There is a 2011 Census version of the Digest which looks at the data from the 2011 Census and where possible makes comparisons to the 2001 Census results.

This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-census-results-for-rural-england>

The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification was released on 6 March 2025. Details of the 2021 Rural Urban Classification can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification>. It will take some time for the Digest to be updated throughout using the new classification. Where relevant Statistics drawing on the 2021 Census will be added to Digest thematic reports.

## Rural Economic Bulletin

This part of the Statistical Digest of Rural England focuses on the Rural economy and covers the following:

- employment (Section A)
- earnings (Section B)
- redundancies (Section C)
- unemployment-related benefits (Section D)
- output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (Section E)
- business demographics (Section F)
- businesses by industry (Section G)
- business survival and growth (Section H)
- innovation and investment (Section I).

## A. Employment

**In rural areas employment rates are higher and unemployment rates lower than in urban areas. However, the rate of economic inactivity is higher in rural areas, driven by proportionally more retirees.**

Please note, the third key finding has been amended; it previously mislabelled the economic inactivity rate as 'lower' in rural settlements instead of 'higher', when comparing to urban areas. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

### Key findings - Employment

#### The employment rate is higher in rural areas than urban areas

- In Q3 2025, 79.0% of the rural population aged 16 to 64 were employed; this compared to 74.8% in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).
- Between Q1 2019 and Q3 2025 employment rates were consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas (2011RUC).

#### The unemployment rate is lower in rural areas than urban areas

- In Q3 2025, 3.6% of the rural population aged 16 and over were unemployed; this compared to 5.6% in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).
- Between Q1 2019 and Q3 2025 unemployment rates were consistently lower in rural areas than in urban areas (2011RUC).

#### The economic inactivity rate (of people aged 16 and over) was higher in rural settlements

- In Q3 2025, 39.2% of the rural population aged 16 and over were economically inactive; this compared to 34.4% in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).
- The economic inactivity rate of the population aged 16 and over includes those who are classed as retired, with the rural population (2011RUC) having a higher retirement rate than urban areas (2011RUC) at 28.6% and 18.7% respectively.

#### Employment rates were lower in the smaller and more distant rural settlements

- In 2024, 78.1% of people aged 16 to 64 in smaller rural settlements were employed – a slightly lower proportion than in larger rural settlements (78.7%) (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).
- Proportionally more people aged 16 to 64 in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city were employed (79.2%) compared to those that were at least a 30-minute drive away (76.9%) (2011RUC).

## Summary

The **employment rates** provided in this section represent the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 (i.e., working-age) who were in employment within the specified area. In Q3 2025, 79% of working-aged people living in rural areas were in employment, compared to just under 75% in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). People living in rural areas may travel to work in urban areas and some people living in urban areas may work in rural areas. Employment rates showed little change between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 in both rural and urban areas (2011 classification).

The percentage of economically active people aged 16 and over who were unemployed (i.e., the **unemployment rate**) in Q3 2025 was 3.6% in rural areas and 5.6% in urban areas (2011 classification). Rates have increased in rural areas (by 1.1 percentage points) and in urban areas (by 0.7 percentage points) when compared with Q3 2024.

In Q3 2025, the percentage of people aged 16 and over who were not available for work or not seeking work (**economic inactivity rate**) was 39.2% in rural areas and 34.4% in urban areas (2011 classification). Between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 inactivity rates have shown no change in rural areas while in urban areas they have decreased by 0.8 percentage points. Of the economically inactive, proportionally more people were retired in rural areas (28.6% in Q3 2025) than in urban areas (18.7%).

Annual data for 2024 (using the 2021 classification of rural and urban areas) allows for more detailed definitions of rurality as well as the impact of proximity to a major town or city. In 2024, the employment rate in smaller rural settlements was slightly lower than in larger rural settlements at 78.1% and 78.7% respectively (RUC21). When considering proximity to a major town or city, the employment rate in 2024 was lower in those rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (76.9%) than those that were nearer to major town or city (79.2%) (RUC21).

## Background information

Employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity data are presented on both an annual and quarterly basis. Quarterly data are timelier; however, the level of geographic detail is limited to just “rural” and “urban”. Moreover, quarterly data is presented using settlement types from the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (hereafter referred to RUC11); this has been superseded by the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, and will be updated accordingly in future publications when the data are available. Annual data are less timely than quarterly data, but provide insight on the labour market over the last two decades. Within this publication, annual data are provided using the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification (hereafter referred to as RUC21) of local authorities. Throughout this publication it will be noted whether the 2011 or the 2021 classification has been used to determine if an area is rural or urban.

Employment measures the number of people in paid work (or who had a job that they were temporarily away from in instances such as annual or sick leave). This differs from the number of jobs, since some people have more than one job. The **employment rate** is the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are in employment, based on where they live (not where they work); people living in rural areas may travel to work in urban areas, and some people living in urban areas may work in rural areas.

Unemployment measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks. The **unemployment rate** is not a proportion of the total population who are unemployed, but rather the proportion of the economically active population (people in work and those seeking and available to work) who are unemployed. It therefore does not include people who are not actively seeking work, or not able to work.

People not in the labour force (also known as economically inactive) are not in employment but do not meet the accepted definition of unemployment. This is because they have not been seeking work within the last four weeks or they are unable to start work in the next two weeks (e.g., students, retirees, those with a disability). The **economic inactivity rate** is the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are not in the labour force.

For further information see the latest [ONS Labour market overview](#).

## Employment rate: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification

The section for employment rates comprises three subsections covering short-term trends, annual changes and long-term trends. Short-term trends compare rates from the two most recent quarters at time of analysis; within this publication, that is Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2025. Annual changes within this publication compare Q3 2024 to Q3 2025. Long-term trends show figures from 2019 to Q3 of 2025. Employment rates are based on where people live, not where they work.

Please note, the ONS have stated that the Labour Force Survey - the data source for this analysis - has become more volatile in recent periods; they advise caution when interpreting short terms changes. For more information please see the latest [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main points\)](#).

### Employment rate – short-term trends

The latest data available on employment rates are for Quarter 3 2025 (Q3; July to September 2025) and are based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC11); they will be updated to the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification once the data is made available using the 2021 classification.

In Q3 2025, 79.0% of the rural population aged between 16 and 64 years were in employment, compared with 74.8% in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). This means the percentage of the rural population aged between 16 and 64 years in employment was 4.2 percentage points higher than for the urban population (RUC11).

Table A-1 shows that employment rates have shown no real change in both rural and urban areas when comparing Q3 2025 with Q2 2025 (RUC11).

**Table A-1: Employment rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification in England, Q2 2025 and Q3 2025 (Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q2 2025 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	78.8	79.0	Little to no change
Urban	74.8	74.8	Little to no change

### Employment rate – annual change

As well as presenting quarterly changes, it is possible to present an annual change based on the most recent quarter compared with the same quarter from the previous year. Annual trends start to give an indication of longer-term changes to the workforce

Employment rates have shown no real change in both rural and urban areas when comparing Q3 2025 with Q3 2024 (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban areas). Employment rates were higher in rural areas than in urban areas (RUC11). This is shown in Table A-2.

**Table A-2: Employment rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification in England, Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q3 2024 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	79.2	79.0	Little to no change
Urban	74.8	74.8	Little to no change

### Employment rate – long-term trends

The line chart in Figure A-1 shows quarterly employment rates from Q1 2019 to Q3 2025. Quarterly data is represented by the darker lines within the chart, while annual averages are plotted using broken horizontal lines that are lighter in colour; data are based on 2011 classification of rural and urban areas.

In recent periods the quarterly data has become more volatile (see [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main points\)](#) for more detail) so annual averages have been added to the chart to illustrate the more general trend for the data over the period shown.

The line chart in Figure A-1 can be summarised as follows:

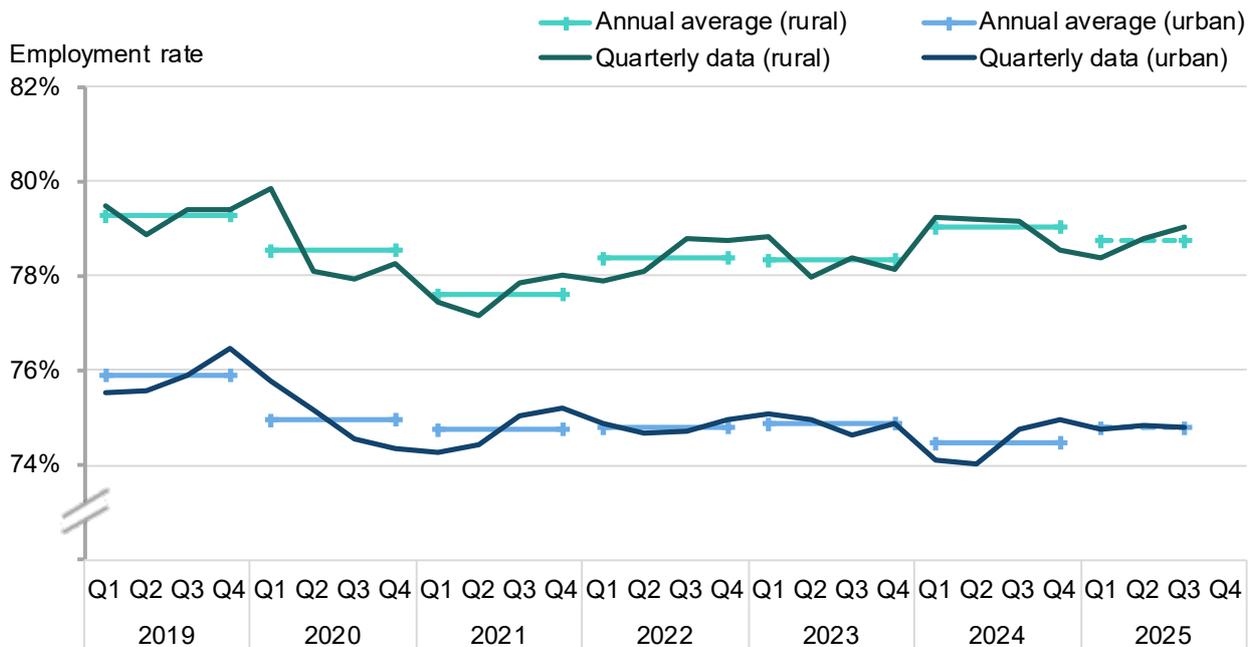
- Employment rates have been consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas since 2019 (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).
- Between 2020 and 2021, employment was affected nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In rural areas, the employment rate decreased from 79.4% in Q4 2019 (i.e., just before the pandemic) to a low of 77.2% in Q2 2021 (RUC11). In urban areas, the employment rate decreased from 76.5% in Q4 2019 to a low of 74.3% in Q1 2021 (RUC11). In both settlement types, this equates to a 2.2 percentage point decrease between the pre-pandemic

highs and mid-pandemic lows). Employment rates have not yet recovered to those seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In rural areas, employment rates have generally been increasing following the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual averages for rural areas show rates rising between 2021 and 2022, then levelling off before rising again in 2024. The annual average for 2025 (currently based on Q1 to Q3) shows employment rates falling, however this could change when the rate for Q4 is included as employment rates typically increase in the final quarter of the year. (RUC11)
- In urban areas, annual averages show rates have generally been falling over the period between 2019 to 2025 (with a period of very little change between 2021 and 2023). (RUC11)
- In Q2 2024 the employment rate for urban areas was the lowest it had been in the period 2019 to 2024 at 74.0%. The second half of 2024 has seen rising employment rates for urban areas with Q4 2024 seeing a rate of 75.0%. The employment rate for urban areas has levelled off for 2025, with a consistent rate of 74.8% across the first three quarters of the year. (RUC11)
- The gap between the rural and urban annual average employment rates was smallest in 2021, when the rural annual average employment rate was 2.9 percentage points higher than for urban areas. At the end of 2024 the gap had increased to its largest over the period with the employment rate in rural areas being 4.6 percentage points higher than for urban areas. The average for the first three quarters of 2025 shows the gap between the rural and urban annual average employment rates falling to 3.9 percentage points, however this could change when the figures for Q4 are included. (RUC11)

**Figure A-1: Line chart showing employment as a percentage of working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification in England, Q1 2019 to Q3 2025 (Note A-2, Note A-6)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. They are represented by horizontal lines that are lighter in colour and indicate the impact of quarterly variation. The dashed lines for 2025 indicate these averages are provisional as they are calculated using data for Q1 to Q3 and therefore do not include Q4 which often sees an increase in employment rates due to additional temporary jobs for the festive period. These averages will be revised once data for Q4 becomes available.



## Unemployment rate: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification

The section for unemployment rates comprises three subsections: short-term trends, annual trends and long-term changes. Short-term trends compare rates from the two most recent quarters at time of analysis; within this publication, that is Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2025. Annual changes within this publication compare Q3 2024 to Q3 2025. Long-term trends show figures from 2019 to Q3 of 2025. Unemployment rates are based on where people live, not where they work.

Please note, the ONS have stated that the Labour Force Survey - the data source for this analysis - has become more volatile in recent periods; they advise caution when interpreting short terms changes. For more information please see the latest [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main points\)](#).

### Unemployment rate – short-term trends

Unemployment rates are reported quarterly; the latest data available for analysis is Q3 2025 (i.e. July to September 2025). They are reported in relation to the population aged 16 and over that are economically active (people in work and those seeking and available to work). Quarterly unemployment rates are based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC11); they will be

updated to the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification once the data is made available using the 2021 classification.

In Q3 2025, 3.6% of the rural economically active population were unemployed, compared with 5.6% of the urban economically active population (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban) as shown in Table A-3. This means the percentage of the rural economically active population that were unemployed was 2 percentage points lower than for the urban economically active population.

When comparing Q3 2025 with Q2 2025, unemployment rates have increased in rural areas by 0.6 percentage points and also increased in urban areas by 0.5 percentage points. (RUC11)

**Table A-3: Unemployment rate among economically active people aged 16 and over in England, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q2 2025 and Q3 2025 (Note A-7, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q2 2025 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	3.0	3.6	Increase
Urban	5.1	5.6	Increase

### Unemployment rate – annual change

As well as presenting quarterly changes, it is possible to present an annual change based on the most recent quarter compared with the same quarter from the previous year. Annual trends start to give an indication of more permanent changes to the workforce, instead of quarterly changes, which may be more temporary.

Unemployment rates were higher in urban areas than in rural areas in Q3 2025 (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban areas). In rural areas, the unemployment rate has increased by 1.1 percentage points between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025, while in urban areas the unemployment rate has increased by 0.7 percentage points. This is shown in Table A-4.

**Table A-4: Unemployment rate among economically active people aged 16 and over in England, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (Note A-7, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q3 2024 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	2.5	3.6	Increase
Urban	4.9	5.6	Increase

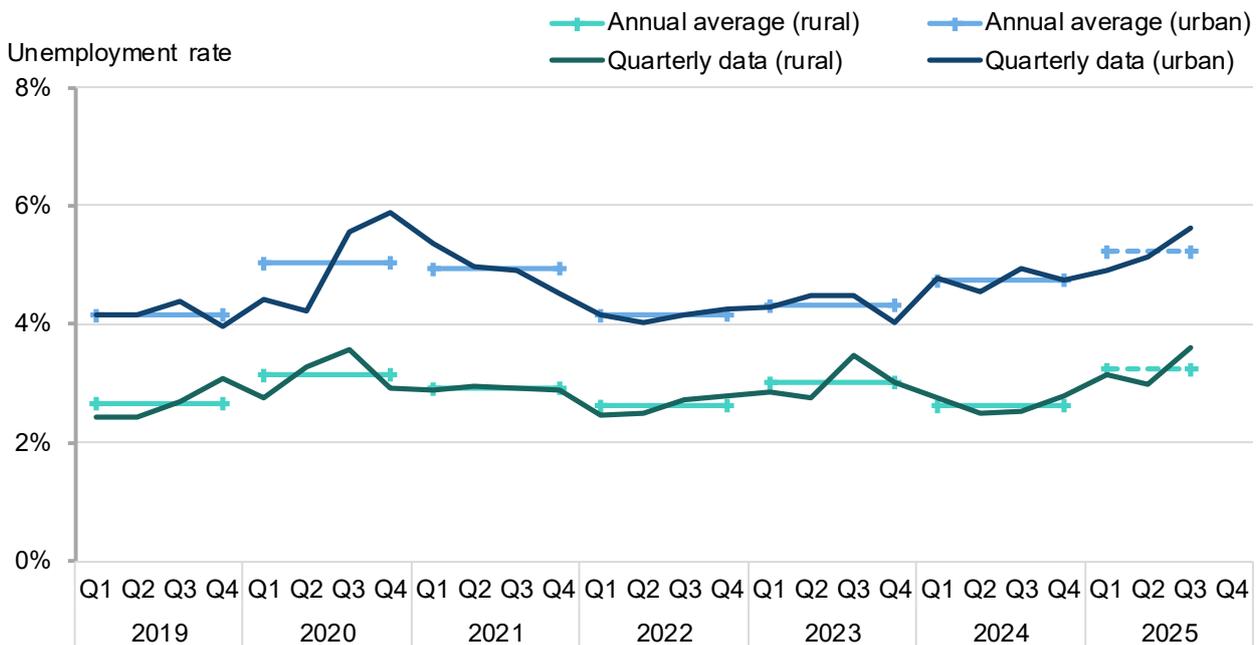
### Unemployment rate – long term-trends

The line chart in Figure A-2 shows quarterly unemployment rates from 2019. Quarterly data is represented by the darker lines within the chart, while annual averages are plotted using broken horizontal lines that are lighter in colour; rurality is defined using RUC11. In recent periods the quarterly data has become more volatile (see [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main](#)

[points](#)) for more detail) so annual averages have been added to the chart to illustrate the more general trend for the data over the period shown.

**Figure A-2: Line chart showing unemployment as a percentage of economically active people aged 16 and over, in England, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q1 2019 to Q3 2025 (Note A-2, Note A-7)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. They are represented by horizontal lines that are lighter in colour and indicate the impact of quarterly variation. The dashed lines for 2025 indicate these estimates are provisional as they are calculated using data for Q1 to Q3 and therefore do not include Q4 which often sees a drop in unemployment rates due to additional temporary jobs for the festive period. These estimates will be revised once data for Q4 becomes available.



The line chart in Figure A-2 can be summarised as follows:

- Unemployment rates were consistently lower in rural areas than in urban areas since 2019. (RUC11)
- Over the period 2019 to Q3 2025, quarterly unemployment rates were highest during the COVID-19 period (Q3 2020 for rural areas at 3.6% and Q4 2020 for urban areas at 5.9%. In rural areas, the unemployment rate for Q3 2025 has returned to the highest rate seen during the COVID-19 period, while in urban areas the rate for Q3 2025 is 0.3 percentage points below the high seen in Q4 2020. (RUC11)
- Rates have fluctuated since the COVID-19 period, however when looking at annual averages for 2024 and 2025, unemployment rates have increased in both rural areas by 0.6 percentage points to 3.2% and in urban areas by 0.5 percentage points to 5.2%. It should be noted though that the annual average for 2025 is currently based on data for Q1 to Q3 and could change when the rate for Q4 is included as unemployment rates can often decrease in the final quarter of the year. (RUC11)

- The gap between the rural and urban annual average unemployment rates was smallest in 2023, when the rural annual average unemployment rate was 1.3 percentage points lower than for urban areas. (RUC11)
- At the end of 2024 the gap had increased to its largest over the period with the annual average unemployment rate in rural areas being 2.1 percentage points lower than for urban areas. This difference has decreased slightly to 2.0 percentage points by Q3 of 2025 however this could change when figures for Q4 2025 are published. (RUC11)

## Economic inactivity: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification

The section for economic inactivity comprises three subsections: short-term trends, annual trends and long-term changes. Short-term trends compare rates from the two most recent quarters at time of analysis; within this publication, that is Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2025. Therefore, annual changes within this publication compare Q3 2024 to Q3 2025. Long-term trends show figures from 2019 to Q3 2025. The annual long-term analysis has not been updated in this publication as annual data for 2025 is not yet available

Please note, the ONS have stated that the Labour Force Survey - the data source for this analysis - has become more volatile in recent periods; they advise caution when interpreting short terms changes. For more information please see the latest [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main points\)](#).

### Economic inactivity – short-term trends

The latest quarterly data available on economic inactivity rates are for Q3 2025 (i.e. July to September 2025). Data is based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC11); they will be updated to the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification once the data is made available using the 2021 classification. Quarterly data is based on the population aged 16 and above, whereas the annual data shown for 2024 is based on the working-age population; therefore, estimates will differ between sections.

In Q3 2025, 39.2% of the rural population aged 16 and over were **economically inactive**, compared with 34.4% of the urban population (based on the 2011 classification or rural and urban areas); this means a larger proportion of people were not available for or not seeking work in rural areas than in urban areas, as shown in Table A-5.

When comparing Q3 2025 with Q2 2025, both rural areas and urban areas have seen little change in the economic inactivity rate. (RUC11)

**Table A-5: Economic inactivity rate for the population of those aged 16 and over in England, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q2 2025 and Q3 2025 (Note A-8, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q2 2025 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	40.3	39.2	Little to no change
Urban	34.6	34.4	Little to no change

Included within the rates shown in Table A-5 are the proportion of the population aged 16 and over who are classed as **retired**. Table A-6 shows that in Q3 2025, 28.6% of the rural population were retired, compared with 18.7% of the urban population. This means 10.6% of people aged 16 and over living in rural areas, and 15.7% of those in urban areas, were economically inactive for other reasons (e.g. unable to work due to sickness or disability). (RUC11)

When comparing Q3 2025 with Q2 2025, the retirement rates in both rural and urban areas had shown little change. (RUC11)

**Table A-6: Retirement rate for the population of those aged 16 and over in England, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q2 2025 and Q3 2025 (Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q2 2025 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	29.3	28.6	Little to no change
Urban	18.4	18.7	Little to no change

### Economic inactivity – annual change

As well as presenting quarterly changes, it is possible to present an annual change based on the most recent quarter compared with the same quarter from the previous year. Annual trends start to give an indication of more permanent changes to the workforce, instead of quarterly changes, which may be more temporary.

In the year between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 inactivity rates have shown no change in both rural and urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban areas). The **economic inactivity rate** was higher in rural areas than in urban areas (RUC11). This is shown in Table A-7.

**Table A-7: Economic inactivity rate for the population of those aged 16 and over in England, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (Note A-8, Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q3 2024 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	39.2	39.2	Little to no change
Urban	35.2	34.4	Little to no change

Included within the rates shown in Table A-7 are the proportion of the population (16 and over) who are classed as **retired**. Retirement rates have shown little change in both rural and urban areas between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (RUC11). This is shown in Table A-8.

**Table A-8: Retirement rate for the population of those aged 16 and over in England, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (Note A-10, Note A-11)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2011	Q3 2024 (%)	Q3 2025 (%)	Direction of change
Rural	28.4	28.6	Little to no change
Urban	19.1	18.7	Little to no change

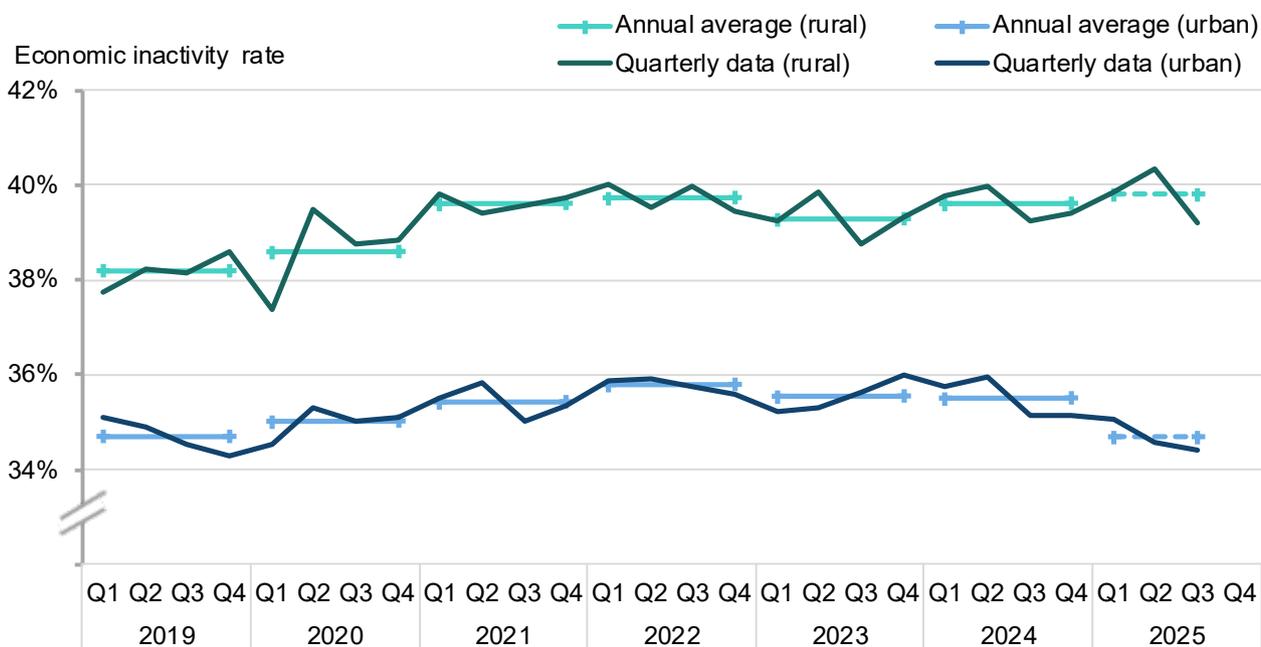
### Economic inactivity – long-term trends

The line chart shown in Figure A-3 shows quarterly rates for those economically inactive from 2019. Quarterly data is represented by the darker lines within the chart, while annual averages are plotted using broken horizontal lines that are lighter in colour; rurality is defined using RUC11.

In recent periods the quarterly data has become more volatile (see earlier note at the start of the Economic inactivity section) so annual averages have been added to the chart to illustrate the more general trend for the data over the period shown.

**Figure A-3: Line chart showing economic inactivity as a percentage of those aged 16 and over, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q1 2019 to Q3 2025 (Note A-2, Note A-8)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. They are represented by horizontal lines that are lighter in colour, and indicate the impact of quarterly variation. The dashed lines for 2025 indicate these estimates are provisional as they are calculated using data for Q1 to Q3 and therefore do not include Q4. These estimates will be revised once data for Q4 becomes available.



The line chart in Figure A-3 can be summarised as follows:

- Economic inactivity rates have been consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas since 2019 (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban areas).
- Quarterly rates have fluctuated in both area types over the period shown, however in rural areas the general trend shows a rise in the rate of economic inactivity while urban areas have shown little overall change over the period shown. (RUC11)
- When considering the annual averages, the rate of economic inactivity was 3.5 percentage points higher in rural areas than urban areas in 2019 at 38.2% and 34.7% respectively, this gap increased to 4.2 percentage points in 2021, falling back ever so slightly to 4.1 percentage points in 2024. The average for the first three quarters of 2025 shows the gap between the rural and urban annual average economic inactivity rates rising to 5.1%, however this is based on provisional annual averages and could change when data for Q4 becomes available. (RUC11)

It should be noted that these rates are for people aged 16 and over, while the annual rates shown later in Figure A-6 are for people aged 16 to 64. As a result, the changes seen in them will differ.

Included within the economic inactivity rates shown in Figure A-3 are the proportion of the population aged 16 and over who are classed as **retired**; this is not an age-related indicator, and is instead self-reported by people who are not actively seeking or available for work.

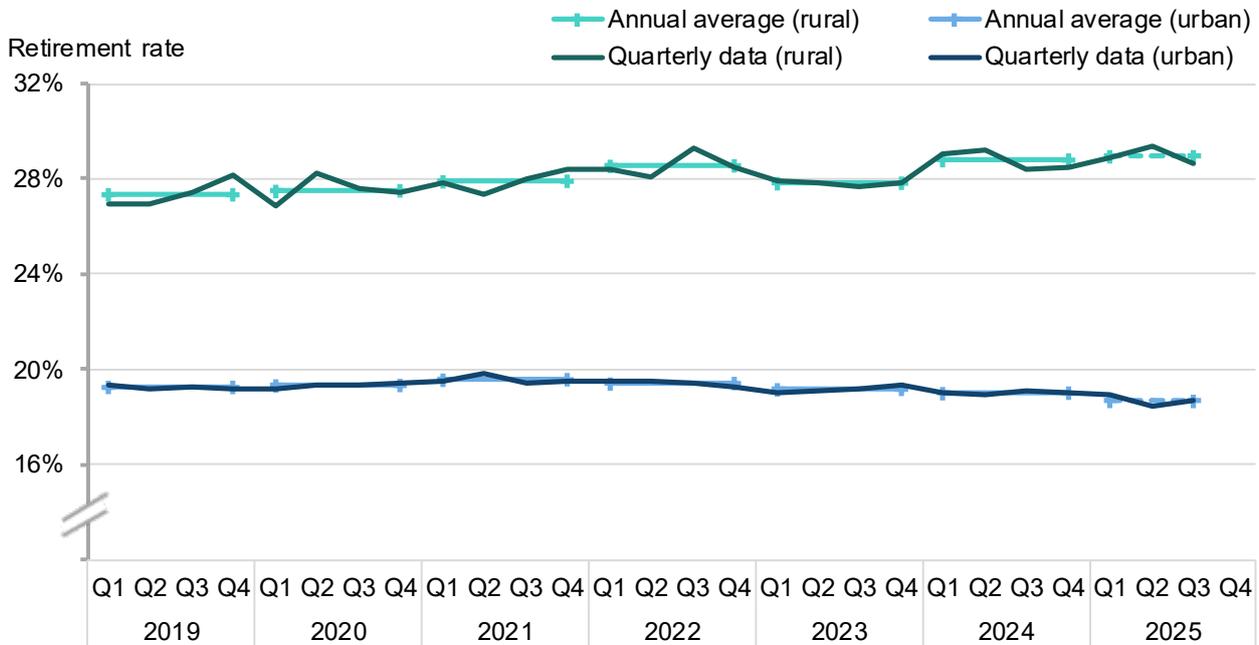
The line chart shown in Figure A-4 shows the proportion of those aged 16 and over that are retired. Quarterly data is represented by the darker lines within the chart, while annual averages are plotted using broken horizontal lines that are lighter in colour; rurality is defined using RUC11. In recent periods the quarterly data has become more volatile (see earlier note at the start of the Economic inactivity section) so annual averages have been added to the chart to illustrate the more general trend for the data over the period shown.

The line chart in Figure A-4 can be summarised as follows:

- Retirement rates have been consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas since 2019. (RUC11).
- Quarterly rates have fluctuated in rural areas, ranging from 26.9% in Q1 and Q2 of 2019 and Q1 of 2020, to highs of 29.3% in Q3 of 2022 and Q2 of 2025. In Q3 2025 the retirement rate in rural areas has fallen back to 28.6%. (RUC11)
- Retirement rates in urban areas have shown less variation, remaining within 0.5 percentage points of 19.0% throughout the period, except for Q2 2021 when rates rose to 19.8% and Q2 2025 when the rate dropped to 18.4%. (RUC11)
- Annual average retirement rates for rural areas increased between 2019 and 2022 (from 27.4% to 28.6%), 2023 saw a small drop to 27.8%, followed by an increase with the provisional annual average for 2025 (based on the first three quarters) being 28.9% but this could change once data for Q4 is included. (RUC11)
- The gap between rural and urban (RUC11) annual average retirement rates has generally increased between 2019 and 2024, with rural rates consistently higher. In 2019, the rural annual average retirement rate was 27.4%, 8.1 percentage points higher than the urban rate. By 2025 the gap has increased to 10.3 percentage points based on the provisional annual average for the first three quarters of the year. (RUC11)

**Figure A-4: Line chart showing retirement as a percentage of those aged 16 and over, by broad 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, Q1 2019 to Q3 2025 (Note A-2)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. They are represented by horizontal lines that are lighter in colour, and indicate the impact of quarterly variation. The dashed lines for 2025 indicate these estimates are provisional as they are calculated using data for Q1 to Q3 and therefore do not include Q4. These estimates will be revised once data for Q4 becomes available.



## Employment analysis in 2024: 2021 Rural-Urban Classification

This section contains employment rate, unemployment rate and economic inactivity analysis using annual data, with rurality being defined by the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. Analysis using annual data is presented in this report alongside analysis using quarterly data as it allows for more detailed definitions of rurality than the quarterly data can show. Annual data is also capable of showing the impact of proximity to a major town or city.

### Employment rate in 2024

Annual employment data have not yet been published for 2025 and therefore this section presents trends from 2024. Analysis will be updated when the data are available.

As [defined](#) within the background section of the report, the employment rate of an area is the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 (working age) who are in employment; more specifically, it includes people who performed at least one hour of paid work within the reference week of the survey, or were temporarily away from their job (e.g., due to being on holiday or sick leave). Within this section, employment rates in 2024 are based on the detailed 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. Therefore, rural classification terminology differs from other employment rates specified within this publication.

75.7% of the working age population (those aged 16 to 64) in England were employed in 2024. This consisted of 78.4% of people living in rural settlements, and 75.3% in urban settlements (based on the 2021 classification of rural and urban areas). A breakdown of employment rates by rurality is given in Table A-9.

**Table A-9: Employment rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Rate (%)
Smaller rural	78.1
Larger rural	78.7
Urban (excluding London)	75.2
London	75.6
<b>England</b>	<b>75.7</b>

The employment rate in smaller rural settlements was slightly lower than in larger rural settlements (RUC21), at 78.1% and 78.7% respectively in 2024. However, rural employment rates were still higher than in urban settlements; 75.2% of the urban population outside of London were employed in 2024. This is slightly lower than in London (75.6%).

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the settlements' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table A-10 shows the employment rates in 2024 within rural settlements by proximity to a major town or city. The employment rate was lower in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (76.9%) compared to those that were nearer to a major town or city (79.2%).

**Table A-10: Employment rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years) living in rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-12)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	Rate (%)
Further from	76.9
Nearer to	79.2
<b>All rural</b>	<b>78.4</b>

### Annual data - long term trends

This section is based on annual employment data up to 2024 - the latest data available at the time of analysis.

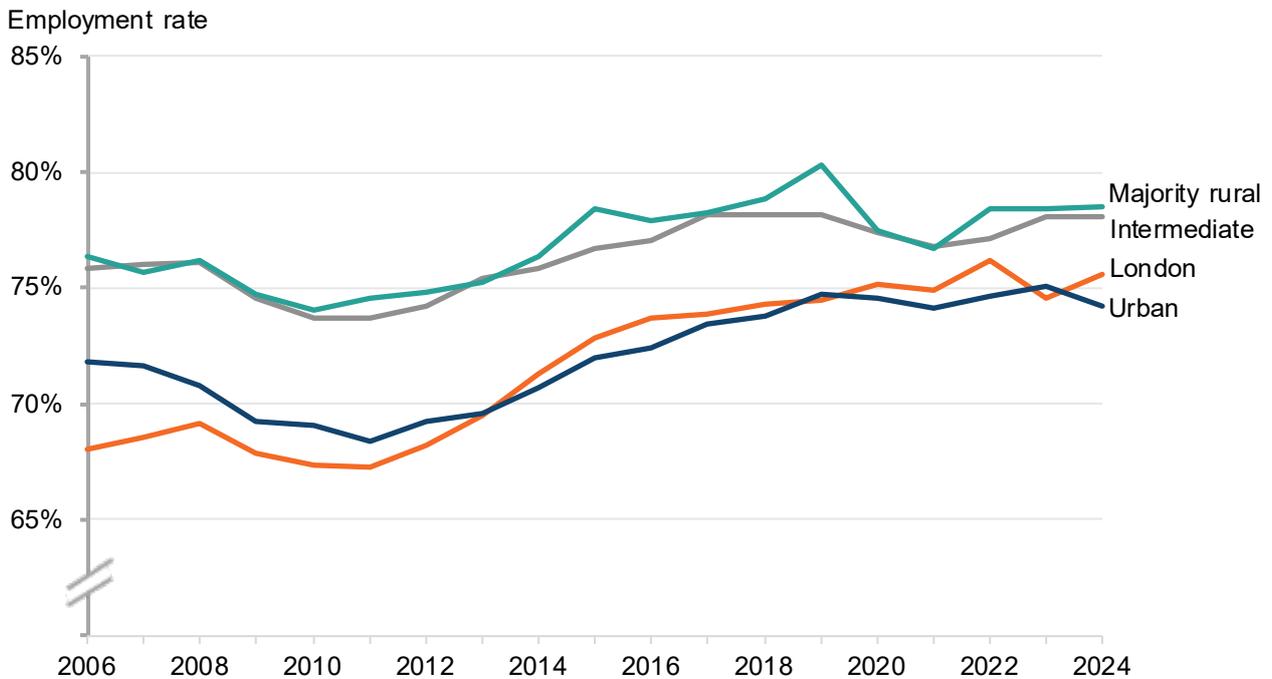
The line chart in Figure A-5 shows annual employment rate figures from 2006. Data are based on the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of the local authority where people live.

Between 2006 and 2024, employment rates have been broadly similar between majority rural and intermediate (rural or urban) authorities (based on RUC21), with some peaks in majority rural

authorities in 2015, 2019, and 2022. Across the period, employment rates were higher in majority rural authorities than in urban authorities.

**Figure A-5: Line chart showing employment as a percentage of working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of local authorities in England, 2006 to 2024 (Note A-1)**

‘Intermediate’ represents the combination of intermediate rural and intermediate urban authorities. ‘Urban’ excludes London.



In all classifications of authority, employment rates were higher in 2024 than they were in 2006. However, this was not a consistent increase; all authority types saw decreases around 2010/11 when England was in recession, with a slow recovery to 2019. All areas once again saw decreases in employment rates around 2020/21, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but have since recovered to pre-pandemic rates.

The highest employment rate across the period was in majority rural authorities in 2019, where 80.3% of the resident working-age population were employed. The lowest employment rate in majority rural authorities was in 2010, where 74.0% of the population were employed. The lowest employment rate of all local authority classifications was in 2011 in London (67.3%).

### Unemployment rate in 2024

Annual unemployment data have not yet been published for 2025 and therefore this section presents figures for 2024. Analysis will be updated when the data are available.

As [defined](#) within the background section of the report, the unemployment rate of an area is the proportion of the economically active population who are unemployed; more specifically, it includes people who were without a job, actively seeking work in the four weeks prior to the survey reference week, and were available to start work within the two weeks following the survey. It also includes those who had found a job and were waiting to start it in the two weeks following the survey reference week.

Within this section, unemployment rates in 2024 are based on the detailed 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. Therefore, rural classification terminology differs from other employment rates specified within this publication.

3.9% of people aged 16 and above in England were unemployed in 2024. This consisted of 2.6% of people living in rural settlements, and 4.2% in urban settlements. A breakdown of unemployment rates by rurality is given in Table A-11.

The unemployment rate in smaller rural settlements was slightly lower than in larger rural settlements, at 2.3% and 3.0% respectively in 2024. Rural unemployment rates were lower than in urban settlements; 3.9% of the urban population outside of London were unemployed in 2024. The highest unemployment rates in 2024 were in London (5.1%).

**Table A-11: Unemployment rate for the economically active among those aged 16 and over, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Rate (%)
Smaller rural	2.3
Larger rural	3.0
Urban (excluding London)	3.9
London	5.1
<b>England</b>	<b>3.9</b>

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the settlements' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access.

Table A-12 shows the unemployment rates in 2024 within rural settlements by proximity to a major town or city. The unemployment rate was lower in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (2.3%) compared to those that were nearer to a major town or city (2.7%).

**Table A-12: Unemployment rate among economically active people aged 16 and over living in rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, in 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-12)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	Rate (%)
Further from	2.3
Nearer to	2.7
<b>All rural</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Annual data – long term trends:** Trend data has not been presented within this section due to the high level of data suppression in local authority-level unemployment rates.

## Economic inactivity rate in 2024

Annual data for economic inactivity have not yet been published for 2025 and therefore this section presents figures for 2024. Analysis will be updated when the data are available.

As [defined](#) within the background section of the report, the economic inactivity rate of an area is the proportion of people of working age who are neither in employment nor unemployed; more specifically, it includes people who were not in employment in the survey reference week, and had not been actively seeking work in the four weeks prior to the survey. Alternatively, people were classed as economically inactive if they were not available to start work in the two weeks following the survey reference week. Quarterly data presented earlier showed the economic activity rate for those aged 16 and over and hence includes those who have reached retirement. Annual data on economic activity is limited to those of working age, defined as aged 16 to 64. Common groups within this age ranges will include students, long-term sick or disabled people, and those who retired before the age of 64.

Within this section, economic inactivity rates in 2024 are based on the detailed 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. Therefore, rural classification terminology differs from other employment rates specified within this publication.

21.1% of the working age population in England were economically inactive in 2024. This consisted of 19.4% of people living in rural settlements, and 21.4% in urban settlements. A breakdown of economic inactivity rates by rurality is given in Table A-13.

**Table A-13: Economic inactivity rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Rate (%)
Smaller rural	19.9
Larger rural	18.8
Urban (excluding London)	21.7
London	20.4
<b>England</b>	<b>21.1</b>

The economic inactivity rate in smaller rural settlements was higher than in larger rural settlements, at 19.9% and 18.8% respectively in 2024. Rural economic inactivity rates were lower than in urban settlements (RUC12). 21.7% of the urban population outside of London were economically inactive in 2024; this was higher than in London (20.4%).

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the settlements' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access.

Table A-14 shows the economic inactivity rates in 2024 within rural settlements by proximity to a major town or city. The economic inactivity rate was higher in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (21.1%) compared to those that were nearer to a major town or city (18.5%).

**Table A-14: Economic inactivity rate for the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years) living in rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, 2024 (Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-12)**

Rates have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	Rate (%)
Further from	21.1
Nearer to	18.5
<b>All rural</b>	<b>19.4</b>

### Annual data – long term trends

This section is based on annual economic inactivity data up to 2024 - the latest data available at the time of analysis.

The line chart in Figure A-6 shows annual inactivity rates from 2006. Data are based on the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of the local authority where people live. It should be noted that these rates are for working aged people (16 to 64), while the quarterly rates are for people aged 16 and over. As a result, the changes seen in them will differ.

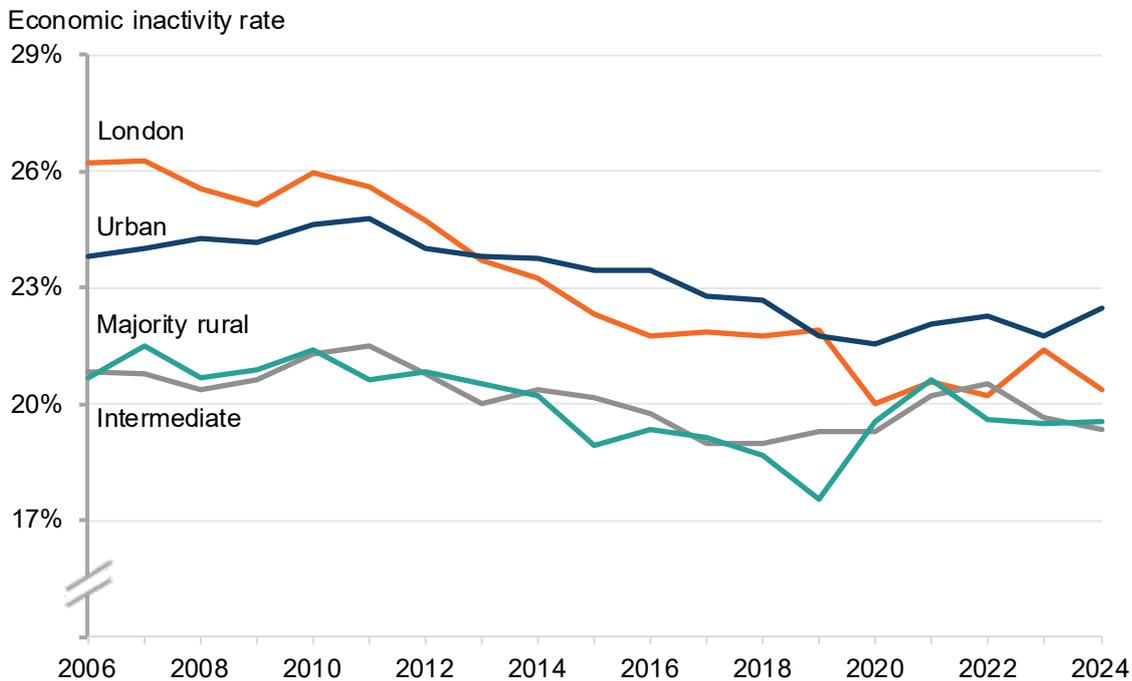
Between 2006 and 2024, economic inactivity rates have been broadly similar between majority rural and intermediate (rural or urban) authorities, with the main differences in 2015 and 2019. Across the period, economic inactivity rates were lower in majority rural authorities than in urban authorities.

In all classifications of authority, economic inactivity rates were lower in 2024 than they were in 2006. However, this was not a consistent decrease; all classifications saw overall decreases to 2019 with some fluctuations. In 2020, there were sharp increases in economic inactivity in majority rural and intermediate (rural or urban) authorities, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in London, there were sharp decreases at this time. Economic inactivity rates in urban authorities outside of London were relatively unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the pandemic, economic inactivity rates in majority rural and intermediate authorities increased to levels seen in the late 2000s/early 2010s, but have levelled off between 2022 and 2024.

The lowest economic inactivity rate across the period was in majority rural authorities in 2019, where 17.5% of the resident working-age population were economically inactive. The highest economic inactivity rate in majority rural authorities was in 2007, where 21.5% of the population were economically inactive. The highest economic inactivity rate of all local authority classifications was also in 2007, in London (26.3%).

**Figure A-6: Line chart showing percentage of working age population (16 to 64 years) who are economically inactive, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of local authorities in England, 2006 to 2024 (Note A-1, Note A-3)**

'Intermediate' represents the combination of intermediate rural and intermediate urban authorities.  
'Urban' excludes London.



## Employment explanatory notes

- **Note A-1**

For the long-term trends, data have been calculated based on local authorities as at 2023. As a result, the [2021 Rural-Urban Classification](#) could be applied.

- **Note A-2**

The RUC11 has been applied to all data represented in the chart. In December 2024, the ONS carried out a reweighting exercise on the Labour Force Survey to make use of more recent mid-year population estimates. This reweighting was only backdated to the start of 2019, creating a discontinuity between the end of 2018 and the start of 2019. We have only included data from 2019 in our charts to ensure the series is consistent. The full series back to 2005 can be seen in the supplementary data tables that accompany this report (see Note A-9).

- **Note A-3**

In 2009 and before, working age was defined as 16-64 for males and 16-59 for females. In September 2010 the definition for working age was altered to be 16-64 for both males and females. The statistics shown here have been adjusted to this new definition for all years shown.

- **Note A-4**

All changes are based on unrounded figures and therefore may not agree exactly to the figures presented in the text and tables which are rounded to 1 decimal place.

- **Note A-5**

Unemployment rate is expressed as a percentage of the economically active 'age 16 and over' population, this is a departure from previous analyses and is consistent with ONS Labour Market Statistics. The

employment rate and economically inactive rate are expressed as a percentage of the entire working age population. Therefore, the rates should not be expected to sum to 100%.

- **Note A-6**

As a percentage of people aged 16 to 64, bringing this figure in line with other publications where employment rate is shown as percentage of people aged 16 to 64.

- **Note A-7**

As a percentage of people aged 16 and over who are economically active (in work or seeking work).

- **Note A-8**

As a percentage of all people aged 16 and over.

- **Note A-9**

Data presented within all figures from the Employment section are available in the [Rural economy supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note A-10**

Source: ONS (Labour Force Survey, not seasonally adjusted).

- **Note A-11**

The 'direction of change' column in these tables indicates the magnitude of change over the period shown. 'Small increase / small decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 3\%$  while 'increase / decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 6\%$ . Where the change does not meet the  $\pm 3\%$  threshold the table will show 'little to no change'. These tables show the direction of change over the last quarter or year and are provided to give an indication only and may not represent a clear improvement or deterioration.

- **Note A-12**

'Nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). Conversely, 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive away from these built-up areas.

## B. Earnings

**Median earnings of workers in majority rural authorities are lower than in urban authorities. However, people do not necessarily live and work in the same authority and there is little difference in median earnings between those living in majority rural authorities and those living in urban authorities.**

### Key findings - Earnings

#### Median earnings for workers in majority rural authorities are lower than in urban authorities

- In 2025, the median workplace-based earnings of workers in majority rural authorities was £36,600; this was less than the median earnings of £37,700 in urban authorities outside of London.
- The median earnings of workers in majority rural authorities have consistently been lower than those in urban authorities outside of London.

#### Little difference in median earnings between those who lived in majority rural or urban authorities

- In 2025, the median residence-based earnings of workers living in majority rural authorities was £38,800; this was slightly more than for workers who lived in urban authorities outside of London (£38,000).
- Longer-term there has been little or no difference in the median earnings of those who lived in majority rural authorities and those who lived in urban authorities outside of London.

#### In majority rural authorities proximity to major towns or cities is linked to higher median earnings

- In 2025, the median earnings of workers living in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city was £39,700; this was £2,600 higher than for those where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city.
- In authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city, residence-based median earnings are higher than workplace-based earnings which suggests that workers benefit from being able to work in larger urban centres, which typically offer more opportunities for higher earnings.

## Summary

Median annual employee earnings give an indication of living standards people can enjoy through their disposable income (see [Expenditure](#) in our Communities and Households report). Lower quartile earnings give the level below which the 25% lowest earning workers are paid. Workplace-based earnings relate to the employee's usual site or office, whereas residence-based earnings relate to where they live. If the employee is a remote/home worker, then earnings will be linked to the location they would report to or the closest office/site. Earnings are expressed as current prices and hence are not adjusted for inflation.

**Workplace-based earnings:** In 2025, the median earnings of workers in majority rural authorities was £36,600; this was less than for workers in urban authorities outside of London (£37,700). Longer-term, the earnings of workers in majority rural authorities have been consistently lower than those in urban authorities outside of London. Between 2024 and 2025, majority rural authorities saw a 6% increase in median annual workplace-based earnings, whilst urban authorities outside of London saw a 4% increase. Proximity to a major town or city made a considerable difference to median workplace-based earnings. In 2006, median annual earnings were 9% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than where the majority lived further away; by 2025, the gap had narrowed to 5%.

**Residence-based earnings:** In 2025, the median earnings for workers living in majority rural authorities was £38,800; this was slightly more than for workers who lived in urban authorities outside of London (£38,000). Longer-term, there has been little or no difference in median earnings for those living in majority rural or urban authorities outside of London. Between 2024 and 2025, majority rural authorities saw a 5% increase in median annual residence-based earnings, whilst urban authorities outside of London saw a 4% increase. Proximity to a major town or city made a considerable difference to median residence-based earnings – more so than workplace-based. In 2006, median annual residence-based earnings were 14% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than where the majority lived further away; by 2025, the gap had narrowed to 7%.

People do not necessarily work in the same area as they live, meaning median workplace-based and residence-based average earnings may differ. People who live in majority rural authorities and possibly work elsewhere have consistently had higher median earnings than those who worked in these areas.

## Workplace-based earnings

People do not necessarily live in the same local authority as where they work, and many commute across authority boundaries for employment. This means that measures of earnings can differ depending on whether they are based on where people work or where they live.

Workplace-based earnings (this section) measure what those earn who work in the specified authority type, regardless of where they live.

[Residence-based earnings](#) measure what those who live in the specified authority type earn, regardless of where they work.

## Median earnings

Median earnings represent the middle point of a distribution of earnings, where half of employees earn more and half earn less. Unlike the mean, the median is not affected by extremely high or low values, and is a useful measure to compare earnings across local authorities.

In 2025, median gross annual workplace-based earnings in England were £39,300. In majority rural authorities, median earnings were £36,600 - below the median for England. In urban authorities outside of London, median earnings were £37,700 - higher than in majority rural authorities, but below the median for England. The median for England is inflated by the high median earnings of people who work in London (£49,500). Rural classification estimates include imputation to fill in missing data; for more information, see Note B-5.

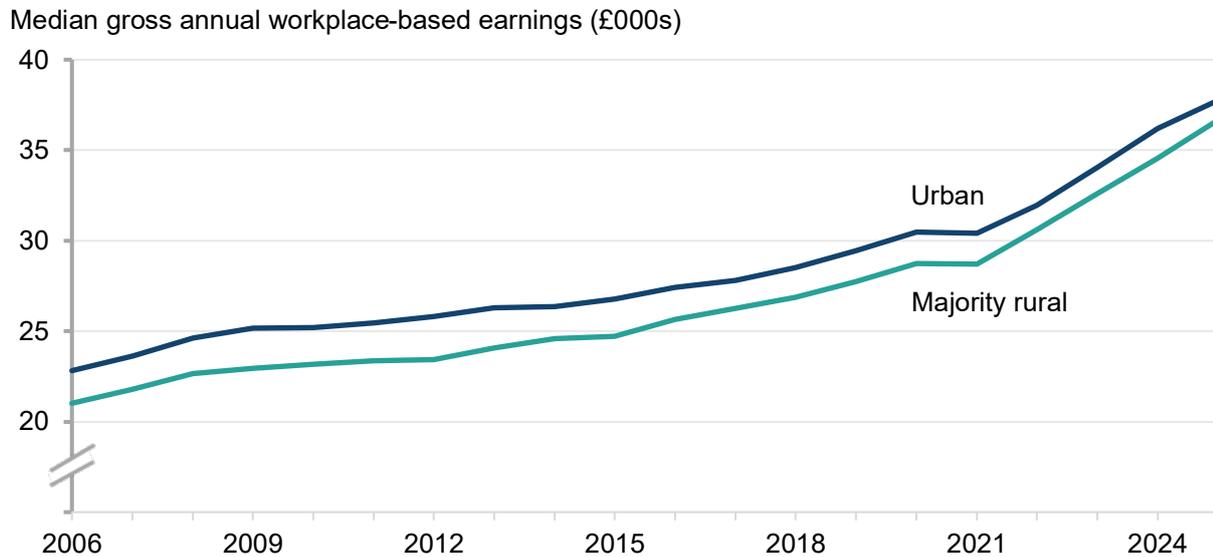
Earnings are expressed as current prices and therefore are not adjusted for inflation. Nevertheless, median earnings have increased over time, particularly in recent years. The line chart in Figure B-1 shows the median workplace-based earnings in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London between 2006 and 2025. London has been excluded from the chart as the median earnings are considerably higher. Intermediate (rural or urban) authorities are not included on the chart but their median earnings sit between majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, as shown in the [supplementary data tables](#).

Median annual workplace-based earnings have risen steadily over time in both majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, but urban earnings have consistently been higher. From 2006 to 2025, the gap between median workplace-based earnings in majority rural and urban authorities has narrowed as earnings in majority rural authorities have seen a greater rate of increase.

At the start of the series, median annual earnings were £21,000 in majority rural authorities and £22,800 urban authorities outside of London. Both authority types saw growth in median earnings, particularly from 2021 onwards. Between 2006 and 2020, median earnings increased by 37% in majority rural authorities, and by 34% in urban authorities outside of London. There was little to no change in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2025, median earnings increased by 28% in majority rural authorities and by 24% in urban authorities outside of London.

**Figure B-1: Line chart showing median workplace-based earnings for majority rural and urban local authorities, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-5)**

“Urban” excludes London. Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



Majority rural authorities saw a 6% increase in median annual workplace-based earnings between 2024 and 2025, for urban authorities outside of London the increase was 4% between 2024 and 2025. In comparison, the CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including housing costs; a measure of inflation) rose by 3.4% in the year ending March 2025. This means that in the year ending March 2025, median earnings were rising faster than inflation. For more information, see: [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#).

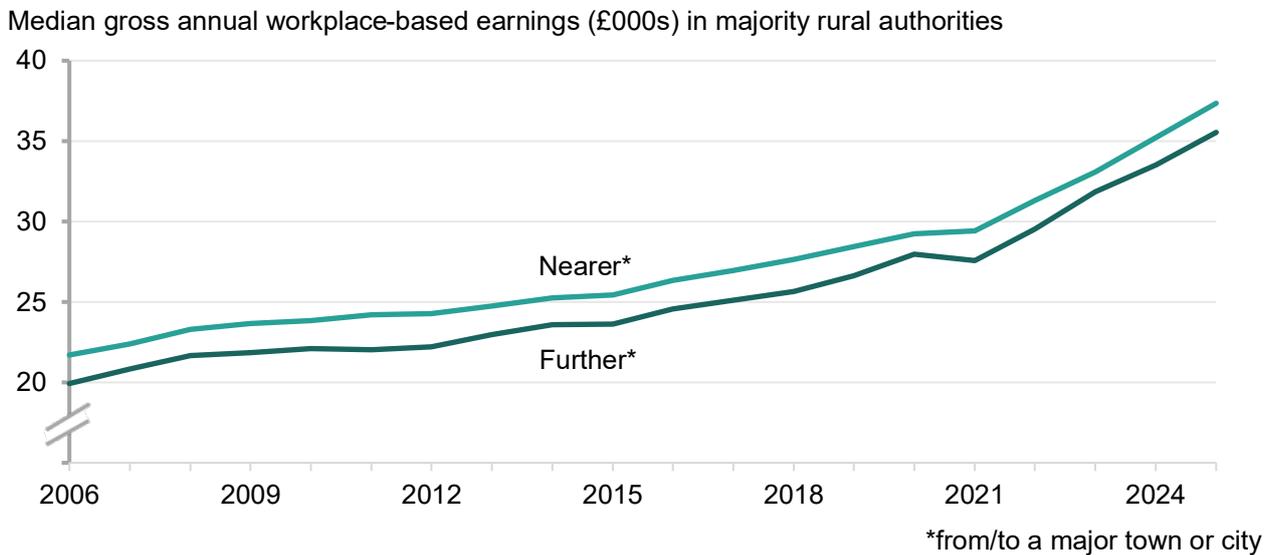
Proximity to a major town or city is considered within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification to indicate relative access; please see Note B-4 for more information about the classification. Between 2006 and 2025, median annual workplace-based earnings were higher in majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than where the majority lived further away. This is shown as a line chart in Figure B-2.

The gap in median workplace-based earnings between majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city, and those where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city, narrowed between 2006 and 2025. In 2006, median annual earnings were 9% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than where the majority lived further away.

By 2025, the gap had narrowed to 5%. In 2025, the median annual workplace-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city was £37,300; this was £1,800 higher than in authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city (£35,500).

**Figure B-2: Line chart showing median workplace-based earnings for majority rural local authorities in England as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-4)**

Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



There is a regional influence in median annual workplace-based earnings; areas closer to London tend to have the higher median earnings. Table B-1 shows the local authorities with the highest median annual workplace-based earnings within each type of authority.

**Table B-1: Local authorities with the highest median annual workplace-based earnings within the specified authority type, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2025**

Annual gross earnings are rounded to the nearest £100.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Local Authority	Earnings (£)
Majority rural	Stratford-on-Avon	49,500
Intermediate rural	Vale of White Horse	45,200
Intermediate urban	Mole Valley	49,900
Urban (excluding London)	Three Rivers	50,900
London	City of London	68,700
<b>England</b>	<b>City of London</b>	<b>68,700</b>

In 2025, the ‘City of London’ had the highest median annual workplace-based earnings in England, at £68,700.

Outside of London, ‘Three Rivers’ (an urban authority in south-west Hertfordshire) had the highest median annual workplace-based earnings in 2025, at £50,900.

Out of all majority rural authorities, ‘Stratford-on-Avon’ had the highest median annual workplace-based earnings in 2025, at £49,500; this was £19,200 less than in ‘City of London’, and £1,400 less than in ‘Three Rivers’.

When considering the local authorities with the lowest median annual workplace-based earnings within each authority type, as shown in Table B-2, there is a focus on authorities from the East Midlands.

**Table B-2: Local authorities with the lowest median annual workplace-based earnings within the specified authority type, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2025**

Annual gross earnings are rounded to the nearest £100.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Local Authority	Earnings (£)
Majority rural	South Holland	30,100
Intermediate rural	Isle of Wight	28,500
Intermediate urban	Boston	30,100
Urban (excluding London)	Oadby and Wigston	30,300
London	Bexley	35,200
<b>England</b>	<b>Isle of Wight</b>	<b>28,500</b>

In 2025, the 'Isle of Wight' (an intermediate rural authority in the South East of England) had the lowest median workplace-based earnings in England, at £28,500.

Of the majority rural authorities, 'South Holland' (in the East Midlands) had the lowest median workplace-based earnings in 2025, at £30,100. In London, 'Bexley' had the lowest median workplace-based earnings, at £35,200.

Proximity to a major town or city had a notable impact on median workplace-based earnings. 'Stratford-on-Avon' – with the highest median annual workplace-based earnings of majority rural authorities in 2025 (£49,500) – has the majority of its population living nearer to a major town or city. Of majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city, 'Cumberland' had the highest median annual workplace-based earnings (£42,800); but this was £6,700 less than in 'Stratford-on-Avon'.

In comparison, 'South Holland' – with the lowest median annual workplace-based earnings of majority rural authorities in 2025 (£30,100) – has the majority of its population living further from a major town or city. Of majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city, 'Babergh' had the lowest median annual workplace-based earnings (£30,900); but this was £800 more than in 'South Holland'. Local Authority level earnings estimates can be found in the [supplementary data tables](#).

### Lower quartile earnings

Lower quartile earnings represent the value below which 25% of employees earn.

In 2025, lower quartile gross annual workplace-based earnings in England were £29,400. In majority rural authorities, lower quartile earnings were lower, at £28,200. In urban authorities outside of London, lower quartile earnings were £28,600 - higher than in majority rural authorities, but below the England lower quartile. The England lower quartile earnings are inflated by the lower quartile earnings in London (£35,400). Rural classification estimates include imputation to fill in missing data; for more information regarding the approximation, see Note B-5.

Earnings are expressed as current prices and therefore are not adjusted for inflation. Nevertheless, lower quartile earnings have increased over time, especially in recent years. The line chart in Figure B-3 shows the lower quartile workplace-based earnings in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London between 2006 and 2025. London has been excluded from the chart as the lower quartile earnings are considerably higher. Intermediate (rural or urban) authorities are not included on the chart but their median earnings sit between majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, as shown in the [supplementary data tables](#).

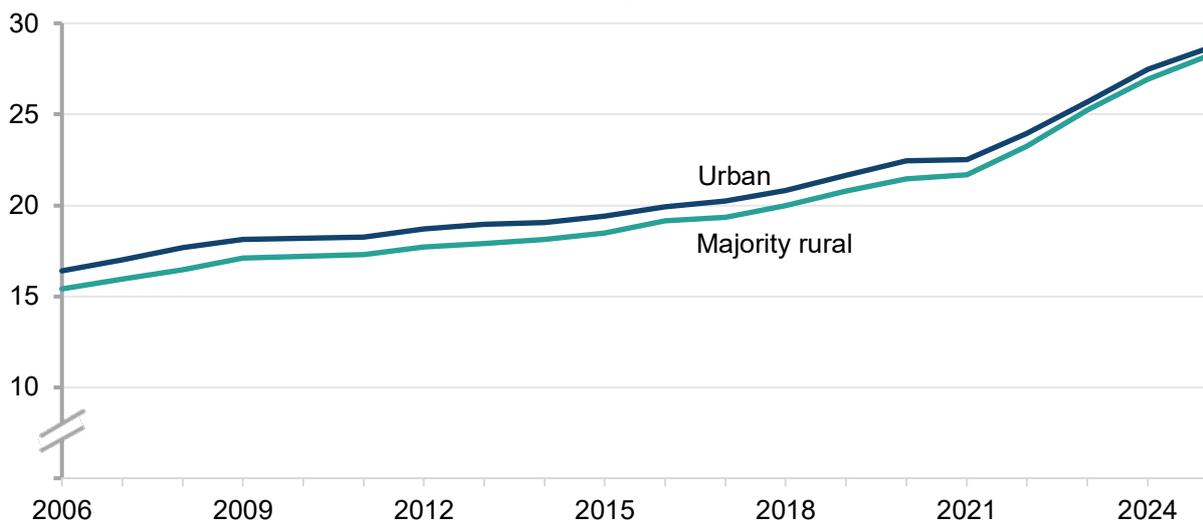
Lower quartile annual workplace-based earnings have risen steadily over time in both majority rural and urban authorities outside of London (not taking account of inflation). They have been consistently higher in urban authorities outside London however the gap is narrowing.

At the start of the series, lower quartile annual earnings were £15,400 and £16,400 in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, respectively. Both authority types saw notable growth in lower quartile earnings, particularly from 2021 onwards (not adjusted for inflation).

**Figure B-3: Line chart showing lower quartile workplace-based earnings for majority rural and urban local authorities in England, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025**

“Urban” excludes London. Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.

Lower quartile gross annual workplace-based earnings (£000s)



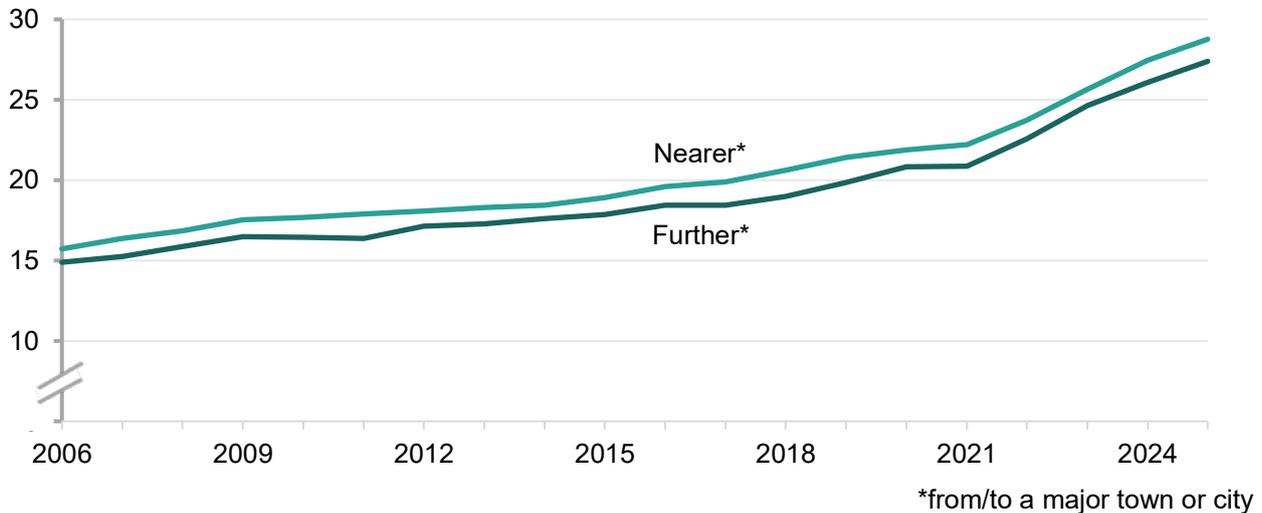
Between 2006 and 2020, lower quartile earnings increased by 39% in majority rural authorities, and by 37% in urban authorities outside of London. There was little to no change in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2025, lower quartile earnings increased by 30% in majority rural authorities and by 27% in urban authorities outside of London. Majority rural authorities saw a 5% increase in lower quartile annual workplace-based earnings between 2024 and 2025 while urban authorities outside of London saw an increase of 4%.

The line chart in Figure B-4 shows how proximity to a major town or city impacts lower quartile earnings.

**Figure B-4: Line chart showing lower quartile workplace-based earnings for majority rural local authorities in England as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-4)**

Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.

Lower quartile gross annual workplace-based earnings (£000s) in majority rural authorities



Between 2006 and 2025, lower quartile annual workplace-based earnings were higher in majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than in those where the majority lived further away. The difference between the authority types has fluctuated over time. In 2006, lower quartile annual earnings were 6% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than in those where the majority lived further away; by 2025, the gap had narrowed to 5%.

In 2025, the lower quartile annual workplace-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city was £28,800; this was £1,400 higher than for those where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city (£27,400).

## Residence-based earnings

People do not necessarily live in the same local authority where they work, and many commute across authority boundaries for employment. This means that measures of earnings can differ depending on whether they are based on where people work or where they live.

Residence-based earnings (this section) measure what those earn who live in the specified authority type, regardless of where they work.

[Workplace-based earnings](#) measure what those who work in the specified authority type earn, regardless of where they live.

## Median earnings

Median earnings represent the middle point of a distribution of earnings, where half of employees earn more and half earn less. Unlike the mean, the median is not affected by extremely high or low values, and is a useful measure to compare earnings across local authorities.

In 2025, median gross annual residence-based earnings in England were £39,200. For majority rural authorities, median earnings were £38,800 - below the median for England. For urban authorities outside of London, median earnings were £38,000 - slightly lower than in majority rural authorities. Median earnings in England are inflated by the high median earnings seen in London (£46,800). Rural classification estimates include imputation to fill in missing data; for more information, see Note B-5.

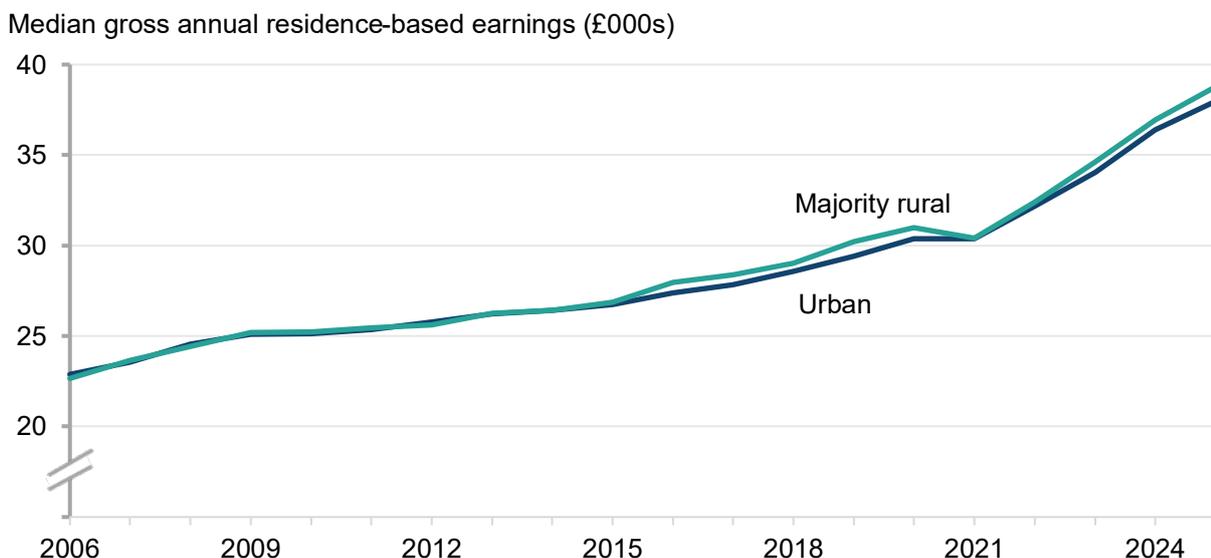
Earnings are expressed as current prices and therefore are not adjusted for inflation. Nevertheless, median earnings have increased over time, particularly in recent years. The line chart in Figure B-5 shows the median residence-based earnings in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London between 2006 and 2025. London has been excluded from the chart as the median earnings are considerably higher. Intermediate (rural or urban) authorities are not included on the chart but their median earnings sit between majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, as shown in the [supplementary data tables](#).

Median annual residence-based earnings have risen steadily over time in both majority rural and urban authorities outside of London (not adjusted for inflation) with often little difference between these authority types.

At the start of the series, majority rural authorities had median residence-based earnings of £22,700; this compared to £22,900 for urban authorities outside of London. Both authority types saw notable growth in median residence-based earnings, particularly from 2021 onwards (not adjusted for inflation).

**Figure B-5: Line chart showing median residence-based earnings for majority rural and urban local authorities, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025**

“Urban” excludes London. Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



Between 2006 and 2020, median earnings increased by 37% for those living in majority rural authorities, and by 33% in urban authorities outside of London. There was a small decrease in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2025, median earnings increased by 27% in majority rural authorities and by 25% in urban authorities outside of London.

Majority rural authorities saw a 5% increase in median annual residence-based earnings between 2024 and 2025, for urban authorities outside of London the increase was 4% between 2024 and 2025. In comparison, the CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including housing costs; a measure of inflation) rose by 3.4% in the year ending March 2025. This means that in the year ending March 2025, median earnings were rising faster than inflation. For more information, see: [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#).

Proximity to a major town or city is considered within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification to indicate relative access; please see Note B-4 for more information about the classification.

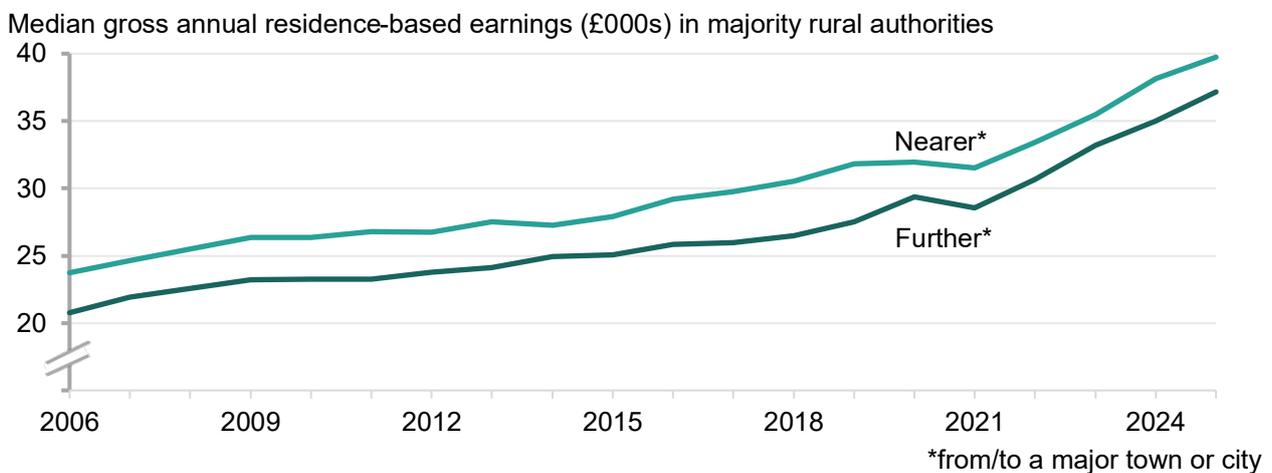
As shown in Figure B-6, between 2006 and 2025, median annual residence-based earnings were higher in majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than in authorities where the majority were further away.

Between 2006 and 2025, there was a gap in median residence-based earnings between majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city, and those where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city. In 2006, median annual residence-based earnings were 14% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than in authorities where the majority were further away; by 2025, this difference had decreased to 7%.

In 2025, the median annual residence-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city was £39,700; this was £2,600 higher than in those authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city (£37,100).

**Figure B-6: Line chart showing median residence-based earnings for majority rural local authorities as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-4)**

Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



There is a regional influence in median annual residence-based earnings; areas closer to London tend to have the highest median earnings in England. Table B-3 shows the local authorities with the highest median annual residence-based earnings within each type of authority in 2025; all of the authorities shown in the table are located in the East or South East of England.

**Table B-3: Local authorities with the highest median annual residence-based earnings within the specified authority type, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2025**

Annual gross earnings are rounded to the nearest £100.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Local Authority	Earnings (£)
Majority rural	Uttlesford	50,100
Intermediate rural	Tunbridge Wells	47,900
Intermediate urban	East Hertfordshire	52,200
Urban (excluding London)	St Albans	57,400
London	Richmond upon Thames	57,200
<b>England</b>	<b>St Albans</b>	<b>57,400</b>

In 2025, the highest median annual residence-based earnings in England was found not in London, but instead in ‘St Albans’ (an urban authority with good public transport links to central London) at £57,400. Within London, the authority of ‘Richmond upon Thames’ had the highest median annual residence-based earnings, at £57,200.

Of majority rural authorities, ‘Uttlesford’ in Essex had the highest median annual residence-based earnings in 2025, at £50,100; this was £7,300 less than in ‘St Albans’.

Local authorities with the lowest median annual residence-based earnings within each authority type, are shown in Table B-4.

**Table B-4: Local authorities with the lowest median annual residence-based earnings within the specified authority type, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2025**

Annual gross earnings are rounded to the nearest £100.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Local Authority	Earnings (£)
Majority rural	East Lindsey	31,500
Intermediate rural	Isle of Wight	31,200
Intermediate urban	Boston	29,800
Urban (excluding London)	Pendle	30,300
London	Barking and Dagenham	38,500
<b>England</b>	<b>Boston</b>	<b>29,800</b>

In 2025, ‘Boston’ (an intermediate urban authority in the East Midlands of England) had the lowest median residence-based earnings in England, at £29,800.

Of majority rural authorities, ‘East Lindsey’ (in the East Midlands of England) had the lowest median residence-based earnings in 2025, at £31,500. In London, ‘Barking and Dagenham’ had the lowest median residence-based earnings, at £38,500.

Proximity to a major town or city had a notable impact on median residence-based earnings. ‘Uttlesford’ – with the highest median annual residence-based earnings of majority rural authorities in 2025 – had the majority of its population living nearer to a major town or city. Of majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city, ‘West Oxfordshire’ had the highest median annual residence-based earnings (£43,900); this was £6,200 less than in ‘Uttlesford’.

In comparison, ‘East Lindsey’ – with the lowest median annual residence-based earnings of majority rural authorities in 2025 – had the majority of its population living further from a major town or city. Of majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city, ‘Babergh’ in Suffolk had the lowest median annual residence-based earnings (£33,900); this was £2,400 more than in ‘East Lindsey’. Local Authority level earnings estimates can be found in the [supplementary data tables](#).

### Lower quartile earnings

Lower quartile earnings represent the level of earnings below which 25% of employees earn.

In 2025, lower quartile gross annual residence-based earnings in England were £29,300. In majority rural authorities, lower quartile earnings were £29,000 - slightly below the England lower quartile. In urban authorities outside of London, lower quartile earnings were £28,800 - lower than in majority rural authorities. The lower quartile for England is inflated by the lower quartile earnings in London (£33,900). Rural classification estimates include imputation to fill in missing data; for more information, see Note B-5.

Earnings are expressed as current prices and therefore are not adjusted for inflation. Nevertheless lower quartile earnings have increased over time.

The line chart in Figure B-7 shows the lower quartile residence-based earnings in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London between 2006 and 2025. There was little difference in lower quartile residence-based earnings between majority rural and urban authorities outside of London. London has been excluded from the chart as the lower quartile earnings are considerably higher. Intermediate (rural or urban) authorities are not included on the chart but their median earnings sit between majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, as shown in the [supplementary data tables](#).

Lower quartile annual residence-based earnings have risen steadily over time in both majority rural and urban authorities outside of London (not adjusted for inflation), with often little difference between these authority types.

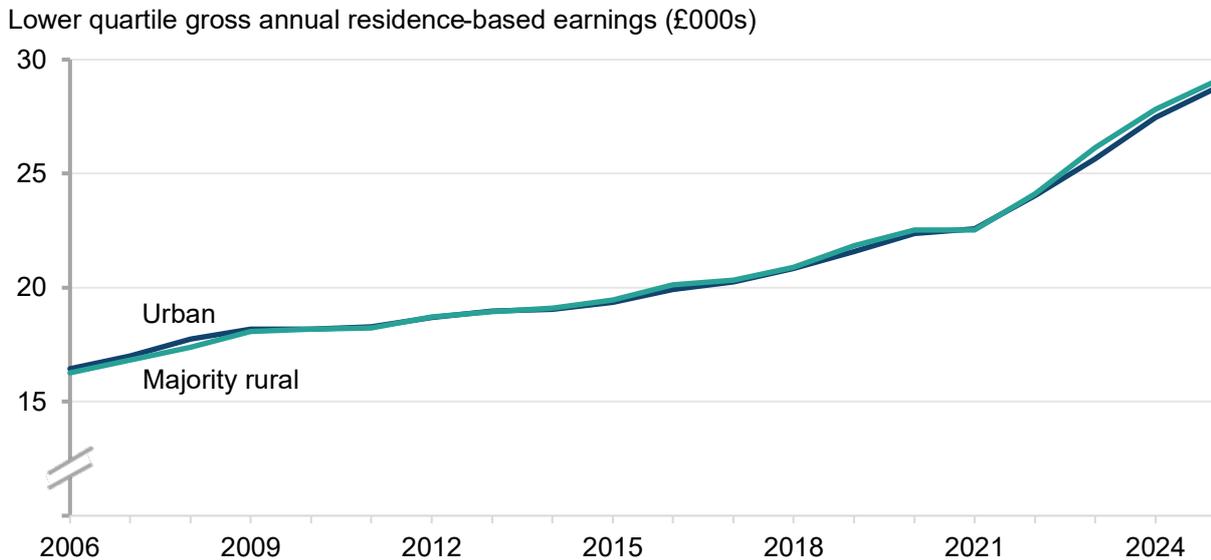
At the start of the series, lower quartile annual earnings were £16,200 and £16,400 in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London, respectively. Both authority types saw notable growth in lower quartile earnings, particularly from 2021 onwards (not adjusted for inflation).

Between 2006 and 2020, lower quartile earnings increased by 39% in majority rural authorities, and by 36% in urban authorities outside of London (not adjusted for inflation) There was little to no change in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2025, lower quartile earnings increased by 29% in majority rural authorities, and by 27% in urban authorities outside of

London. In terms of the short-term change, majority rural authorities saw a 4% increase in lower quartile annual residence-based earnings between 2024 and 2025, compared to a 5% increase in urban authorities outside of London (not adjusted for inflation).

**Figure B-7: Line chart showing lower quartile residence-based earnings for majority rural and urban local authorities in England, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, current prices (not adjusted for inflation) 2006 to 2025**

“Urban” excludes London. Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



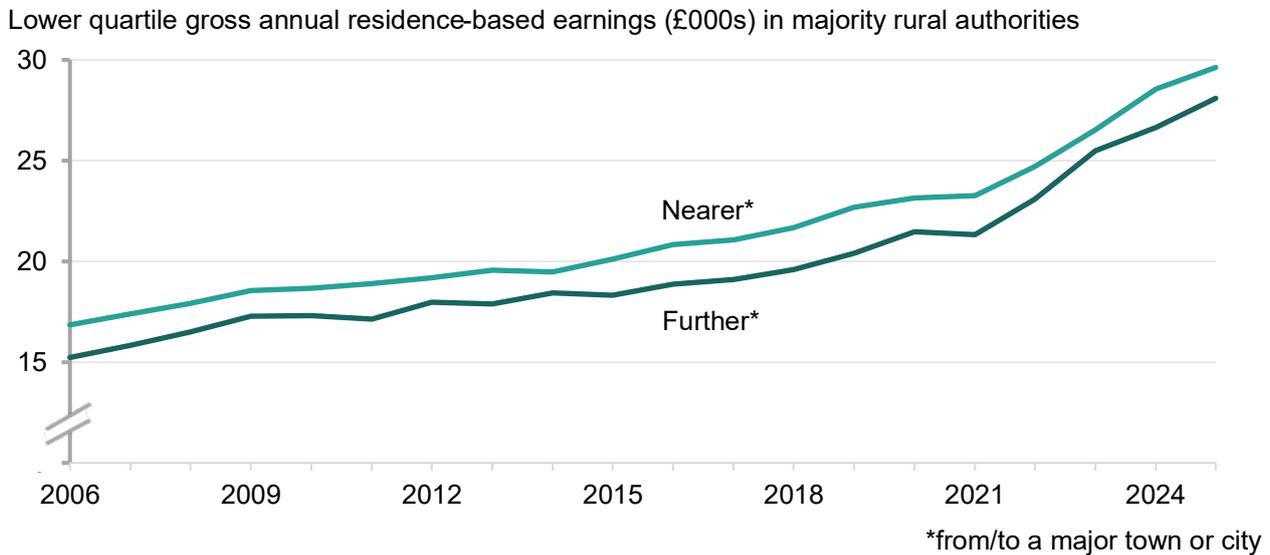
The line chart in Figure B-8 shows how proximity to a major town or city impacts lower quartile earnings.

Between 2006 and 2025, lower quartile annual residence-based earnings were higher in majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city) than in authorities where the majority lived further away.

In 2006, lower quartile annual earnings were 11% higher in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city than in authorities where the majority lived further away; by 2025, this difference had decreased to 5%. In 2025, the lower quartile annual residence-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city (£29,600) was £1,500 higher than those where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city (£28,100).

**Figure B-8: Line chart showing lower quartile residence-based earnings for majority rural local authorities in England as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-4)**

Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



## Comparing workplace-based and residence-based earnings

People do not necessarily live in the same local authority where they work, and many commute across authority boundaries for employment. This means that measures of earnings can differ depending on whether they are based on where people work or where they live.

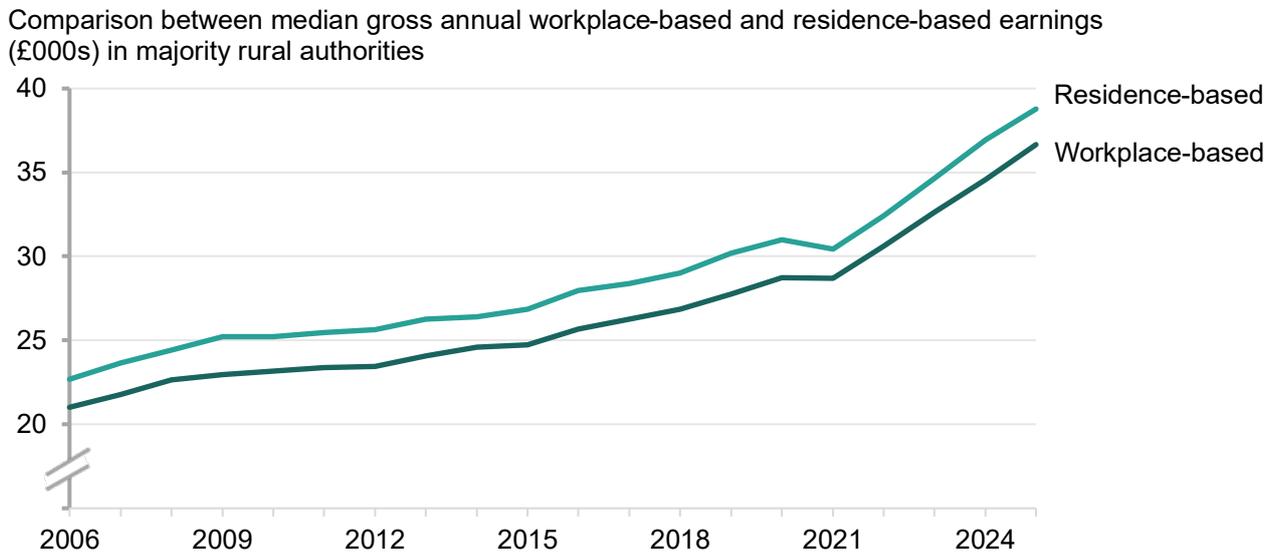
[Workplace-based earnings](#) measure what those who work in the specified authority type earn, regardless of where they live. [Residence-based earnings](#) measure what those who live in the specified authority type earn, regardless of where they work.

The line chart in Figure B-9 highlights the differences in median annual earnings in majority rural authorities when using a workplace-based or residence-based measure. Between 2006 and 2025, median residence-based earnings were consistently higher than median workplace-based earnings in majority rural authorities.

At the start of the series, median annual residence-based earnings (£22,700) were £1,600 higher than median annual workplace-based earnings (£21,000) in majority rural authorities. This was the smallest difference seen between 2006 and 2025. The greatest difference was in 2019, when median residence-based earnings (£30,200) were £2,500 higher than median workplace-based earnings (£27,700) in majority rural authorities.

In 2025, there was still a considerable gap between the different earnings measures; median residence-based earnings in majority rural authorities was £38,800, whilst workplace-based earnings in majority rural authorities were £2,100 less (£36,600).

**Figure B-9: Line chart showing comparison of workplace-based and residence-based median gross annual earnings in majority rural authorities, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025**  
Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



In majority rural authorities, residence-based earnings tend to exceed workplace-based earnings due to several factors. A considerable number of residents of majority rural authorities commute to higher-paying jobs in urban or suburban areas; their earnings are counted as majority rural residence-based income but urban workplace-based income, resulting in the difference between these two measures when focussing on majority rural authorities only. Additionally, more limited local employment opportunities - often characterized by lower wages or fewer jobs - contribute to relatively low workplace-based earnings in majority rural authorities. The trend is further influenced by [remote workers](#), and higher-income individuals who reside in rural areas while working for non-local employers.

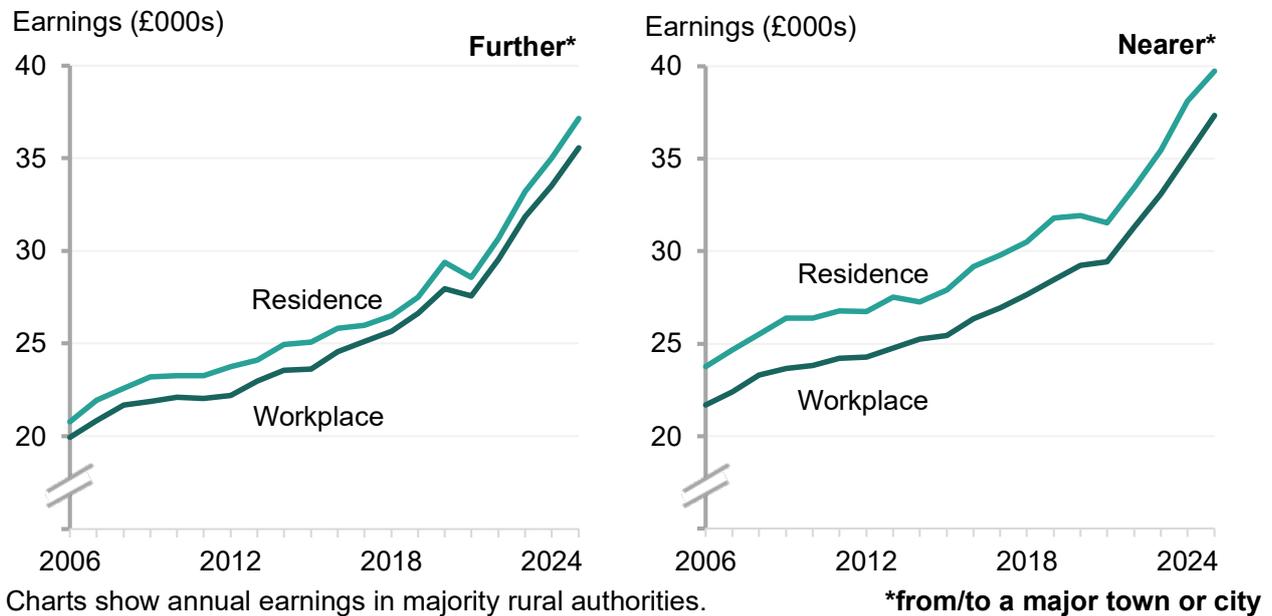
The line charts in Figure B-10 show how proximity to a major town or city impacts median earnings; the left-hand chart shows median annual workplace-based and residence-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city, whereas the right-hand chart highlights the same metrics for majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city.

In both line charts shown in Figure B-10 (i.e. for all majority rural authorities regardless of proximity to a major town or city), median annual residence-based earnings were higher than median annual workplace-based earnings; however, the gap between median residence-based and median workplace-based earnings was greater in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city.

In majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city, higher residence-based than workplace-based earnings suggests that residents are more likely to commute to urban jobs, which typically offer higher pay (see Figure B-1).

**Figure B-10: Comparison of workplace-based and residence-based median gross annual earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from (left-hand chart) or nearer to (right-hand chart) a major town or city, in England, current price (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2025 (Note B-4)**

Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



At the start of the series, the difference between median annual workplace-based and residence-based earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city was £800; this was one of the smallest differences between 2006 and 2025. In comparison, the greatest difference in earnings measures was in 2025, where median annual residence-based earnings were £1,600 higher than workplace-based earnings.

In majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city, the difference between median annual workplace-based and residence-based earnings was £2,000 at the start of the series; this gap between earnings measures was more than double the size of that in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city. The greatest difference in earnings in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city was in 2019, where median annual residence-based earnings were £3,400 higher than workplace-based earnings.

## Earnings explanatory notes

- Note B-1**

Earnings figures are on a current prices basis and have not been adjusted for inflation. Results for Rural – Urban categories have been weighted by the number of people employed aged 16-64 based on Annual Population Survey (residence and workplace analysis): [www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/1066.aspx](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/1066.aspx)

The CPIH is defined as the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (OOH). It measures the rate at which the price of goods and services bought by households increases or decreases. OOH costs are those costs associated with owning, maintaining and living in one's own home, along with Council Tax. Inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time.

Consumer Price Index: [www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7bt/mm23](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7bt/mm23)

- **Note B-2**

Time series data within this section used local authorities as at 2023. The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification has been applied. For more information, see: [Rural Urban Classification - GOV.UK](#)

- **Note B-3**

Data presented within this section are available in the [Rural economy supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note B-4**

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. "Nearer to a major town or city" is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city and, "further from a major town or city" is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city. In this context "a major town or city" is defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents.

A local authority is classified as "majority further from a major town or city" have if at least 50% of their population are further from a major town or city, and similarly a local authority classified as "majority nearer to a major town or city" have less than 50% of their population further from a major town or city.

This proximity measure is independent of the rurality measure in that it relates to all of the population within the local authority - not just the rural proportion.

- **Note B-5**

Earnings data comes from the Local Authority-level dataset of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings release. They are based on full-time workers, and represent earnings from each tax year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April. Earnings are taken for employees on adult rates of pay who have been in the same job for more than a year.

Annual earnings data are missing for some Local Authorities; in these situations, annualised weekly earnings have been used instead. As these figures are not produced on an identical basis to annual earnings, they are not directly comparable; annualised weekly earnings may overestimate or underestimate annual earnings. To reduce this effect, all earnings figures have been rounded to the nearest £100; therefore, values may not sum to totals.

Values for overall earnings in England are reported as they are directly from the Survey, and do not include imputation.

## C. Redundancies

**Redundancies rates fluctuate, but overall, there is little difference in the rate of redundancies for people living in rural areas and urban areas.**

### Key findings - Redundancies

#### Latest redundancy rates were higher in rural areas than in urban areas

- In Quarter 3, 2025 there were 5.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas compared with 4.7 redundancies in urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).

#### Average redundancy rates in 2025 were lower in rural areas than in urban areas

- When looking at the provisional average rate for 2025 (based on Quarters 1 to 3 at present), rates were higher for those living in urban areas, with an average rate of 4.4 redundancies per 1,000 employees, compared with 3.9 redundancies for rural areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).

#### Redundancy rates in rural areas have changed little since 2019

- In 2019 the annual average redundancy rate for those living in rural areas was 4 redundancies per 1,000 employees. The average for 2025 (currently excluding Q4 2025) was at the same level (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban).

## Summary

When a person is dismissed from their job due to being no longer required, it is called “redundancy” or being “made redundant”; it happens when employers need to reduce their workforce.

In Quarter 3 2025, redundancy rates were higher for employees living in rural areas than in urban areas, at 5.7 and 4.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees respectively (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). Rates had increased in both rural and urban areas when compared with the previous quarter, increasing by 2.5 and 0.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees respectively.

Annual changes show redundancy rates increasing. In rural areas rates rose by 3.0 redundancies per 1,000 employees to 23,500 redundancies, while in urban areas they rose by 1.1 redundancies per 1,000 employees to 99,300 redundancies (RUC11).

Redundancy rates have fluctuated over time, but there has been a slight increase between 2019 and Q3 2025 of 2.0 more redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas and 1.4 more redundancies per 1,000 employees living in urban areas (RUC11).

## Redundancies – short-term trends

When a person is dismissed from their job due to being no longer required, it is called “redundancy” or being “made redundant”; it happens when employers need to reduce their workforce. Data for redundancies are collected and analysed quarterly, and a quarter-on-quarter comparison can be made to determine any emerging trends. The latest data available for analysis is Quarter 3 (Q3) 2025 (i.e., July to September 2025).

Please note, the ONS have stated that the Labour Force Survey - the data source for this analysis - has become more volatile in recent periods; they advise caution when interpreting short term changes. For more information please see the latest [ONS Labour Market Overview \(section 2. Main points\)](#).

In Q3 2025, redundancy rates were higher for those living in rural areas than in urban areas at 5.7 and 4.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees respectively (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). This is shown in Table C-1. Proportionally more people were made redundant in Q3 2025 than in the previous quarter in England, increasing from 3.9 to 4.9 redundancies per 1,000 employees. In rural areas, there were 2.5 more redundancies per 1,000 employees in Q3 compared to Q2 2025; in urban areas there was a smaller increase of 0.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees across the same period.

In absolute terms, 23,500 people living in rural areas were made redundant in Q3 2025 - 10,200 more than in Q2 2025. In urban areas 99,300 people were made redundant - 16,200 more than in Q2 2025.

**Table C-1: Redundancies in England, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (counts, rates per 1,000 workers), Q2 and Q3 2025 (Note C-1, Note C-2, Note C-4)**

Rates are rounded to the nearest 0.1 redundancies per 1,000 employees living within the specified settlement type, and counts are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

2011 Rural-Urban Classification	Count, Q2 2025	Rate, Q2 2025	Count, Q3 2025	Rate, Q3 2025	Direction of change
Rural	13,300	3.3	23,500	5.7	Increase
Urban	83,100	4.0	99,300	4.7	Increase
<b>England</b>	<b>96,300</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>122,800</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>Increase</b>

## Redundancies – annual change

As well as presenting quarterly changes, we can show annual change based on the most recent quarter. In Quarter 3 (Q3) 2025, redundancy rates in England had increased when compared with Q3 2024; from 3.4 redundancies per 1,000 employees in Q3 2024 to 4.9 redundancies in Q3 2025 (Table C-2).

There were proportionally more people made redundant in Q3 2025 compared to the year prior in both rural and urban areas (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). In rural areas, there were 3.0 more redundancies per 1,000 employees by Q3 2025, while in urban areas, there were 1.1 more redundancies per 1,000 employees. This is equivalent to an increase of 12,100 redundancies in rural areas and of 25,900 redundancies in urban areas between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (RUC11).

**Table C-2: Redundancies in England, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification (counts, rates per 1,000 workers), Q3 2024 and Q3 2025 (Note C-1, Note C-2, Note C-4)**

Rates are rounded to the nearest 0.1 redundancies per 1,000 employees living within the specified settlement type, and counts are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

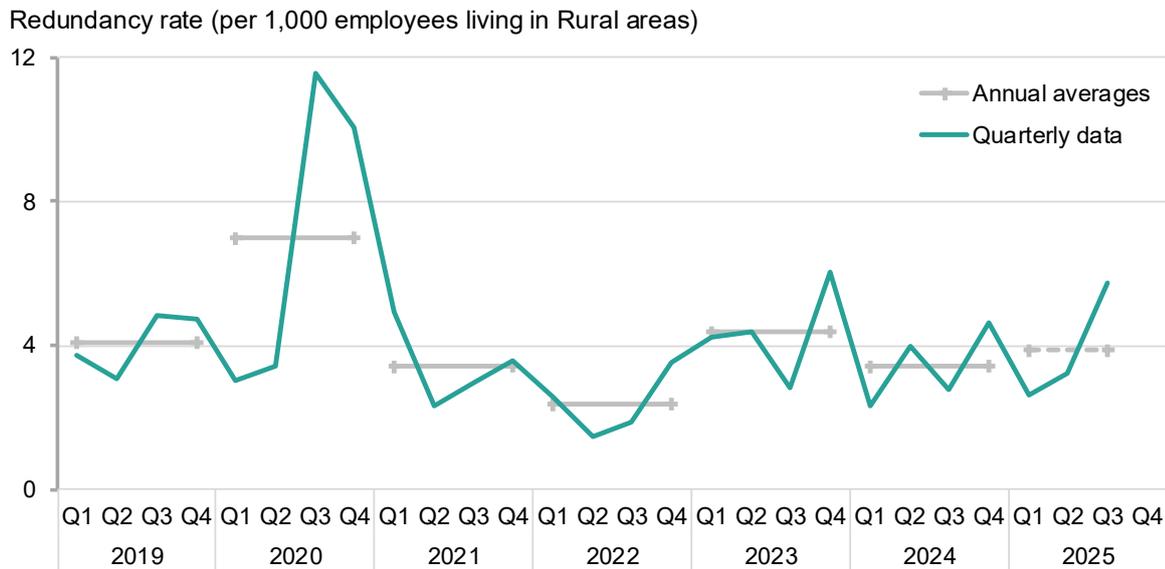
2011 Rural-Urban Classification	Count, Q3 2024	Rate, Q3 2024	Count, Q3 2025	Rate, Q3 2025	Direction of change
Rural	11,400	2.8	23,500	5.7	Increase
Urban	73,400	3.6	99,300	4.7	Increase
<b>England</b>	<b>84,800</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>122,800</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>Increase</b>

## Redundancies – long-term trends

Redundancy rates have fluctuated over time. The line chart in Figure C-1 shows quarterly redundancy rates for rural residents from 2019 to 2025, along with annual averages (based on the 2011 classification of rural and urban). When focussing on quarterly data, there is much more variation in the redundancy rate in rural areas compared to the annual averages.

**Figure C-1: Line chart showing redundancy rate per 1,000 employees living in Rural areas from the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, Q1 2019 to Q3 2025 and annual averages 2019 to 2025 (Note C-1, Note C-2, Note C-3)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. They are represented by horizontal grey lines and indicate the impact of quarterly variation. The dashed line for 2025 indicates this estimate is provisional as it is calculated using data for Q1 to Q3 and therefore does not include Q4. This estimate will be revised once data for Q4 becomes available.



The line chart can be described as follows:

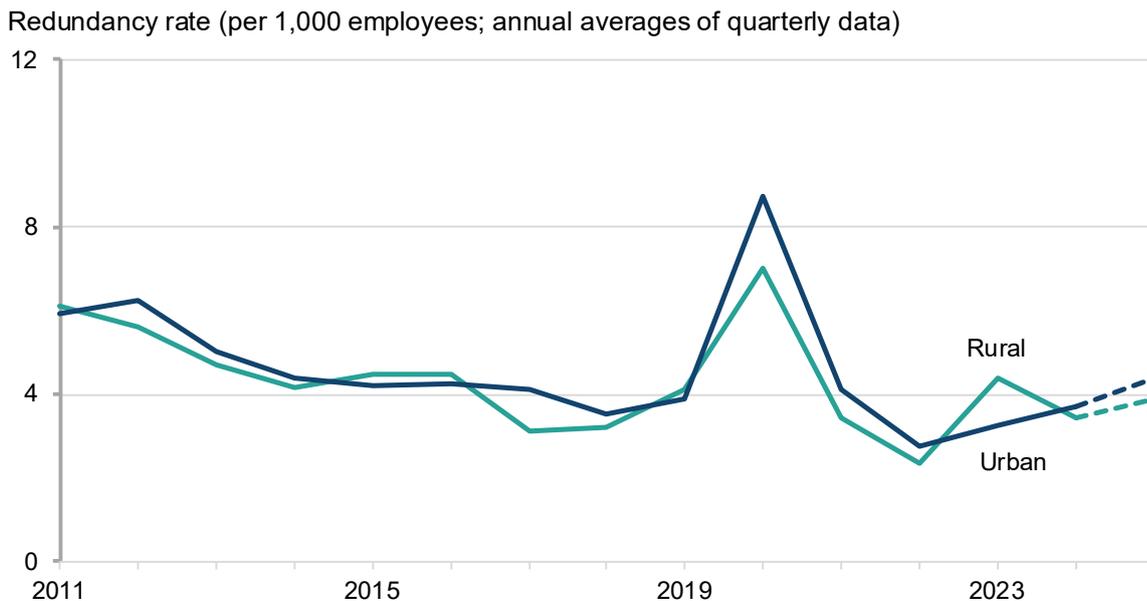
- In 2019 and early 2020, the redundancy rate remained relatively stable between 3 and 5 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas (RUC11).
- The redundancy rate in rural areas peaked in Q3 2020, reaching nearly 12 redundancies per 1,000 employees; this is likely an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (RUC11).
- There was a steep decline in the redundancy rate through 2021, with rates dropping below 3 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas (RUC11).
- From 2022, the redundancy rate in rural areas fluctuated between around 1 redundancy per 1,000 employees (Q2 2022) and 6 redundancies per 1,000 employees (Q4 2023) (RUC11).
- As of Q3 2025, there were 5.7 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas (RUC11).
- Annual averages show less volatility. The highest annual average between 2019 and 2025 was in 2020, where there were 7 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in rural areas (RUC11). The lowest annual average across the same period was in 2022, with just over 2 redundancies per 1,000 employees. Comparing 2019 with the most recent years shows that in 2024 the annual average was slightly lower and for 2025 the average (excluding Q4) was about the same as for 2019.

The annual averages for the redundancy rate in rural areas shown on Figure C-1 can be compared to those in urban areas; this is shown on the line chart in Figure C-2. There is no overall

consistency regarding which settlement type has the higher rates of redundancy; the annual average redundancy rate was higher in rural areas than urban areas in 2011, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2023. For all other years between 2011 and 2025, the annual average redundancy rate was lower in rural areas compared to urban areas (RUC11).

**Figure C-2: Line chart showing annual average redundancy rates per 1,000 employees, by 2011 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2011 to 2025 (Note C-1, Note C-2, Note C-3)**

Annual averages have been calculated from the four quarters within the specified calendar year. Please note, annual averages for 2025 are provisional (indicated by a dashed line) as they are based on data for Q1 to Q3 and will be revised once data for Q4 is available.



The line chart in Figure C-2 can be described as follows:

- From 2011 to 2019, redundancy rates in both rural and urban areas followed a similar downward trend, decreasing from around 6 to 4 redundancies per 1,000 employees (RUC11).
- In 2020, rural and urban areas (RUC11) both saw sharp increases in redundancy rates, coinciding with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; the rural redundancy rate peaked at 7 redundancies per 1,000 employees, compared to around 9 redundancies per 1,000 employees living in urban areas.
- In 2021 and 2022, redundancy rates fell below pre-pandemic levels, reaching lows between 2 and 3 redundancies per 1,000 employees in both rural and urban areas (RUC11).
- There was an increase in redundancy rate in 2023, followed by a slight decrease in 2024 for rural areas (RUC11).
- Annual averages based on the first three quarters of 2025 show both rural and urban areas with a redundancy rate of around 4 redundancies per 1,000 employees, however this could change when the figures for Q4 are included (RUC11).

## Redundancies explanatory notes

- **Note C-1**

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey.

- **Note C-2**

Ratio of the number of workers (aged 16 and over) made redundant for the given quarter to the number of employees (aged 16 and over) in the previous quarter multiplied by 1,000, based on location of residence.

- **Note C-3**

Redundancy data (numbers and rates) back to 2006 can be found in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) (see worksheet CA).

- **Note C-4**

In Table C 1 and Table C 2, the 'direction of change' columns indicate the magnitude of change over the period shown. 'Small increase / small decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 3\%$  while 'increase/decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 6\%$ . Where the change does not meet the  $\pm 3\%$  threshold the tables will show 'little to no change'. These dashboards show the direction of change over the last quarter/year, is provided to give an indication only, and may not represent a clear improvement or deterioration).

## D. Unemployment-related benefits

The proportion of working-age population that claim Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance (related to unemployment) is lower for majority rural constituencies than for urban constituencies outside of London.

### Key findings – Unemployment-related benefits

#### Proportionally fewer claim unemployment benefits in majority rural constituencies than in urban constituencies outside London

- In Quarter 4, 2025, the proportion of the working age population that were claiming either Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance owing to being unemployed was 2.2% in majority rural constituencies; in urban constituencies outside London it was 4.3%.
- This equates to 86,200 claimants in majority rural constituencies and 826,600 claimants in urban constituencies outside London.

#### Proximity to a major town or city has little impact on the proportion of claimants

- In Q4 2025, 2.4% of the working-age population in majority rural constituencies where the majority of residents lived further from a major town or city claimed unemployment-related benefits, compared with 2.2% in constituencies where the majority lived nearer.
- This equates to 33,700 claimants in majority rural constituencies where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city, and 52,500 claimants where they live nearer to a major town or city.

#### Proportion of unemployment-related benefit claimants have increased

- Between Quarter 1 2016 and Quarter 4 2025, the proportion of claimants increased by 1.2 percentage points in majority rural constituencies, from 1.0% to 2.2%.
- In urban constituencies outside London the proportion of claimants increased by 2.1 percentage points between Quarter 1 2016 and Quarter 4 2025, from 2.1% to 4.3%.

## Summary

The term ‘Claimant Count’ is used to describe those who are receiving a benefit to help with living costs whilst looking for work. In this update of Claimant Count estimates we have used a new data source: the Office for National Statistics Claimant Count analysis which is an official statistic in development measuring the number of people who are receiving a benefit principally for the reason of being unemployed. The Claimant Count consists of those receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance, and Universal Credit claimants who are in the ‘searching for work’ category. This is a change from earlier Claimant Count analysis which was based solely on those receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance. These latest updates aim to present a more complete picture of the number of working-age population who are receiving a benefit because they are unemployed. Data is collected at Westminster Parliamentary Constituency level. This section uses the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC21).

In Quarter 4 2025, 2.2% of the working-age population were claiming Universal Credit or Jobseeker’s Allowance in majority rural constituencies, compared with 4.3% in urban constituencies outside London. The number of claimants had shown no real change compared with the previous quarter in both majority rural and urban constituencies outside London.

On an annual basis, the number of claimants has seen a small drop in majority rural constituencies between Quarter 4 2024 and Quarter 4 2025 by 4,300 claimants; a decrease of 5%. In urban constituencies outside London claimant numbers have also decreased (down 48,400 claimants, a decrease of 6%) over the same period.

When considering long-term trends, the total numbers of claimants have been generally rising between 2016 and 2025. The percentage of the working age population claiming either Universal Credit or Jobseeker’s Allowance has been consistently higher in urban constituencies outside London (and highest in London constituencies), while proportions are lowest in majority rural constituencies.

## Background information

When a person is economically active but unemployed, sometimes they will need financial help whilst they are looking for a job. Analysis in this section uses ONS data on Claimant Counts which measures the number of people who are receiving a benefit principally for the reason of being unemployed. Currently, the Claimant Count consists of those receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance and Universal Credit claimants in the “searching for work” category.

Within this section, all claimants contribute towards the unemployment rates seen in [Section A](#). However, not all people included within the unemployment rates will be claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance or Universal Credit. For the majority of unemployed people who do not claim, it is likely because they do not qualify. However, there will still be a number of people who qualify for these benefits but do not claim. Whilst unemployment rates and claimant rates are not directly comparable, they complement each other, and often move in parallel.

[Universal Credit](#) is a single payment for each household, to help with living costs for those on a low income or out of work. Support for housing costs, children and childcare costs are integrated into Universal Credit. The analysis within this section is not fully representative of all Universal Credit claimants; only those described as “searching for work” have been included within this publication.

[Jobseeker's Allowance](#) (JSA) is an unemployment benefit you can claim while looking for work. It is a weekly allowance to aid with living costs that will be paid as long as a person is [eligible](#).

It should be noted that Universal Credit has become predominant and the number of claimants for Jobseeker's Allowance has been declining longer term. New claims for income-based JSA are no longer allowed, and existing claimants are being moved to Universal Credit through a process called "managed migration". Further information can be found on the GOV.UK page covering [Jobseeker's Allowance](#).

Universal Credit has been gradually rolled out in stages. It was initially available to a limited range of claimants, principally single working age people with no children and seeking work. The national expansion of Universal Credit to the full range of claimants was started in May 2016. By December 2018 it was available in every Jobcentre across Great Britain. A pilot for the managed migration of claimants on benefits being replaced by Universal Credit began in July 2019. See Note D-4 for further information.

## Claimant Count – short-term trends

Data for the number of people claiming Universal Credit (UC) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is collected monthly. This monthly data is used to produce quarterly estimates. The latest data presented are for Quarter 4 (Q4) 2025.

A lower proportion of people claimed UC or JSA owing to being unemployed in majority rural constituencies than in urban constituencies outside of London in Q4 2025; 2.2% of the working-age population were claimants in majority rural constituencies, compared with 4.3% in urban constituencies outside of London (Note D-2). It is worth noting that unemployment rates are also lower in rural areas as shown in [Section A](#). The number of claimants for Q4 2025 has seen very little change in both majority rural and urban constituencies outside of London when compared with the previous quarter (Q4 2024). In absolute terms, there were 1,300 more people claiming UC or JSA in Q4 2025 than the previous quarter in majority rural constituencies. In urban constituencies outside of London, there were 9,700 fewer people claiming UC or JSA in Q4 2025 than the previous quarter, as shown in Table D-1.

**Table D-1: Claimants of Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance owing to being unemployed in England (count and proportion of the working-age population), by 2021 Westminster Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification, Q3 2025 and Q4 2025 (Note D-1, Note D-2, Note D-3, Note D-5, Note D-6, Note D-7)**

Rates (i.e., the proportion of the working-age population) are rounded to the nearest 0.1%, and counts are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

2021 Rural-Urban Classification	Count, Q3 2025	Rate, Q3 2025	Count, Q4 2025	Rate, Q4 2025	Direction of change
Majority rural	84,900	2.2%	86,200	2.2%	Little to no change
Intermediate (rural or urban)	186,700	2.5%	187,500	2.6%	Little to no change
Urban (excluding London)	836,300	4.3%	826,600	4.3%	Little to no change
London	352,700	5.6%	345,800	5.5%	Little to no change
<b>England</b>	<b>1,460,700</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>1,446,200</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>Little to no change</b>

Constituency types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the populations' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. 'Nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely, 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). For more information about the relative access measure, or more generally about the rural-urban classification, see [Rural Urban Classification](#) page on the Defra website.

Table D-2 shows how proximity to a major town or city impacts on claimant count numbers and proportions for majority rural constituencies. In Q4 2025, proximity to major towns or cities had little effect on the proportion of unemployment-related benefit claimants in majority rural constituencies. Among working-age residents in constituencies where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city, 2.4% claimed unemployment-related benefits, compared with 2.2% in constituencies where the majority of residents lived nearer. Between Q3 and Q4 2025, the proportion of claimants in majority rural constituencies remained broadly unchanged regardless of proximity to major towns or cities.

**Table D-2: Claimants of Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance owing to being unemployed in England (count and proportion of the working-age population), by proximity to a major town or city for majority rural constituencies as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, Q3 2025 and Q4 2025 (Note D-1, Note D-2, Note D-3, Note D-5)**

Rates (i.e., the proportion of the working-age population) are rounded to the nearest 0.1%, and counts are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

2021 Rural-Urban Classification	Count, Q3 2025	Rate, Q3 2025	Count, Q4 2025	Rate, Q4 2025	Direction of change
Majority nearer to	52,000	2.2%	52,500	2.2%	Little to no change
Majority further from	32,900	2.3%	33,700	2.4%	Little to no change
<b>Majority rural</b>	<b>84,900</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>86,200</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>Little to no change</b>

## Claimant Count – annual change

As well as presenting quarterly changes, we can show annual changes which are based on the latest quarter presented. In comparison to Q4 2024, in Q4 2025 66,700 fewer unemployed people claimed Universal Credit or Jobseeker’s Allowance. This decrease was slightly less prevalent in majority rural constituencies (a 0.1 percentage points decrease between Q4 2024 and Q4 2025) than in urban constituencies outside of London (a 0.2 percentage points decrease). This is shown in Table D-3.

In majority rural constituencies where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city, as well as those where the majority lived further away, the proportion of unemployment-related benefit claimants decreased by 0.1 percentage points between Q4 2024 and Q4 2025. Data regarding the relative access of majority rural constituencies can be found within the [supplementary data tables](#).

**Table D-3: Claimants of Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance owing to being unemployed in England (count and proportion of the working-age population), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England, Q4 2024 and Q4 2025 (Note D-1, Note D-2, Note D-3, Note D-5, Note D-6, Note D-7)**

Rates (i.e., the proportion of the working-age population) are rounded to the nearest 0.1%, and counts are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

2021 Rural-Urban Classification	Count, Q4 2024	Rate, Q4 2024	Count, Q4 2025	Rate, Q4 2025	Direction of change
Majority rural	90,500	2.4%	86,200	2.2%	Small decrease
Intermediate (rural or urban)	194,400	2.6%	187,500	2.6%	Small decrease
Urban (excluding London)	875,000	4.5%	826,600	4.3%	Small decrease
London	353,000	5.6%	345,800	5.5%	Little to no change
<b>England</b>	<b>1,512,900</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>1,446,200</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	Small decrease

## Claimant Counts – long-term trends

The proportion of the population claiming unemployment-related benefits fluctuates over time. The long-term quarterly trends are shown within this section, up to the latest quarter presented (Q4 2025). The line chart in Figure D-1 shows quarterly data for people claiming Universal Credit (UC) or Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) from Q1 2016.

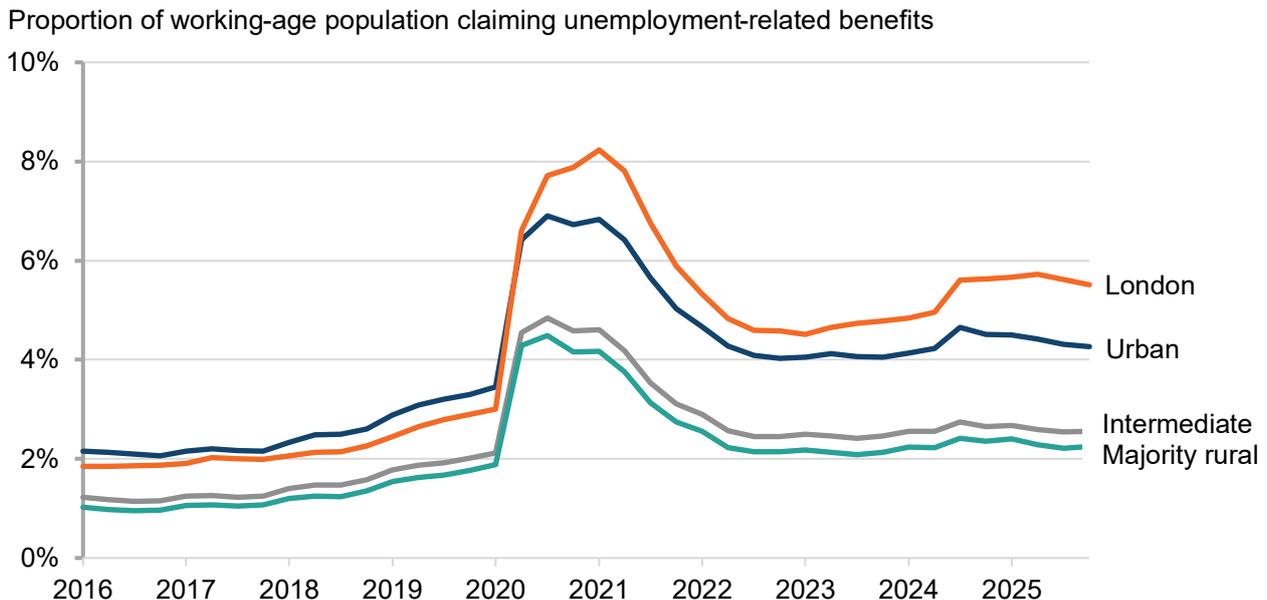
The trends seen in the Figure D-1 are summarised below.

- The percentage of the working-age population claiming UC or JSA owing to being unemployed has been consistently higher in urban constituencies outside London than in majority rural constituencies, while proportions were consistently highest in London.
- Percentages of UC or JSA claimants owing to being unemployed saw overall increased in all constituency types between 2016 and 2025. In majority rural constituencies, the percentages of claimants doubled between Q1 2016 and Q4 2025, from 1.0% of the working-age population to 2.2%, respectively.

- In intermediate constituencies (rural and urban), percentages have doubled between Q1 2016 (1.2%) and Q4 2025 (2.6%). The same is true in urban constituencies outside of London where percentages were around two times higher in Q4 2025 (4.3%) compared to Q1 2016 (2.1%). The greatest increase occurred in London constituencies where the percentage of claimants was around three times higher in Q4 2025 (5.5%) than in Q1 2016 (1.8%).
- All constituency types saw large increases in claimants between Q1 and Q2 2020; this is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In majority rural constituencies, the proportion of the working-age population as claimants peaked in Q3 2020, at 4.5%. In urban constituencies outside London, the proportion of claimants also peaked in Q3 2020 (6.9%) while London constituencies peaked slightly later in Q1 2021, at 8.2%.
- During 2021, the percentage of claimants fell quickly but they did not return to pre-pandemic levels. Between 2023 and mid-2024 claimant rates were generally increasing, but since 2025 rates have started to fall again for all constituency types.

**Figure D-1: Line chart showing claimants of Universal Credit and Jobseeker’s Allowance as a percentage of the working age population, Q1 2016 to Q4 2025, England, 2021 Westminster Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note D-1, Note D-2, Note D-3, Note D-6, Note D-7)**

‘Intermediate’ represents the combination of intermediate rural and intermediate urban authorities. ‘Urban’ excludes London.



### Claimant Count explanatory note

- **Note D-1**

Source: ONS Claimant Count data (Universal Credit and Jobseeker’s Allowance) via [Nomis](#). Data is at Westminster Parliamentary Constituency (July 2024) level. Often statistics are compiled at Westminster Parliamentary Constituency-level, in which case the rural-urban classification for constituencies is used. This is different from looking at the population using the more detailed rural-urban classification as it is based on whole constituencies. The whole population in a constituency will be attributed to the class assigned to the constituency. So, a constituency that is majority rural or intermediate rural will have the whole population

counted as being in a majority or intermediate rural area, even those living in an urban settlement within that constituency, while all those living in a rural area but within a constituency classed as urban or intermediate urban will not be counted in the majority or intermediate rural figure. Analysis using constituencies may under-estimate the rural population.

- **Note D-2**

Working age population is those aged 16 to 64.

- **Note D-3**

When the proportion of the working-age population claiming Jobseeker's Allowance is calculated, the mid-2024 population estimates have been used for current statistics, from Q1 2024 until Q4 2025; this is because the latest mid-year estimates available are not yet available for 2025. All other years use the mid-year population estimates for that year.

- **Note D-4**

A timeline detailing the key events in the implementation of Universal Credit can be found in the Background information section of the ONS document '[Universal Credit statistics: background information and methodology](#)'.

- **Note D-5**

In Table D-1 and Table D 2, the 'direction of change' column indicates the magnitude of change over the period shown. 'Small increase / small decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 3\%$  while 'increase / decrease' indicates a change of  $\pm 6\%$ . Where the change does not meet the  $\pm 3\%$  threshold the table will show 'little to no change'. These dashboards showing the direction of change over the last quarter/year are provided to give an indication only, and may not represent a clear improvement or deterioration.

- **Note D-6**

The category 'Intermediate (rural or urban)' is a combination of the intermediate rural and intermediate urban categories. For further information on the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification please see the [Rural Urban Classification](#) page on the Defra website.

- **Note D-7**

Westminster parliamentary constituencies (as of July 2024) that are 'in London' can be defined in two different ways: 1) just constituencies in 'Inner London', or 2) constituencies in both 'Inner London' and 'Outer London'. For the purposes of this publication, constituencies 'in London' refers to only those in 'Inner London'. This is all 'London-area' constituencies, minus those in the 'Outer London-area', as given in the IPSA guidance from the 5 July 2024 General Election. Included 'London' constituencies are listed within the supplementary data table.

## E. Output and Productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)

In 2023, Gross Value Added (GVA) in rural areas was £259 billion and accounted for 12% of England's GVA. At Local Authority-level, output in majority rural local authorities totalled £167 billion (8%) in 2023 and a further £200 billion (9%) was generated in intermediate rural local authorities, combining to £367 billion.

### Key findings – Output and Productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)

#### Rural areas account for 12% of England's GVA

- In 2023, rural areas contributed £259 billion to England's Gross Value Added (GVA), representing 12.2% of the total GVA for England.
- Smaller rural settlements contributed 7% to England's GVA and larger rural settlements contributed 5%.
- Over the period 2001 to 2023 the proportional contribution of rural areas to England's GVA has fallen slightly – 12.8% in 2002, down to 11.7% in 2016 and at 12.2% in 2023.

#### Majority rural authorities account for 8% of England's GVA

- In 2023, majority rural local authorities contributed £167 billion to England's GVA, representing 7.9% of the total GVA for England. In 2001, majority rural local authorities accounted for 8.3% of the total GVA for England.
- Two-thirds of the GVA from majority rural authorities - £112 billion - came from authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city; the remaining £55 billion came from those authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city.

#### Relative productivity in majority rural authorities is lower than it was in 2001

- Productivity of majority rural local authorities measured using GVA per workforce job was around 92% of that for England (excluding London) in 2023.
- In 2001, productivity of majority rural local authorities measured using GVA per workforce job was around 96% of that for England (excluding London).
- Relative productivity in majority rural local authorities has fallen most in local authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city (from 92% in 2001 to 82% in 2023).

## Summary

Productivity measures are often used to indicate how well somewhere can use its human and physical resources to generate economic growth. Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector.

In 2023, rural areas contributed £259 billion to England's GVA, representing 12.2% of the total GVA for England. This estimate is based on the GVA in rural areas using new more localised GVA data. Hitherto estimates for the rural economy were based on GVA at Local Authority.

The new estimate of £259 billion generated in rural areas, based on the new more detailed GVA data, is more representative of the output in rural areas. It will include the output from all rural areas across all local authorities. However, many people who live in rural areas work in urban areas, so it does not reflect the output of the rural population but of economic activity in rural areas. It is still important to consider the economy at Local Authority-level, not least owing to the inextricable economic and social links between rural and urban areas within local authorities.

The new 2021 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities is not strictly comparable with the previous classification. Under the new classification, output in majority rural local authorities totalled £167 billion (8%) in 2023 and a further £200 billion (9%) was generated in intermediate rural authorities, combining to £367 billion.

GVA per workforce job is a measure of productivity where total output is divided by the number of individuals in the workforce. In 2023, the productivity of majority rural local authorities was around 92% of the average for England excluding London and had declined from 96% in 2001. For intermediate rural authorities it was 97% of the average for England excluding London, having declined from 100% in 2001.

The greatest gap in productivity relative to the England average was in local authorities where the majority reside further from a major town or city.

- For **majority rural** local authorities with a majority residing **further from** a major town or city, productivity in 2023 was 82% of the average for England excluding London, down from 92% in 2001.
- For **majority rural** authorities with a majority residing **nearer to** a major town or city, productivity in 2023 was 97% of the average for England excluding London, down from 99% in 2001.

## Background information

### What is GVA?

Productivity measures are often used to indicate how well a country can use its human and physical resources to generate economic growth. Strong economic growth will generally mean an improvement in living standards. However, productivity alone does not tell us everything about the economic wellbeing of different areas. The potential of any given place depends on the mix of industries, the infrastructure and the size of settlements there. Based on these circumstances, even an area with low productivity might be performing as well as it can.

Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector. Simplistically it is the value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced, less the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production.

### Revision note

The Office for National Statistics has produced new estimates of GVA for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA), which means that for the first time it is possible to produce estimates for GVA for rural areas rather than at Local Authority-level.

See: [UK small area gross value added \(GVA\) estimates - Office for National Statistics](#) for more details of the underlying data.

Estimates are also affected by the new 2021 Rural-Urban classification both for LSOAs and for Local Authorities.

GVA estimates in this report have been also affected by changes to Local Authority boundaries (Note E-13), and most notably, the new 2021 Rural-Urban Classification; figures published previously using the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification are not comparable.

The ONS have also made further methodological changes to improve the geographical distribution of GVA. These changes are mainly focussed on improving regional banking data and estimates for non-market education output. These improvements have reduced the GVA allocated to London while increasing GVA allocated outside of London. Further information can be found in Section 7 of the ONS publication '[Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK: 1998 to 2022](#)'. GVA for London has also been greatly affected by the difficulties in measuring the economy during the Covid 19 pandemic which has led to greater than usual revisions to initial estimates, especially for the last couple of years.

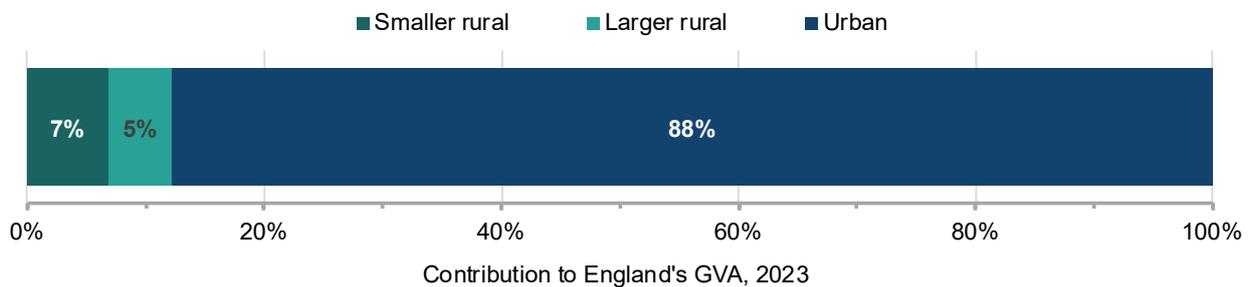
## Contribution to England's Gross Value Added (GVA)

In 2023, rural areas contributed £259 billion to England's GVA, representing 12.2% of the total GVA for England. This is only the second time an estimate has been produced for the GVA in rural areas using new more localised GVA data. Hitherto estimates were based on GVA at Local Authority-level.

The bar chart in Figure E-1 shows that smaller rural settlements contributed 7% to England's GVA and larger rural settlement contributed 5%. Urban areas contributed 88% to England's GVA, 27% of which comes from London (Table E-1).

**Figure E-1: Bar chart showing contribution to England's Gross Valued Added (GVA), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification for LSOAs in England, 2023 (provisional)**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars.



**Figure E-2: Line chart showing contribution from rural areas to England's Gross Valued Added (GVA), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification for LSOAs in England, 2001 to 2023 (provisional)**

Dotted line indicates that results are provisional.

Contribution to England's GVA in rural areas



The line chart in Figure E-2 shows that proportionally the contribution has changed only a little over the last 20 years – it was 12.6% in 2001, 12.0% in 2011 and at its lowest in 2016 at 11.7%. More recently it had increased to 12.3% in 2021, falling to 12.2% in 2023.

Previous estimates of the rural economy were based on the GVA arising in Predominantly Rural Authorities (using the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification), which in 2022 was £315 billion. Using the newer 2021 rural urban classification (Note E-14), output in majority rural local authorities totalled £167 billion in 2023. A further £200 billion was generated in intermediate rural authorities, combining to £367 billion, but the 2021 and 2011 rural urban classifications for local authorities are not comparable. While the estimate of £259 billion, which is based on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), is lower it is more representative of the contribution of rural areas. As many people living in rural areas work in urban areas, it does not reflect the output from the rural population as such but of economic activity in rural areas.

Estimates based on aggregating the GVA of local authorities include the output of the whole authority and so include the urban areas within them and exclude rural areas not within them. However, it is still relevant to consider output at Local Authority level, not least owing to the inextricable economic and social links between rural and urban areas within authorities.

Table E-1 shows that majority rural local authorities contributed 8% (£167 billion) of England's GVA in 2023 and a further 9% (£200 billion) was contributed by intermediate rural local authorities, combining to 17% (£367 billion) (Note E-1 and Note E-2).

These GVA figures are based on GVA at broadly county level apportioned at local district level to provide a more refined analysis of GVA across the local authority classification. The total GVA for rural and urban areas in Table E-1 and Table E-2 differ from the industry breakdown following this and is less finely detailed being based on data at broadly county level.

**Table E-1: Contribution to England's Gross Value Added (GVA) within each area described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, as at 2001, 2011, and 2023**

Contribution has been presented as a percentage share, rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification	2001	2011	2023
Majority rural	8.3%	8.0%	7.9%
Intermediate rural	10.0%	9.6%	9.5%
<b>Majority or intermediate rural</b>	<b>18.3%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>
Intermediate urban	11.0%	10.5%	10.1%
Urban (excluding London)	46.4%	45.6%	45.3%
London	24.2%	26.3%	27.3%
<b>Urban</b>	<b>81.7%</b>	<b>82.4%</b>	<b>82.6%</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The contributions of GVA by different types of authority as a proportion of total GVA for England has remained relatively stable for all area types over the last 20 plus years and has been strongly affected by growth seen in London. Table E-2 shows that for majority rural local authorities, the contribution has declined from 8.3% to 7.9% over the period. Most of this decline has been within those authorities with a majority residing further from a major town or city – declining from 2.9% in 2001 to 2.6% in 2023.

**Table E-2: Contribution to England’s Gross Value Added (GVA) within majority rural local authorities as described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, by proximity to a major town or city, as at 2001, 2011, and 2023**

Contribution has been presented as a percentage share, rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	2001	2011	2023
Majority further from	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%
Majority nearer to	5.4%	5.2%	5.3%
<b>All majority rural</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>

Table E-3 shows that in 2023 majority rural local authorities contributed £167 billion (7.9%) to England’s GVA and intermediate authorities contributed £200 billion (9.5%).

Table E-4 shows that £112 billion of the contribution from majority rural local authorities came from those with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city and £55 billion came from those authorities with a majority residing further from a major town or city.

**Table E-3: Contribution to England’s Gross Value Added (GVA) within each area described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, 2023**

Contribution has been presented as a percentage share, rounded to the nearest 0.1%, and in £millions (£m), rounded to the nearest £100m.

Rural-Urban Classification	GVA (£m)	Percentage share
Majority rural	166,700	7.9%
Intermediate rural	200,200	9.5%
<b>Majority or intermediate rural</b>	<b>366,900</b>	<b>17.4%</b>
Intermediate urban	212,700	10.1%
Urban (excluding London)	956,500	45.3%
London	577,100	27.3%
<b>Urban</b>	<b>1,746,300</b>	<b>82.6%</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>2,113,300</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table E-4: Contribution to England’s Gross Value Added (GVA) within majority rural local authorities as described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, by proximity to a major town or city, 2023**

Contribution has been presented as a percentage share, rounded to the nearest 0.1%, and in £millions (£m), rounded to the nearest £100m.

Proximity to a major town or city	GVA (£m)	Percentage share
Majority further from	54,600	2.6%
Majority nearer to	112,100	5.3%
<b>All majority rural</b>	<b>166,700</b>	<b>7.9%</b>

## Gross Value Added (GVA) per Workforce Job

A measure of productivity is GVA per workforce job i.e. output divided by the number of individuals in the workforce, allowing for closer comparisons between geographical area types (Note E-4). Please note, this section uses an England figure in its comparisons that excludes London. This differs from the previous section where London is included from the England total.

Table E-5 shows that compared with the average productivity for England excluding London, productivity in majority rural local authorities has fallen in relative terms from 96.2% of the average in 2001 to 91.7% in 2023. For intermediate rural authorities it was 97% of the average for England excluding London in 2023, having declined from 100% in 2001

**Table E-5: Gross Value Added (GVA) per workforce job (WFJ) as percentage of England level, within each area described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, as at 2001, 2011, and 2023**

Productivity (GVA per WFJ) has been presented as a percentage of the England total excluding London, creating an index of change; values have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification	2001	2011	2023
Majority rural	96.2	90.6	91.7
Intermediate rural	99.7	95.7	96.8
<b>Majority or intermediate rural</b>	<b>98.1</b>	<b>93.3</b>	<b>94.4</b>
Intermediate urban	105.8	103.0	101.1
Urban (excluding London)	99.5	102.1	102.1
London	145.3	155.1	142.9
<b>England excluding London</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-6 shows that within majority rural local authorities, the fall in productivity relative to the average is more pronounced for authorities with a majority residing further from a major town or city and that in 2023 productivity relative to the England average excluding London was 82.4% (down from 91.9% in 2001). For majority rural authorities with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city, the fall in productivity relative to the England average excluding London was much smaller (97.7% in 2023, down from 98.7% in 2001).

**Table E-6: Gross Value Added (GVA) per workforce job (WFJ) as percentage of England level, within majority rural local authorities as described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, by proximity to a major town or city, as at 2001, 2011, and 2023**

Productivity (GVA per WFJ) has been presented as a percentage of the England total excluding London, creating an index of change; values have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	2001	2011	2023
Majority further from	91.9	84.8	82.4
Majority nearer to	98.7	94.0	97.1
<b>All majority rural</b>	<b>96.2</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>91.7</b>

Table E-7 shows that average GVA per workforce job in majority rural local authorities at £56,400 was £5,100 lower compared with the average for England excluding London of £61,500; while in urban local authorities excluding London at £62,700, it was £1,300 higher.

**Table E-7: Gross Value Added (GVA) per workforce job (WFJ) within each area described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, 2023**

Productivity (GVA per WFJ) has been presented in £, rounded to the nearest £100, and as a percentage of the England total excluding London, creating an index of change; values have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-Urban Classification	GVA per WFJ (£)	Comparison to England total excluding London
Majority rural	56,400	91.7
Intermediate rural	59,500	96.8
<b>Majority or intermediate rural</b>	<b>58,000</b>	<b>94.4</b>
Intermediate urban	62,100	101.1
Urban (excluding London)	62,700	102.1
London	87,800	142.9
<b>England excluding London</b>	<b>61,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-8 shows that the average GVA per workforce job in majority rural local authorities with a majority residing further from a major town or city at £50,600, was at least £9,000 lower than in those authorities with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city.

**Table E-8: Gross Value Added (GVA) per workforce job (WFJ) within majority rural local authorities as described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, by proximity to a major town or city, 2023**

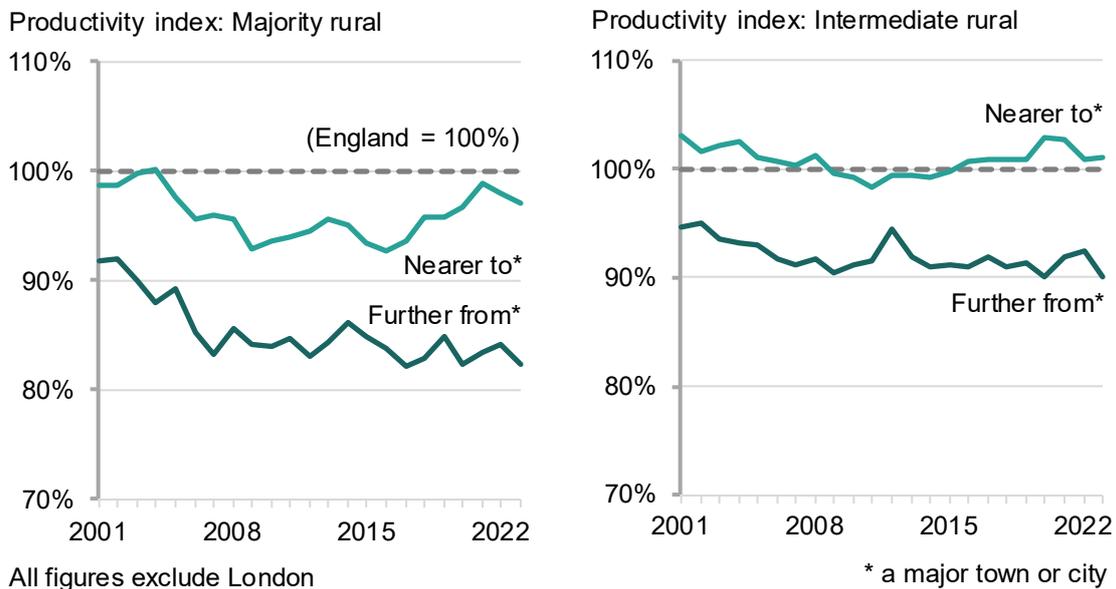
Productivity (GVA per WFJ) has been presented in £, rounded to the nearest £100, and as a percentage of the England total excluding London, creating an index of change; values have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	GVA per WFJ (£)	Comparison to England total excluding London
Majority further from	50,600	82.4
Majority nearer to	59,700	97.1
<b>All majority rural</b>	<b>56,400</b>	<b>91.7</b>

The line charts in Figure E-3 show that the fall in productivity relative to the average for England excluding London has been more pronounced for authorities with a majority residing further from a major town or city, particularly so for majority rural local authorities. Productivity in intermediate rural local authorities with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city has been above the average for England excluding London since 2016.

**Figure E-3: Line charts showing the productivity index (England excluding London = 100) for majority rural (left-hand chart) and intermediate rural (right-hand chart) local authorities as described in the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification in England, by proximity to a major town or city, 2001 to 2023**

Change is measured against the national productivity level, where England = 100%, as represented by the horizontal dashed line on the charts. All values on the charts exclude London.



**Notes**

- GVA per workforce job is a measure of GVA divided by the workforce number.
- The analysis uses the 2021 Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification for all years to allow comparison.

**Contribution to England's Gross Value Added (GVA) by Industry**

**Note that this section is based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification and will be updated to reflect the new 2021 classification in due course.** Different sections of the economy contribute very different amounts to England’s GVA with over half of all GVA coming from just 3 sector groups of ‘Public administration; education; health’, ‘Distribution; transport; accommodation and food’ and ‘Real estate activities’ (see Figure E-5).

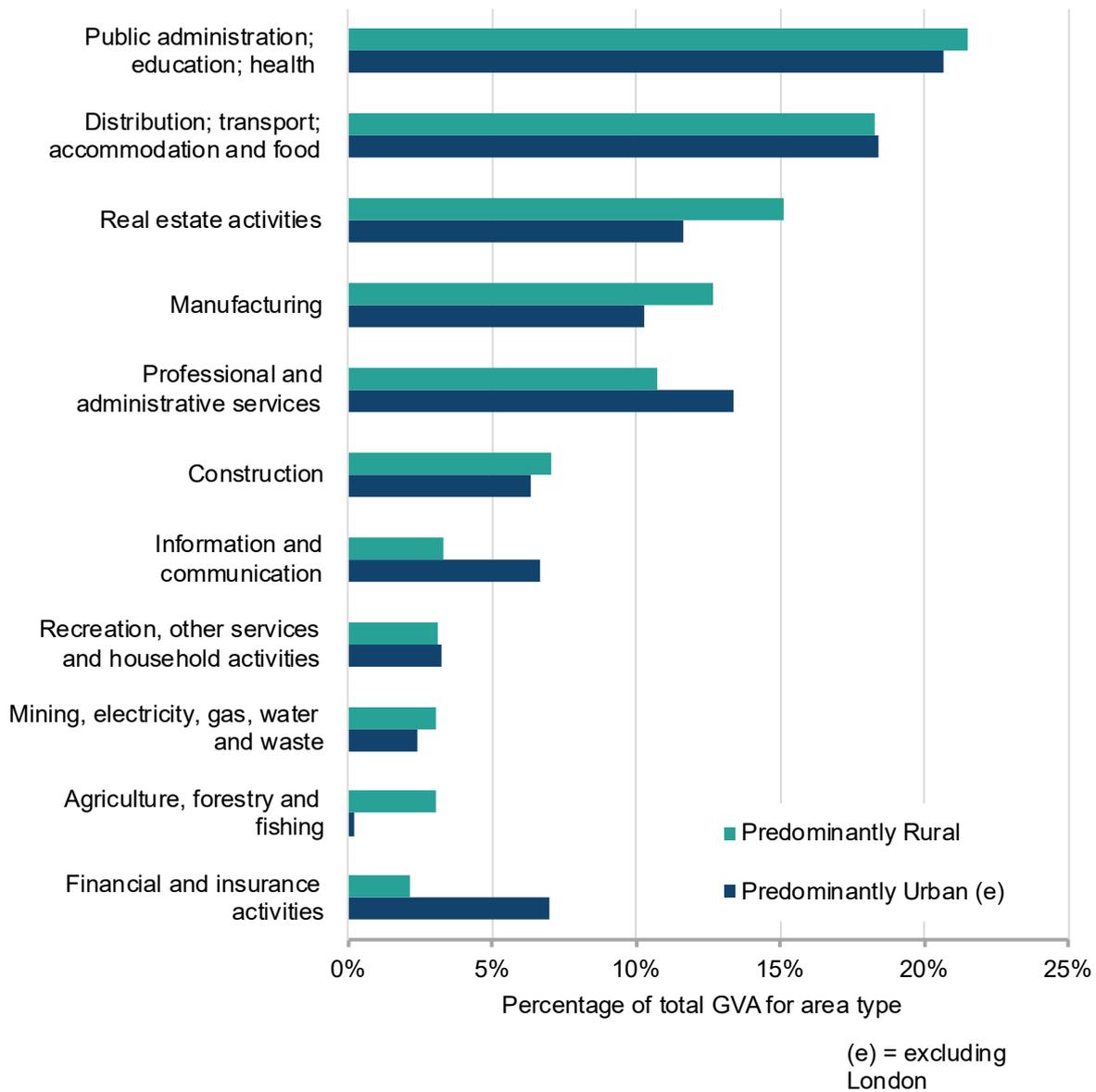
The bar chart in Figure E-5 shows that the industrial breakdown is broadly similar across Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In both area types the combined sector of ‘Public administration; education and health’ contributes the most to GVA at 21% of GVA for both area types.

In Predominantly Rural areas the sectors where contributions to GVA are more dominant than in Predominantly Urban areas are ‘Real estate activities’ (15% in Predominantly Rural areas and 12% in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) and ‘Manufacturing’ (13% in Predominantly Rural areas and 10% in Predominantly Urban areas). ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ contributed 3% (£8.6 billion) to Predominantly Rural GVA.

In Predominantly Urban areas the sectors where contributions to GVA are more dominant than in Predominantly Rural areas are ‘Financial and insurance activities’ (2% in Predominantly Rural

areas and 7% in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) and ‘Information and communication’ (3% in Predominantly Rural areas and 7% in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London)). Whilst these types of specialised businesses do exist in Predominantly Rural areas, they are more prevalent in cities and larger towns.

**Figure E-4: Bar chart showing percentage breakdown of Gross Value Added (GVA) by industry, and by Local Authority 2011 Rural-Urban Classification in England, 2022 (provisional) (Note E-7, Note E-8, Note E-9)**



**Notes**

- The industry breakdown is based on the lowest level of geography available which is broadly at county level.
- The totals for GVA for Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas are different from the headline figures for GVA earlier in this section. This is because the industrial breakdown is calculated using a coarser Rural-Urban classification which will tend to increase the areas classed as Predominantly Urban. For the total GVA of each type of area the headline figures should be used.

## Gross Value Added (GVA) from Tourism

This section will be updated shortly.

Tourism makes an important contribution to the Rural economy. In 2018, GVA from tourism in Predominantly Rural areas was worth an estimated £11.5 billion, contributing 4% of total GVA in Predominantly Rural areas (see Table E-9).

**Table E-9: Gross Value Added from Tourism, by Local Authority Classification in England, 2018 (Note E-11 and Note E-12)**

	GVA from Tourism (£m)	Total GVA (£m)	Tourism GVA as a % of total GVA for classification
Predominantly Rural	11,530	260,645	4
<b>England</b>	<b>96,355</b>	<b>1,643,300</b>	<b>6</b>

## Productivity explanatory notes

- **Note E-1**

The GVA figures are based on GVA at broadly county level apportioned at local district level to provide a more refined analysis of GVA across the local authority classification. Data have been recalculated based on ONS Local Authority GVA figures.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/nominalregionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedperheadandincomecomponents>

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedlocalauthoritiesbynuts1region](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedlocalauthoritiesbynuts1region)

- **Note E-2**

Balanced GVA uses the income approach and the production approach for estimating GVA. It takes the strengths from both approaches to produce a new balanced measure of regional GVA. This gives users a single measure of economic activity within a region.

- **Note E-3**

Source: Defra analysis. Office for National Statistics, Gross Value Added at NUTS3 and LA level.

- **Note E-4**

It is important to note that there is currently no official way of deflating nominal GVA figures to reflect underlying differences in price levels between places. This means that figures may exaggerate the variation in real GVA per job between different areas because we would expect prices (property and other living expenses) to be highest in areas of high productivity such as London. Rather than report the absolute figures the variations in productivity are shown in relation to the level for England as a whole for each year.

- **Note E-5**

Data in Table E-3 is detailed in a table of GVA per workforce job figures broken down by broad local authority Rural-Urban classification covering 2001 to 2022 (provisional), available in the [Rural economy supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note E-6**

Source: Defra analysis. Workforce jobs series via Nomis (Jobs Density Total Jobs) ([www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp)).

- **Note E-7**

Data in Figure E-5 is detailed in a table of 2022 (provisional) GVA figures broken down by industry and broad local authority Rural-Urban classification, available in the [Rural economy supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note E-8**

The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities has been applied.

- **Note E-9**

Source: Defra analysis. Office for National Statistics, Gross Value Added (Balanced) at ITLs3 (broadly county level) by SIC07 industry codes at current basic prices. As of 1 January 2021, the internationally comparable regional geography for the UK is the International Territorial Levels (ITLs) geography. This has replaced the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) geographies for the UK that were operational when the UK was a member of the European Union. See the ONS "[International, regional and city statistics](#)" page for more information.

- **Note E-10**

Gross Value Added measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the country. However, there are some gaps in the coverage of the Annual Business Survey; agriculture for example is only partially covered and self-employment is not included in the data. This may lead to underestimations of economic value. Gross Value Added data by industry is only available at ITLs3 (broadly county) level, and so a broad Rural-Urban classification is applied. Predominantly Rural areas are those with at least half of their population living in Rural settlement or large market Towns.

- **Note E-11**

Source: Bespoke data request from Office for National Statistics, Annual Business Survey, specified Standard Industry Codes (SICs) relevant to the tourism industry, by Local Authority.

- **Note E-12**

Due to numerous suppressed values for local authorities in both Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas, values for 2018 GVA from tourism could not be calculated for these areas. Therefore, it has been agreed with the Office for National Statistics that rather than publishing a full Rural-Urban breakdown for 2018 that would be affected by suppressed values we would instead only present values for Predominantly Rural, and for England as a whole.

In the future these data will be presented using the broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification rather than the more detailed Local Authority classification used previously to avoid this issue reoccurring in the future.

- **Note E-13**

In April 2023 there were further changes to Local Authorities boundaries where some Local Authority Districts merged to form single Unitary Authorities. This reduces the number of Local Authorities Districts and Unitary Authorities in England from 309 to 296. The impact of these changes on Rural Urban comparisons is that some Local Authority Districts originally categorised as Mainly Rural or Largely Rural or Urban with Significant Rural now form part of Unitary Authorities categorised as Largely Rural. This change has been backdated across all time-series within this section.

- **Note E-14**

The 2021 rural-urban classification was released on 6 March 2025. It includes a classification for Local Authorities based on the proportion of their populations in rural areas:

- **Majority rural authorities** have 50% or more of their population in rural areas
- **Intermediate rural authorities** have between 35% and less than 50% of their population in rural areas
- **Intermediate urban authorities** have between 20% and less than 35% of their population in rural areas
- **Urban authorities** have less than 20% of their population in rural areas

Further information on the 2021 rural-urban classification can be found on the [Rural Urban Classification](#) webpage.

## F. Business demographics

In 2023/24, there were 526,200 businesses registered in rural areas, accounting for 22% of all registered businesses in England.

### Key findings – Business demographics

Please note, the second key finding has been amended, as previously it referred to businesses when it should have referred to employment. The first bullet point under the amended key finding has been similarly corrected. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

#### The more rural the area the higher the number of businesses per head of population

- In 2023/24, there were 550 businesses per 10,000 population in rural areas compared with 390 per 10,000 population in urban areas.
- In 2023/24, there were 730 registered businesses per 10,000 population in smaller rural areas compared with 360 registered businesses per 10,000 population in larger rural areas.

#### Most rural employment takes place in businesses with fewer than 50 employees

- The majority of rural employment occurs in businesses with fewer than 50 employees in 2023/24 while the majority of urban employment occurs in businesses with more than 50 employees.
- A micro-business is a business with between 1 and 9 employees; 27% of employees in rural areas worked for a micro-business in 2023/24 compared to 18% in urban areas.
- In rural areas, 16% of businesses had no employees: they were sole traders and/or partnerships. In urban areas, just 7% of businesses had no employees.

#### SMEs equally common but in rural areas they employ proportionally more people

- There is very little difference between rural and urban areas in terms of proportion of businesses that are Small and Medium-size enterprises (SMEs). In rural areas, 99.8% of all registered businesses are SMEs, compared to 99.5% in urban areas. In absolute terms, there were 525,000 registered SMEs in rural areas and 1.8 million in urban areas.
- In 2023/24, SMEs accounted for 72% of employment in rural areas compared to 41% in urban areas.
- Average turnover per person employed was lower in rural registered SMEs - at £148,000 - than the £248,000 per person turnover of urban registered SMEs.

## Summary

The business demographics section considers businesses at both an ‘Enterprise’ (headquarters) level and Local Unit (individual branch) level.

Business composition looks at the number of businesses per 10,000 population. In 2023/24 there were 550 businesses per 10,000 population in rural areas compared with 390 per 10,000 population in urban areas. Businesses registered in rural areas employed 3.5 million people, accounting for 12% of all those employed by registered businesses in England. Average turnover per person employed is lower in rural areas than in urban areas (£158,000 and £242,000 per person employed respectively).

Business demography is different depending on whether you are looking at business size or employment. In both rural and urban areas, the size-band category with the greatest proportion of total businesses is those with between 1 and 9 employees, with 72% of businesses (local units) in this size band in rural areas and 77% in urban areas. When considering employment, in rural areas the greatest proportion of employment occurs in those businesses with between 10 and 49 employees (27%). In urban areas the greatest proportion of employment occurs within businesses that have 250 employees or more (31% of employment).

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are business enterprises employing fewer than 250 people. In 2023/24, there were 525,000 registered SMEs in rural areas, representing 99.8% of all registered rural enterprises. In urban areas SMEs represented 99.5% of registered enterprises. 2.5 million people were employed in registered rural SMEs, representing 72% of all those employed by registered rural enterprises. SMEs account for 41% of those employed in registered urban enterprises.

## Background information

The business demographics section includes analysis at both ‘Enterprise’ (headquarters) level and ‘Local Unit’ (individual branch) level. ‘Business composition’ uses enterprise level data while ‘Businesses by size band’ uses local unit level data. Local unit level better reflects the make-up of rural businesses as there can be many local business units in rural areas whose headquarters are elsewhere (although this can apply vice versa). Table F-1 shows numbers at both enterprise and local unit level for 2023/24.

**Table F-1: Number of registered business enterprises and local units, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24**

2021 Rural-Urban Classification	Number of registered businesses - enterprises ('000s)	Number of registered businesses - local units ('000s)
Smaller rural	359	384
Larger rural	167	188
Urban (excluding London)	1,311	1,574
London	531	589
<b>England</b>	<b>2,368</b>	<b>2,736</b>

## Business composition

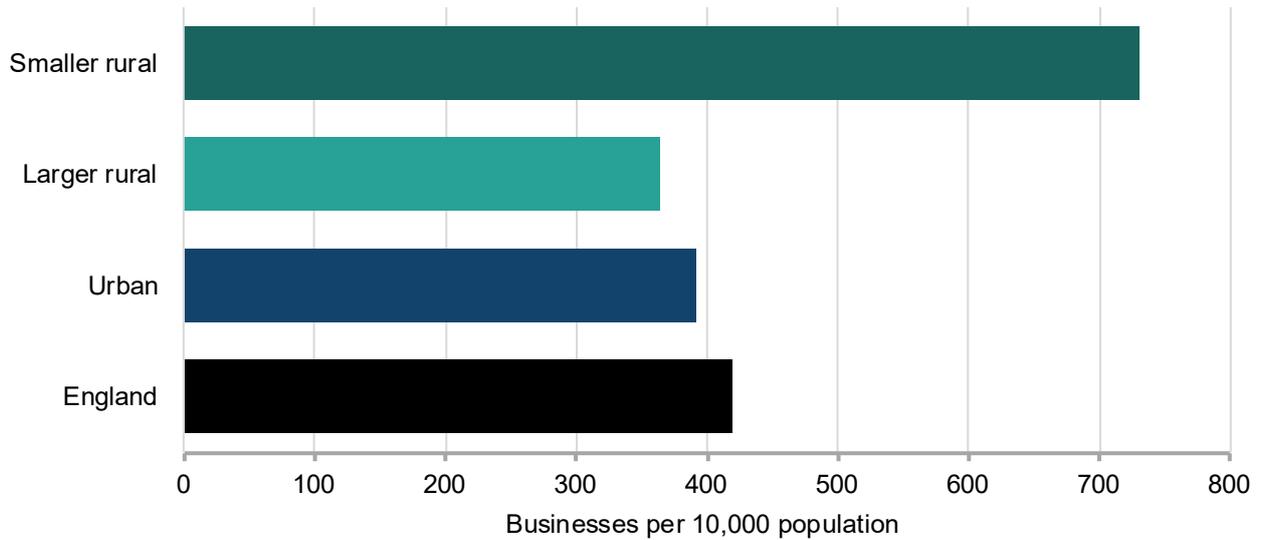
Business composition is based on Enterprises, which is the level at which businesses are registered for Value Added Tax (VAT) and/or Pay As You Earn (PAYE). In the case of a business operating at only one address, it will be registered at that address, but for businesses operating in several locations, it will be the location of the headquarters that is registered. If a business has branches in rural areas, but the headquarters are registered within an urban area, then the statistics for all the branches will be registered at the headquarters and not counted as “rural”. The later sections on [‘Businesses by industry type’](#), [‘Employment by industry type’](#) and [‘Businesses by size band’](#) are based on Local Unit data, which uses the location of branches.

In 2023/24, there were 526,200 businesses registered in rural areas, accounting for 22% of all registered businesses in England. This number is lower than has been reported previously, however this is a result of switching to the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification meaning some areas previously classed as rural will now be classed as urban. It does not mean that business numbers in rural areas are falling, more that some businesses previously classified as rural businesses now fall in urban areas. Businesses registered in rural areas employed 3.5 million people, accounting for 12% of all those employed by registered businesses in England. A further breakdown of business numbers, employment and turnover by Rural-Urban Classification can be found in the Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables (Note F-3).

## Number of businesses per population

The bar chart in Figure F-1 shows the number of businesses per 10,000 population. In 2023/24 there were 550 businesses per 10,000 population in rural areas compared with 390 per 10,000 population in urban areas. The more rural an area is, the greater the number of registered businesses per population. In 2023/24, there were 730 registered businesses per 10,000 population in smaller rural areas while in larger rural areas the number was around half that with 360 registered businesses per 10,000 population. The number of businesses per 10,000 population will be affected by differences in sizes of business, sizes of settlements and other factors. In England overall, there were around 420 registered businesses per 10,000 population in 2023/24.

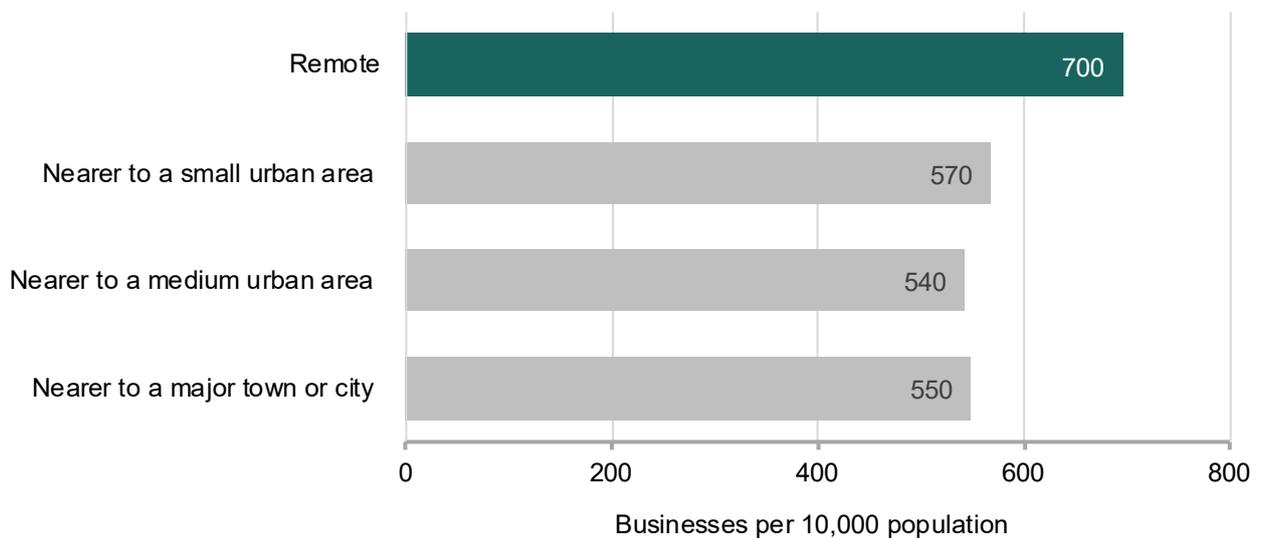
**Figure F-1: Bar chart showing the number of registered businesses (single-site or headquarters) per 10,000 population, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-1, Note F-2, Note F-3)**



It is also worth considering the impact of proximity to a major town or city and how this affects business numbers. The bar chart in Figure F-2 shows that in rural areas, settlements that are remote have the greatest number of enterprises per 10,000 population (700 enterprises) compared with 540 enterprises per 10,000 population for those settlements that are nearer to a medium urban area.

**Figure F-2: Focus bar chart showing the number of registered businesses (single-site or headquarters) per 10,000 population, by proximity to a major town, city or urban area, in rural areas of England, 2023/24 (Note F-1, Note F-2, Note F-3, Note F-8)**

The bar representing remote areas is coloured to draw focus.



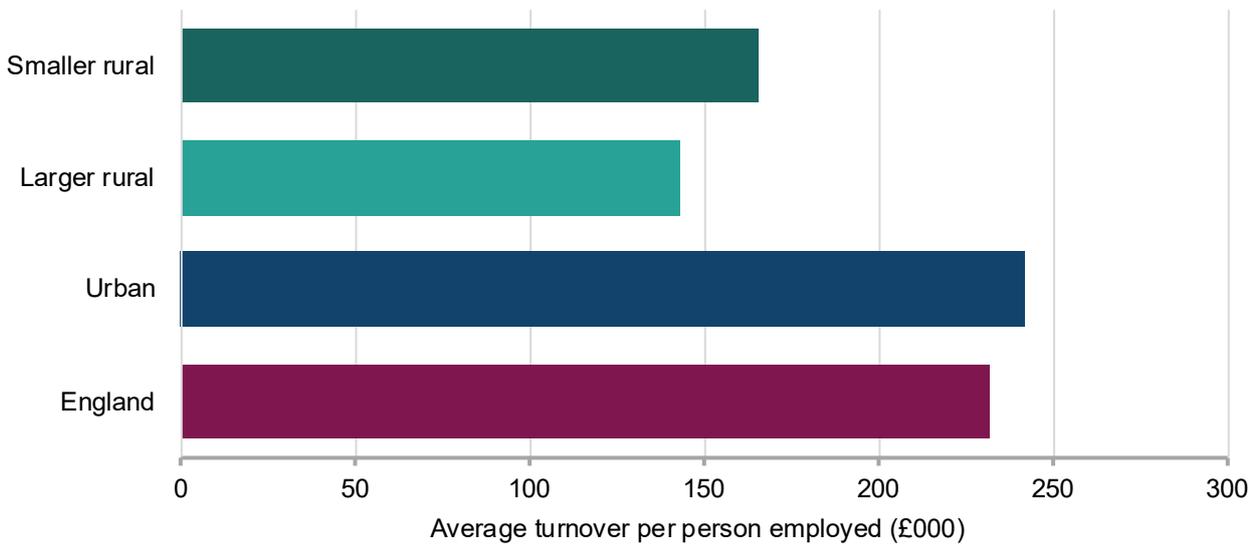
### Average turnover per employee

The bar chart in Figure F-3 shows average turnover per person employed and how this varies across the settlement types. In 2023/24, average turnover per person employed was lower in rural areas than in urban areas (£158,000 and £242,000 per person employed respectively).

These latest turnover figures show a larger than usual increase on the previous year for all area types. This is due to changes in how the ONS estimate turnover for businesses in the financial industry. We would recommend the turnover analysis presented in this report is used to compare rural and urban settlements rather than looking at changes over time.

Within rural areas, turnover per employee is higher in smaller rural settlements (£160,000) than in larger rural settlements (£143,000) affected by the sizes and types of businesses.

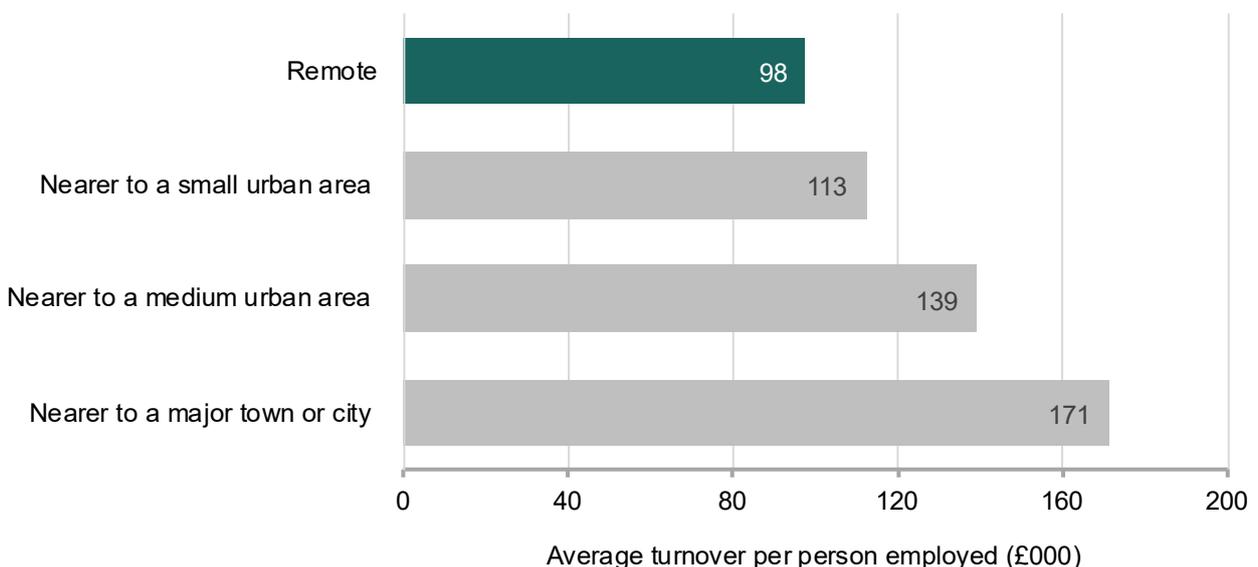
**Figure F-3: Bar chart showing the average turnover per person employed (£000), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-1, Note F-2, Note F-3)**



As with business numbers, proximity to major towns and cities also has an impact on average turnover per person employed (and also average turnover per enterprise). The bar chart in Figure F-4 shows that in rural areas, settlements that are remote have the lowest average turnover per person employed at £98,000 compared with £171,000 for those settlements that are nearer to a major town or city, affected by the sizes and types of businesses.

**Figure F-4: Focus bar chart showing the average turnover per person employed (£000), by proximity to a major town, city or urban area, in rural areas of England, 2023/24 (Note F-1, Note F-2, Note F-3, Note F-8)**

The bar representing remote areas is coloured to draw focus.



## Businesses by size band

Within the Businesses by size band section the business size band refers to individual Local Unit level businesses, it is not allocated at the Enterprise level.

The number of employees refers to the number of people working within the business under a contract of employment in return for a wage or salary. A business can have no employees, if all the business is conducted by people classed as being working proprietors (i.e. sole traders or partnerships).

The number of people employed is a sum of employees and self-employed people who run the business.

## Employment by size band

The following paragraph has been amended. Previously it referred to businesses when it should have referred to employment. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused

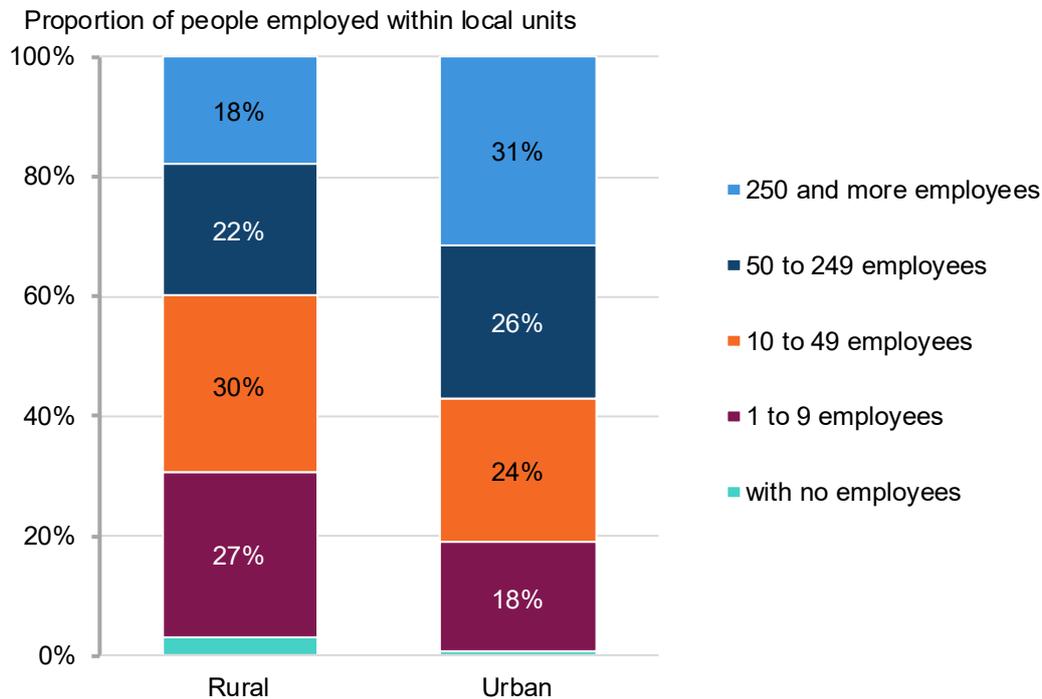
The stacked column chart in Figure F-5 shows how the size of business (in terms of number of people employed within local units of businesses) differs between rural and urban areas. It shows that the majority of rural employment occurs in businesses (local units) that have fewer than 50 employees while the majority of urban employment occurs in businesses (local units) that have more than 50 employees. In rural areas, the greatest proportion of employment occurs in those businesses with between 10 and 49 employees at 27% (28% and 33% respectively when considering smaller and larger rural settlements, see Note F-4). In urban areas the greatest proportion of employment occurs within businesses that have 250 employees or more (31% of employment).

In rural areas, the proportion of people that are employed in the local units of registered businesses with 250 or more employees is lower than in urban areas (18% and 31% respectively). When comparing smaller and larger rural settlements, the proportion of people that are employed in the local units of registered businesses with 250 or more employees is much higher for smaller rural settlements (20%) than for larger rural settlements (12%) (see Note F-4).

A micro-business is a business with between 1 and 9 employees. The proportion of people employed in micro-businesses in rural areas was 9 percentage points higher than in urban areas (27% and 18% respectively). Within rural areas, larger rural settlements have a greater proportion employed in micro-businesses (31%) than in smaller rural settlements (26%) (see Note F-4).

**Figure F-5: Stacked column chart showing percentage of people employed within local units by size bands of registered businesses and 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-2 and Note F-4)**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



When looking at numbers of local units of registered businesses the category with the greatest proportion of total businesses is those with between 1 and 9 employees, with 72% of businesses (local units) in this size band in rural areas and 77% in urban areas. Within rural areas the proportion of businesses in the ‘1 to 9 employees’ band is higher in larger rural settlements (77%) than in smaller rural settlements (69%). Further details of business numbers by business size band can be found in the Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables (Note F-4).

In rural areas 16% of businesses have no employees (e.g., sole traders and partnerships), this is 9 percentage points higher than in urban areas (7%). Within rural areas, the proportion of businesses with no employees is nearly twice as high in smaller rural settlements (19%) than for larger rural settlements (10%).

**Notes**

- The statistics are based on individual business units rather than the location of the headquarters of the enterprise. There may be many local business units in rural areas whose headquarters are elsewhere, and vice versa.
- ‘With no employees’ comprises mainly sole proprietorships and partnerships. This category also includes around 21,000 businesses classed as ‘Other’ – with no employees and no employment (about 0.8% of the total business count).

## Small and Medium-sized businesses (SMEs)

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are business enterprises employing fewer than 250 people. Businesses are categorised at the enterprise level in this section, and not at the local unit level as in the previous '[Businesses by size band](#)' section.

In England in 2023/24, there were 2.4 million SMEs registered for PAYE and/or VAT (Note F-5), providing employment for 12.6 million people. However, it is estimated that in England there are an additional 2.4 million unregistered businesses i.e., those who are not registered for VAT and do not have employees registered for PAYE (Note F-5).

For registered businesses, information is available on their location, principal activity, employment and turnover, and for those who operate on multiple sites, the location and employment in individual business units. Information on registered SMEs is presented below.

Less is known of unregistered businesses and in particular until recently there have been no estimates of how many are based in rural areas. However, analysis of data from the Longitudinal Small Business Survey, which included unregistered businesses, provides further insights on SMEs in Rural areas. Some results from the analysis are presented in [Appendix 3](#) at the end of this report. These suggest that 73.3% of all SMEs in rural areas have no employees. Note that this includes both registered and unregistered businesses and hence is not comparable with statistics presented in this section for registered businesses as the majority of unregistered businesses will have no employees. Of registered SMEs in rural areas 17.3% have no employees.

Enterprises are considered rural registered businesses if their single site of operation or headquarters - as registered for the purposes of Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) tax or Value Added Tax (VAT), or both - are located in a rural area.

### Analysis of registered SMEs from Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)

Whilst almost all registered businesses are small or medium enterprises (SME) in both rural and urban areas, a much higher proportion of the workforce are employed by rural registered SMEs than in urban areas. Table F-2 shows the statistics on registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by broad 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. In 2023/24, there were 525,000 registered SMEs in rural areas, representing 99.8% of all registered rural enterprises. SMEs in rural areas accounted for 22% of all those in England overall. In urban areas SMEs represented 99.5% of registered enterprises. In 2023/24, 2.5 million people were employed in registered rural SMEs, representing 72% of all those employed by registered rural enterprises. SMEs account for 41% of those employed in registered urban enterprises.

Average turnover per person employed is lower in rural registered SMEs (£148,000) than in urban registered SMEs (£248,000) (Note F-6).

**Table F-2: Number of registered small and medium enterprises, employment and turnover, by broad 2021 Rural Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-6)**

Rural-Urban Classification	Number of registered SMEs ('000s)	Employment by registered SMEs ('000s)	Employment by SMEs as a percentage of all employment by registered enterprises (%)	Average turnover per person employed (£000s)
All rural	525	2,522	72	148
All urban	1,833	10,079	41	248
<b>England</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>12,601</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>228</b>

Table F-3 shows the statistics on registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by more detailed 2021 Rural-Urban Classification. This shows that there is little difference between smaller and larger rural settlements when considering those employed in registered SMEs as a proportion of all employment (72% and 71% respectively). Settlement size has more of an impact on average turnover with smaller rural settlements having a greater average turnover per person employed than larger rural settlements (£157,000 and £128,000 respectively).

**Table F-3: Number of registered small and medium enterprises, employment and turnover, by 2021 Rural Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-6)**

Rural-Urban Classification	Number of registered SMEs ('000s)	Employment by registered SMEs ('000s)	Employment by SMEs as a percentage of all employment by registered enterprises (%)	Average turnover per person employed (£000s)
Smaller rural	358	1,730	72	157
Larger rural	167	792	71	128
Urban (excluding London)	1,305	7,410	41	165
London	528	2,669	40	481
<b>England</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>12,601</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>228</b>

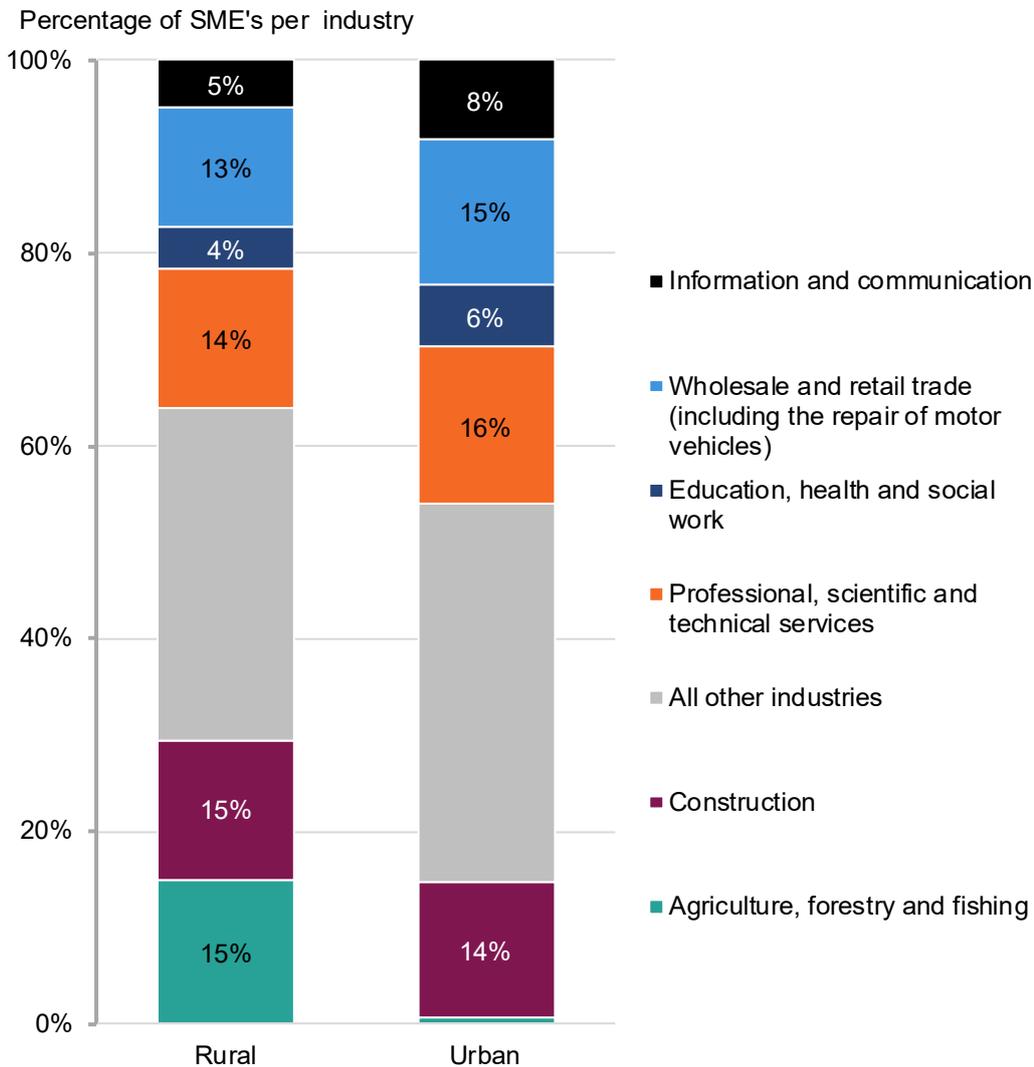
The stacked column chart in Figure F-6 shows those sectors where the business count proportions by sector for the Rural-Urban Classifications differs the most from England averages. Service type sectors are shown at the top with 'Construction' and 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' at the bottom. The chart shows that overall, the combined key services sectors make up a greater proportion of registered SMEs in urban areas, while the reverse is true for the combined key primary and secondary sectors having the greater proportion in rural areas.

SMEs in 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' sectors account for 15% of rural registered SMEs. This percentage is slightly higher than when considering the sector representation at a local business unit level (see [Businesses by industry type](#)).

For rural registered SMEs, other sectors that are dominant at the local business unit level are similarly dominant at the SME level, such as 'Professional, scientific and technical services' (14%), 'Wholesale and retail trade including the repair of motor vehicles' (13%), and 'Construction' (14%).

**Figure F-6: Stacked column chart showing percentage of registered small and medium enterprises by industry and 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note F-7)**

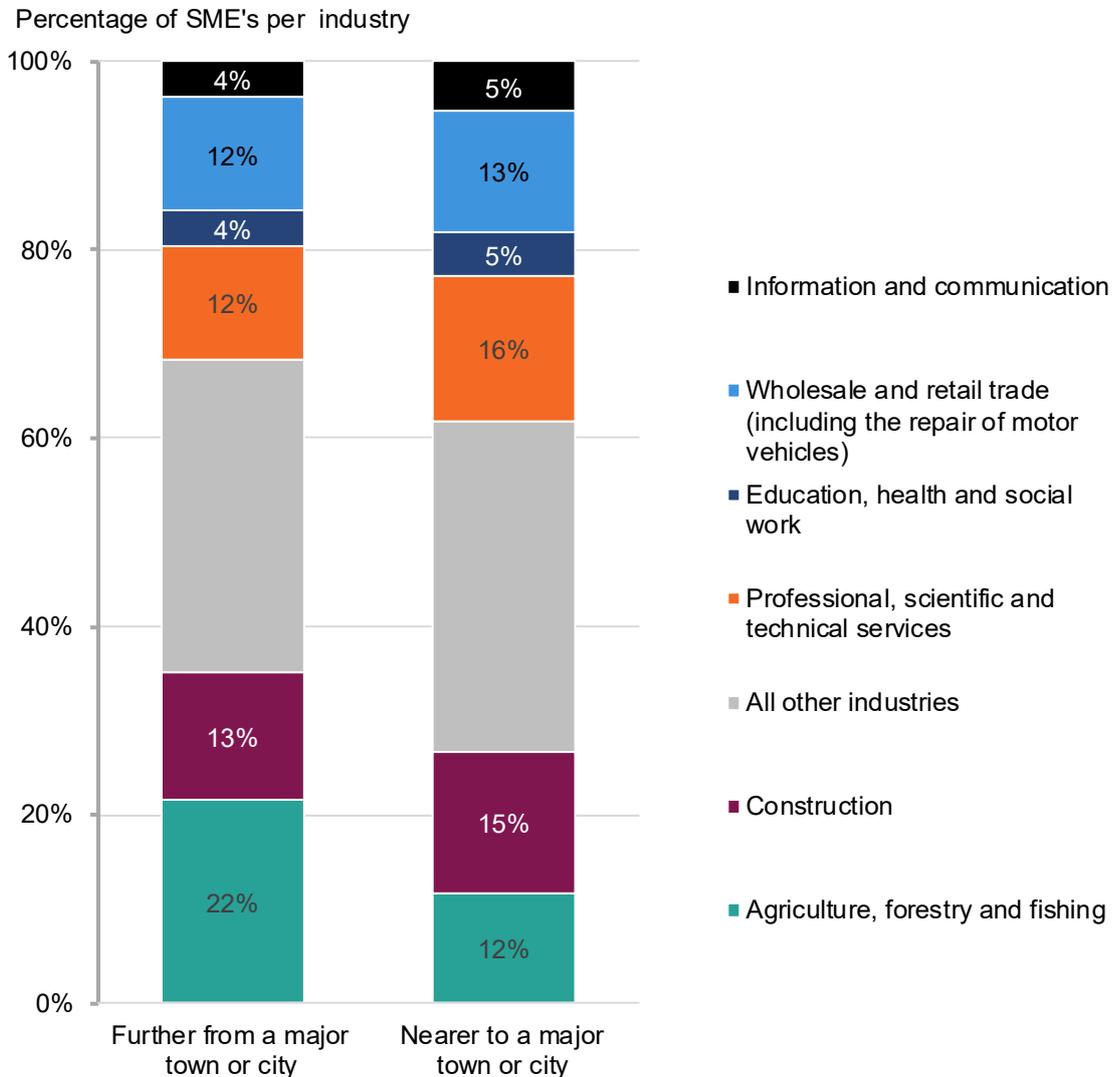
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked columns. 'Education, health and social work' is a bespoke grouping that has been created for this chart to simplify the presentation of the data.



We can also look at the impact of proximity to a major town or city and how this affects the types of business that operate in rural areas. The stacked column chart in Figure F-7 takes those sectors hi-lighted in Figure F-6 and shows how the business count proportions by sector differ between settlements that are nearer or further away from a major town or city. For the service type industries, it is 'Professional, scientific and technical service' businesses where proximity has the greatest impact with a greater proportion of businesses to be found in settlements that are nearer to a major town or city than in those that are further away (16% and 12% respectively). When considering 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' businesses the reverse is true as the proportion of businesses in this sector is greater for those settlements that are further from a major town or city than those that are closer (22% and 12% respectively). It is worth noting that in absolute terms, the number of SME businesses in the 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' is very similar for both 'nearer to' and 'further from' settlements (40,000 and 38,000 respectively), however, the total number of SME businesses is smaller for those settlements that are further from a major town or city thus giving the 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector a greater significance.

**Figure F-7: Stacked column chart showing percentage of registered small and medium enterprises by industry and proximity to a major town or city, in rural areas of England, 2023/24 (Note F-7)**

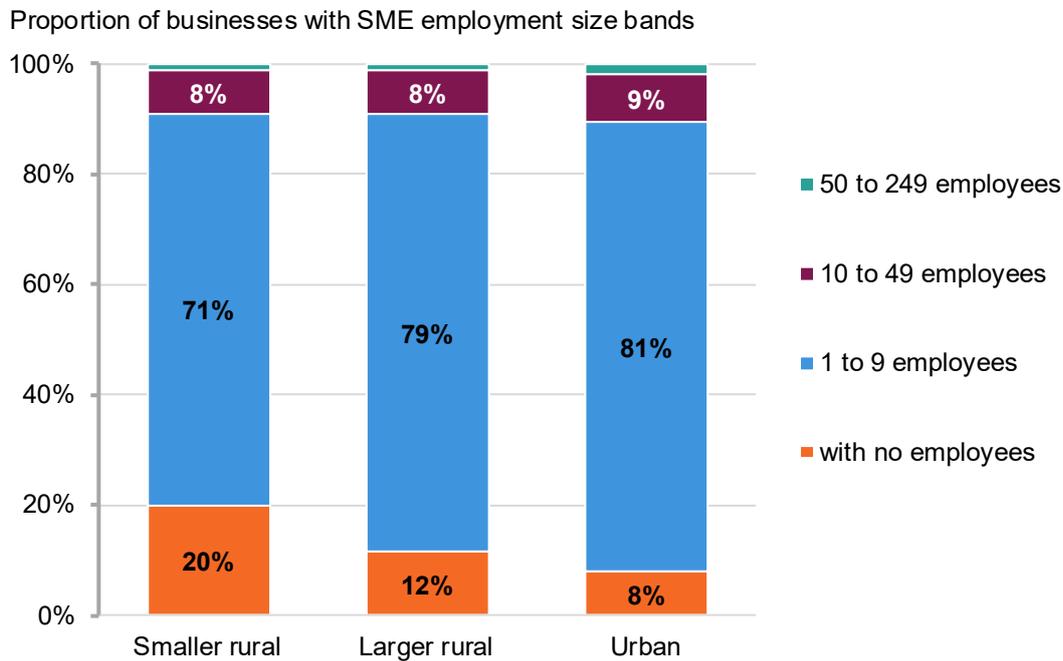
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked columns. ‘Education, health and social work’ is a bespoke grouping that has been created for this chart to simplify the presentation of the data.



When considering SME business numbers by business size band (categorised by number of employees), 17% of rural registered SMEs have no employees, compared with 8% of urban registered SMEs. The majority of rural registered SMEs (74%), have 1 to 9 employees, though this is lower than for urban registered SMEs (81%) as shown in the stacked column chart in Figure F-8. The chart also shows that within rural areas, larger rural settlements have a greater proportion of their businesses in the ‘1 to 9 employees’ size band than smaller rural settlements (79% and 71% respectively). For businesses with no employees, smaller rural settlements have a greater proportion of their businesses in this size group (20%) than larger rural settlements (12%). Tables showing these additional more detailed breakdowns can be found in the Rural economy supplementary data tables. See Note F-6 for further details.

**Figure F-8: Stacked column chart showing percentage of registered SME businesses by size (categorised by number of employees) and 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked columns.



**Notes**

- On Figure F-5 the unlabelled bars are 2% or smaller.

**Business demographics explanatory notes**

• **Note F-1**

On the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), the enterprise is the statistical unit that most closely equates to a business. It holds aggregated information gathered from administrative and statistical sources within that enterprise to give an overall picture of what is going on in the business. An enterprise carries out one or more activities at one or more locations. An enterprise may be a sole legal unit.

Turnover relates to income received by a business from the ‘sale of goods and or services charged to third parties’. The IDBR does not include businesses whose turnover is below the tax threshold. As turnover is reported at the enterprise level it is affected by where businesses report their headquarters to be. As such there can be variation from year to year as a result of businesses relocating

Further information: [see this ONS document about the Inter-Departmental Business Register](#)

• **Note F-2**

Source: ONS, Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR), 2023/24

• **Note F-3**

Data in Figure F-1 and Figure F-2 are detailed in tables containing further key 2023/24 statistics on registered businesses including number of registered businesses, number of people employed and turnover. These are available broken down by detailed Rural-Urban Classification in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) (see worksheet FA).

• **Note F-4**

Data in Figure F-5 is detailed in a table of 2023/24 employment figures broken down by business size band and detailed Rural-Urban Classification which is available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) (see worksheet FE).

• **Note F-5**

Business population estimates for 2024 published by the Department for Business and Trade (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) suggest there are 4.8 million business in England ([Business population estimates 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). Office for National Statistics estimate there are 2.4 million registered businesses in England. This suggests there are 2.4 million unregistered businesses in England.

- **Note F-6**

A breakdown of Table F-1 using a more detailed Rural-Urban Classification is available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) (see worksheet F1). A further table that breaks SMEs down by business size band (in terms of employment) and detailed Rural-Urban Classification is also available.

- **Note F-7**

The 'all other industries' grouping is made up of: (1) Administrative and support services, (2) Arts, entertainment and recreation, (3) Education, health and social work, (4) Finance, (5) Manufacturing, (6) Mining/ quarrying and utilities, (7) Public admin and defence; other services, (8) Real estate activities, (9) Transport and storage and (10) Other service activities, including activities of households as employers.

- **Note F-8**

Detailed relative access categories look at the ability to reach towns or cities of specified size within a 30-minute drive. For RUC21 purposes, a major town or city is defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents. A medium urban area is a built-up area with at least 30,000 residents. A small urban area is a built-up area with at least 10,000 residents. A remote settlement is defined as one from which it is not possible to reach the nearest small urban area within a 30-minute drive. More information regarding the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#).

## G. Businesses by industry

In 2023/24 the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector had the largest proportion of business numbers in rural areas (14% of all businesses for the area type) but only accounted for 8% of all employment for the area type, with the ‘Education, health and social work sector’ having the largest proportion of employment for the area type (16%).

### Key findings – Businesses by industry

#### The mix of businesses is similar in rural and urban areas plus agriculture

- In rural areas in 2023/24, the industry type with the greatest percentage of businesses was ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ with 14%, closely followed by ‘Construction’ and ‘Professional, scientific and technical services’ also with 14% and ‘Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)’ with 13%. These latter three sectors also account for the largest proportion of businesses in Urban areas.
- The more rural the area, the greater the proportion of the businesses accounted for by ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’. In rural areas, 81,700 businesses were within this category, with the vast majority of these (75,000) in smaller rural settlements. ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ businesses account for 20% of all businesses in that settlement type.

#### Education, health and social work sectors employ the largest share of workers

- The sector with the largest proportion of employment in both rural and urban areas is ‘Education, health and social work’ at 16% and 23% respectively. In second place was ‘Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)’ which accounted for 13% of employment in rural areas and 14% in urban areas.
- ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ is the only sector that employs more workers in rural areas than in urban areas; in 2023/24, this sector accounted for 309,000 workers in rural areas and 55,300 workers in urban areas.
- The more rural the area, the greater the proportion of the total employment accounted for by ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ businesses. In smaller rural settlements, 10% of all workers were employed by businesses within this category.

#### 68,000 rural tourism related businesses employ 580,000 people

- In 2023/24, tourist-related businesses accounted for 12% of all registered businesses in rural areas; in urban areas, they accounted for 13% of all registered businesses.
- Employment from tourism-related businesses accounts for 0.6 million roles in rural areas and 2.6 million roles in urban areas. However, the proportion of employment in tourism-related roles is higher in rural areas (15%) than in urban areas (11%).

## Summary

Businesses by industry are based on Local Unit (individual branch) level. This better reflects the make-up of rural businesses as there can be many local business units in rural areas whose headquarters are elsewhere (although this can apply vice versa).

Looking at total business numbers by industry type the industry type with the greatest percentage of businesses in rural areas is 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' with 14% of total businesses for the area type. This is closely followed by two industry types also with 14% of business numbers ('Construction' and 'Professional, scientific and technical services') and then 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 13%. In urban areas the dominant industry type is 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 17% of all businesses.

In terms of employment by industry type the sector with the largest proportion of employment in both rural and urban areas is 'Education, health and social work' at 16% and 23% respectively. The 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector makes up 8% of total employment in rural areas, so the sector is more dominant in terms of business numbers (14%) than it is in terms of employment.

In 2023/24, there were 67,800 tourist related businesses registered in rural areas, accounting for 12% of all registered businesses in rural areas. This compares with 286,500 tourist related businesses in urban areas (13% of all businesses in urban areas). However, when considering employment from tourism related businesses the proportion is higher in rural areas (15%) than in urban areas (11%).

## Businesses by industry type

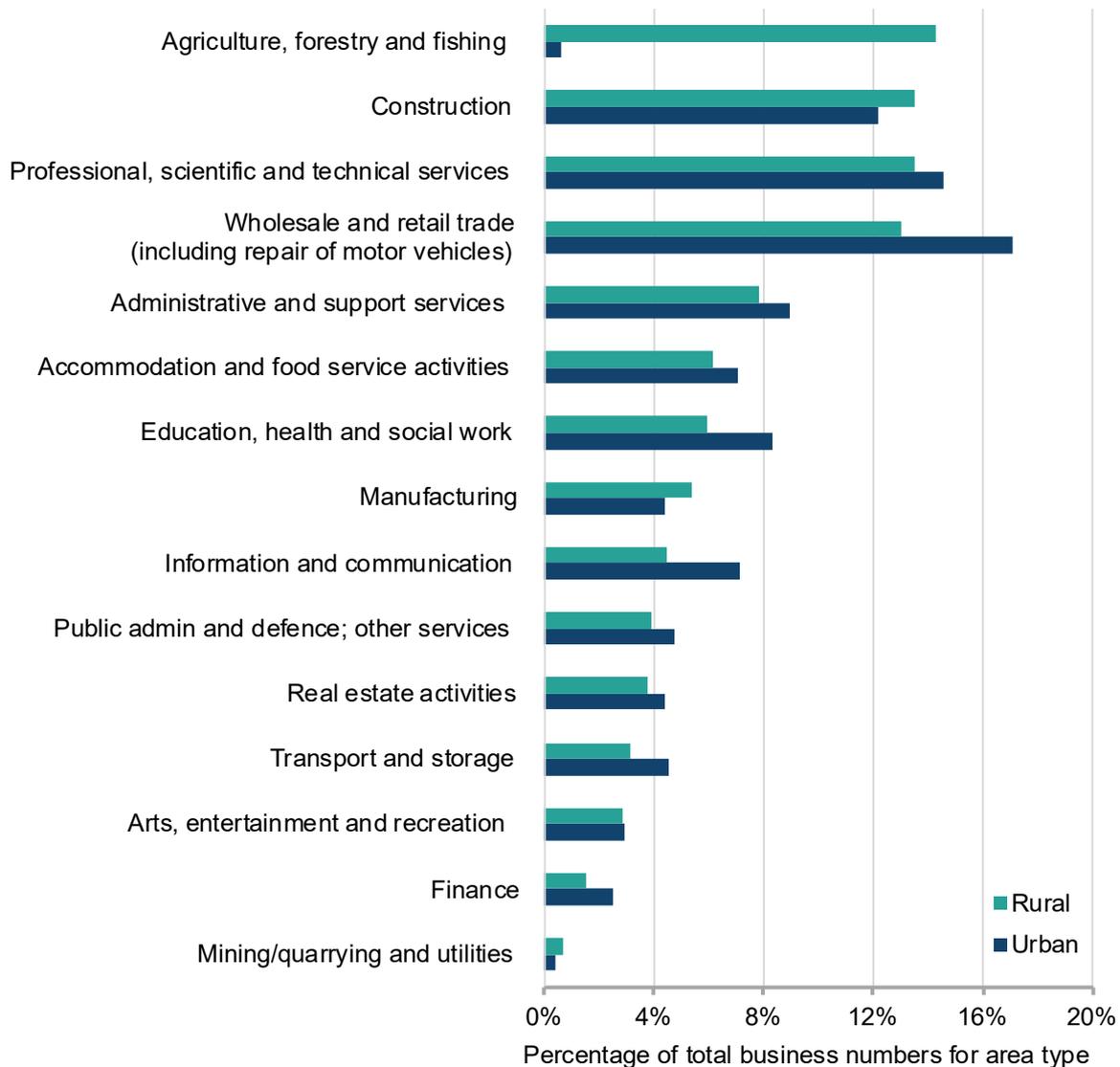
Important note: 'Businesses by industry type' and 'Businesses by size band' are based on Local Unit. This better reflects the make-up of rural businesses as there can be many local business units in rural areas whose headquarters are elsewhere (although this can apply vice versa).

### Proportion of total businesses by industry

The clustered bar chart in Figure G-1 shows how businesses in rural and urban areas are divided across the various industries. In rural areas the industry type with the greatest percentage of businesses is 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' with 14%, followed by 'Construction' and 'Professional, scientific and technical services' also with 14% and 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 13%. In urban areas the industry type with the greatest percentage of businesses is 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 17% of all businesses', followed by 'Professional, scientific and technical services (15%) and 'Construction' (12%).

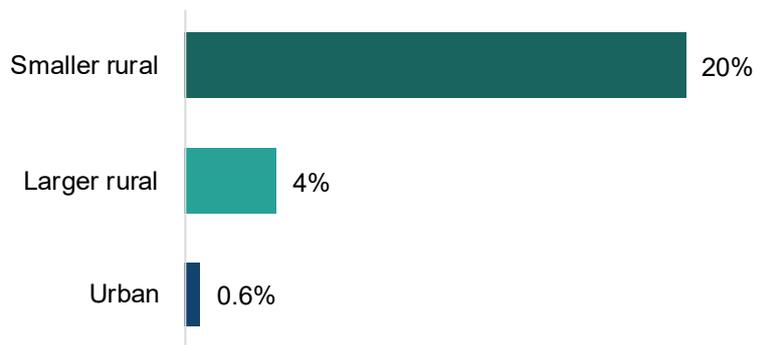
**Figure G-1: Clustered bar chart showing percentage of local unit registered businesses by industry, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note G-1 and Note G-2)**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



The bar chart in Figure G-2 shows how important the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ industry is across the various settlement types. In rural areas overall the industry makes up 14% of all businesses for the settlement type. The industry ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ is most dominant in smaller rural settlements with 20% of all businesses for that settlement type. In larger rural settlements the industry ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ makes up 4% of all businesses for the settlement type. In England overall the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector accounts for 3.5% of the local units of registered businesses.

**Figure G-2: Bar chart showing Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing businesses as a percentage of total local units of registered businesses by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note G-1)**



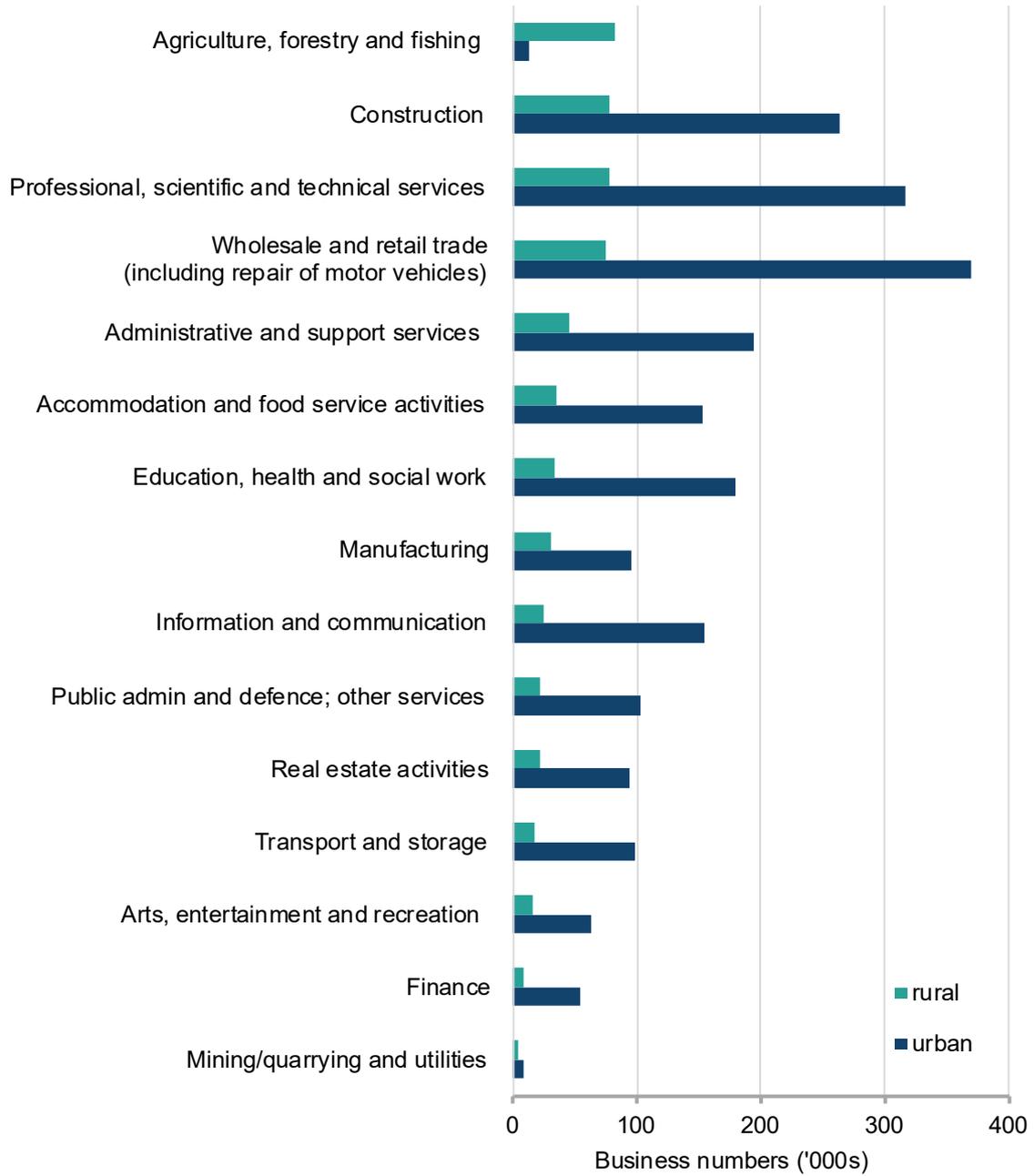
### Number of businesses by industry

The clustered bar chart in Figure G-3 shows numbers of local units of registered businesses by broad industry category for both rural and urban areas. In rural areas the industry category with the greatest number of businesses was ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ (81,700 businesses) while in urban areas it was ‘Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)’ (369,300 businesses). The category with the smallest number of businesses was the same for both rural and urban areas, being ‘Mining/quarrying and utilities’ (Note G-6) at 4,100 and 9,300 businesses respectively.

Previous line charts showing the index of change in numbers of local units of registered businesses in rural and urban areas (2011 Rural-Urban Classification) by industry between 2011/12 and 2022/23 have been removed. Analysis for 2023/24 uses the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification and is not directly comparable with analysis using the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification so we are unable to extend the time-series with the figures for the latest year. These line charts will be reinstated in time when we have sufficient data to create a consistent time-series. Data for the 2011/12 to 2022/23 line charts remain available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#).

**Figure G-3: Clustered bar chart showing numbers of local units of registered businesses in rural and urban areas by industry, 2023/24, in England (Note G-1 and Note G-2)**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



## Employment by industry type

The number of employees refers to the number of people working within the business under a contract of employment in return for a wage or salary. A business can have no employees, if all the business is conducted by people classed as being working proprietors (i.e., sole traders or partnerships).

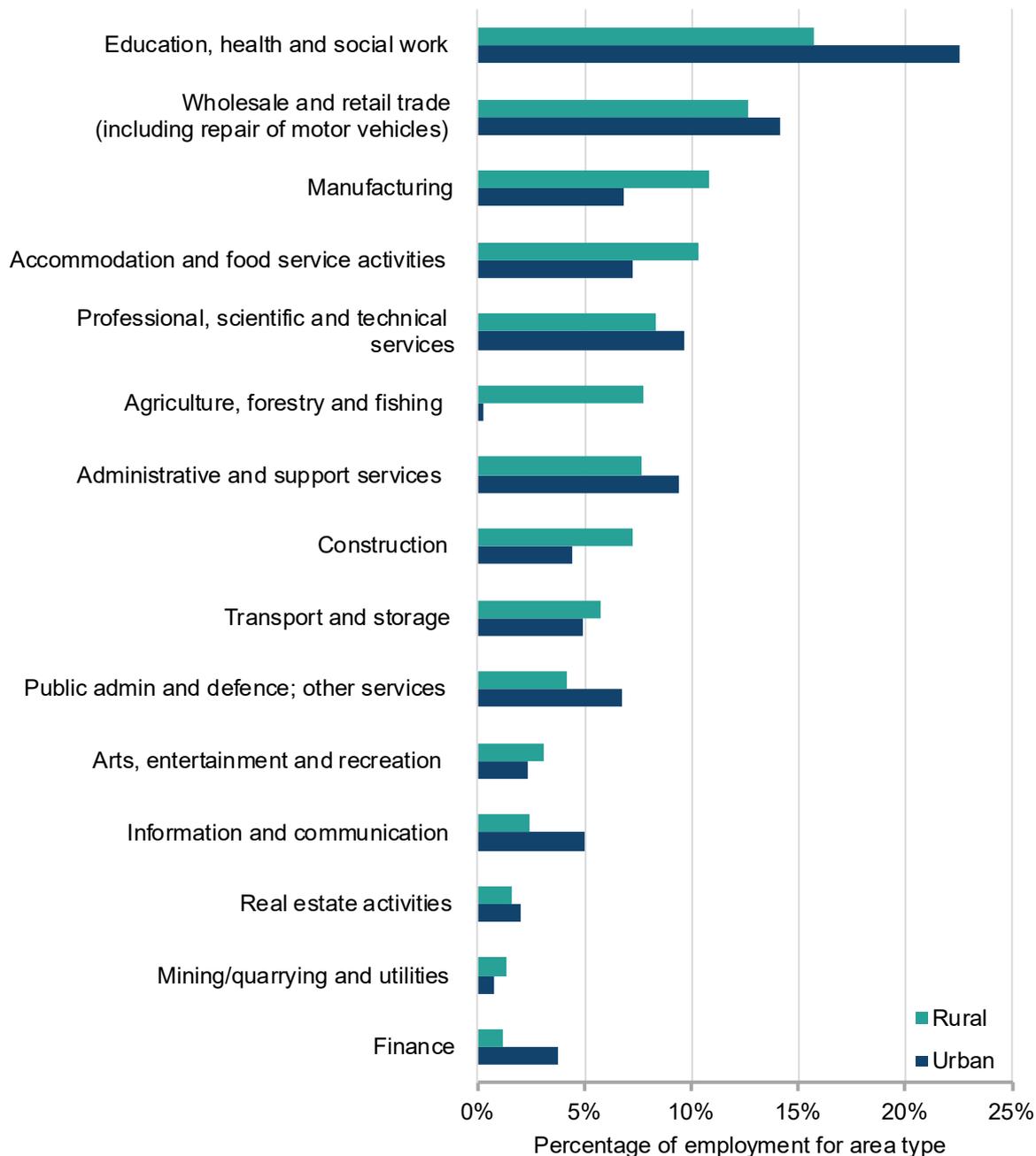
The number of people employed is a sum of employees and self-employed people who run the business.

## Proportion of total employment by industry

The clustered bar chart in Figure G-4 shows the proportion of total employment by broad industry category for both rural and urban areas, showing that the sector with the largest proportion of employment in both rural and urban areas was 'Education, health and social work' at 16% and 23% respectively. In rural areas this was followed by 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 13%, 'Manufacturing' with 11% and 'Accommodation and food service activities' with 10%. While in urban authorities, the next largest sectors for employment were 'Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles)' with 14% and 'Professional, scientific and technical services' with 10%. All remaining sectors have proportions of total employment that are smaller than 10%.

**Figure G-4: Clustered bar chart showing percentage of employment within local units of registered businesses by industry, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24 (Note G-2)**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.

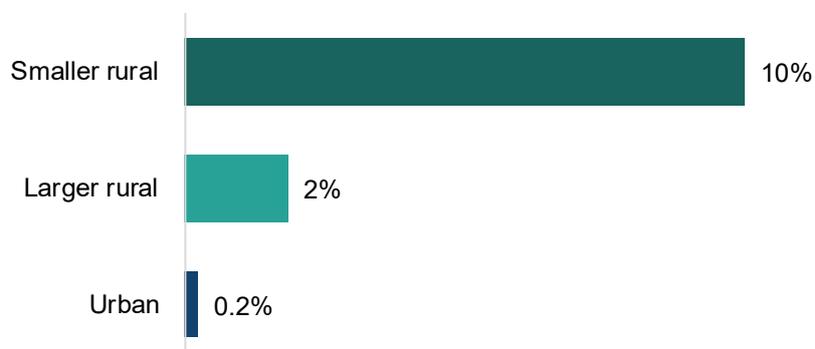


The bar chart in Figure G-5 focuses on employment in the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector as a percentage of total employment. In rural areas employment in the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector accounts for 8% of all employment in this settlement type. In smaller rural settlements the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector’ has the greater proportion of employment at 10%, this is 5 times higher than the proportion for larger rural areas (2%). In England overall the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector accounts for 1.3% of total employment.

It is useful to consider both business numbers and employment when looking at the importance of the ‘Agriculture, forestry and fishing’ sector to rural areas, and worth noting that the sector has

greater dominance in rural areas in terms of business numbers (14% of all business in rural areas) than it does in terms of employment (8% of total employment in rural areas).

**Figure G-5: Bar chart showing employment in Agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses as a percentage of total employment in local units of registered businesses by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2023/24**



'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' is the only sector that is greater in terms of actual employment numbers when comparing rural areas with urban areas, with employment figures of 309,000 working in the sector in rural areas compared with 55,300 working in the sector in urban areas. It is likely that in urban areas the employment within the 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector will be heavily weighted towards the fishing sector (Note G-4). All other sectors as detailed in this report have greater employment numbers in urban areas than rural areas ([Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#)).

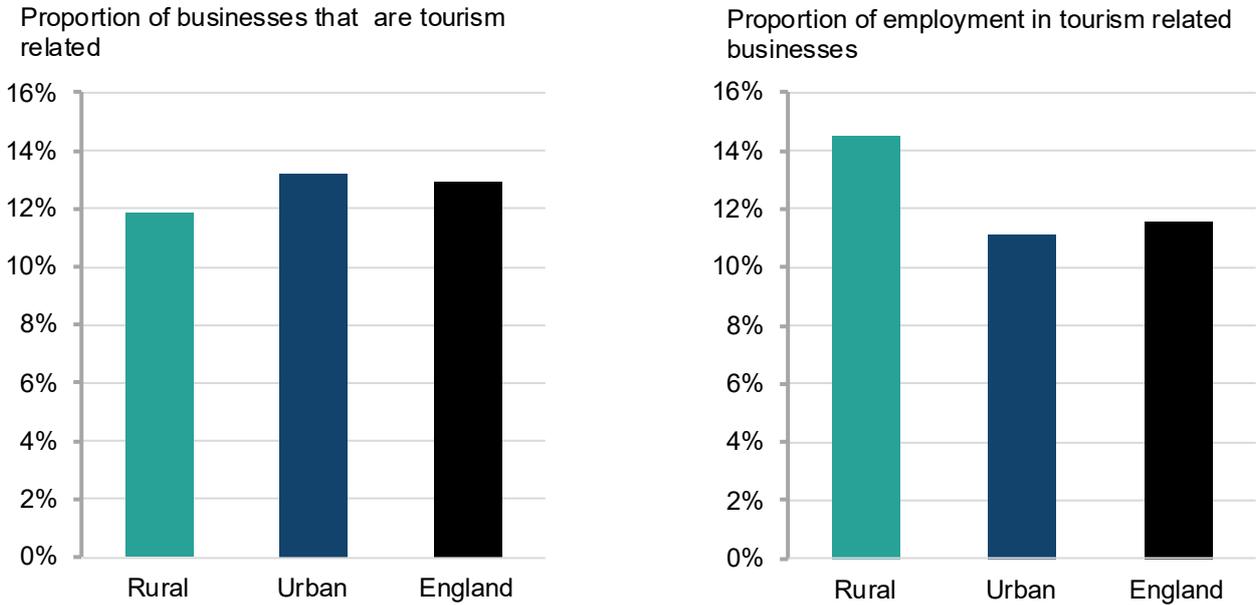
## Tourism: business counts and employment

Tourism related businesses do not have their own separate category of Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), instead the analysis in this section uses those business types that are linked to the tourism industry. These businesses fall within a number of the broad industry classifications; 'Distribution, transport, accommodation and food', 'Professional and administrative services', 'Real estate activities' and 'Recreation, other services and household activities'.

In 2023/24, there were 67,800 tourism related businesses registered in rural areas, accounting for 12% of all registered businesses in rural areas. In urban areas there were 286,500 tourist related businesses accounting for 13% of all businesses in urban areas. When considering employment from tourism related businesses the proportion is higher in rural areas (15%) than in Urban areas (11%) with employment numbers of 0.6 million and 2.6 million respectively.

The column charts in Figure G-6, and Tables G-1 and Table G-2 show tourism related business counts and employment as a proportion of total business counts and employment. The chart on the left-hand side of Figure G-6 shows that when considering business numbers for tourism as a proportion of total business counts the proportion is slightly higher in urban areas compared with rural areas (13% and 12% respectively). The chart on the right-hand side of Figure G-6 shows that when considered as a proportion of total employment the proportion for those working in tourism related industries is higher in rural areas (15%) compared with 11% in urban authorities. Within rural areas the proportion of total business counts that are tourism related is higher in larger rural settlements (13%) than in smaller rural settlements (11%). However, the proportion of total employment in smaller rural settlements (15%) working in tourism related industries was greater than in larger rural settlements (14%).

**Figure G-6: Column charts showing tourism related business counts as a proportion of total business counts (left-hand chart) and tourism related employment as a proportion of total employment (right-hand chart), by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2023/24 (Note G-1)**



**Table G-1: Numbers of local units of registered businesses and employment numbers for tourism related businesses, by broad 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2023/24 (Note G-1 and Note G-3)**

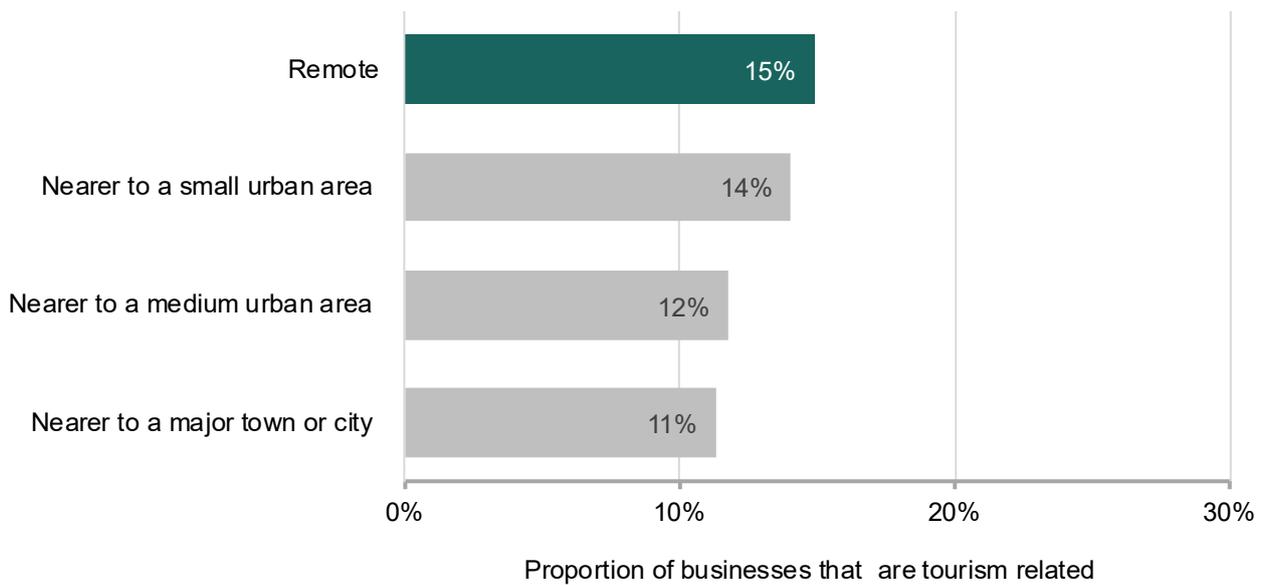
	Count of businesses	Total employment (000s)	Tourism related business count as a % of total business count	Tourism related employment as a % of total employment
Rural	67,800	578	12%	15%
Urban	286,500	2,624	13%	11%
<b>England</b>	<b>354,300</b>	<b>3,202</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>

**Table G-2: Numbers of local units of registered businesses and employment numbers for tourism related businesses, by 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, 2023/24 (Note G-1 and Note G-3)**

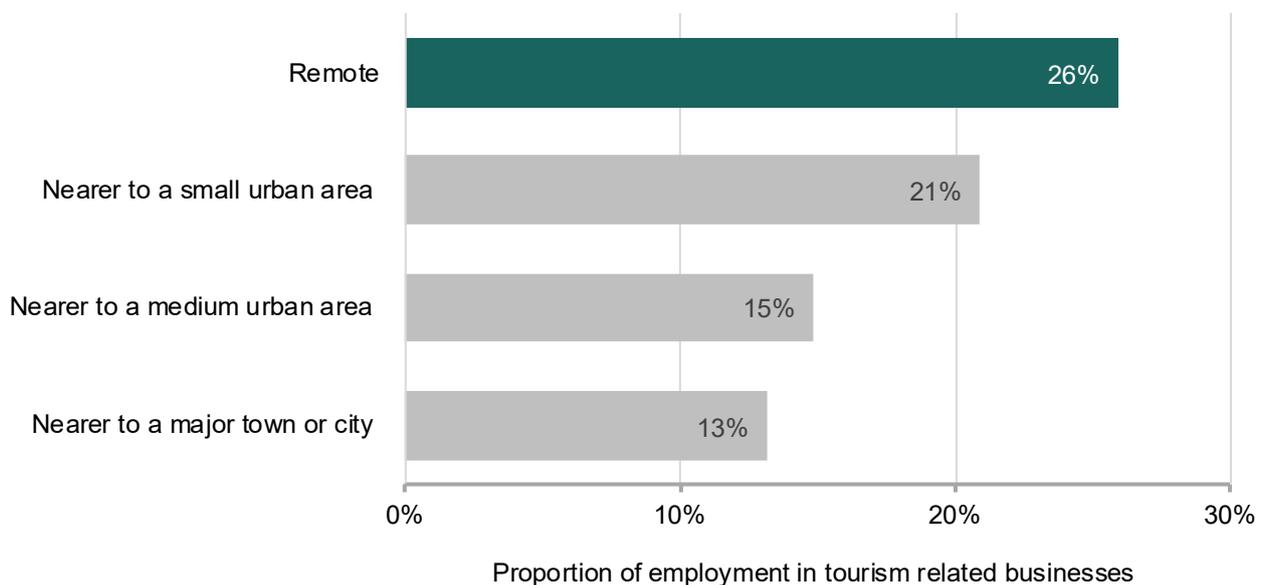
	Count of businesses	Total employment (000s)	Tourism related business count as a % of total business count	Tourism related employment as a % of total employment
Smaller rural	44,000	409	11%	15%
Larger rural	23,800	169	13%	14%
Urban (excluding London)	202,300	1,868	13%	10%
London	84,300	757	14%	13%
<b>England</b>	<b>354,300</b>	<b>3,202</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>

It is also useful to consider proximity to major towns and cities and the impact this may have on businesses numbers and employment in tourism related industries. The bar chart in Figure G-7 shows that the proportion of total businesses that are tourism related increases as you get further from a major town or city, with remote settlements having the greatest proportion of tourism related businesses at 15%. The bar chart in Figure G-8 shows that the impact of proximity to a major town or city is more pronounced when considering tourism related employment, with 26% (one in every four) of the workforce in remote settlements working in a business that is related to tourism. See the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) for the full set of figures.

**Figure G-7: Focus bar chart showing tourism related business counts as a proportion of total business counts, by proximity to a major town, city or urban area, in rural areas of England, 2023/24 (Note G-1 and Note G-5)**



**Figure G-8: Focus bar chart showing tourism related employment as a proportion of total employment, by proximity to a major town, city or urban area, in rural areas of England, 2023/24 (Note G-1 and Note G-5)**



## Businesses by industry explanatory notes

- **Note G-1**

Source: ONS, Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR), 2023/24

- **Note G-2**

Data in Figure G-1, Figure G-3, Figure G-4 and Figure G-5 are detailed in tables of 2023/24 business figures broken down by industry and detailed Rural-Urban Classification, available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#) (see worksheets GA and GC and GD).

- **Note G-3**

Data in Table G-1 showing the number of tourism related businesses and employment within those businesses in 2023/24, broken down using a more detailed Rural-Urban Classification are available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note G-4**

The publication '[UK sea fisheries annual statistics report 2024](#)' gives an indication of the number of people employed in the fishing industry.

- **Note G-5**

Detailed relative access categories look at the ability to reach towns or cities of specified size within a 30-minute drive. For RUC21 purposes, a major town or city is defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents. A medium urban area is a built-up area with at least 30,000 residents. A small urban area is a built-up area with at least 10,000 residents. A remote settlement is defined as one from which it is not possible to reach the nearest small urban area within a 30-minute drive. More information regarding the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note G-6**

The 'Mining/quarrying and utilities' sector is made up of 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' (1,070 businesses), Mining and quarrying (600 businesses) and 'Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation services' (1,600 businesses).

## H. Business survival and growth

**Business start-ups and deaths per head of population are lower in Predominantly Rural areas, but overall, Predominantly Rural areas have more businesses per head of population than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). Business survival rates are higher in Predominantly Rural areas, but these areas have a lower rate of high-growth enterprises.**

### Key findings – Business survival and growth

#### Business start-ups per head of population are lower in Rural areas

- In 2023, there were 39 registered business start-ups per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 43 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).
- Between 2018 to 2023 in Predominantly Rural areas, there were between 42 and 45 business start-ups per 10,000 population; in Urban areas, there were between 43 and 52 per 10,000 population.

#### Business deaths per head of population are lower in Rural areas

- In 2023, there were 39 business deaths per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 44 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).
- Between 2018 to 2023 in Predominantly Rural areas, the number of business deaths remained between 35 and 45 per 10,000 population; in Urban areas it remained between 40 and 50.

#### Business counts per head of population are stable in both Rural and Urban areas

- Between 2018 and 2023, the number of active businesses per population was consistently higher in Predominantly Rural areas when compared with Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In Predominantly Rural areas, it was between 420 and 430 registered businesses per 10,000 population and in Predominantly Urban areas it was between 370 and 390 registered businesses per 10,000 population.

#### Longer-term business survival rates are better in Rural areas than in Urban areas

- Survival rates after one year were similar in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In Predominantly Rural authorities, 95% of business start-ups were still active 1 year later compared with 94% in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).
- After 5 years, the gap in survival rates between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) had widened to 8 percentage points. In Predominantly Rural areas the 5-year business survival rate was 45% but in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) it was 37%.
- In 2023, nearly a quarter of all Predominantly Rural authorities had a business survival rate of at least 50% in the fifth year after the business had started.

## Summary

Between 2018 and 2023 numbers of registered business start-ups per head of population were consistently lower in Predominantly Rural than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In 2023, there were 39 registered business start-ups per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 43 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In all settlement types, numbers of business start-ups were lower in 2023 than they were in 2018.

The number of business deaths per head of population were consistently lower in Predominantly Rural areas between 2018 and 2023, when compared with Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In 2023, there were 39 registered business deaths per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 44 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas business deaths were slightly higher in 2023 than they were in 2018, while in London they were slightly lower.

Between 2018 and 2023 the number of active businesses per population were consistently higher in Predominantly Rural areas when compared with Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). In 2023, there were 421 active businesses per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 374 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). When looking at changes since 2018 both Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) had lower numbers of active businesses in 2023 than in 2018, while numbers in London had increased slightly.

When considering the 5-year business survival rate for those businesses that started in 2018, 45% of businesses had survived in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with 37% for Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). While business survival rates decrease over the five years following business start-up for all area types, survival rates were consistently highest in Predominantly Rural areas.

Since 2019 the proportion of high-growth businesses has been consistently lowest in Predominantly Rural areas. In 2023, the proportion of high-growth businesses in Predominantly Rural areas was 4.3%, slightly lower than the 4.6% for Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). When looking at changes since 2018 both Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) had smaller proportions of high-growth businesses in 2023 than in 2018 while in London the proportion had increased slightly.

## Note on business counts

The following sections use data from the [ONS business demography dataset](#) which presents data at the Local Authority level of detail. Business counts presented in this section will differ from those in [Section F](#), which uses the more granular Output Area-level Rural-Urban Classification.

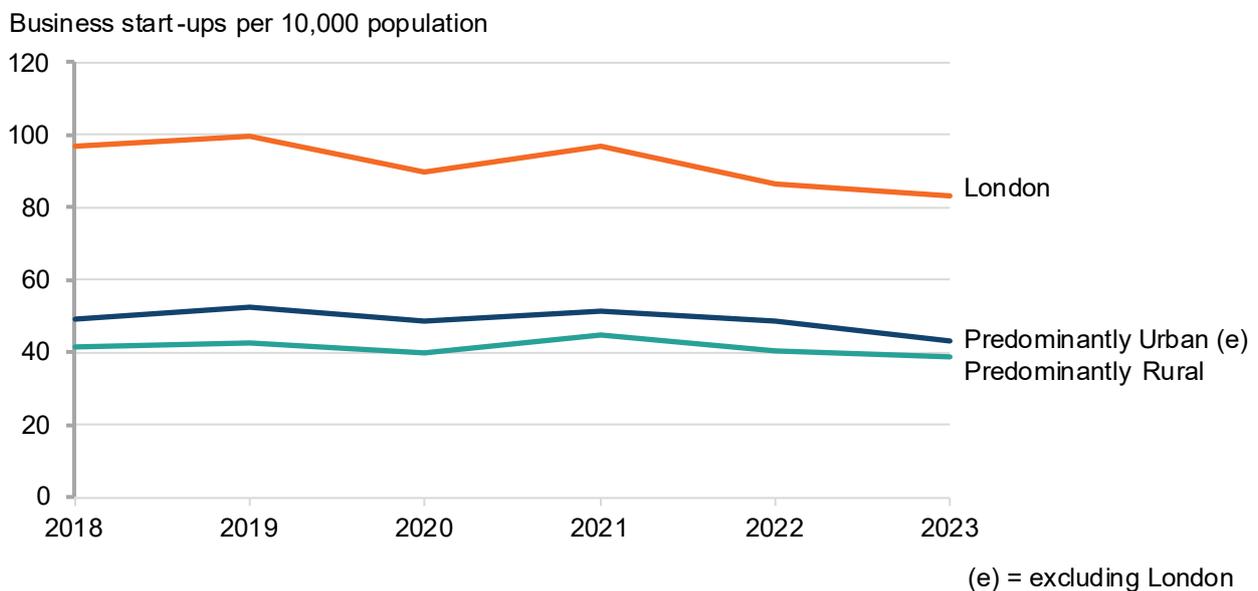
In the Local Authority-level classification, a whole Authority is designated as Predominantly Rural if the majority of the population resides in Rural areas, regardless of any Urban Output Areas there may be; the same is true for Rural Output Areas within Predominantly Urban Local Authorities. Therefore, differences may occur between the results presented in this section and Section F. Despite the different granularity of data, the overall trends are similar between sections; in both Section H and Section F, there were proportionally more businesses in (Predominantly) Rural areas than in (Predominantly) Urban areas.

## Business start-ups

Business start-ups are identified as a business that is present in the current year but did not exist in the previous two years.

The line chart in Figure H-1 shows the number of registered business start-ups per population by Rural-Urban Classification between 2018 and 2023. Over this period the numbers of registered business start-ups per population were consistently lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) whilst numbers were highest in London. In all settlement types, numbers of business start-ups per population fluctuated between 2018 and 2021, and then fell between 2021 and 2023.

**Figure H-1: Line chart showing the number of registered business start-ups per 10,000 population by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2018 to 2023 (Note H-1 and Note H-2)**



In 2023, there were 39 registered business start-ups per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 43 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). These numbers show a decrease on 2022 start-ups of 5% in Predominantly Rural areas compared with a larger decrease in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) of 11%. When looking at changes since 2018 both Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) had lower numbers of business start-ups in 2023 than in 2018 (by 3 and 6 business start-ups respectively).

## Business deaths

A business death is defined as a business that was classed as an active business in one year then is no longer present in data for the following two years.

The line chart in Figure H-2 shows the number of registered business deaths per population by Rural-Urban Classification between 2018 and 2023. The line chart shows that between 2018 and 2023 the number of business deaths per population were consistently lower in Predominantly Rural areas when compared with Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). Between 2018 and

2020 there was some fluctuation in numbers in Predominantly Rural areas while numbers in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) remained stable. Between 2020 and 2022 both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) saw a rise in the number of business deaths, with numbers then falling into 2023. In London, numbers were consistently higher, showing the same general pattern with a gradual increase up to 2022, falling again into 2023.

In 2023, there were 39 registered business deaths per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 44 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). These numbers show a 10% decrease compared to business deaths in 2022 in Predominantly Rural areas, and an 11% decrease in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) of 11%. When looking at changes since 2018, Predominantly Rural areas had higher numbers of business deaths in 2023 than in 2018 (by 2 business deaths) whilst Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) and in London the numbers showed little change over the same time period.

**Figure H-2: Line chart showing the number of registered business deaths per 10,000 population by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2018 to 2023 (Note H-1 and Note H-2)**

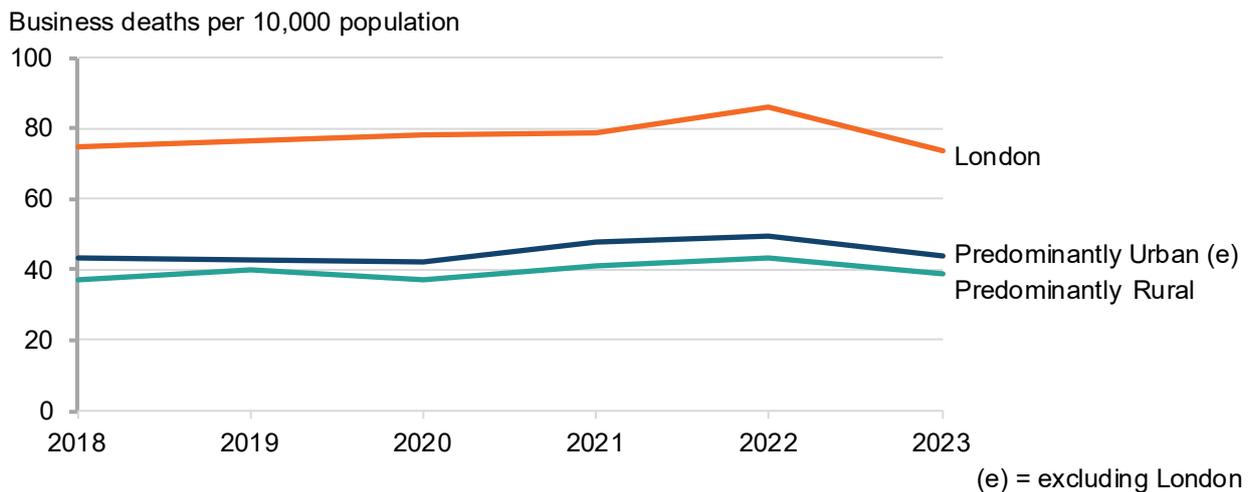


Table H-1 and Table H-2 show the 10 Local Authorities with the greatest numbers of business start-ups and business deaths per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas in 2023. Waverley (Surrey) had the greatest number of business start-ups with 54 businesses per 10,000 population in 2023, while Wychavon (Worcestershire) had the greatest number of business deaths (69 per 10,000 population). There were six Local Authorities that appeared in both top ten lists which suggests these areas saw a greater level of business turnaround than others. These areas were: Waverley (Surrey), Stratford-on-Avon (Warwickshire), Sevenoaks (Kent), Uttlesford (Essex), Harborough (South Leicestershire) and Winchester (Hampshire).

**Table H-1: The 10 Predominantly Rural areas with the highest number of business start-ups per 10,000 population in 2023**

Predominantly Rural areas	Business start-ups per 10,000 population
Waverley	54
Stratford-on-Avon	53
Sevenoaks	53
Cotswold	52
Uttlesford	52
Harborough	52
Winchester	50
West Suffolk	49
East Hampshire	49
Maldon	48

**Table H-2: The 10 Predominantly Rural areas with the highest number of business deaths per 10,000 population in 2023**

Predominantly Rural areas	Business deaths per 10,000 population
Wychavon	69
Stratford-on-Avon	64
Winchester	59
South Kesteven	56
Uttlesford	53
Waverley	53
Sevenoaks	50
Harborough	50
Ribble Valley	49
Newark and Sherwood	49

**Table H-3: The 10 Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas with the highest number of business start-ups per 10,000 population in 2023**

Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas	Business start-ups per 10,000 population
Hertsmere	82
Elmbridge	65
Three Rivers	64
Watford	63
Manchester	63
Slough	62
Windsor and Maidenhead	61
Thurrock	59
Oadby and Wigston	59
St Albans	58

**Table H-4: The 10 Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas with the highest number of business deaths per 10,000 population in 2023**

Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas	Business deaths per 10,000 population
Wolverhampton	76
Hertsmere	69
Brighton and Hove	68
Bromsgrove	67
St Albans	64
Elmbridge	64
Peterborough	63
Rugby	61
Windsor and Maidenhead	61
Mansfield	61

Table H-3 and Table H-4 show the 10 Local Authorities with the greatest numbers of business start-ups and business deaths per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) for 2023. Hertsmere (Hertfordshire) had the greatest number of business start-ups with 82 businesses per 10,000 population, while Wolverhampton (West Midlands) had the greatest number of business deaths (76 per 10,000 population). There were four Local Authorities that appeared in both top ten lists: Hertsmere (Hertfordshire), Elmbridge (Surrey), Windsor and Maidenhead (Berkshire), and St Albans (Hertfordshire).

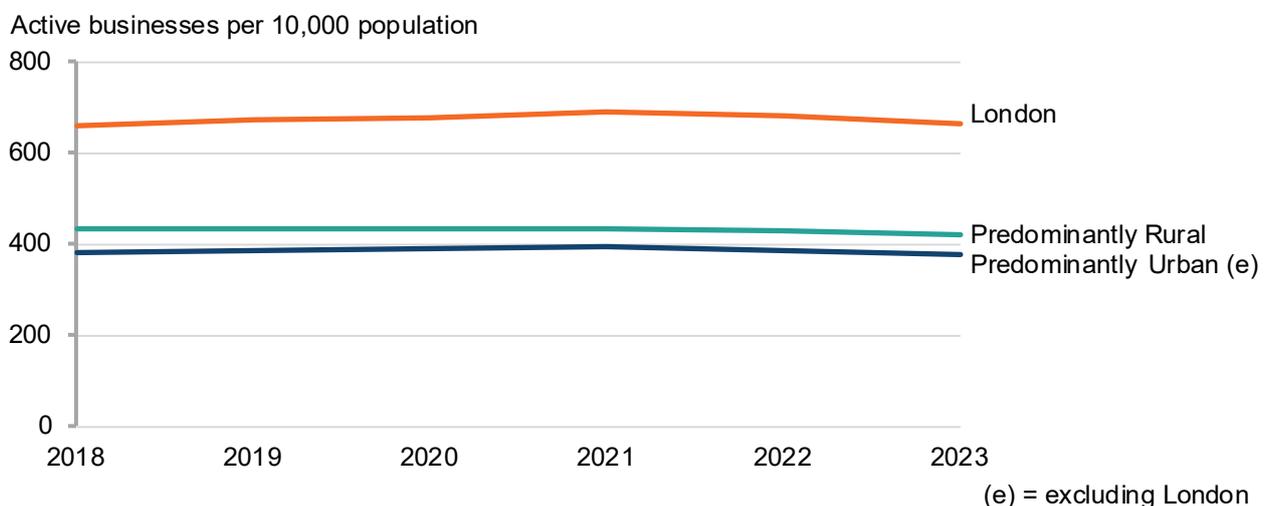
## Business count

This section provides a count of those businesses considered to be active businesses, which is those that had either turnover or employment at any point during the reference year.

The line chart in Figure H-3 shows the number of active registered businesses per population by Rural-Urban Classification between 2018 and 2023. The line chart shows that between 2018 and 2023 the number of active businesses per population was consistently higher in Predominantly Rural areas when compared with Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). Between 2018 and 2022 the number of active businesses was stable in Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) at around 430 and 385 active businesses per 10,000 population respectively. This was followed by a slight fall in numbers of active businesses into 2023. In London, numbers of active businesses per 10,000 population saw a gradual increase between 2018 (660) to 2021 (688) after which they have fallen back to 662 in 2023.

In 2023, there were 421 active businesses per 10,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 374 per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). These numbers show a decrease on 2022 business numbers of 2% in Predominantly Rural areas compared with a decrease in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) of 3%. When looking at changes since 2018 both Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) had lower numbers of active businesses in 2023 than in 2018 (by 10 and 6 active businesses respectively) while in London numbers have increased by 2 over the same time period.

**Figure H-3: Line chart showing the number of active registered businesses per 10,000 population by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2018 to 2023 (Note H-1 and Note H-2)**

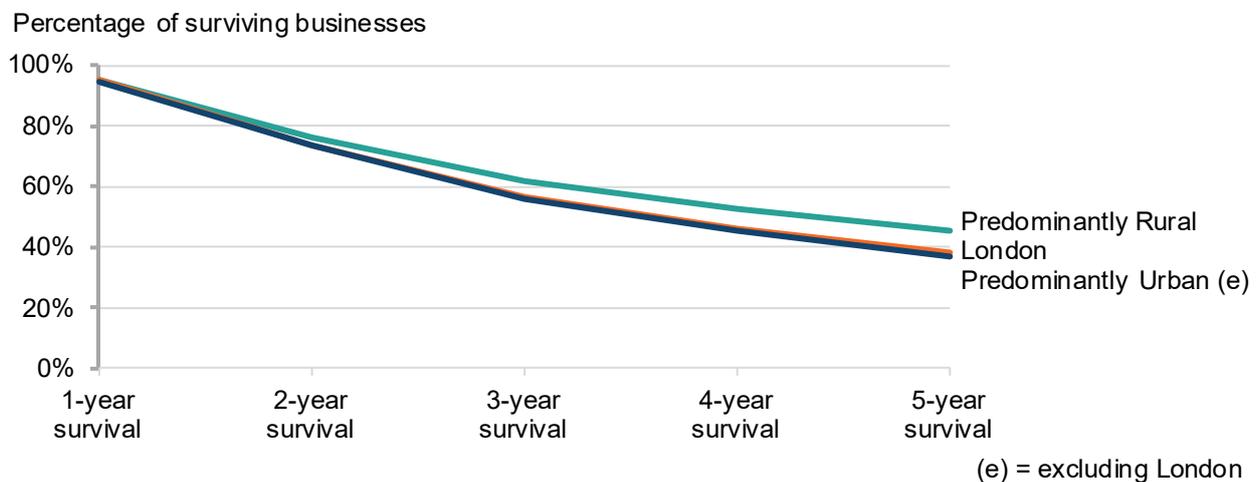


## Business survival rates

This section looks at businesses that were started in 2018, tracking how rates of survival change over the following five years.

The line chart in Figure H-4 shows that while business survival rates decrease over the five years following business start-up for all area types, survival rates are consistently highest in Predominantly Rural areas. The gap between survival rates in Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban areas increased throughout the five years from 2018. Rates of survival were similar after year 1 with Predominantly Rural areas showing a business survival rate of 95%, compared with 94% for Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). By year 5 the gap between the area types had widened to 8 percentage points, with Predominantly Rural areas having a business survival rate of 45% (compared with 37% for Predominantly Urban areas, excluding London).

**Figure H-4: Line chart showing the survival rate of businesses started in 2018, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2018 to 2023 (Note H-1 and Note H-2)**

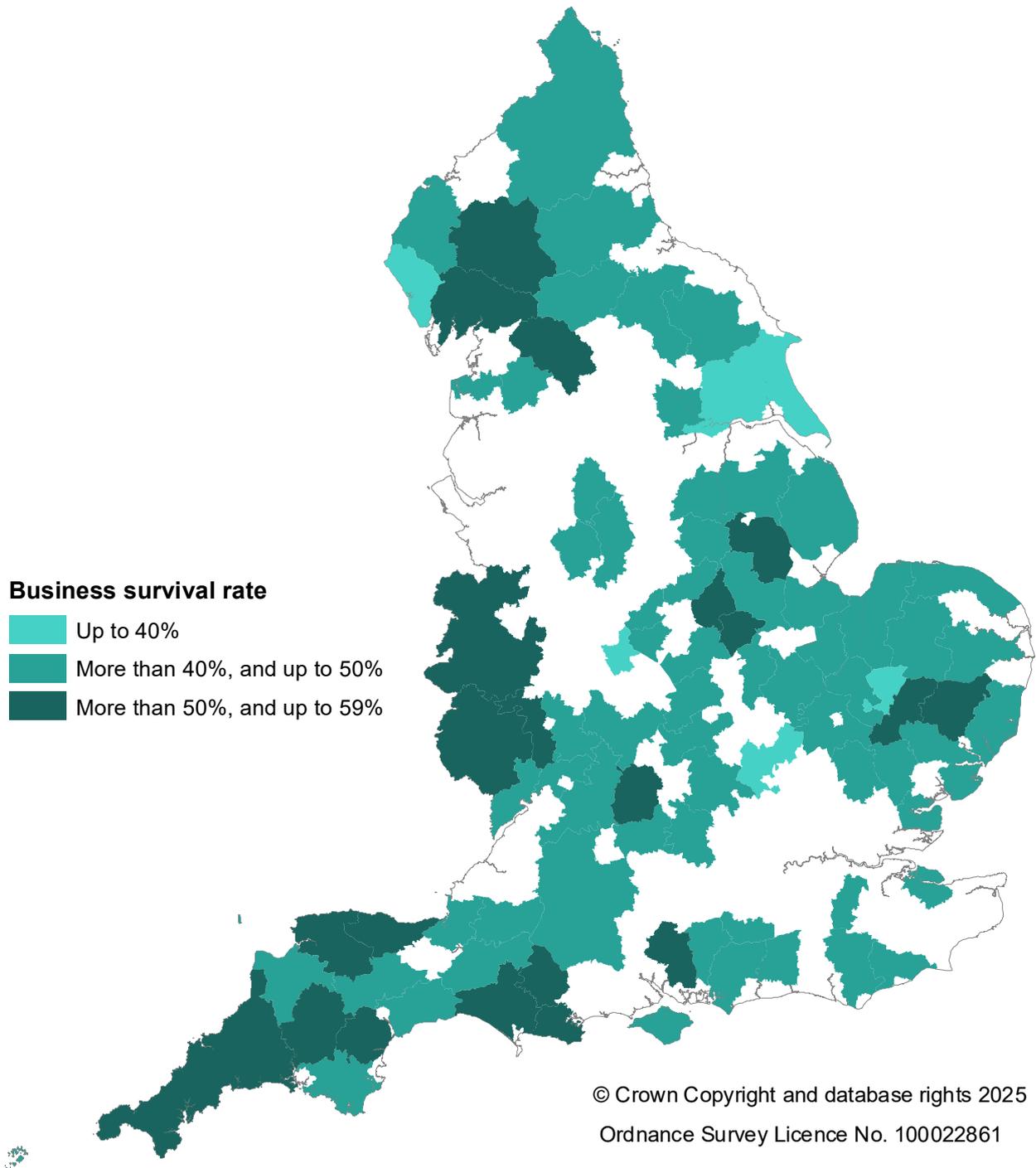


The maps in Figure H-5 and Figure H-6 show the proportion of businesses started in 2018 that had survived for five years into 2023, by Local Authority area. Predominantly Rural authorities are mapped in Figure H-5 which shows that of the 91 Predominantly Rural authorities, 5 authorities had a survival rate of 40% or less businesses surviving for 5 years, 65 authorities had a survival rate of between 40% and 50% of businesses, while 21 authorities had a survival rate of more than 50% of businesses. This means that for Predominantly Rural Local Authorities, nearly a quarter of all Authorities had a business survival rate of at least 50% in the fifth year after the business had started. West Devon was the Predominantly Rural Local Authority with the highest survival rate for businesses in their fifth year (59% of businesses), while Central Bedfordshire had the lowest rate of survival (28%).

Figure H-6 shows the situation for Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Local Authorities, covering a total of 235 authorities. This shows there were 93 authorities that had a survival rate of 40% or less businesses surviving for 5 years, 135 authorities had a survival rate of between 40% and 50% of businesses, while just 7 authorities that had a survival rate of more than 50% of businesses. Weymouth and Portland (Dorset) was the Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Local Authority with the highest survival rate for businesses in their fifth year (53% of businesses), while Bromsgrove (Worcestershire) had the lowest rate of survival (13%).

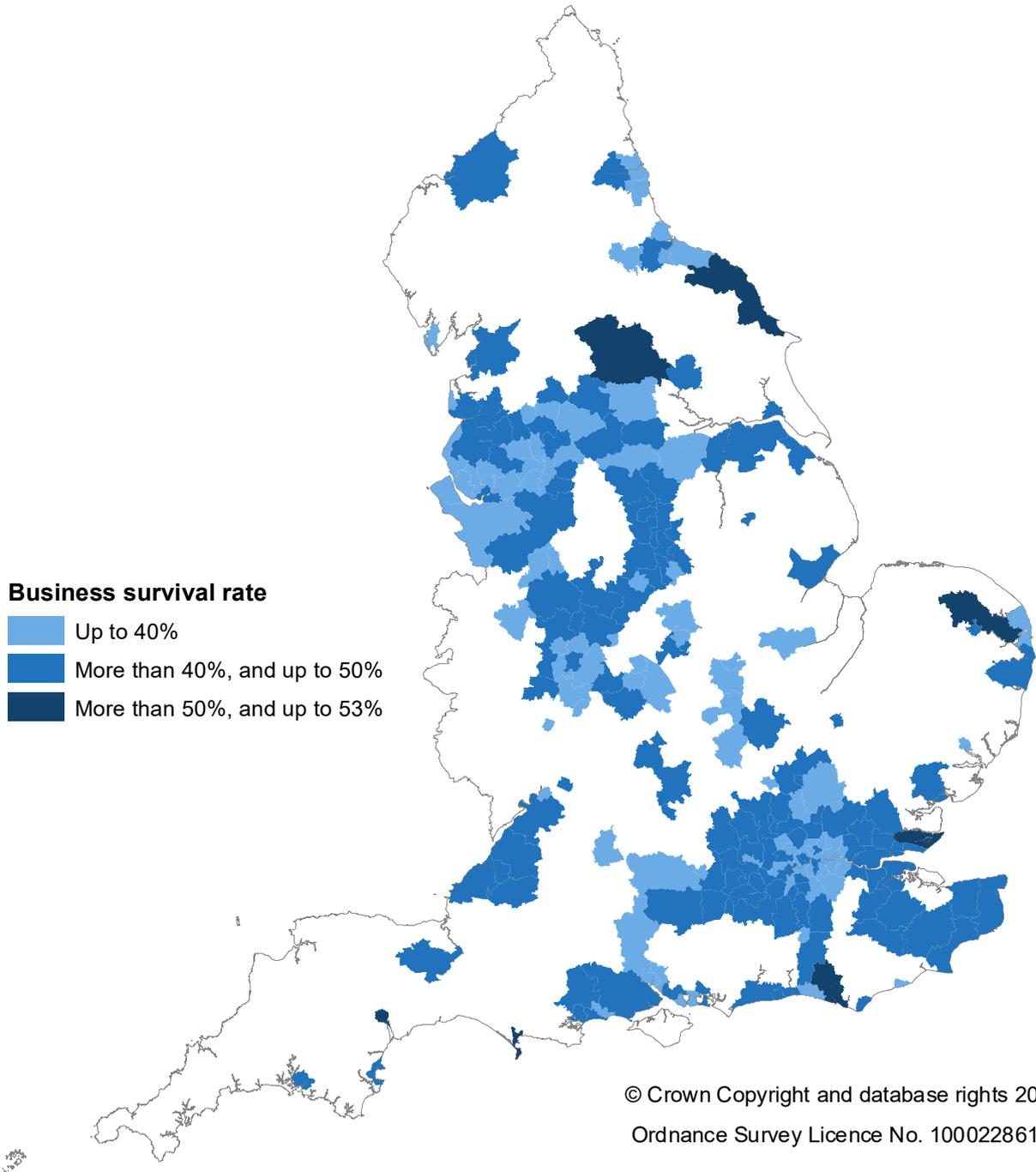
**Figure H-5: Map showing the five-year survival rate of businesses started in 2018, by Local Authority area, in Predominantly Rural areas in England (Note H-2)**

White areas on the map represent Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas, which are instead presented in Figure H-6.



**Figure H-6: Map showing the five-year survival rate of businesses started in 2018, by Local Authority area, in Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas in England (Note H-2)**

White areas on the map represent Predominantly Rural areas, which are instead presented in Figure H-5.



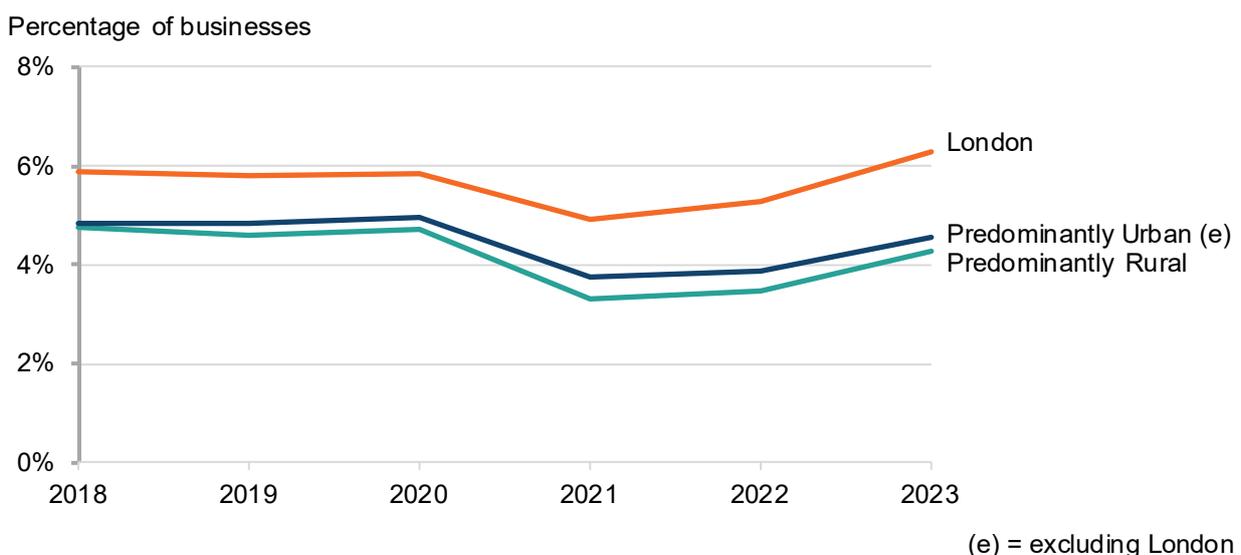
## High-growth businesses

High-growth businesses are those enterprises with an average annualised growth of 20% per annum, over a three-year period. Growth is measured in terms of employment. Analysis is limited to businesses with 10 or more employees to avoid the growth of small businesses distorting results.

The line chart in Figure H-7 shows high-growth businesses as a proportion of all businesses with 10 or more employees between 2018 and 2023. In 2018 both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas had the same proportion of high-growth businesses (4.8%). In 2019 the proportion in Predominantly Rural areas dropped slightly while Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas remained stable. Since 2019 the proportion of high-growth businesses has consistently been lowest in Predominantly Rural areas. All settlement types have seen the same pattern since 2019, with the proportion of high-growth businesses remaining stable between 2019 and 2020, followed by a steep drop into 2021, and then increasing proportions of high-growth businesses between 2021 and 2023. The proportion of high-growth businesses was consistently highest in London.

In 2023, the proportion of high-growth businesses in Predominantly Rural areas was 4.3%, slightly lower than the 4.6% for Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London). This was an increase on 2022 proportions of 0.8 percentage points in Predominantly Rural areas compared with an increase in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) of 0.7 percentage points. When looking at changes since 2018 both Predominantly Rural areas and Predominantly Urban (excluding London) had smaller proportions of high-growth businesses in 2023 than in 2018 (by 0.5 and 0.3 percentage points respectively) while in London the proportion had increased by 0.4 percentage points over the same time period.

**Figure H-7: Line charting showing the proportion of businesses that are high-growth businesses, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, in England, 2018 to 2023 (Note H-1 and Note H-2)**



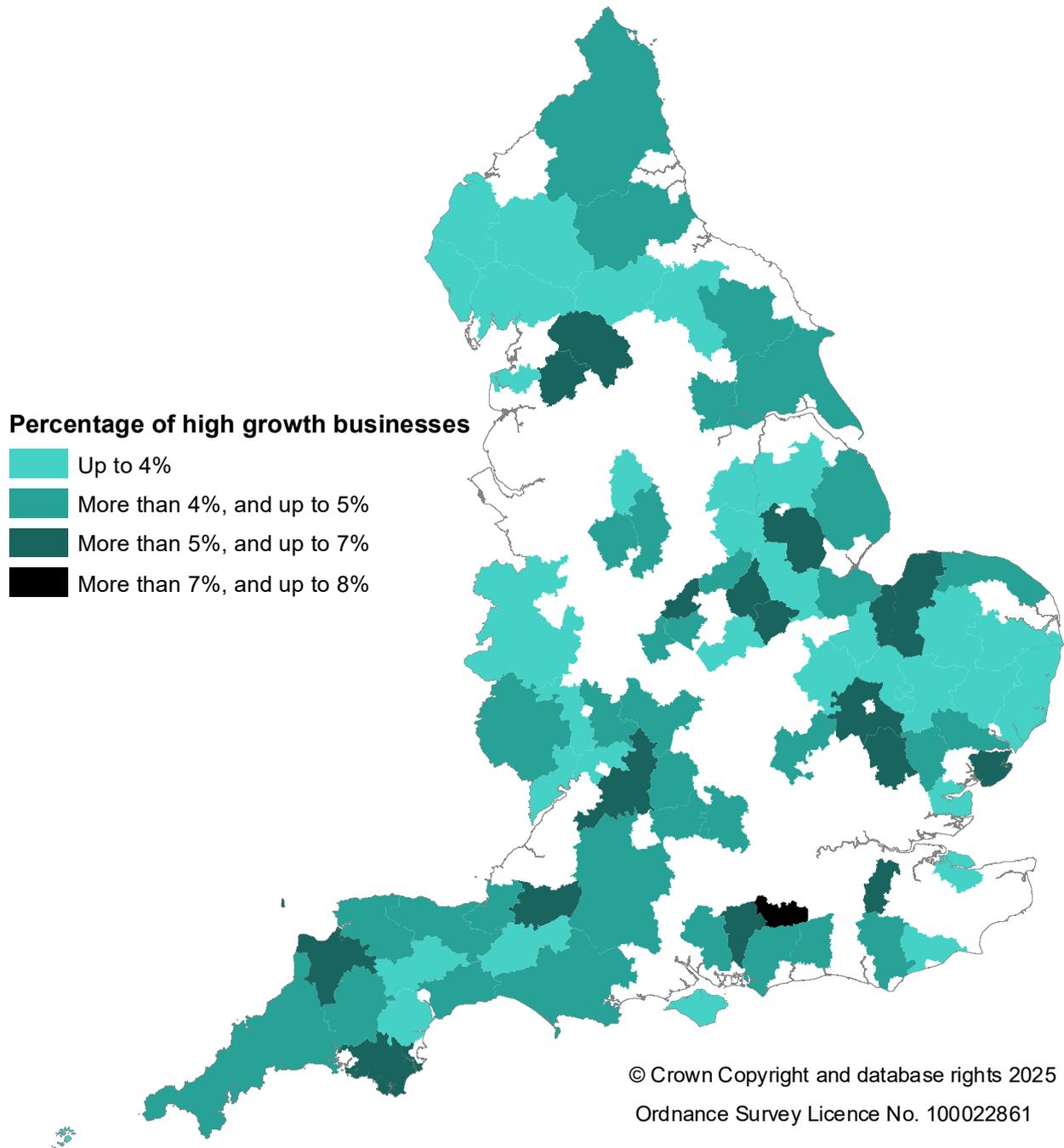
The maps in Figure H-8 and Figure H-9 show the proportion of all businesses with 10 or more employees that were considered high-growth businesses, in 2023, by Local Authority area. Predominantly Rural authorities are mapped in Figure H-8 which shows that of the 84

Predominantly Rural authorities, 35 authorities had 4% or fewer high-growth businesses, 32 authorities had between 4% and 5% high-growth businesses, 16 authorities had between 5% and 7% high-growth businesses, while just one authority had more than 7% of businesses with 10 or more employees being high-growth businesses. Waverley (Surrey) was the Predominantly Rural Local Authority with the greatest proportion of high-growth businesses (7.8% of businesses with 10 or more employees), while the Isles of Scilly had the lowest proportion of high-growth businesses (less than 0.1%). It is worth noting that Waverley is also the Predominantly Rural Local Authority with the highest rate of building start-ups per 10,000 population in 2023, whilst also featuring in the top 10 for business deaths.

Figure H-9 shows the situation for Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Local Authorities, covering a total of 225 authorities. This shows there were 81 authorities with 4% or fewer high-growth businesses, 81 authorities with between 4% and 5% high-growth businesses, 53 authorities with between 5% and 7% high-growth businesses, and 10 authorities that had more than 7% of businesses being high-growth businesses. The top 5 authorities for proportion of high-growth businesses were all London authorities, with the City of London being the highest at 9.4% of businesses. Outside of London, Oxford was the Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Local Authority with the greatest proportion of high growth businesses (7.6% of businesses), while Eastbourne (East Sussex) had the lowest proportion of high growth businesses (1.4%).

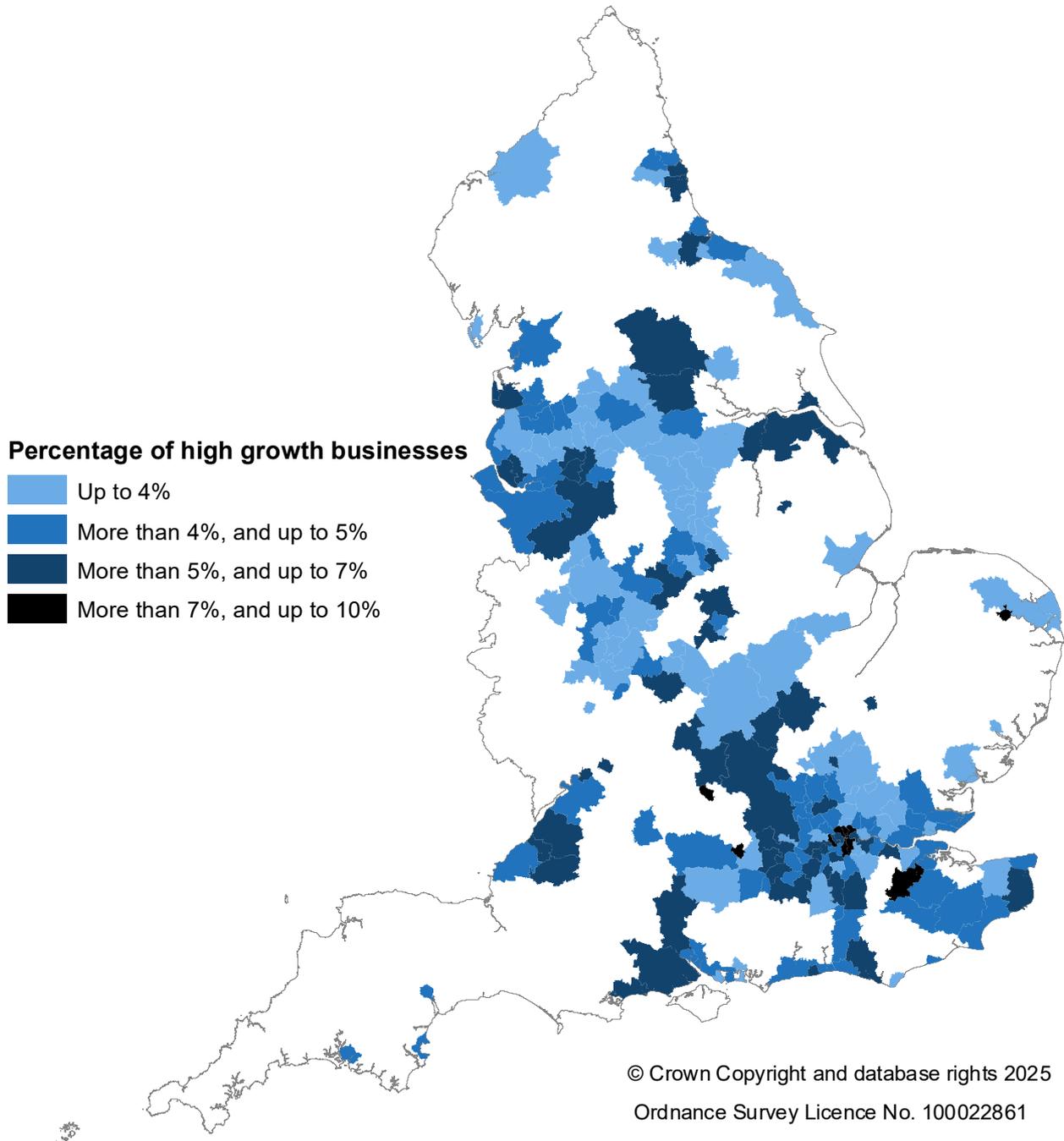
**Figure H-8: Map showing high-growth businesses as a proportion of all businesses with 10 or more employees, by Local Authority area, in Predominantly Rural areas in England, in 2023 (Note H-2)**

White areas on the map represent Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas, which are instead presented in Figure H-9.



**Figure H-9: Map showing high-growth businesses as a proportion of all businesses with 10 or more employees, by Local Authority area, in Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas in England, in 2023 (Note H-2)**

White areas on the map represent Predominantly Rural areas, which are instead presented in Figure H-8.



## Business survival and growth notes

- **Note H-1**

Tables of the data in this section are available in the [Rural Economic Bulletin Supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note H-2**

Source: [ONS Business Demography dataset](#)

## I. Innovation and investment

The proportion of businesses undertaking broader innovation activities is similar in Rural and Urban areas, but capital investment per employee is generally lower in Predominantly Rural areas than Predominantly Urban areas.

### Key findings – Innovation and investment

#### Location has little effect on the innovation practices of businesses surveyed

- Broader innovation activities were undertaken by 58% of Rural businesses and 57% of Urban businesses surveyed between 2012 and 2014.

#### Less capital investment per employee in rural areas than in urban areas

- Companies undertake 'capital investment' when spending money on fixed assets (with the expectation that productivity will increase as a result of the investment). In 2018, investment per head was around £4,700 in Predominantly Rural areas and around £4,900 in Predominantly Urban areas excluding London.
- With the exception of 2017 when they were the same, the investment per head Predominantly Rural areas has been lower than the England average over the period 2007 to 2018.

## Summary

Broad innovation activities can include introducing new or significantly improved products (good or services) or processes; new or improved forms of organisation, business structures or practices, or activities in areas like internal research and development, training, acquisition of external knowledge or machinery, and equipment linked to innovation activities.

Broader innovation activities were undertaken by 58% of Rural businesses and 57% of Urban businesses surveyed between 2012 and 2014.

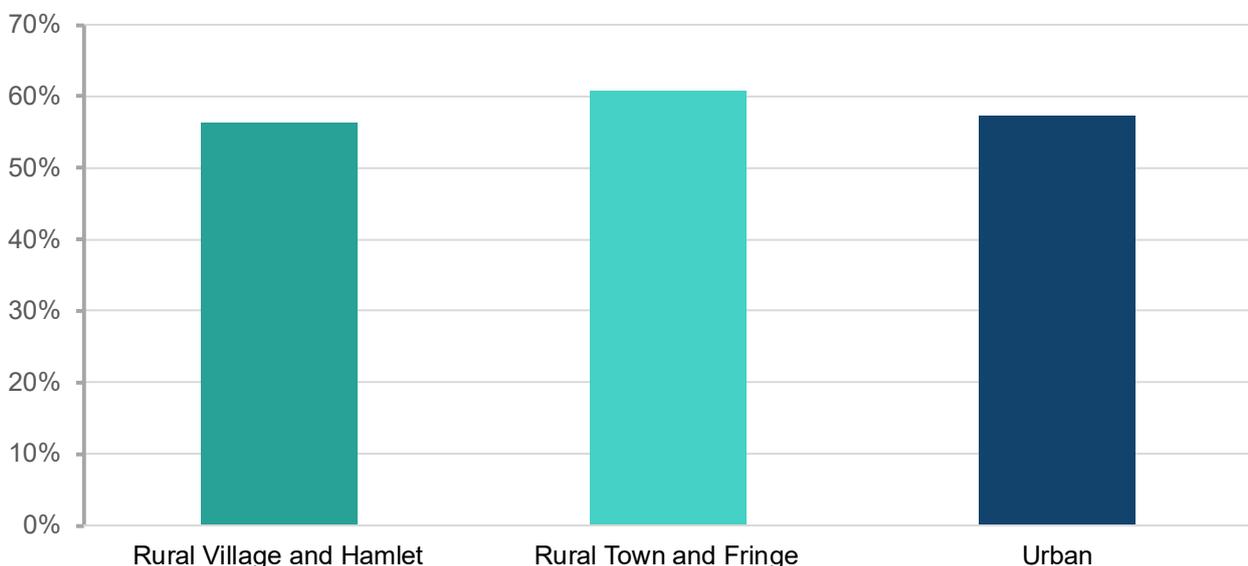
Capital investment is where companies spend money on fixed assets (typically land, buildings, or machinery) with the expectation that productivity will increase as a result of the investment. In 2018, investment per employee in Predominantly Rural areas was £4,700, compared with £4,900 in Predominantly Urban areas excluding London, and £5,800 in London.

## Businesses engaged in innovation

Figure I-1 shows that broader innovation activities were undertaken by 58% of Rural businesses and 57% of Urban businesses surveyed between 2012 and 2014 suggesting that being situated in a Rural or Urban area had little effect on the innovation practices of businesses surveyed.

There are a higher proportion of businesses involved in broader innovation located in areas of Rural Town and Fringe than in areas of Rural Village and Hamlet (61% and 56% respectively).

**Figure I-1: Percentage of businesses in England engaged in broader innovation-related activities, 2012 to 2014 (Note I-1)**



**Table I-1: Business involvement with broader-innovation-related activities, 2012 to 2014**

	Broader innovators, percentage of businesses	Not broader innovators, percentage of businesses
Urban	57	43
Rural Town and Fringe	61	39
Rural Village and Hamlet	56	44
<b>Rural total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>

## Capital investment per employee

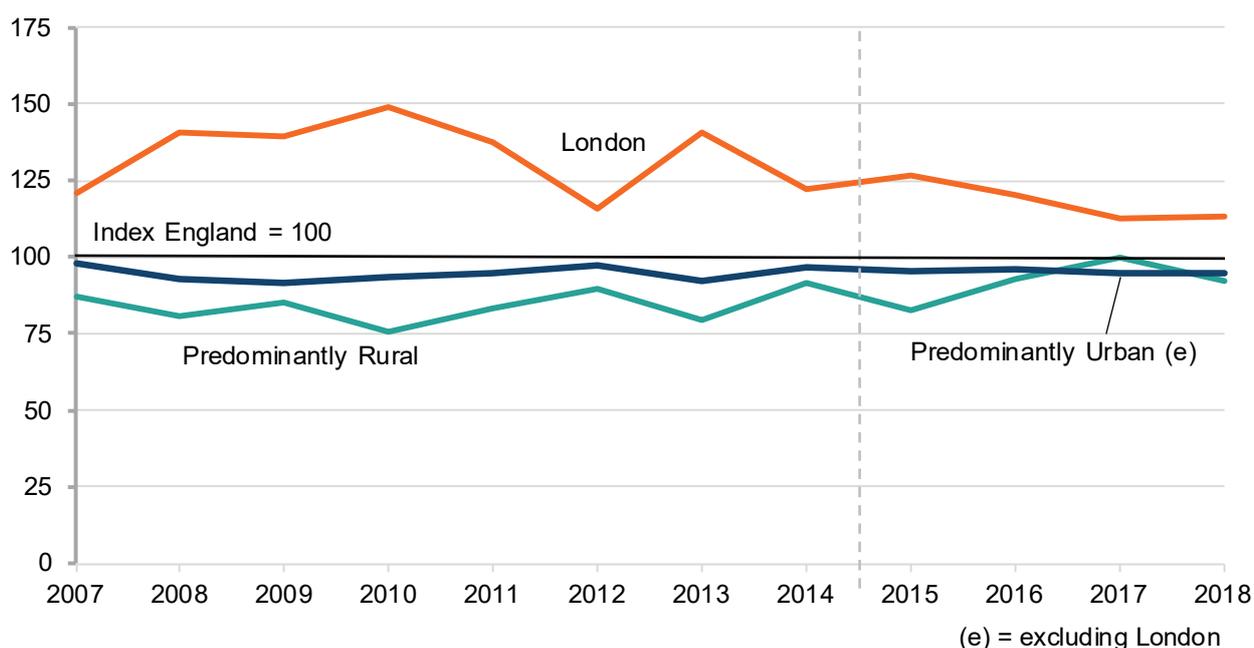
Companies undertake ‘capital investment’ when spending money on fixed assets (typically land, buildings or machinery) with the expectation that productivity will increase as a result of the investment. Capital investment in absolute terms is only available at current prices so caution should be used when comparing over time. Comparisons below are presented as an index in relation to the level for England as whole.

Figure I-2 shows that continuing recent trends, capital investment per employee in 2018 was highest in London. In Predominantly Rural areas it was around 92% of the level for England as a whole compared with 95% in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).

Overall capital investment per employee in Predominantly Rural areas has been lower than in Predominantly Urban areas, except for 2017 when it was higher.

In 2018, investment per head in London was around £5,800, compared with £4,900 in Predominantly Urban areas excluding London, and £4,700 in Predominantly Rural areas.

**Figure I-2: Capital investment per employee as a percentage of the level for England, by Local Authority Classification in England, 2007 to 2018 (Note I-2, Note I-3 and Note I-4)**



## Notes

- Figure I-2 note: Dashed line shows that from 2015 employee numbers include estimates from businesses that are solely PAYE ([Note I-5](#)) based with employment counts less than 20. These businesses were excluded from estimates of employee numbers in earlier years. This has had minimum impact on the data presented.
- Total net capital investment is calculated as total proceeds from disposals subtracted from the total cost of acquisitions. The data is at current prices, so it has already taken account of inflation.
- London has been separated out to allow a fair comparison of major Urban against all other area classifications.

## Innovation and investment explanatory notes

### • Note I-1

Innovation notes:

- These results are based on the unweighted sample of businesses surveyed for England only (therefore the England percentage totals may not match the weighted results published by the Department for Business and Trade, formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). The sample mainly includes enterprise units (i.e. headquarters of businesses) but also has a small number of local units (i.e. sites belonging to enterprises).
- The sampling methodology used by the Department for Business and Trade (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) is described in their report and accompanying statistics:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/506953/bis-16-134-uk-innovation-survey-2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506953/bis-16-134-uk-innovation-survey-2015.pdf). Owing to the small sample sizes achieved after application of the Rural-Urban definition, this analysis has been presented as the unweighted results from the surveyed sample. Some settlement types were underrepresented in the sample and should be treated with caution: *Rural Town & Fringe* and *Rural Village & Hamlet*. Furthermore, percentage totals for England may not match those published by the Department for Business and Trade (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) due to minor discrepancies with postcode data.
- The description of innovation activity in the chart and table above includes businesses that were engaged in any of the following:
  - introduced a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process
  - engaged in innovation projects that have been abandoned or are not yet complete
  - undertaken new and significantly improved forms of organisation, business structures or practices, and marketing concepts or strategies
  - undertaken activities in areas such as internal research and development, training, acquisition of external knowledge or machinery, and equipment linked to innovation activities
  - A business engaged in any of the activities 1 to 4 is described as a 'broader innovator'.
  - Data from the 2015 UK Innovation Survey may not be directly comparable with data from previous surveys due to changes in survey mode, methodology, sampling approach, questionnaire design and response rate. The Rural-Urban analyses presented here were performed by applying RUC11 to the data, RUC01 had been used previously for the 2011 UK Innovation Survey. As a result, a comparison cannot be made with previous Rural-Urban innovation analyses
  - Source: Department for Business and Trade (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) UK Innovation Survey 2015 covering innovation activity during 2012 to 2014.

### • Note I-2

Data in Figure H-2 are detailed in tables of investment per employee, both current prices and as a percentage of the level for England, broken down by detailed local authority Rural Urban Classification for 2007 to 2018. These are available in the [Rural economy supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note I-3**

Caution should be taken when interpreting this measure as capital investment is difficult to attribute at local authority level. The estimates are produced by taking data at a higher geographical level and apportioning it at local authority level based on employment levels. As ONS are not wholly confident that there is a sufficient correlation between investment and employment, they do not release the data as a National Statistic below National level.

- **Note I-4**

Source: Bespoke data request from the ONS, Annual Business Inquiry, and Business Register and Employment Survey (classified data); via Nomis ([www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)).

- **Note I-5**

Pay As You Earn (PAYE) is HMRC's system to collect income tax (which helps pay for services like education and healthcare), and National Insurance (which helps pay for some benefits and the State Pension) from employees.

# Appendix 1: The 8 thematic reports that make up the Statistical Digest of Rural England (and the topics included within them)

## 1. [Population](#)

- A. Population level and change
- B. Population age profile
- C. Internal migration
- D. Local Authority population data
- E. Census 2021: Population

## 2. [Housing](#)

- A. Housing stock: age and type
- B. Housing stock: additions and affordable housing
- C. Housing market
- D. Second and empty homes
- E. Homelessness
- F. Land use change for housing
- G. Housing quality

## 3. [Health and Wellbeing](#)

- A. Life expectancy and Mortality
- B. Wellbeing
- C. NHS Dentistry provision
- D. NHS General Practices
- E. Childcare provision
- F. Loneliness
- G. Volunteering and charity

## 4. [Communities and Households](#)

- A. Index of Multiple Deprivation
- B. English Indices of Deprivation
- C. Poverty due to low income
- D. Household expenditure
- E. Police recorded crime and outcomes
- F. Crime surveys: local police and businesses
- G. Feelings about the local neighbourhood

## 5. [Connectivity and Accessibility](#)

- A. Broadband
- B. Mobile coverage
- C. Travel behaviours
- D. Access to personal transport
- E. Access to services
- F. Home working

## 6. [Education, Qualifications and Training](#)

- A. Schools and their workforce
- B. Class sizes
- C. Secondary education attainment
- D. School inspections
- E. Free school meals - eligibility
- F. Alternative and specialist education provision
- G. Progression to higher education
- H. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training
- I. Workforce education level

## 7. [Rural Economic Bulletin](#)

- A. Employment
- B. Earnings
- C. Redundancies
- D. Unemployment-related benefits
- E. Output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)
- F. Business demographics
- G. Businesses by industry
- H. Business survival and growth
- I. Innovation and investment

## 8. [Energy](#)

- A. Fuel poverty
- B. Energy Performance Certificates: average Energy Efficiency Score
- C. Energy Performance Certificates: achieving energy efficiency category C
- D. Central heating
- E. Energy Consumption
- F. Estimated carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions

Each of the 8 themes also has their own set of supplementary data tables that include the larger source data that could not be included in the presented document. The chapter headings above are hyperlinked to the home page for that specific digest theme. The supplementary tables can be accessed from these home pages.

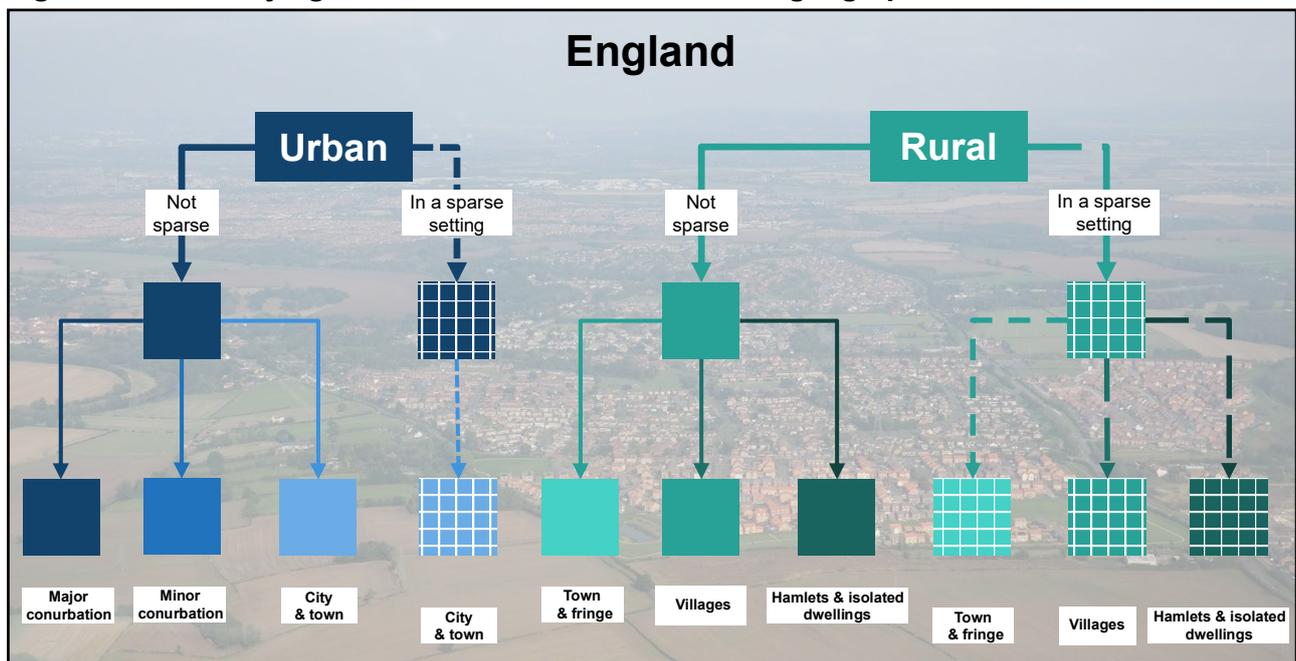
There is a further document including the individual Local Authority data tables, which have been separated for ease of use.

## Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas

Wherever possible, 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.

Census Output Areas are the smallest areas for which data are available from Censuses. These Census Output Areas are assigned to one of four Urban or six Rural categories (Figure X-1) based on dwelling densities. Those described as “in a sparse setting” reflect where the wider area is sparsely populated (again based on dwelling densities). From Census Output Areas, other small area geographies can be classified based on how they map to Census Output Areas (such as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), Wards, and postcodes – [Note 1](#)).

**Figure X-1: Classifying Rural and Urban areas for small geographical areas**

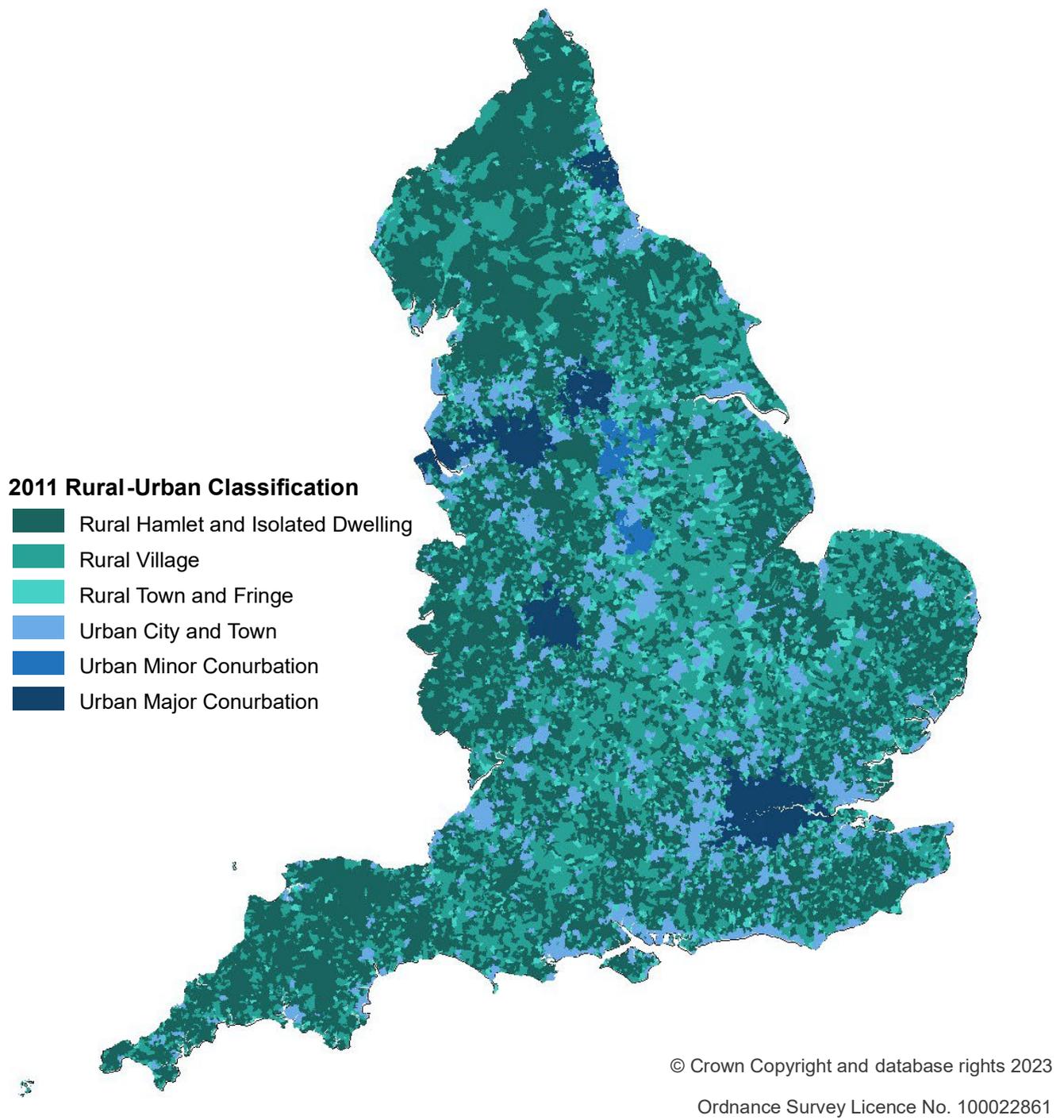


A map showing the distribution of the Rural and Urban Census Output Areas is shown in Figure X-2.

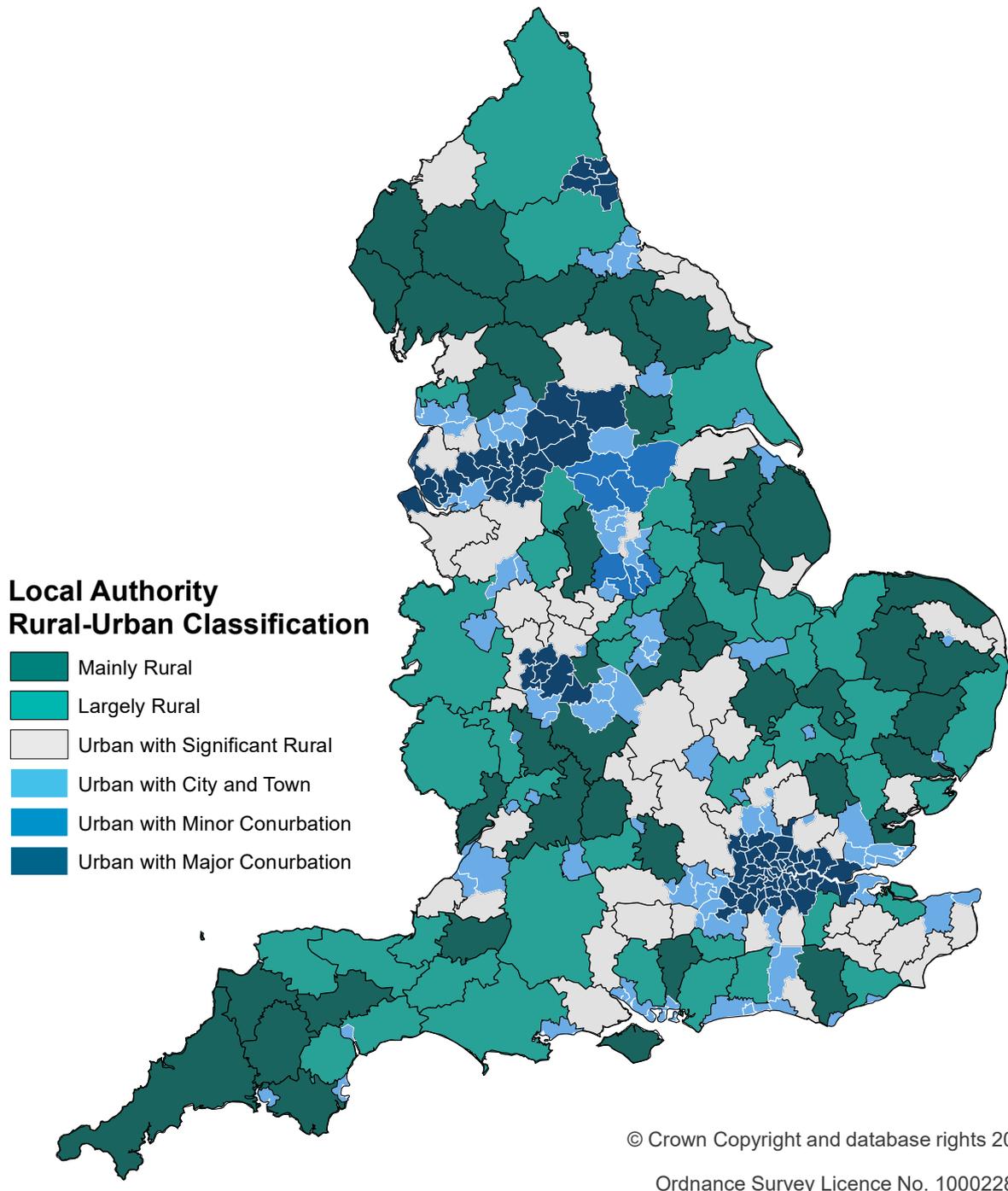
When data are not available at a small geographical scale, it may be possible to apply the Rural-Urban Local Authority Classification or a similar classification for other larger geographies. This classification categorises districts and unitary authorities on a six-point scale from Rural to Urban. It is underpinned by Rural and Urban populations as defined by the Census Output Area Classification. A map of the geographical distribution of the Rural and Urban Local Authorities is shown in Figure X-3.

However, the Local Authority Classification also considers some Urban areas as Hub Towns (with populations of between 10,000 and 30,000). These Hub Towns have met statistical criteria (based on dwelling and business premise densities) to be considered hubs for services and businesses for a wider rural hinterland and their populations are therefore classified as effectively Rural for the purposes of determining the classification of the authority.

Figure X-2: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Census Output Areas in England

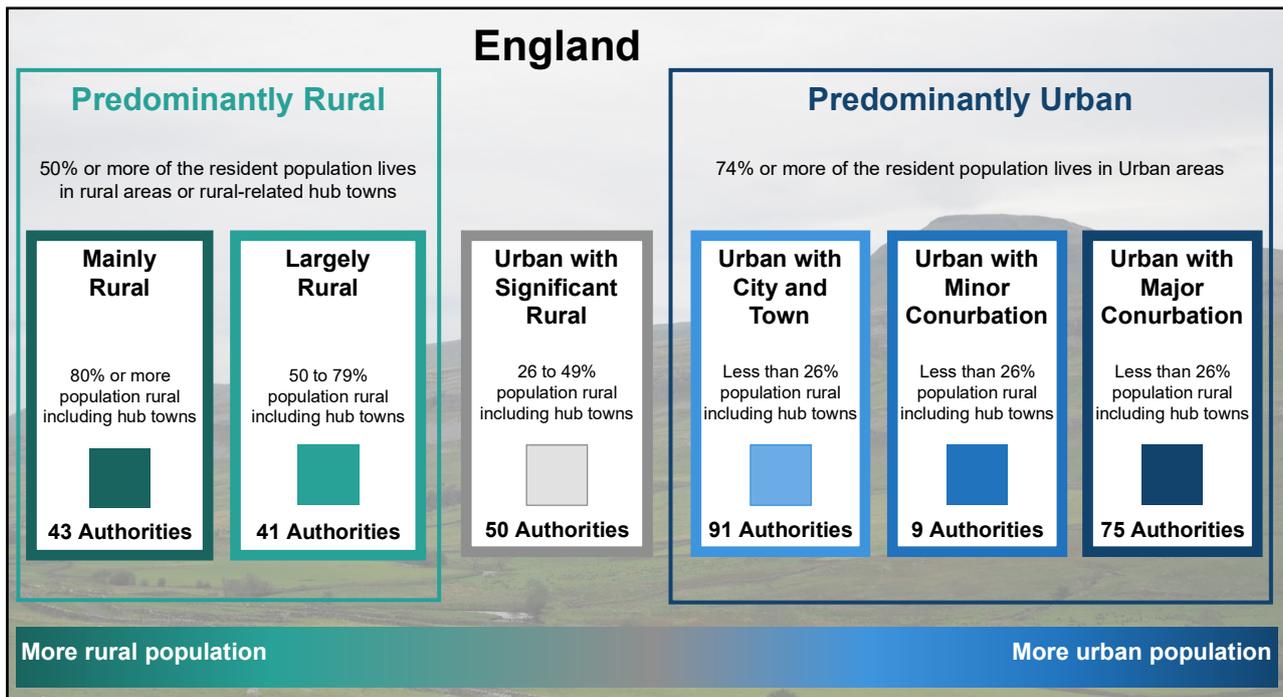


**Figure X-3: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities in England**



Under the classification, which is shown in Figure X-4, each Local Authority is assigned to one of six categories on the basis of the percentage of the total resident population accounted for by the combined Rural and Hub Town components of its population and its 'conurbation context'. The Local Authority Classification categories are frequently aggregated to 'Predominantly Rural', 'Urban with Significant Rural' and 'Predominantly Urban' as shown on Figure X-4.

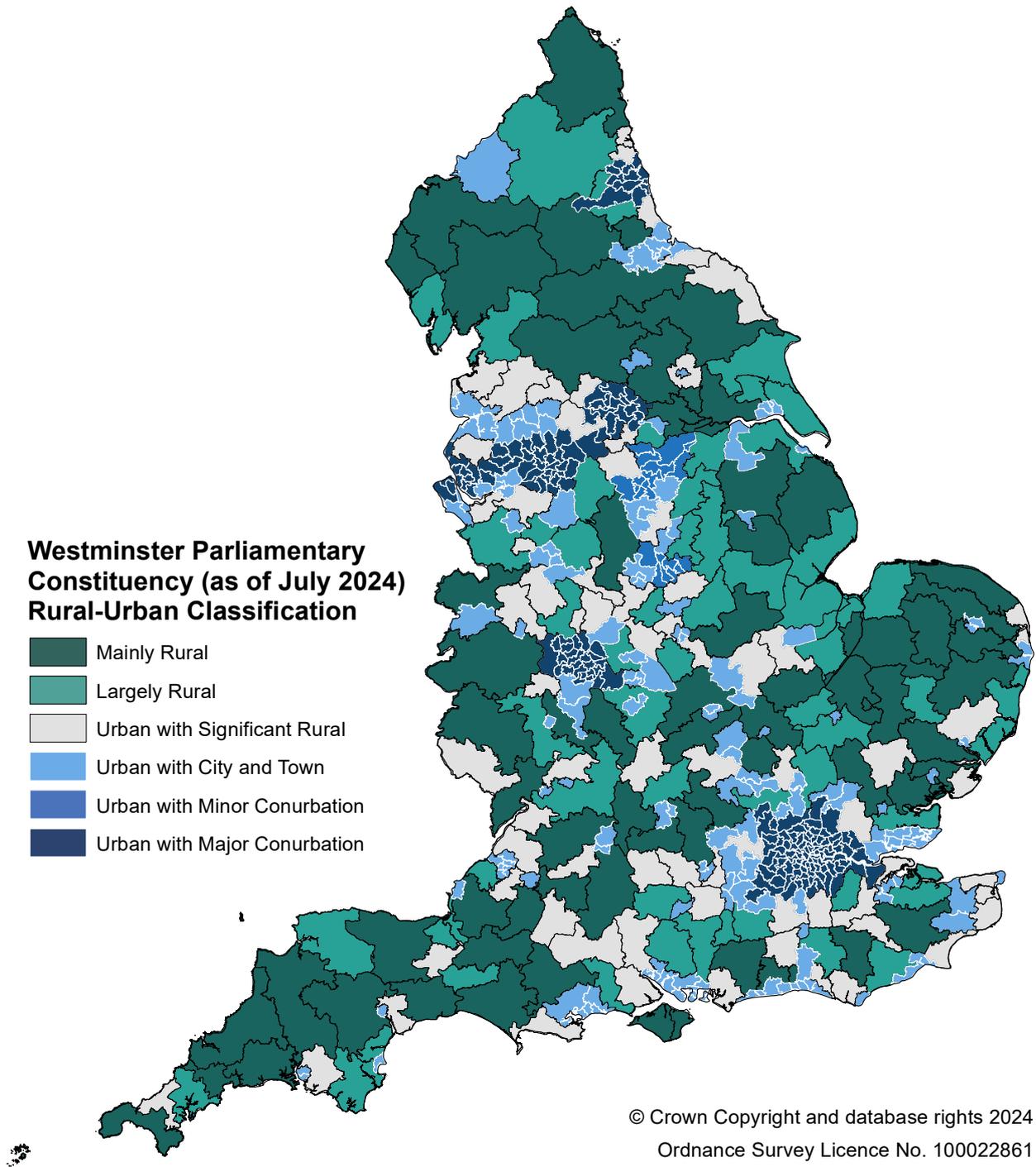
**Figure X-4: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities in England**



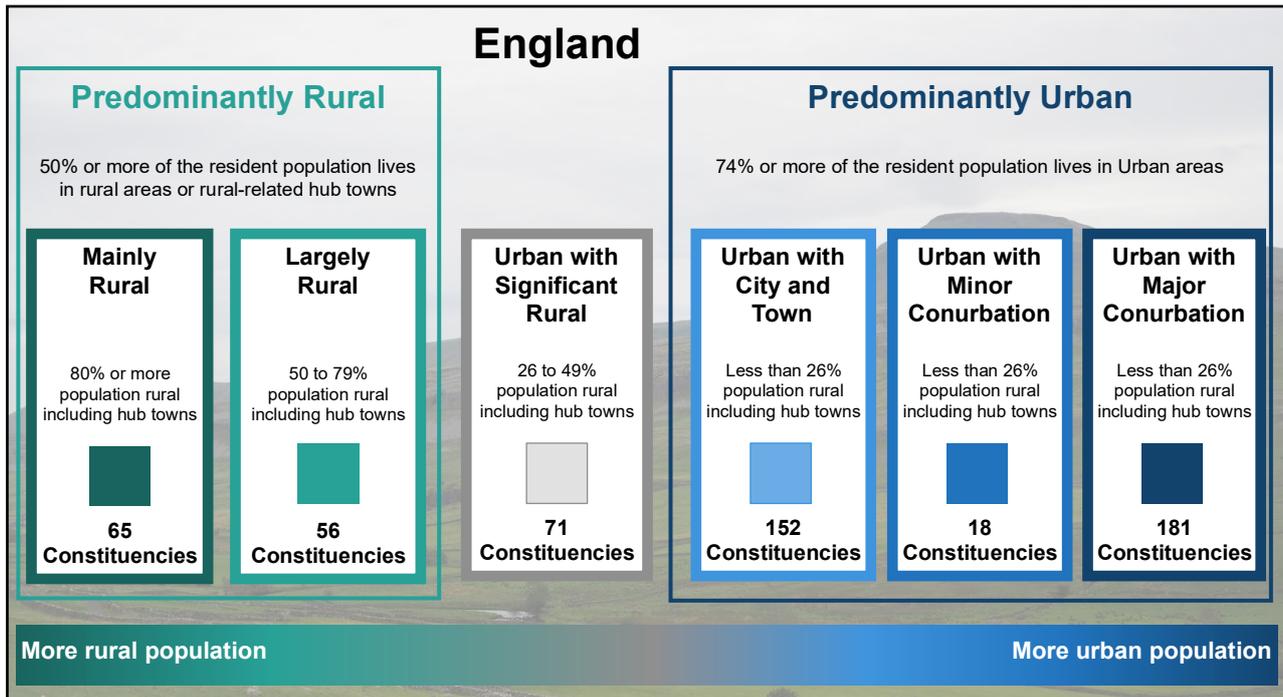
The Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification is based on populations and settlement patterns, not on how much countryside there is. Authorities classified as Urban may have wide areas of countryside and may have sizeable Rural populations. The classification has been made according to the proportions of the population residing in Urban settlements and outside Urban settlements. More information on the classifications can be found at: [The Rural-Urban Definition](#).

A similar approach to that for Local Authorities was used to create a classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies. Under this classification, which is shown in Figure X-5, each Parliamentary Constituency is assigned to one of six categories on the basis of the percentage of the total resident population accounted for by the combined Rural and Hub Town components of its population and its 'conurbation context'. A map of the geographical distribution of the Rural and Urban Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies is shown in Figure X-5. This map depicts a classification for the new rebalanced Parliamentary Constituencies that were introduced for 2024 General Election. The Parliamentary Constituency Classification categories are frequently aggregated to 'Predominantly Rural', 'Urban with Significant Rural' and 'Predominantly Urban' as shown on Figure X-6.

**Figure X-5: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England**



**Figure X-6: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England**



## Defining Rural areas explanatory notes

- **Note 1:** Defining Super Output Areas and Wards

*Census Output Areas* (OAs) were created for publication of the results of the recent Censuses. They cover around 125 households. In practice few datasets are produced at OA level. However, other larger geographies can be built up from OAs. These include *Lower Layer Super Output Areas* (LSOAs) which typically contain 5 OAs, so contain approximately 625 households or a population of approximately 1,500 and a minimum 1,000. Their Rural-Urban Classification is based on the majority category of OAs they contain. Some other geographies, for example postcodes are classified based on the location of their central point and the classification of respective OA.

- **Note 2:** Accessibility of Figure X-2

We accept that this map might not be accessible for all users, but it is difficult to develop a map containing six colours that will provide enough contrast between all colours to enable every user to see them, especially when the shaded areas are small. Separate maps (showing only three levels of shading) for Rural and Urban areas are available on request from: [rural.statistics@defra.gov.uk](mailto:rural.statistics@defra.gov.uk)

## Appendix 3: Analysis of small and medium enterprises from the Longitudinal Small Business Survey

The Longitudinal Small Business Survey (LSBS) was commissioned by the Department for Business and Trade (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), the Governments in Scotland and Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Over 13,400 SMEs were interviewed in England in 2015, including over 3,500 (26.5%) in Rural areas (Table F-2). The Rural Enterprise UK team at Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy and Business School undertook additional Rural-Urban analysis of the data and some of their findings are presented below.

Comparisons between statistics on Rural and Urban businesses can be difficult to interpret and in particular it is difficult to identify whether any differences reflect variations in the profile of Urban and Rural economies in terms of business sectors, ages and sizes or factors related to their location. The analysis attempts to match similar Rural and Urban businesses to take account of this where practicable.

**Table XX-1: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises with percentage by size and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015** ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
With no employees - number	2,687	6,361	<b>9,048</b>
With no employees - %	73.3	77.7	<b>76.3</b>
With 1 to 9 employees - number	828	1,480	<b>2,308</b>
With 1 to 9 employees - %	22.6	18.1	<b>19.5</b>
With 10 to 49 employees - number	133	300	<b>433</b>
With 10 to 49 employees - %	3.6	3.7	<b>3.7</b>
With 50 to 249 employees - number	19	49	<b>68</b>
With 50 to 249 employees - %	0.5	0.6	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Total number of employees</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The proportion of businesses with no employees is considerably higher for both Rural (73.3%) and Urban areas (77.7%) in the LSBS sample compared with the proportions represented as registered businesses with no employees (19.8% and 9.3% respectively).

However, this is consistent with Business population estimates suggesting that enterprises with no employees, whether registered or unregistered, account for around 76% of enterprises in England.

The survey suggests that enterprises with no employees are proportionately fewer in Rural areas (73.3%) compared with Urban areas (77.7%), but that enterprises with 1-9 employees are proportionately higher in Rural areas (22.6%) compared with Urban areas (18.1%).

**Table XX-2: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises, with percentage, by broad sector and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
Production and construction - number	1,085	2,095	<b>3,180</b>
Production and construction - %	29.6	25.6	<b>26.8</b>
Transport, retail and food, accommodation - number	775	1,451	<b>2,226</b>
Transport, retail and food, accommodation - %	21.1	17.7	<b>18.8</b>
Business services - number	1,099	2,660	<b>3,759</b>
Business services - %	30	32.5	<b>31.7</b>
Other services - number	708	1,984	<b>2,692</b>
Other services - %	19.3	24.2	<b>22.7</b>
<b>Total - number</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In the survey Rural enterprises were more likely to be in production and construction sectors, and transport, retail and food, and accommodation sectors, while Urban enterprises were slightly more likely to be providing business and other services.

**Table XX-3: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises, with percentage, by level of turnover and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
Less than £82,000 - number	2,011	5,279	<b>7,290</b>
Less than £82,000 - %	54.8	64.5	<b>61.5</b>
More than £82,000 - number	1,192	1,938	<b>3,130</b>
More than £82,000 - %	32.5	23.7	<b>26.4</b>
Don't know / refused - number	464	973	<b>1,437</b>
Don't know / refused - %	12.7	11.9	<b>12.1</b>
<b>Total - number</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table XX-4: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises, with percentage, by whether or not they were profitable and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
Yes - number	2,907	6,258	<b>9,165</b>
Yes - %	79.3	76.4	<b>77.3</b>
No - number	536	1,461	<b>1,997</b>
No - %	14.6	17.8	<b>16.8</b>
Don't know / refused - number	224	471	<b>695</b>
Don't know / refused - %	6.1	5.8	<b>5.9</b>
<b>Total - number</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The survey results would initially suggest that Rural enterprises were more likely to have an annual turnover of more than £82,000 than Urban enterprises and were more likely to report a profit.

However, this is in part likely to reflect differences in the characteristics of businesses in Rural and Urban areas. When similar businesses are compared analysis shows that Rural enterprises were likely to have similar levels of turnover to their Urban counterparts, though they were still more likely to report a profit.

The study speculates that Rural enterprises could be more likely to be profitable owing to a number of factors including lower wage levels, a higher proportion of home-based enterprises, lower rents/rates, and less local competition.

**Table XX-5: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises by age and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
0 to 5 years - number	410	1,281	<b>1,691</b>
0 to 5 years - %	11.2	15.6	<b>14.3</b>
6 to 10 years - number	663	1,527	<b>2,190</b>
6 to 10 years - %	18.1	18.6	<b>18.5</b>
11 to 20 years - number	857	1,977	<b>2,834</b>
11 to 20 years - %	23.4	24.1	<b>23.9</b>
More than 20 years - number	1,732	3,374	<b>5,106</b>
More than 20 years - %	47.2	41.2	<b>43.1</b>
Don't know - number	6	31	<b>37</b>
Don't know - %	0.2	0.4	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Total - number</b>	<b>3,668</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,858</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table XX-6: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises by whether or not family-owned and Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Data type (number or %)	Rural	Urban	Total
Yes - number	3,185	7,036	<b>10,221</b>
Yes - %	86.9	85.9	<b>86.2</b>
No - number	464	1,122	<b>1,586</b>
No - %	12.7	13.7	<b>13.4</b>
Don't know / refused - number	18	32	<b>50</b>
Don't know / refused - %	0.5	0.4	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total - number</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The surveyed Rural enterprises were more likely than Urban enterprises to be more than 20 years old.

The majority of enterprises were family owned but there was no significant difference between Rural and Urban enterprises. 86.9% of Rural enterprises were family owned.

**Table XX-7: LSBS - Number of responses from small and medium enterprises by major obstacles to businesses in general at the England level, by Rural-Urban Classification, England excluding London, 2015 ([Note XX-1](#) and [Note XX-2](#))**

Type of obstacle to business	Rural	Urban	Total
Competition in the market - number	1,476	3,788	<b>5,264</b>
Competition in the market - %	40.3	46.3	<b>44.4</b>
Regulations / red tape – number	1,671	2,841	<b>4,512</b>
Regulations / red tape - %	45.6	34.7	<b>38.1</b>
Taxation, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, Business rates – number	1,157	2,297	<b>3,454</b>
Taxation, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, Business rates - %	31.6	28.0	<b>29.1</b>
Late payment – number	1,037	2,239	<b>3,276</b>
Late payment - %	28.3	27.3	<b>27.6</b>
Staff recruitment and skills – number	718	1,348	<b>2,066</b>
Staff recruitment and skills - %	19.6	16.5	<b>17.4</b>
Obtaining finance – number	663	1,375	<b>2,038</b>
Obtaining finance - %	18.1	16.8	<b>17.2</b>
Availability / cost of suitable premises – number	534	1,295	<b>1,829</b>
Availability / cost of suitable premises - %	14.6	15.8	<b>15.4</b>
Workplace pensions – number	409	898	<b>1,307</b>
Workplace pensions - %	11.2	11.0	<b>11.0</b>
Any other major issues or obstacles – number	479	943	<b>1,422</b>
Any other major issues or obstacles - %	13.1	11.5	<b>12.0</b>
None of these – number	594	1,634	<b>2,228</b>
None of these - %	16.2	20.0	<b>18.8</b>
<b>Total – number</b>	<b>3,667</b>	<b>8,190</b>	<b>11,857</b>
<b>Total - %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When asked to identify major obstacles to businesses, Rural enterprises were more likely than Urban enterprises to cite 'Regulations / red tape', 'Taxation, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, Business rates', and 'Staff recruitment and skills'.

The above is a selection of findings from the Newcastle University study. For more details and analysis refer to the full study report ([Note XX-2](#)).

### Notes

- In Table XX-7 enterprises could give responses to multiple options.

## Analysis of small and medium enterprises from the Longitudinal Small Business Survey explanatory notes

- **Note XX-1**

On the **Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR)**, the enterprise is the statistical unit that most closely equates to a business. It holds aggregated information gathered from administrative and statistical sources within that enterprise to give an overall picture of what is going on in the business. An enterprise carries out one or more activities at one or more locations. An enterprise may be a sole legal unit. Turnover relates to income received by a business from the 'sale of goods and or services charged to third parties'. The IDBR does not include businesses whose turnover is below the tax threshold.

Further information:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/paidservices/interdepartmentalbusinessregisteridbrw>

- **Note XX-2**

Sources:

- ONS, Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR), 2015/16
- **Small Business Survey reports:** [www.gov.uk/government/collections/small-business-survey-reports](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/small-business-survey-reports)
- **Business Population Estimates:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/business-population-estimates>
- Phillipson J, Gorton M, Maioli S, Newbery R, Tiwasing P, Turner R. (2017) **Small Rural firms in English regions: analysis and key findings from the UK Longitudinal Small Business Survey, 2015**. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University Centre for Rural Economy and Business School, September 2017 update: [research.ncl.ac.uk/Ruralenterpriseuk/](http://research.ncl.ac.uk/Ruralenterpriseuk/)