

OfS postcode lookup tool

Change notes

This data release was published in September 2018.

It supersedes the previous postcode lookup tool published in November 2017.

1. **CORRECTION to POLAR4:** An error was found in the calculation of population estimates of young people in all years used in the definition of POLAR4 in Northern Ireland. This has affected the participation rates in 42 Northern Ireland Super Output Areas (NI SOA), resulting in a decrease in the estimated young participation from those areas. This has subsequently changed the quintile allocation of 14 areas - 12 SOAs in Northern Ireland, and 2 Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs) in England. This has affected postcodes in the following areas:

MSOA	Previous quintile	New quintile
95YY04W1	5	4
95YY14S1	5	4
95YY15S1	5	4
95YY16W1	5	4
95ZZ02W1	4	3
95ZZ06W1*	4	3
95ZZ07W1	4	3
95ZZ09W1*	4	3
95ZZ10W1	5	4
95ZZ13W1	3	2
95ZZ14S1	3	2
95ZZ15W1	4	3
E02000059	4	5
E02006794	3	4

* - These SOAs contain only a single postcode that has changed quintile, probably due to methodology changes in how postcodes are assigned to other geographies in the NSPD.

This results in a change of quintile for 1,219 postcodes in these areas compared with the previous iteration of this postcode lookup tool.

2. Update from (May 2016) ONSPD to (Nov 2017) ONSPD. New postcodes have been added, but where existing postcodes have changed, previously published information has been prioritised. The ONS Postcode Directory lists all postcodes in the UK, and links them to higher geographies. For more information see <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/postcodeproducts>.
3. The postcode lookup is now available as both a single csv and as a MS Excel file (with multiple tabs) for accessibility; both files contain the same information, and both reflect the postcode lookup tool on the OfS website (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/postcode-search/>)
4. Postcodes that had a "reason removed" under POLAR3, but not under Gaps, have now had that reason applied to Gaps.

5. Approximately 370,000 postcodes which had Gaps quintiles in the previous published lookup have now had Gaps information removed, as they now have a "Gaps reason removed" value. Most of these postcodes are non-geographic large users, hence the effect on analyses of students should be minimal.
6. NCOP target wards have been recalculated from the combination of Gaps (quintile 1 or 2) and POLAR3 (quintile 1) information. Approximately 1600 additional postcodes have NCOP flags; approximately 44,000 postcodes have had NCOP flags removed. The latter are a subset of the postcodes which have had their Gaps information removed, and hence are mostly non-geographic large user postcodes. Again, the impact on analyses of students should be minimal.

Please note that the assignment of POLAR quintiles, Gaps quintiles and NCOP areas is made at the following geographies:

- POLAR4 quintiles: MSOA 2011 (England and Wales), SOA 2011 (Northern Ireland) and Intermediate Zone 2001 (Scotland)
- POLAR3 quintiles: census area statistics ward 2001 (CAS ward)
- Gaps quintiles census area statistics ward 2001 (CAS ward)
- NCOP areas: census area statistics ward 2001 (CAS ward)

The postcode lookup tool is the OfS' application of the postcode directory to the above areas, for convenience and accessibility, and is therefore dependent on the version of the postcode directory used and its methodology.

Further information:

Gaps: analysis carried out by HEFCE to identify areas where participation in higher education is higher or lower than expected taking into account factors such as ethnicity and key stage 4 attainment. See <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/gaps/>.

Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA): A statistical geography used in the calculation of POLAR4. See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/censusgeography#super-output-area-soa>.

Super Output Area (SOA): A statistical geography used in the calculation of POLAR4 that relates to areas in Northern Ireland. See

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/support/geography/northern-ireland-super-output-areas>

NCOP: National Collaborative Outreach Program. Program to increase participation in higher education focussed on areas identified as having lower than expected participation (see <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-ncop/>).

ONSPD: Office for National Statistics Postcode Directory (see <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/postcodeproducts>).

POLAR3: Area-based measure of young participation in higher education, based on participation by the age of 19 of five young cohorts who were aged 18 at the start of the academic years 2005-06 to 2009-10. See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/polar3/>.

POLAR4: Latest iteration of the POLAR measure, based on participation by the age of 19 of five young cohorts who were aged 18 at the start of the academic years 2009-10 to 2013-14. See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/>.