# One in five new buy‑to‑let companies lists a non‑British shareholder as company ownership of rentals trebles



One in five buy‑to‑let companies set up in the last year lists at least one shareholder who is not a British citizen, according to analysis of Companies House data by estate agent Hamptons. The finding — part of a wider Hamptons review of limited companies used to hold rental property — shows growing international participation in the ownership structures that now dominate new purchases in the private rented sector. Aneisha Beveridge, head of research at Hamptons, cautioned that overseas citizenship does not always mean investors live abroad: many new shareholders appear to be foreign‑national residents of the UK. She added that “while overseas‑based investors are part of the picture, the majority of purchases by non‑UK nationals reflect domestic demand.” (Hamptons’ analysis also notes that some limited companies are created to receive properties transferred from owners’ personal names rather than to buy new stock.)

Hamptons’ full summer 2025 buy‑to‑let report and its February lettings index offer more detail on who these non‑UK shareholders are and how that mix has shifted. Indian nationals form the largest single group of new registrations in the latest year, followed by investors from Nigeria, Poland, Ireland and Italy. The firm says the nationality profile has changed since Britain left the EU: the share of non‑UK shareholders from EU countries has fallen (from roughly two‑thirds of the total in 2016 to under half in 2025), while investors from countries such as India and Nigeria have become relatively more prominent.

The pattern is not uniform across the country. Hamptons’ data show that non‑UK nationals make up a larger share of newly‑registered buy‑to‑let companies in London than elsewhere — about 27 per cent of new London registrations — and even higher proportions in some boroughs (the firm reports roughly 54 per cent in Kensington & Chelsea and 51 per cent in Hammersmith & Fulham this year). At the same time, regions beyond the capital have seen some of the fastest rises in the share of new non‑UK national landlords: the East Midlands, West Midlands and Scotland have all more than doubled their shares since 2016. Local authority-level results highlight wide variation, with Runnymede in Surrey recording one of the highest shares of new companies set up by non‑UK nationals this year.

Those nationality and location trends sit alongside a much broader structural change in how buy‑to‑let property is owned. Hamptons’ research and its February lettings index record that the number of buy‑to‑let limited companies has trebled since 2016: Companies House listed about 401,744 such companies by February 2025, a rise of some 332 per cent. Hamptons estimates that roughly 70–75 per cent of new buy‑to‑let purchases now go into company structures rather than being held in individuals’ names, and industry analysis suggests that company purchases accounted for tens of thousands of property acquisitions in the most recent twelve‑month periods reported. The Financial Times, drawing on joint research by Hamptons and the University of Nottingham, put the number of properties bought by companies at around 85,000 in the year to September 2024.

The principal driver behind this wave of incorporation has been taxation and the treatment of finance costs. Government reforms introduced from 6 April 2017 gradually removed the ability for individual landlords to deduct mortgage interest and other finance costs from property income, with the relief phased down to zero by the 2020–21 tax year and replaced with a basic‑rate tax reduction. HMRC’s guidance and the government’s policy papers set out how the restriction works in practice, including worked examples; as a result, many landlords view limited company ownership — where corporation tax is applied to profits and mortgage interest is deductible against those profits — as offering a more attractive tax outcome for growing portfolios.

But the shift is not without costs and caveats. Hamptons’ report flags that transferring properties into companies can trigger stamp duty, solicitor and agent fees, potentially higher borrowing costs and additional regulatory complexity, while lenders may impose stricter terms on company borrowers. Analysts and commentators have also warned that any future policy changes or tax rule revisions could materially affect the calculus that has driven incorporation. The Guardian and other outlets have highlighted concerns about slowing rent growth in some areas and the potential for transfer‑related costs to blunt the enthusiasm for incorporation among smaller landlords.

For landlords, policy‑makers and tenants, the trends carry competing implications. On one hand, more company ownership reflects professionalisation and portfolio diversification that can stabilise returns and encourage long‑term investment outside London. On the other, rising numbers of incorporated landlords complicate the tax and regulatory landscape and create potential volatility if government tax settings or mortgage markets change. “Despite the challenges facing landlords, non‑UK nationals are increasingly embracing UK buy‑to‑let,” Beveridge said, noting a visible shift of demand into lower‑value markets outside the capital where much of the recent growth in house prices and rents has taken place. Observers say the story is likely to remain dynamic: the composition of buyers, the balance between personal and company ownership, and the policy framework that shapes those choices will be important to watch in the months and years ahead.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-14983427/Fifth-buy-let-companies-set-landlords-arent-British-citizens.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578_BTL_Report_-_2025_-_Digital_version.pdf)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-14983427/Fifth-buy-let-companies-set-landlords-arent-British-citizens.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578_BTL_Report_-_2025_-_Digital_version.pdf), [[3]](https://www.hamptons.co.uk/articles/february-2025-lettings-index)
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* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578_BTL_Report_-_2025_-_Digital_version.pdf), [[3]](https://www.hamptons.co.uk/articles/february-2025-lettings-index), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/f727bd07-921e-4f2e-a47f-aa287464db0e)
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* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-14983427/Fifth-buy-let-companies-set-landlords-arent-British-citizens.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578_BTL_Report_-_2025_-_Digital_version.pdf), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/f727bd07-921e-4f2e-a47f-aa287464db0e)

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1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-14983427/Fifth-buy-let-companies-set-landlords-arent-British-citizens.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. [https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site\_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578\_BTL\_Report\_-2025-\_Digital\_version.pdf](https://mr1.homeflow-assets.co.uk/files/site_asset/image/6824/9422/HAM578_BTL_Report_-_2025_-_Digital_version.pdf) - Hamptons’ Buy‑to‑Let Report (Summer 2025) analyses Companies House, Land Registry and lettings agency records to examine how limited companies shape landlord portfolios. The report shows that buy‑to‑let limited companies have trebled since 2016, highlights geographic diversification by investors, and explains why many landlords incorporate: tax changes, mortgage costs and differing regional yields. It presents evidence that limited company structures are increasingly used by smaller landlords and that diversified portfolios tend to deliver steadier returns. The report quantifies portfolio sizes, purchase distances, return profiles and warns investors about stamp duty and regulatory costs when transferring property into company ownership and internationally.
3. <https://www.hamptons.co.uk/articles/february-2025-lettings-index> - Hamptons’ February 2025 Lettings Index reports that Companies House recorded 401,744 companies set up to hold buy‑to‑let property by February 2025, representing a 332 per cent rise since February 2016. The note records a record 61,517 new buy‑to‑let limited companies created during 2024 and finds Companies House now lists more buy‑to‑let firms than any other type of business. Hamptons links this surge to tax changes and the phased withdrawal of mortgage interest relief, and estimates that around 70–75 per cent of new buy‑to‑let purchases now go into company structures rather than personal names. It highlights strong London concentration and beyond.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restricting-finance-cost-relief-for-individual-landlords/restricting-finance-cost-relief-for-individual-landlords> - The UK government publication 'Restricting finance cost relief for individual landlords' explains the policy introduced from 6 April 2017 that gradually removes the ability for individual landlords to deduct finance costs (such as mortgage interest) from property income. Over four years the deduction was phased down: 75 per cent deductible in 2017–18, 50 per cent in 2018–19, 25 per cent in 2019–20 and 0 per cent from 2020–21, with the remainder converted into a basic‑rate tax reduction. The paper sets out who is affected, the policy rationale, and detailed operational guidance for implementing the change including calculation examples and timings.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-tax-relief-for-residential-landlords-how-its-worked-out-including-case-studies> - HMRC guidance 'Tax relief for residential landlords: how it's worked out' provides practical instructions and case studies on the finance cost restriction that came into effect from 6 April 2017 and was completed by 2020. It details the calculation of the basic‑rate tax reduction landlords receive for finance costs not deducted from property income, explains interaction with property profits and adjusted total income, and describes how any excess finance costs may be carried forward. The guidance includes worked examples to show the impact for differing landlord circumstances and clarifies that the tax reduction cannot create a refund or penalty adjustments.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/f727bd07-921e-4f2e-a47f-aa287464db0e> - The Financial Times article examines how limited companies have become dominant purchasers in the buy‑to‑let market, reporting that company purchases surged with around 85,000 properties acquired in the year to September 2024. It draws on research by Hamptons and Nottingham University using Companies House data, showing that more than three‑quarters of buy‑to‑let limited companies existing in 2017 went on to acquire properties and that limited companies are increasingly the vehicle for new purchases. The piece analyses the tax and regulatory drivers behind the shift, and discusses implications for landlords, lenders and the rental market more broadly including future policy risks.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/mar/17/buy-to-let-firms-become-biggest-single-type-of-business-in-uk-data-shows> - The Guardian reports on Hamptons’ analysis showing that buy‑to‑let companies have become the most common type of business registered at Companies House, with 401,744 such companies by February 2025. The article notes the fourfold increase since February 2016 and highlights that many landlords have moved properties into company structures in response to tax changes, notably the phased withdrawal of mortgage interest relief. It discusses regional patterns, slowing rent growth, and quotes Hamptons’ head of research on why limited companies are now the preferred structure for many investors, while cautioning that stamp duty and other costs may slow future incorporation trends.