

UK Business Counts 2024

The UK Business Counts dataset was released by the Office for National Statistics on 17 October 2024. Figures for 2025 will be released in Autumn 2025.

NOTE: In this bulletin the term Kent refers to the Kent County Council area and excludes Medway.

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[Kent Facts & Figures](#)

The UK Business Counts data is published annually by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is based on output from the VAT and PAYE administrative systems.

The information provided by the UK Business dataset gives a snapshot of businesses, also known as enterprises, and is broken down by size band, industry, turnover, and age of business.

Summary

- In March 2024 there were 64,575 enterprises in Kent.
- The highest proportion of enterprises in Kent (18.3%) are within the construction sector, significantly higher than the national proportion of 13.9%.
- Most enterprises in Kent (89.9%) are micro enterprises (with 0-9 employees).
- Most enterprises in Kent (99.4%) are classed as companies which operate within the private sector.
- 66.8% of enterprises in Kent reported a turnover of more than £100k in the year 2023/24 (Nationally 66.2%).

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Introduction

The UK Business data is produced from a snapshot of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) - usually taken during March - and provides the basis for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to conduct surveys of businesses.

The main administrative sources for the IDBR are VAT (Value Added Tax) trader and PAYE (Pay As You Earn) employer information passed to the ONS by HM Revenue & Customs under the Value Added Tax Act 1994 for VAT traders and the Finance Act 1969 for PAYE employers; details of incorporated businesses are also passed to the ONS by Companies House. The ONS Survey data and survey information from the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Investment – Northern Ireland (DETINI) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) farms register provide auxiliary information. Construction statistics formerly produced by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills are now produced by the ONS.

The IDBR combines the information from the three administrative sources with this survey data in a statistical register comprising over two million enterprises. These comprehensive administrative sources combined with the survey data contribute to the coverage on the IDBR, which is one of its main strengths, representing nearly 99 percent of UK economic activity.

The latest data is published for 2024 and is based upon the 2007 revision to the Standard Industrial Classification UKSIC (2007). Detailed information about the types of industry which make up each of the industrial sectors is available from the Office for National Statistics in their [UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities](#) publication.

This bulletin looks at the main tables available from the UK Business data, which relate to VAT/PAYE enterprises.

An additional dataset from the ONS is the Business Demography dataset. This is also based on VAT and PAYE data, but this information measures any activity during the year, so leads to slightly higher counts of businesses. It provides information on business births, deaths, and survival rates.

Information on this dataset can be found in the [“Business births, deaths and survival rates”](#) bulletin.

Analysis

Enterprises in Kent

There were 64,575 enterprises in Kent as of March 2024 up 0.5% on the previous year. Great Britain and the South East region saw a slight reduction in the number of enterprises (-0.1%).

When compared with 2010 the number of enterprises in Kent has grown by 29.6%, a larger increase than was seen in the South East region (+22.4%) but lower than the national growth of 30.2%.

Maidstone district had the highest number of enterprises (7,930) in 2024 but saw the biggest number reduction over the previous year (-35 enterprises, -0.4%).

While all Kent districts have seen an increase in the number of enterprises since 2010, four Kent districts saw the numbers fall over the last year. Of those that saw an increase over the last year, Ashford saw the biggest number increase (+115, +1.8%) and Dover saw the biggest percentage increase (+2.8%, +100 enterprises).

Table 1: VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises

2024	Number of enterprises	Change 2010-2024	% change 2010-2024	Change 2023-2024	% change 2023-2024
Ashford	6,490	1,455	28.9%	115	1.8%
Canterbury	5,630	1,210	27.4%	10	0.2%
Dartford	4,600	1,770	62.5%	50	1.1%
Dover	3,705	905	32.3%	100	2.8%
Folkestone & Hythe	3,735	625	20.1%	-30	-0.8%
Gravesham	4,040	1,410	53.6%	-20	-0.5%
Maidstone	7,930	1,795	29.3%	-35	-0.4%
Sevenoaks	6,560	860	15.1%	-30	-0.5%
Swale	5,170	1,210	30.6%	85	1.7%
Thanet	4,525	1,405	45.0%	80	1.8%
Tonbridge & Malling	6,060	1,440	31.2%	20	0.3%
Tunbridge Wells	6,130	665	12.2%	0	0.0%
Kent	64,575	14,755	29.6%	345	0.5%
Medway	8,915	2,680	43.0%	100	1.1%
Kent + Medway	73,485	17,430	31.1%	440	0.6%
South East	404,360	73,985	22.4%	-480	-0.1%
Great Britain	2,645,840	613,995	30.2%	-2,820	-0.1%

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

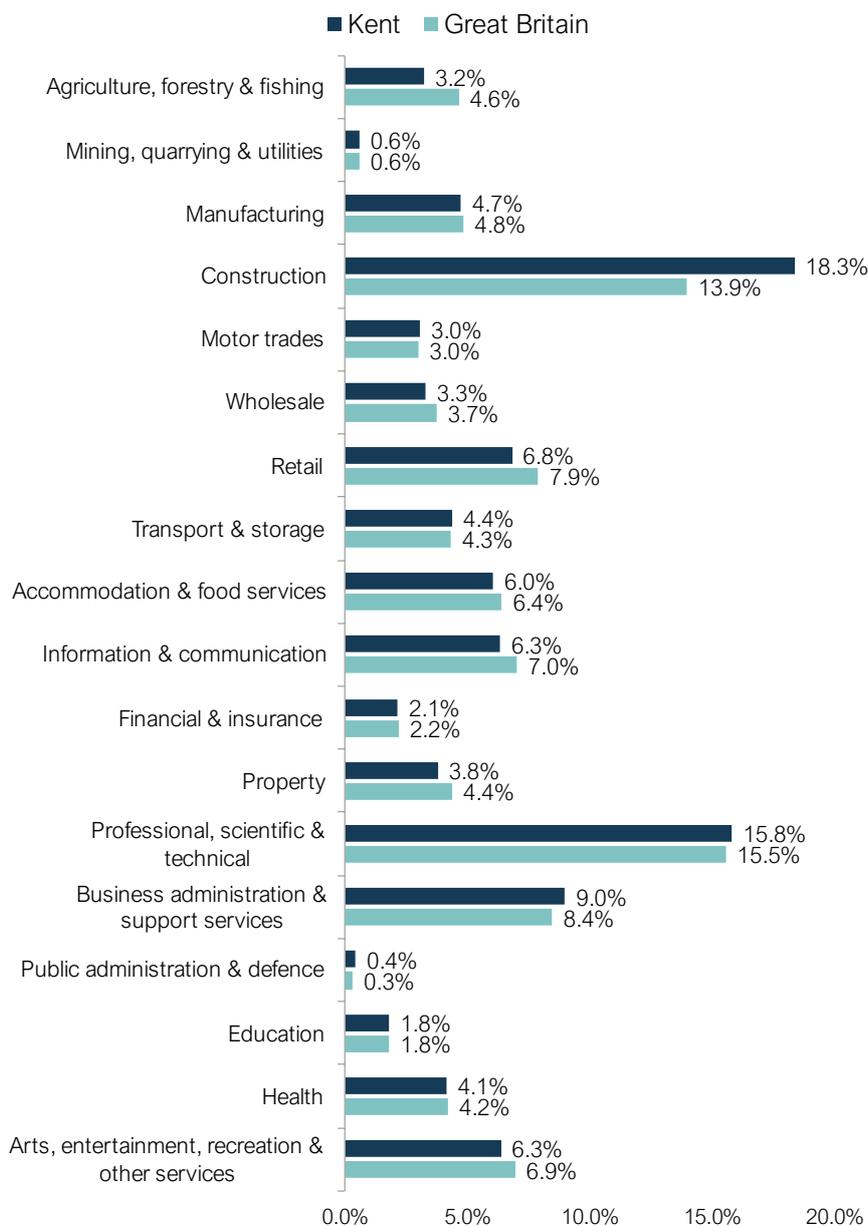
Enterprises by Industry

The UK Business data shows us the number of enterprises by broad industrial group.

Overall, Kent has a similar profile to Great Britain although does show a noticeably higher proportion of enterprises in the Construction Industry and lower proportions in Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and Retail industries.

Chart 1: Enterprises by Industry

Percentage of Enterprises by Industry, 2024



Source: ONS UK Business Counts
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Table 2: Number of Vat And/or PAYE Based Enterprises in Kent districts in 2024 by Broad Industrial Group

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

2024	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Mining, quarrying & utilities	Manufacturing	Construction	Motor trades	Wholesale	Retail	Transport & storage	Accommodation & food services	Information & communication	Financial & insurance	Property	Professional, scientific & technical	Business administration & support services	Public administration & defence	Education	Health Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	
Ashford	410	50	310	1,070	180	230	390	185	280	365	400	310	1,005	575	35	90	260	360
Canterbury	145	30	230	880	155	190	440	190	445	355	90	230	925	450	20	120	295	425
Dartford	20	30	200	1,025	155	165	295	290	210	405	65	165	625	385	10	80	225	240
Dover	165	20	185	675	130	95	320	160	335	165	40	100	525	270	30	75	160	250
Folkestone & Hythe	185	10	180	585	120	110	320	110	370	195	45	150	540	300	25	75	150	260
Gravesham	40	20	180	925	125	105	300	380	255	200	35	115	480	380	5	75	160	255
Maidstone	275	40	380	1,575	275	280	495	600	360	435	160	270	1,170	700	35	120	310	445
Sevenoaks	200	30	285	1,205	180	210	375	140	260	475	160	305	1,230	710	30	115	230	420
Swale	190	45	350	1,050	200	170	340	345	335	235	55	165	650	425	25	85	205	300
Thanet	65	25	245	860	120	115	395	120	470	295	60	160	580	370	10	95	160	385
Tonbridge & Malling	125	40	260	1,215	175	235	310	175	280	435	140	215	1,085	635	30	110	245	355
Tunbridge Wells	255	25	245	765	150	210	410	130	300	530	130	250	1,365	590	20	110	265	385
Kent	2,075	365	3,050	11,835	1,965	2,120	4,390	2,815	3,900	4,085	1,385	2,430	10,185	5,790	270	1,150	2,670	4,095
Medway	70	55	430	2,145	285	280	710	560	515	500	100	265	1,065	765	15	185	425	535
Kent + Medway	2,145	420	3,485	13,980	2,250	2,400	5,100	3,375	4,415	4,585	1,485	2,700	11,250	6,555	285	1,340	3,095	4,630

Table 3: Percentage of Vat And/or PAYE Based Enterprises in Kent districts in 2024 by Broad Industrial Group

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

2024	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Mining, quarrying & utilities	Manufacturing	Construction	Motor trades	Wholesale	Retail	Transport & storage	Accommodation & food services	Information & communication	Financial & insurance	Property	Professional, scientific & technical	Business administration & support services	Public administration & defence	Education	Health	Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services
Ashford	6.3%	0.8%	4.8%	16.5%	2.8%	3.5%	6.0%	2.9%	4.3%	5.6%	6.2%	4.8%	15.5%	8.9%	0.5%	1.4%	4.0%	5.5%
Canterbury	2.6%	0.5%	4.1%	15.6%	2.8%	3.4%	7.8%	3.4%	7.9%	6.3%	1.6%	4.1%	16.4%	8.0%	0.4%	2.1%	5.2%	7.5%
Dartford	0.4%	0.7%	4.3%	22.3%	3.4%	3.6%	6.4%	6.3%	4.6%	8.8%	1.4%	3.6%	13.6%	8.4%	0.2%	1.7%	4.9%	5.2%
Dover	4.5%	0.5%	5.0%	18.2%	3.5%	2.6%	8.6%	4.3%	9.0%	4.5%	1.1%	2.7%	14.2%	7.3%	0.8%	2.0%	4.3%	6.7%
Folkestone & Hythe	5.0%	0.3%	4.8%	15.7%	3.2%	2.9%	8.6%	2.9%	9.9%	5.2%	1.2%	4.0%	14.5%	8.0%	0.7%	2.0%	4.0%	7.0%
Gravesham	1.0%	0.5%	4.5%	22.9%	3.1%	2.6%	7.4%	9.4%	6.3%	5.0%	0.9%	2.8%	11.9%	9.4%	0.1%	1.9%	4.0%	6.3%
Maidstone	3.5%	0.5%	4.8%	19.9%	3.5%	3.5%	6.2%	7.6%	4.5%	5.5%	2.0%	3.4%	14.8%	8.8%	0.4%	1.5%	3.9%	5.6%
Sevenoaks	3.0%	0.5%	4.3%	18.4%	2.7%	3.2%	5.7%	2.1%	4.0%	7.2%	2.4%	4.6%	18.8%	10.8%	0.5%	1.8%	3.5%	6.4%
Swale	3.7%	0.9%	6.8%	20.3%	3.9%	3.3%	6.6%	6.7%	6.5%	4.5%	1.1%	3.2%	12.6%	8.2%	0.5%	1.6%	4.0%	5.8%
Thanet	1.4%	0.6%	5.4%	19.0%	2.7%	2.5%	8.7%	2.7%	10.4%	6.5%	1.3%	3.5%	12.8%	8.2%	0.2%	2.1%	3.5%	8.5%
Tonbridge & Malling	2.1%	0.7%	4.3%	20.0%	2.9%	3.9%	5.1%	2.9%	4.6%	7.2%	2.3%	3.5%	17.9%	10.5%	0.5%	1.8%	4.0%	5.9%
Tunbridge Wells	4.2%	0.4%	4.0%	12.5%	2.4%	3.4%	6.7%	2.1%	4.9%	8.6%	2.1%	4.1%	22.3%	9.6%	0.3%	1.8%	4.3%	6.3%
Kent	3.2%	0.6%	4.7%	18.3%	3.0%	3.3%	6.8%	4.4%	6.0%	6.3%	2.1%	3.8%	15.8%	9.0%	0.4%	1.8%	4.1%	6.3%
Medway	0.8%	0.6%	4.8%	24.1%	3.2%	3.1%	8.0%	6.3%	5.8%	5.6%	1.1%	3.0%	11.9%	8.6%	0.2%	2.1%	4.8%	6.0%
Kent + Medway	2.9%	0.6%	4.7%	19.0%	3.1%	3.3%	6.9%	4.6%	6.0%	6.2%	2.0%	3.7%	15.3%	8.9%	0.4%	1.8%	4.2%	6.3%

Enterprises by employee size

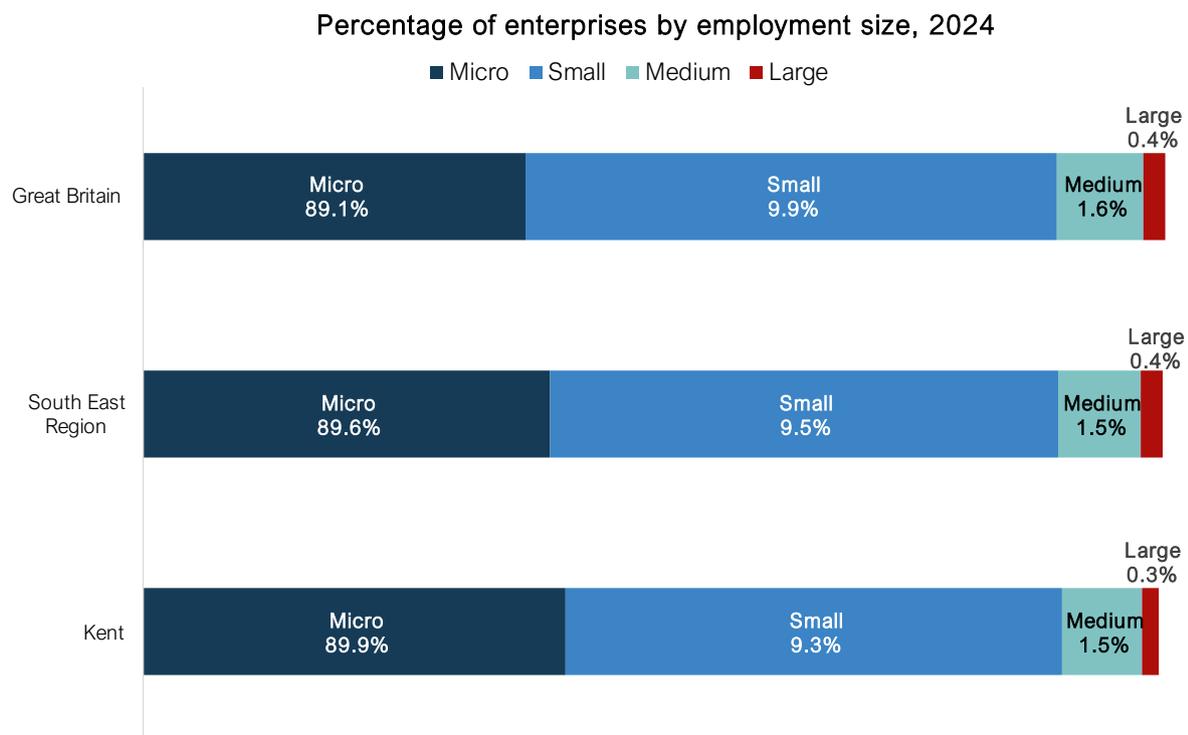
Table 4 shows how enterprises can be defined as micro, small, medium or large depending on the number of employees they have.

Table 4: Enterprise size definition

Enterprise size	Number of employees
Micro	0 to 9
Small	10 to 49
Medium	50 to 249
Large	250+

In Kent the majority of enterprises (89.9%) are classed as micro businesses. Kent has a slightly higher proportion of enterprises which are classed as micro than Great Britain (89.1%) and a slightly smaller proportion of small, medium and large enterprises.

Chart 2: Enterprises by size-band in Kent, the South East & Great Britain



Source: ONS: UK Business Counts
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Table 5 overleaf shows the number of enterprises by the number of employees in Kent districts.

Table 5: Number of VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises by employment size-band

2024	Micro (0-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50-249)	Large (250+)	Total
Ashford	5,900	500	80	10	6,490
Canterbury	4,955	555	90	25	5,630
Dartford	4,130	365	80	20	4,600
Dover	3,310	325	60	5	3,705
Folkestone & Hythe	3,355	320	50	10	3,735
Gravesham	3,710	275	45	10	4,040
Maidstone	7,150	635	115	30	7,930
Sevenoaks	5,940	505	100	20	6,560
Swale	4,615	455	85	20	5,170
Thanet	4,085	380	55	5	4,525
Tonbridge & Malling	5,350	565	125	25	6,060
Tunbridge Wells	5,540	500	75	15	6,130
Kent	58,035	5,380	950	205	64,575
Medway	8,065	700	115	30	8,915
Kent + Medway	66,105	6,080	1,070	240	73,485
South East	362,210	34,240	6,235	1,670	404,360
Great Britain	2,358,180	234,240	42,380	11,045	2,645,840

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

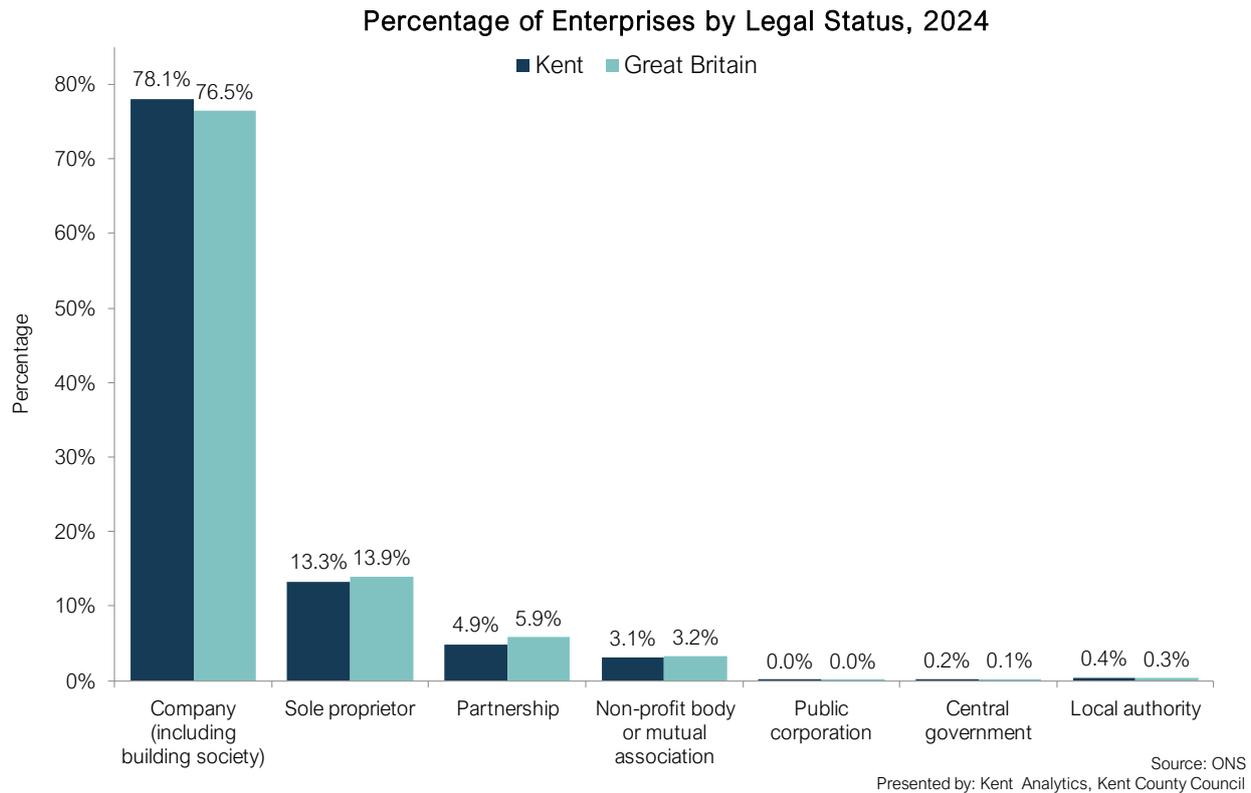
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Enterprise by status

The Business Counts data also shows the number of enterprises by legal status. The legal status of an enterprise is classified by the ONS in accordance with National Accounts Sector Classifications. All enterprises engage in financial transactions, paying out and receiving money for reasons such as buying and selling goods and services, paying taxes, or collecting tax revenues. Using information received from Companies House and the administrative sources from HM Revenue & Customs, the National Accounts Sector Classification determines whether a body or enterprise is in the private or public sector, and if public, whether they are government bodies or public corporations, and whether certain transactions count as taxes or service fees.

Chart 3 shows the proportion of enterprises by legal status in Kent compared to Great Britain in 2024.

Chart 3: Enterprises by legal status



The majority of enterprises are private sector companies. In Kent they account for 99.4% of all enterprises, just below Great Britain as a whole (99.5%).

In the private sector Kent has a slightly higher proportion of companies (including building societies) than seen nationally. In the public sector Kent has a slightly higher proportion of central government and local authority enterprises than the national average.

The majority of private sector companies in Kent (78.6%) are classed as companies (which includes building societies). The majority of public sector enterprises in Kent (73.1%) are local authorities.

Table 6 overleaf shows the number of enterprises by legal status in Kent local authority districts and Kent as a whole, with information at regional and national level for comparison.

Table 6: Number of VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises by legal status

2024	Private sector: Company (including building society)	Private sector: Sole proprietor	Private sector: Partnership	Private sector: Non-profit body or mutual association	Public sector: Public corporation	Public sector: Central government	Public sector: Local authority	TOTAL
Ashford	4,650	850	465	485	0	10	35	6,490
Canterbury	4,250	820	320	205	0	10	25	5,630
Dartford	3,910	460	95	110	0	10	10	4,600
Dover	2,555	700	295	110	0	5	35	3,705
Folkestone & Hythe	2,730	620	250	95	0	10	25	3,735
Gravesham	3,400	430	100	85	0	10	5	4,040
Maidstone	6,330	1,020	335	195	0	10	35	7,930
Sevenoaks	5,290	790	280	160	0	5	30	6,560
Swale	3,975	760	270	130	0	10	25	5,170
Thanet	3,450	705	235	115	0	10	10	4,525
Tonbridge & Malling	5,015	665	195	155	0	5	35	6,060
Tunbridge Wells	4,860	785	310	155	0	5	20	6,130
Kent	50,420	8,610	3,155	2,000	5	100	285	64,575
Medway	7,330	1,075	255	215	0	15	20	8,915
Kent + Medway	57,750	9,685	3,410	2,210	5	115	310	73,485
South East	322,105	50,695	17,795	11,900	15	450	1,395	404,360
Great Britain	2,023,205	368,940	155,865	85,320	165	3,400	8,950	2,645,840

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Turnover

Turnover figures provided to the ONS for the majority of traders is based on VAT returns for a 12 month period. For 2024 this relates to a 12 month period covering the financial year 2023/24. For other records, in particular members of VAT group registrations, turnover may relate to an earlier period or survey data.

For traders who have registered more recently, turnover represents the estimate made by traders at the time of registration.

The turnover figures on the register generally exclude VAT but include other taxes, such as the revenue duties on alcoholic drinks and tobacco. They represent total UK turnover, including exempt and zero-rated supplies.

Turnover bands shown in the analyses relate to the latest year for which information is available. Traders may be registered below the VAT threshold or may choose not to de-register should their turnover fall below the threshold.

Table 7 shows the VAT registration thresholds since 2010/11. The level at which an enterprise must register for VAT has remained unchanged at £85,000 since 1st April 2017.

Table 7: VAT registration thresholds

Operative dates	VAT Registration Threshold
1 Apr 2010 - 31 Mar 2011	£70,000
1 Apr 2011 - 31 Mar 2012	£73,000
1 Apr 2012 - 31 Mar 2013	£77,000
1 Apr 2013 - 31 Mar 2014	£79,000
1 Apr 2014 - 31 Mar 2015	£81,000
1 Apr 2015 - 31 Mar 2016	£82,000
1 Apr 2016 - 31 Mar 2017	£83,000
1 Apr 2017 onwards	£85,000

66.8% of enterprises in Kent have a turnover of £100k and above, this is slightly higher than is seen nationally (66.2%) and in the South East as a whole (66.5%).

The proportion of enterprises by turnover sizeband in Kent compared to Great Britain is shown in chart 4 overleaf.

Chart 4: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE enterprises by turnover

Percentage of Enterprises by Turnover, 2024

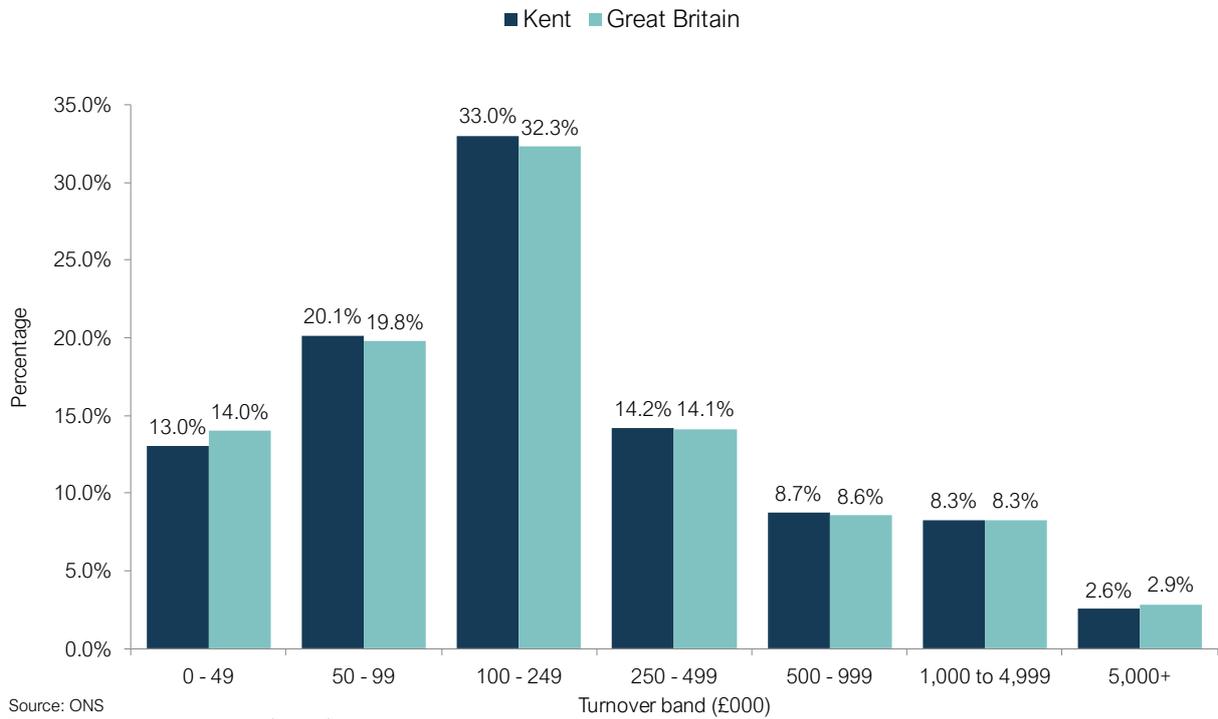


Table 8 overleaf presents the turnover data for Kent local authority districts and Kent as a whole. Regional and national figures are also presented for comparison.

Table 8: Number of VAT and/or PAYE enterprises by turnover

2024	0 to 49 (£ 000s)	50 to 99 (£ 000s)	100 to 199 (£ 000s)	200 to 499 (£ 000s)	500 to 999 (£ 000s)	1,000 to 4,999 (£ 000s)	5,000+	TOTAL
Ashford	1,235	1,215	1,985	860	500	565	125	6,490
Canterbury	690	1,150	1,875	825	500	455	130	5,630
Dartford	560	980	1,550	585	370	405	155	4,600
Dover	450	760	1,215	565	340	285	90	3,705
Folkestone & Hythe	495	790	1,265	535	285	285	75	3,735
Gravesham	485	910	1,380	550	330	315	70	4,040
Maidstone	1,045	1,595	2,595	1,120	720	645	210	7,930
Sevenoaks	830	1,260	2,070	1,010	610	560	220	6,560
Swale	600	1,085	1,610	735	515	495	130	5,170
Thanet	480	960	1,645	685	385	290	80	4,525
Tonbridge & Malling	720	1,120	1,995	850	560	570	245	6,060
Tunbridge Wells	830	1,185	2,130	845	520	480	140	6,130
Kent	8,415	13,010	21,320	9,175	5,635	5,350	1,665	64,575
Medway	1,025	2,070	2,935	1,215	765	700	205	8,915
Kent + Medway	9,440	15,080	24,260	10,385	6,400	6,050	1,875	73,485
South East	55,140	80,350	134,095	56,615	33,805	33,155	11,200	404,360
Great Britain	370,300	524,015	854,255	374,220	227,760	219,315	75,970	2,645,840

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Related documents

The [Economy & Employment](#) section of the Kent County Council website provides further information about economic related statistics.