

OfS postcode lookup for area-based measures of young participation

1. We published this data release in September 2019. It supersedes the previous postcode lookup tool published in October 2018.
2. The 2019 data release uses updated ONS Postcode Directory (ONSPD) and ONS Postcode Lookup (ONSPL) data from May 2019. The ONSPD and ONSPL 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. This note describes information that is included in the postcode lookup data downloads (CSV and Excel format). The information displayed in the interactive postcode search tool is a subset of this information. Annex A shows which information is in the data file and which is in the postcode search.

Summary of changes

4. We have added 24,927 new postcodes to the lookup.
5. We have removed 365,209 postcodes with a termination date prior to January 2000 from the lookup. Postcodes that have subsequently been reused remain in the postcode lookup.
6. We have removed 60,999 postcodes for addresses in Northern Ireland for licensing reasons.
7. All of the area-based measures are assigned to a larger geographical area than postcode: some are assigned to areas known as middle-layer super output areas (MSOAs) and others are assigned to areas known as census area statistics wards (CAS wards). All postcodes within those areas have the same value of the area-based measure, for example all postcodes within the same MSOA will have the same POLAR4 (participation of local areas) quintile. In this data release we have shown the MSOA and CAS Ward that each postcode is assigned to.
8. We have updated the format of the postcode search tool to show the postcode on a map of the local area and within the boundary of all postcodes in the same MSOA or CAS ward.
9. We have added a new measure of young participation by small geographical areas, TUNDRA (tracking of underrepresented areas), to the lookup.
10. The ONS assignment of postcodes to MSOAs and CAS Wards sometimes changes between versions of the ONSPD and ONSPL despite the postcode not being reused. In these cases, we have reported the original assignment so that we minimise changes to the area-based measures compared to earlier publications. If the assignment to MSOA or CAS Ward in the lookup differs from the ONS May 2019 assignment we have flagged this up in the data file.
11. Sometimes postcodes in the lookup are not assigned any area-based measures. In these cases a 'reason removed' code is displayed. In this release, we have expanded the reasons removed to include postcodes that have been reused, and reported separate reason removed codes for Gaps, and for TUNDRA.

12. We have introduced a postcode status code to the data file that describes if the postcode is new in this release, has been reused, or has moved areas.

Update to POLAR4

13. POLAR4 quintiles are assigned to small geographical areas called middle-layer super output areas (MSOAs) in England and Wales, intermediate zones in Scotland and super output areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland, but we have referred to all these as MSOAs in this document. The assignment of POLAR4 quintile to MSOA remains unchanged.
14. The first POLAR4 postcode lookup was created from the 2016 ONSPL, so we have considered changes between the 2016 and 2017 versions, and between the 2017 and 2019 versions.
15. We identified a number of postcodes as having been reused, if they had been terminated and then reintroduced again at a later date. However, if a postcode was terminated before January 2000, and only reused once, we have treated it as new for that use. If the reuse of a previously terminated postcode means that the postcode now belongs to an MSOA that is assigned to a different POLAR4 quintile, then no quintile is reported for that postcode. There are 427 such postcodes in the lookup. The reused postcodes were previously distributed across POLAR4 quintile 1 to quintile 5 as follows: 15 per cent, 24 per cent, 20 per cent, 25 per cent, and 16 per cent.
16. The reason for the removal of POLAR information is shown in the postcode lookup as “reason removed POLAR” and is the same one that is used for POLAR3 and Adult HE quintiles. For reasons described below (see Table 1), only the values “A”, “B”, “C”, “R”, “Rm” are valid reason codes for POLAR4.

Update to POLAR3 and Adult HE

17. Similarly to POLAR4, we have updated POLAR3 and Adult HE quintiles to reflect the May 2019 update to the ONSPD. However, POLAR3 and Adult HE quintiles are assigned to census area statistics wards (CAS wards), unlike POLAR4 which is assigned to MSOAs.
18. The first POLAR3 postcode lookup was created using the 2012 postcode directory, and then updated in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. We have compared changes between these six postcode directories.
19. For both POLAR3 and Adult HE, we have not reported a quintile for reused postcodes where a change in CAS ward has resulted in a change to its POLAR3 or Adult HE quintile. There are 1,471 such postcodes in the lookup. These reused postcodes were distributed between quintiles 1 to 5 as follows: 15 per cent, 21 per cent, 21 per cent, 24 per cent and 19 per cent (POLAR3) and 12.5 per cent, 21 per cent, 22 per cent, 24.5 per cent and 20 per cent (Adult HE).
20. Once again, the reason removed is displayed as “reason removed POLAR” in the postcode lookup but only the values “A”, “B”, “C”, “R”, “Rc” apply to POLAR3 and Adult HE quintiles. Table 1 shows a description of the different reason removed codes. We have identified 288 postcodes that have moved both MSOAs and CAS wards.

Table 1: Reason removed codes for POLAR4, POLAR3 and Adult HE measures

Value	Description
A	unsafe for measurement
B	non-geographic postcode
C	no link to census geography
R	reused postcode and change of CAS wards and MSOAs and POLAR4/POLAR3/Adult HE quintile change
Rc	reused postcode and change of CAS wards and POLAR3/Adult HE quintile change
Rm	reused postcode and change of MSOAs and POLAR4 quintile change

Update to Gaps quintiles

21. The participation Gaps analysis classifies local areas (CAS wards) based on the difference between observed higher education participation and what might be expected based on GCSE attainment. The two published Gaps quintiles are Gaps GCSE attainment and Gaps GCSE attainment with ethnicity (also taking into account ethnicity when considering expected participation). However, unlike POLAR3 and Adult HE, Gaps quintiles were originally assigned to 2014 ONSPD data.
22. A small subset of postcodes have moved CAS ward between different postcode directories and have therefore changed their Gaps quintiles.
23. We have assigned postcodes that have been identified as reused “R” for their Gaps quintiles. The reason removed is displayed as “reason removed Gaps”. Table 2 shows a description of the different reason removed codes.

Table 2: Reason removed codes for Gaps measures

Value	Description
A	unsafe for measurement
B	non-geographic postcode
C	no link to census geography
U	outside England
R	reused postcode and change of CAS wards
N	no population data available

24. Gaps quintiles correction: we discovered that the Gaps GCSE and Gaps GCSE ethnicity quintiles were published in reverse order in 2018. We have corrected this in the current publication. This would have no impact on the identification of NCOP wards.

TUNDRA quintiles

25. We have added a new area-based measure, TUNDRA (tracking underrepresented areas), to the postcode lookup. TUNDRA is an experimental participation measure, assigned to MSOAs in England. More information about TUNDRA can be on our webpage about the data, available at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-the-data/. As TUNDRA quintiles are based on ONSPL May 2019 data we have not classified any postcodes as reused. We have not assigned TUNDRA quintiles to 27 English MSOAs that

have fewer than 50 eligible pupils living in the area. These MSOAs have a flag “reason removed TUNDRA”=“M”. As with POLAR4, POLAR3, Adult HE and Gaps, we have assigned a value of “R” to all postcodes that have been removed from statistics for any reason. Table 3 shows a description of the different reason removed codes.

Table 3: Reason removed codes for TUNDRA

Value	Description
U	outside England
M	fewer than 50 eligible pupils living in the MSOA
A	unsafe for measurement
B	non-geographic postcode
C	no link to census geography

NCOP areas

26. The National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) includes a strand of outreach activity targeted at wards in England that have low levels of young participation and where participation is lower than expected based on key stage 4 (GCSE level) attainment. NCOP target wards are defined as areas which are POLAR3 quintile 1 and Gaps (accounting for key stage 4 attainment only) quintiles 1 and 2, or POLAR3 quintile 1 and Gaps (accounting for key stage 4 attainment and ethnicity) quintiles 1 and 2. There are 997 target wards.

27. We have classified postcodes as belonging to NCOP wards from the combination of new Gaps and POLAR3 information. There are 2853 additional postcodes that now have NCOP flags and 418 postcodes that have had NCOP flags removed. While the majority of new NCOP postcodes were newly introduced in 2019, 223 postcodes were previously assigned to a different CAS ward. This affected their Gaps quintile and NCOP status. The majority (173) of the removed “NCOP” postcodes were reused and we have assigned them an “R” value for their NCOP status. Furthermore, 245 postcodes were previously assigned to the wrong CAS ward and consequently given an NCOP status incorrectly – these are now marked as “1*” to signify that we have previously assigned them as NCOP areas.

MSOA and CAS wards

28. In this release of the postcode lookup we have included the MSOA and CAS ward that the postcode is assigned to. The ONS postcode products provide a lookup from postcode to MSOA and CAS ward. Over time this might have changed, either because housing within the postcode changes or because the method used by ONS to assign postcodes to areas has been improved. We have prioritised consistency with earlier versions of the postcode lookup, so that if the postcode has not been reused we continue to assign the postcode to the same area.

29. We have included the MSOA and CAS ward in the post code lookup to show how we have assigned the area-based measures. In the data files (csv and Excel format) we have also included two variables MSOA status and CAS ward status that indicate whether these MSOAs and CAS wards are the same as one would find on the most recent (May 2019) ONSPL and ONSPD files. CAS wards are obtained from the ONSPD file, and MSOAs from the ONSPL file.

Postcode status

30. An indicator of the history of the postcode, postcode status describes whether a postcode has been:

- newly introduced and if so, when
- reused and if so when, and whether that has resulted in a change of MSOA, CAS ward or both
- removed from the ONSPD/ONSPL.

31. Most postcodes have seen no changes and fall in the "Not New" category.

Annex A: Variables available in postcode look-up data file and tool

Field in postcode lookup data file	Description	Present in postcode lookup tool
Postcode	Unique identifier for the dataset	Yes
Country	The country to which each postcode is assigned	No
MSOA	The relevant middle-layer super output area (MSOA) in England and Wales or intermediate zone in Scotland that a postcode has been assigned to.	Yes
CAS ward	The relevant UK Census Area Statistics ward (CAS ward) that a postcode has been assigned to	Yes
POLAR4 quintile	The POLAR4 quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
POLAR3 quintile	The POLAR3 quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
Adult HE quintile	The Adult HE quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
Reason removed POLAR	A reason removed flag that applies to POLAR4, POLAR3 and Adult HE area-based participation measures	Yes
TUNDRA quintile	The Tundra quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
Reason removed TUNDRA	A reason removed flag that applies to the Tundra measure	Yes
Gaps GCSE quintile	The Gaps GCSE quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
Gaps GCSE Ethnicity quintile	The Gaps GCSE Ethnicity quintile associated with the postcode	Yes
Reason removed Gaps	A reason removed flag that applies to Gaps GCSE and Gaps GCSE Ethnicity area-based participation measures.	Yes
NCOP target ward	Indicates whether a postcode belongs to an NCOP ward	Yes
Postcode status	A summary variable that details if a postcode was newly introduced and when, if and when it was reused or removed	No
MSOA status	Details whether the MSOA linked to the postcode and used for quintile assignments will match the information for that postcode on the May 2019 ONSPD file or not	No
CAS ward status	Details whether the CAS ward linked to the postcode and used for quintile assignments will match the information for that postcode on the May 2019 ONSPD file or not	No