

# UK Business Counts 2023

The UK Business Counts dataset was released by the Office for National Statistics on 27 September 2023. Figures for 2024 will be released in Autumn 2024.

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

## Further Information

Kent Analytics  
Kent County Council  
Invicta House  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1XQ

Email:  
[research@kent.gov.uk](mailto:research@kent.gov.uk)

Phone: 03000 41 74 44

[Facts and figures about Kent](#)

**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 2023 there were 64,230 enterprises in Kent.
- The highest proportion of enterprises in Kent (18.0%) are within the construction sector. Significantly higher than the national proportion of 13.8%.
- Most enterprises in Kent (89.7%) are micro enterprises (with 0-9 employees).
- Most enterprises in Kent (99.4%) are classed as companies which operate within the private sector.
- 64.1% of enterprises in Kent reported a turnover of more than £100k in the year 2022/23 (Nationally 63.2%).

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Analysis .....	2
Enterprises in Kent.....	2
Enterprises by Industry .....	3
Enterprises by employee size .....	6
Enterprise by status .....	7
Turnover.....	9
Related documents .....	13

## 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 (DETI) 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 per cent of UK economic activity.

The latest data is published for 2022 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 64,230 enterprises in Kent as of March 2023 down 1.5% from the previous year. This decrease was the same as seen nationally and lower than the decrease in the South East.

When compared with 2010 the number of enterprises in Kent has grown by 28.9%, a larger increase than was seen in the South East region (+22.5%) but lower than the national growth of 30.4%.

Maidstone district had the highest number of enterprises (7,965) in 2023 and saw the biggest reduction over the previous year (-355 enterprises, -4.3%).

While all Kent districts have seen an increase in the number of enterprises since 2010, all Kent districts apart from Canterbury and Thanet saw the numbers fall over the last year. Thanet saw the biggest increase in number of enterprises with 65 more than seen in 2022, an increase of 1.5%. Canterbury had 40 more enterprises than the year before which equates to an increase of 0.7%.

**Table 1: VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises**

Area	2023	Number change 2010-2023	% change 2010-2023	Number change 2022-2023	% change 2022-2023
Ashford	6,375	1,340	26.6%	-110	-1.7%
Canterbury	5,620	1,200	27.1%	40	0.7%
Dartford	4,550	1,720	60.8%	-100	-2.2%
Dover	3,605	805	28.8%	-105	-2.8%
Folkestone & Hythe	3,765	655	21.1%	-85	-2.2%
Gravesham	4,060	1,430	54.4%	-25	-0.6%
Maidstone	7,965	1,830	29.8%	-355	-4.3%
Sevenoaks	6,590	890	15.6%	-75	-1.1%
Swale	5,085	1,125	28.4%	-65	-1.3%
Thanet	4,445	1,325	42.5%	65	1.5%
Tonbridge & Malling	6,040	1,420	30.7%	-65	-1.1%
Tunbridge Wells	6,130	665	12.2%	-115	-1.8%
<b>Kent</b>	<b>64,230</b>	<b>14,410</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>-1,000</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>
Medway	8,815	2,580	41.4%	-165	-1.8%
Kent + Medway	73,045	16,990	30.3%	-1,165	-1.6%
South East LEP	176,505	38,915	28.3%	-1,800	-1.0%
South East Region	404,840	74,465	22.5%	-7,810	-1.9%
Great Britain	2,648,660	616,815	30.4%	-41,090	-1.5%

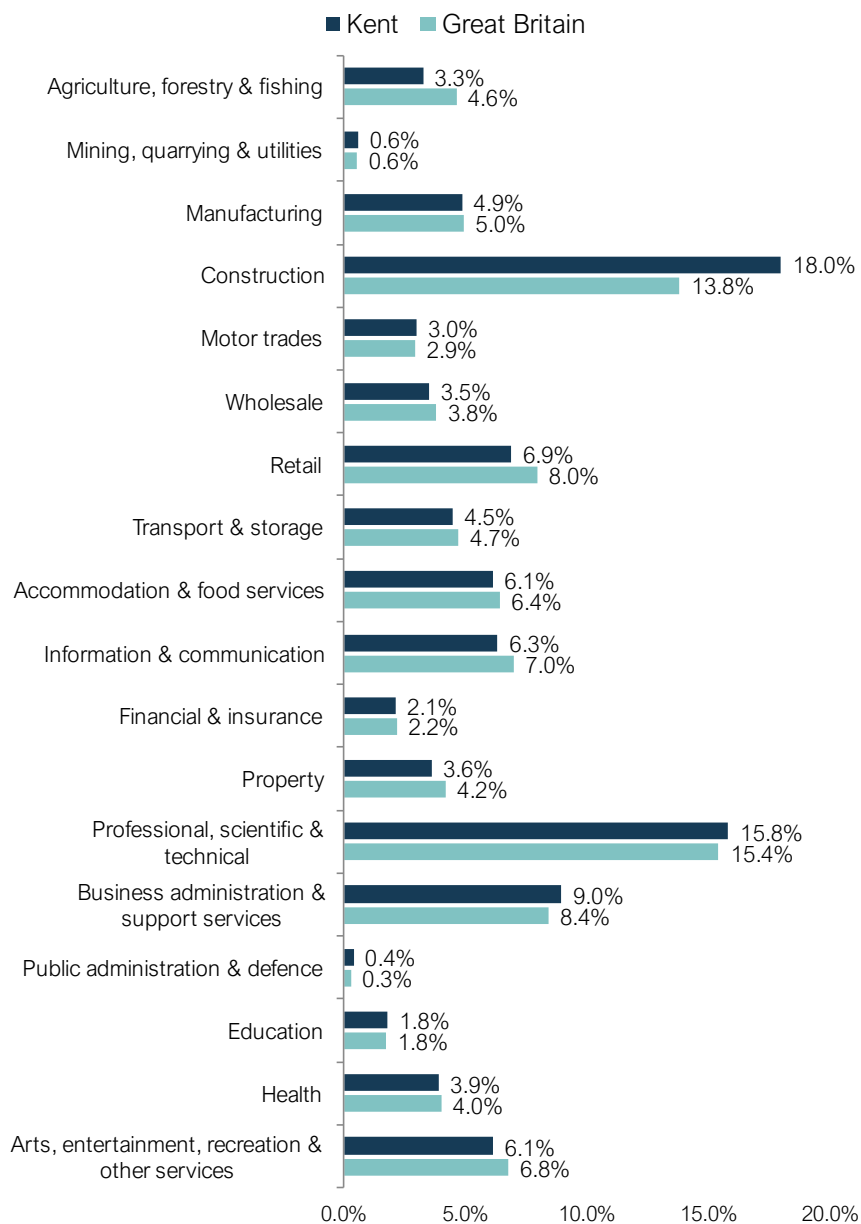
## Enterprises by Industry

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, 2023



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 2022 By Broad Industrial Group**

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

2023	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	405	45	310	1,035	170	245	375	195	275	360	375	285	985	585	35	95	245	350
Canterbury	155	35	245	845	155	190	460	170	470	355	100	220	930	460	20	125	275	415
Dartford	20	35	210	995	150	155	295	295	230	415	65	160	630	375	10	80	195	235
Dover	165	20	180	645	130	100	310	160	320	155	45	95	510	270	30	75	155	230
Folkestone & Hythe	190	15	185	585	120	110	335	130	370	195	35	145	550	295	25	80	145	255
Gravesham	40	20	195	940	120	115	305	400	280	200	35	100	485	365	5	75	150	235
Maidstone	280	35	390	1,540	265	385	500	585	365	435	165	265	1,185	685	35	120	295	430
Sevenoaks	200	30	295	1,195	180	210	365	135	255	490	160	295	1,255	715	30	120	225	420
Swale	195	50	345	1,035	195	170	345	330	345	220	60	160	615	415	25	85	185	305
Thanet	70	25	255	815	115	120	390	135	485	265	60	155	565	365	10	100	155	365
Tonbridge & Malling	120	40	260	1,175	170	245	325	215	250	440	145	200	1,095	640	30	115	240	330
Tunbridge Wells	250	30	250	750	150	225	430	140	300	545	130	240	1,355	595	20	100	240	385
Kent	2,095	385	3,130	11,560	1,925	2,265	4,435	2,890	3,945	4,075	1,375	2,320	10,165	5,760	265	1,170	2,515	3,950
Medway	70	50	450	2,100	265	280	685	610	520	480	110	265	1,080	750	15	175	400	510
Kent + Medway	2,165	435	3,580	13,660	2,190	2,545	5,120	3,500	4,465	4,555	1,485	2,585	11,245	6,510	285	1,350	2,915	4,460

**Table 3: Percentage of Vat And/or PAYE Based Enterprises in Kent districts in 2022 By Broad Industrial Group**

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

2023	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	6.4%	0.7%	4.9%	16.2%	2.7%	3.8%	5.9%	3.1%	4.3%	5.6%	5.9%	4.5%	15.5%	9.2%	0.5%	1.5%	3.8%	5.5%
Canterbury	2.8%	0.6%	4.4%	15.0%	2.8%	3.4%	8.2%	3.0%	8.4%	6.3%	1.8%	3.9%	16.5%	8.2%	0.4%	2.2%	4.9%	7.4%
Dartford	0.4%	0.8%	4.6%	21.9%	3.3%	3.4%	6.5%	6.5%	5.1%	9.1%	1.4%	3.5%	13.8%	8.2%	0.2%	1.8%	4.3%	5.2%
Dover	4.6%	0.6%	5.0%	17.9%	3.6%	2.8%	8.6%	4.4%	8.9%	4.3%	1.2%	2.6%	14.1%	7.5%	0.8%	2.1%	4.3%	6.4%
Folkestone & Hythe	5.0%	0.4%	4.9%	15.5%	3.2%	2.9%	8.9%	3.5%	9.8%	5.2%	0.9%	3.9%	14.6%	7.8%	0.7%	2.1%	3.9%	6.8%
Gravesham	1.0%	0.5%	4.8%	23.2%	3.0%	2.8%	7.5%	9.9%	6.9%	4.9%	0.9%	2.5%	11.9%	9.0%	0.1%	1.8%	3.7%	5.8%
Maidstone	3.5%	0.4%	4.9%	19.3%	3.3%	4.8%	6.3%	7.3%	4.6%	5.5%	2.1%	3.3%	14.9%	8.6%	0.4%	1.5%	3.7%	5.4%
Sevenoaks	3.0%	0.5%	4.5%	18.1%	2.7%	3.2%	5.5%	2.0%	3.9%	7.4%	2.4%	4.5%	19.0%	10.8%	0.5%	1.8%	3.4%	6.4%
Swale	3.8%	1.0%	6.8%	20.4%	3.8%	3.3%	6.8%	6.5%	6.8%	4.3%	1.2%	3.1%	12.1%	8.2%	0.5%	1.7%	3.6%	6.0%
Thanet	1.6%	0.6%	5.7%	18.3%	2.6%	2.7%	8.8%	3.0%	10.9%	6.0%	1.3%	3.5%	12.7%	8.2%	0.2%	2.2%	3.5%	8.2%
Tonbridge & Malling	2.0%	0.7%	4.3%	19.5%	2.8%	4.1%	5.4%	3.6%	4.1%	7.3%	2.4%	3.3%	18.1%	10.6%	0.5%	1.9%	4.0%	5.5%
Tunbridge Wells	4.1%	0.5%	4.1%	12.2%	2.4%	3.7%	7.0%	2.3%	4.9%	8.9%	2.1%	3.9%	22.1%	9.7%	0.3%	1.6%	3.9%	6.3%
<b>Kent</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Medway	0.8%	0.6%	5.1%	23.8%	3.0%	3.2%	7.8%	6.9%	5.9%	5.4%	1.2%	3.0%	12.3%	8.5%	0.2%	2.0%	4.5%	5.8%
Kent + Medway	3.0%	0.6%	4.9%	18.7%	3.0%	3.5%	7.0%	4.8%	6.1%	6.2%	2.0%	3.5%	15.4%	8.9%	0.4%	1.8%	4.0%	6.1%

## 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 (89.7%) 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 smaller proportion of small, medium and large enterprises.

**Chart 2: Enterprises by size-band in Kent & Great Britain**

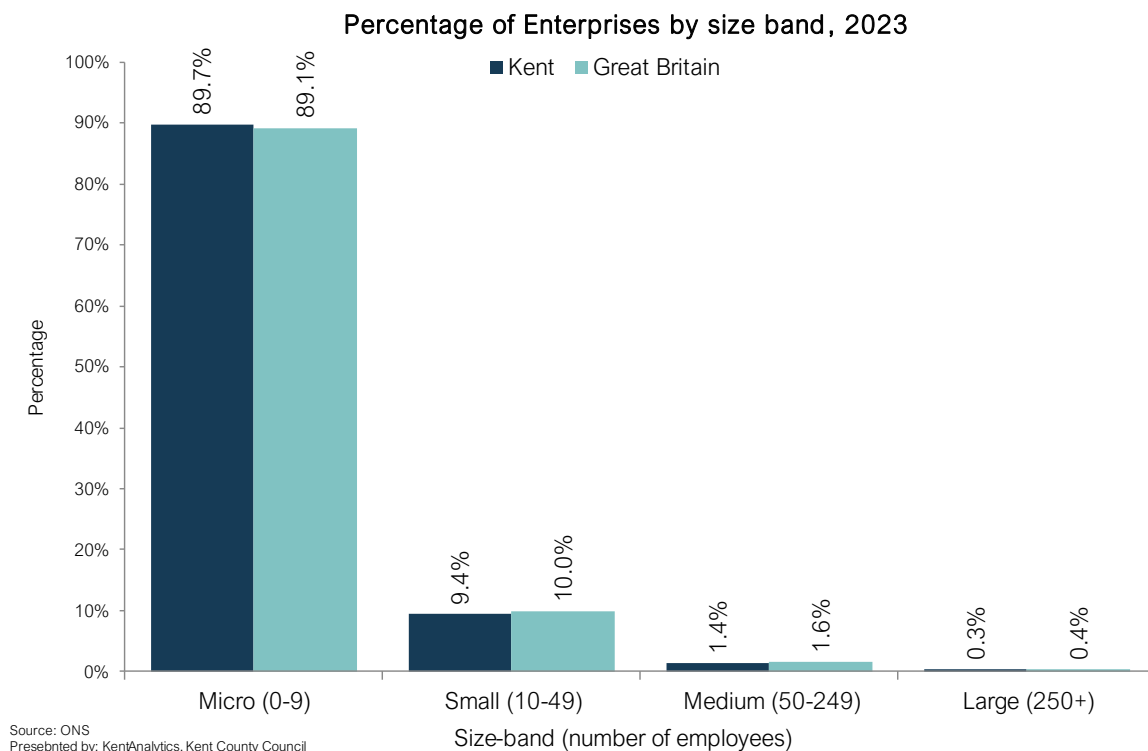




Table 5 shows the number of enterprises by the number of employees in Kent districts.

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

2023	Micro (0-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50-249)	Large (250+)	Total
Ashford	5,795	540	85	15	6,375
Canterbury	4,955	615	80	20	5,620
Dartford	4,090	415	85	20	4,550
Dover	3,205	365	55	5	3,605
Folkestone & Hythe	3,370	370	40	15	3,765
Gravesham	3,685	345	55	10	4,060
Maidstone	7,180	710	120	30	7,965
Sevenoaks	5,950	585	85	20	6,590
Swale	4,515	525	80	20	5,085
Thanet	4,000	405	55	5	4,445
Tonbridge & Malling	5,345	635	115	20	6,040
Tunbridge Wells	5,540	555	80	10	6,130
<b>Kent</b>	<b>57,625</b>	<b>6,060</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>64,230</b>
Medway	7,960	780	115	30	8,815
Kent + Medway	65,585	6,840	1,045	235	73,045
South East LEP	158,715	16,425	2,470	505	176,505
South East Region	362,465	38,500	6,090	1,615	404,840
Great Britain	2,406,400	258,585	40,685	10,340	2,689,750

Source: ONS UK Business Counts

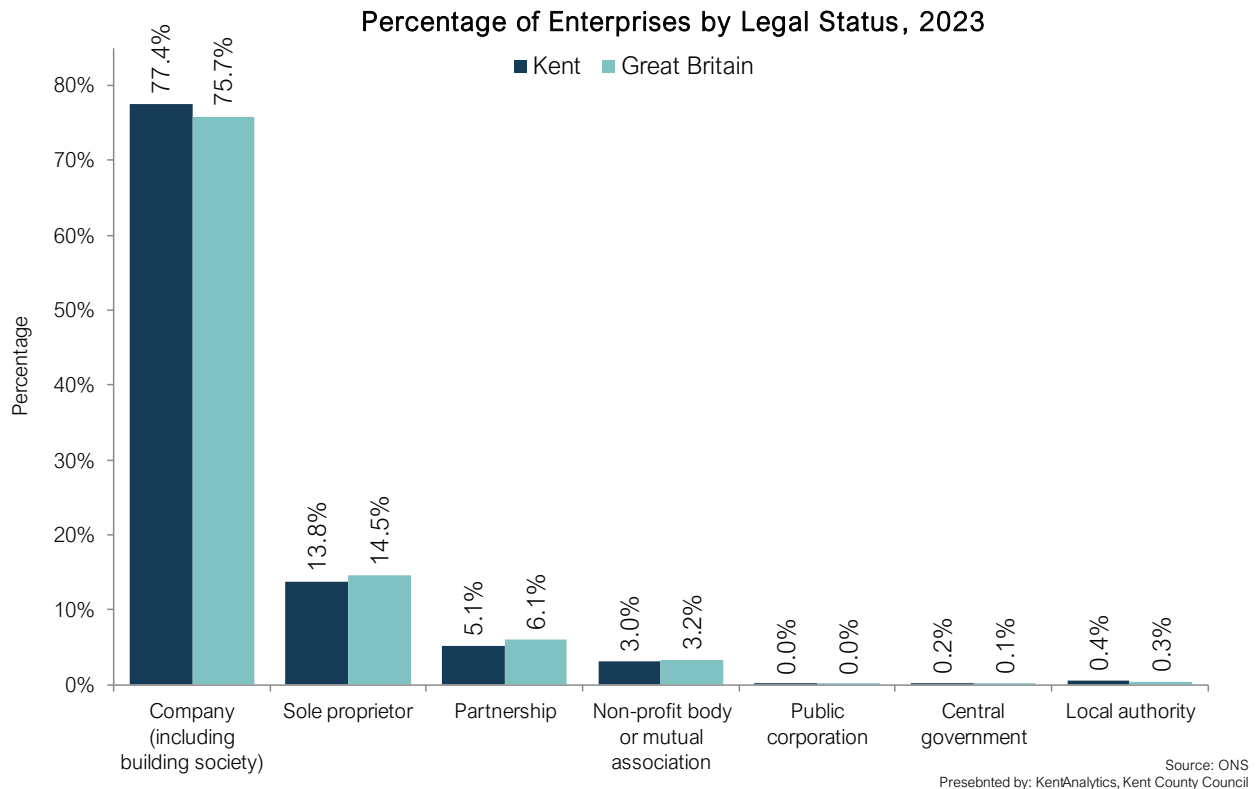
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

## 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 2023.

### 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%).

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**

	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
<b>2023</b>								
Ashford	4,525	870	475	460	0	10	35	6,375
Canterbury	4,175	875	340	195	0	10	25	5,620
Dartford	3,855	470	95	110	0	15	10	4,550
Dover	2,440	710	310	105	0	5	35	3,605
Folkestone & Hythe	2,705	670	260	95	0	10	25	3,765
Gravesham	3,395	460	105	80	0	10	5	4,060
Maidstone	6,370	1,000	355	195	0	10	35	7,965
Sevenoaks	5,295	805	295	160	0	5	30	6,590
Swale	3,870	770	285	125	0	15	25	5,085
Thanet	3,335	725	250	115	0	10	10	4,445
Tonbridge and Malling	4,930	705	215	155	0	5	35	6,040
Tunbridge Wells	4,830	800	320	155	0	5	20	6,130
<b>Kent</b>	<b>49,725</b>	<b>8,860</b>	<b>3,305</b>	<b>1,945</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>64,230</b>
Medway	7,210	1,080	275	215	0	15	20	8,815
Kent + Medway	56,930	9,940	3,585	2,160	5	120	305	73,045
South East LEP	138,755	23,390	8,765	4,495	10	305	785	176,505
South East Region	320,275	52,330	18,570	11,835	15	420	1,400	404,840
Great Britain	2,005,150	385,080	161,165	84,965	165	3,215	8,920	2,648,660

## Turnover

Turnover figures provided to the ONS for the majority of traders is based on VAT returns for a 12 month period. For 2023 this relates to a 12 month period covering the financial year 2022/23. 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 remain unchanged at £85,000 since 1<sup>st</sup> 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

64.1% of enterprises in Kent have a turnover of £100k and above than is seen nationally (63.2%) and in the South East as a whole (63.6%).

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, 2023

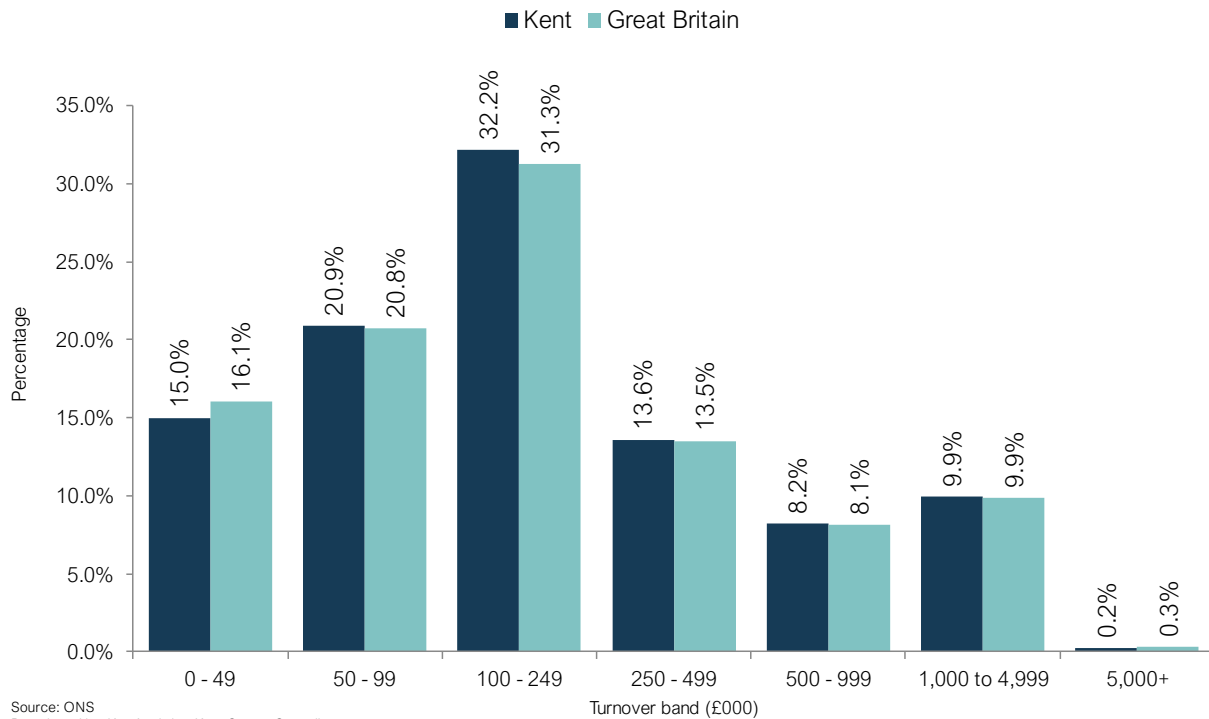


Table 8 overleaf presents the turnover data for Kent local authority districts and Kent as a whole. Regional and national figures are also presented for comparison.

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

	0 to 49 (£ thousand)	50 to 99 (£ thousand)	100 to 199 (£ thousand)	200 to 499 (£ thousand)	500 to 999 (£ thousand)	1,000 to 4,999 (£ thousand)	5,000+ (£ thousand)	TOTAL
<b>2023</b>								
Ashford	1,295	1,250	1,900	835	480	605	10	6,375
Canterbury	810	1,225	1,795	785	475	515	15	5,620
Dartford	615	1,005	1,490	560	350	510	20	4,550
Dover	530	735	1,140	525	330	335	10	3,605
Folkestone & Hythe	585	815	1,240	510	280	330	10	3,765
Gravesham	600	910	1,320	545	320	350	5	4,060
Maidstone	1,225	1,635	2,635	1,050	620	780	20	7,965
Sevenoaks	960	1,335	2,015	950	575	730	25	6,590
Swale	700	1,080	1,530	715	480	565	10	5,085
Thanet	555	960	1,615	605	350	355	5	4,445
Tonbridge & Malling	815	1,200	1,920	825	530	735	25	6,040
Tunbridge Wells	950	1,255	2,050	820	470	575	10	6,130
<b>Kent</b>	<b>9,635</b>	<b>13,400</b>	<b>20,660</b>	<b>8,725</b>	<b>5,260</b>	<b>6,385</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>64,230</b>
Medway	1,220	2,125	2,785	1,170	685	815	15	8,815
Kent + Medway	10,860	15,525	23,440	9,895	5,945	7,205	175	73,045
South East LEP	25,080	37,540	57,040	24,265	14,755	17,450	375	176,505
South East Region	63,330	83,895	130,315	54,085	32,050	39,760	1,410	404,840
Great Britain	425,185	549,970	828,745	357,570	215,745	262,350	9,095	2,648,660

## Related documents

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