# Rightmove data exposes north–south split in homes hit by proposed property tax



Data from Rightmove has laid bare a stark north–south divide in the number of homes that would be liable under the government’s proposed property tax. In the capital, 59% of homes for sale are priced at £500,000 or more, with 39% in the South East and 28% in the South West reaching the qualifying figure. By contrast, the North East is well short at 8%, with Yorkshire and the Humber on 13%, the East Midlands 14%, the North West 15% and the West Midlands 18%. The East of England sits in between, at 29%. Rightmove’s specialist commentary welcomed the prospect of changes that could ease the cost of moving, but officials stressed that details would determine whether property owners would be better or worse off in the long run. Colleen Babcock, Rightmove’s property expert, said: “Stamp duty is a huge barrier to movement, from first-time buyers to downsizers. If changes are brought in that make home-moving genuinely more affordable for people then we would welcome them, but without firm details it remains to be seen if a different type of taxation would leave property owners better or worse off in the long run.” However, industry reaction has been cautious. The market could face disruption if policy details are not firm, with one conveyancing industry insider noting that leaks create uncertainty for transactions over £500,000 in the run-up to the Autumn Budget.

To anchor the current debate, the government’s stamp duty regime remains the reference point for any reform. Official guidance shows the present bands for residential property under Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT): 0% on up to £250,000, 5% on the next £675,000, 10% on the next £575,000, and 12% above £1.5 million, with higher rates applying to non-natural persons and an extra 5% on top of standard rates for additional dwellings when buying more than one property. First-time buyers enjoy SDLT relief up to £425,000, after which the standard scales apply; higher rates also apply to buy-to-let and second-home purchases. These thresholds and rates provide the backdrop against which any replacement or reform would be measured, and came into effect in late-October 2024 through March 2025. The current framework underscores the potential impact of any shift toward a proportional or national property tax. ([todaysconveyancer.co.uk](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/steep-north-south-divide-homes-liable-property-tax-plus-industry-reaction/), [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-stamp-duty-land-tax/stamp-duty-land-tax-rates-31-october-2024-to-31-march-2025))

The industry’s response to the leak about a possible national or proportional tax has been cautiously critical of the lack of detail, while continuing to press for reforms that support mobility. Mark Slade, a director on the Conveyancing Association board, warned that the leak risks delaying real moves and unsettling existing chains as buyers, sellers and lenders await final policy. “From my point of view, it’s not the potential tax that is the problem, because at this stage we have no idea what it might be, but the fact this has been leaked into the public domain. It creates massive uncertainty in the market for property purchases over £500k in the months ahead,” he said, noting the budget’s timing. In parallel, Propertymark argued that any future changes to SDLT across England and Northern Ireland must be carefully considered and fit for future purpose, emphasising that reforms should support first-time buyers, second steppers and those seeking to right-size. Tim Douglas, Propertymark’s head of policy and campaigns, emphasised that reforms must be evidence-based and work in step with varying property prices and market dynamics across the country. Daniel Austin, CEO of ASK Partners, sounded a more cautionary note, warning that proposals described as a short-term fix risk stabilising neither the market nor long-term growth and could distort pricing near key thresholds. In parallel, Rightmove has consistently signalled that mobility would be helped by retention or upgrading of zero-rate thresholds, arguing that current levels have not kept pace with prices and that a more stable framework would support moving decisions. ([todaysconveyancer.co.uk](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/steep-north-south-divide-homes-liable-property-tax-plus-industry-reaction/), [rightmove.co.uk](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-review-stamp-duty-thresholds/?utm_source=chatgpt.com), [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/aug/20/rachel-reeves-considering-tax-expensive-homes?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

Looking ahead, the policy signal from Rightmove and industry voices points toward a preference for a staged, mobility-friendly reform rather than quick, ad hoc tinkering. Rightmove has pushed for a permanent upgrade of zero-rate thresholds to reflect price growth and improve mobility, arguing that the current thresholds do not keep pace with market realities. The prospect of a more lasting reform has gained attention in industry circles, with advocates arguing that maintaining or raising reliefs could lower upfront costs, support first-time buyers, and sustain transaction volumes. At the same time, the industry press has highlighted calls for simpler, more predictable rules to reduce the friction of moving, including the possibility of a national property tax replacing SDLT in the medium term, subject to careful modelling and political feasibility. Phil Spencer, the broadcaster and property advisor, has backed Propertymark’s call for stamp duty reform, stressing the value of keeping the existing relief for first-time buyers at the £425,000 level and promoting “right-sizing” for older buyers to free up family homes, while acknowledging the Autumn Budget as a pivotal moment to simplify SDLT, lower moving costs, and accelerate transactions. The policy landscape remains in flux, with proponents arguing for mobility and affordability and opponents warning of potential market distortions if reform is not carefully designed. ([rightmove.co.uk](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-review-stamp-duty-thresholds/?utm_source=chatgpt.com), [propertymark.co.uk](https://www.propertymark.co.uk/resource/reeves-explores-innovative-overhaul-of-anti-aspirational-property-taxes.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/steep-north-south-divide-homes-liable-property-tax-plus-industry-reaction/), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-stamp-duty-land-tax/stamp-duty-land-tax-rates-31-october-2024-to-31-march-2025)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/steep-north-south-divide-homes-liable-property-tax-plus-industry-reaction/), [[2]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-retain-first-time-buyer-stamp-duty-thresholds/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/aug/20/rachel-reeves-considering-tax-expensive-homes)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-review-stamp-duty-thresholds/), [[6]](https://www.propertymark.co.uk/resource/phil-spencer-backs-propertymark-s-call-for-stamp-duty-reform.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/steep-north-south-divide-homes-liable-property-tax-plus-industry-reaction/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-retain-first-time-buyer-stamp-duty-thresholds/> - Rightmove urges retention of existing first-time buyer stamp duty thresholds to preserve mobility in the housing market. The press release argues that, if thresholds revert in April 2025, only a minority of current listings would be stamp-duty free for first-time buyers, with regional disparities reflecting house-price gaps. It highlights that high-price areas such as London and the South face the biggest impact, while more affordable regions would see fewer savings. The document stresses affordability and the wider benefits of keeping reliefs intact, and notes the potential role of mortgage criteria and product innovations in supporting buyers. It also emphasises clarity and predictability for market confidence.
3. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/press-centre/rightmove-asks-government-to-review-stamp-duty-thresholds/> - Rightmove calls for a permanent upgrade of zero-rate thresholds to boost housing mobility. The release compares 2017 and 2025, showing a steep drop in homes free from stamp duty as prices have risen, with regional variation intensifying pressure on buyers in London and the South. It argues that keeping higher thresholds would stabilise the market by reducing upfront costs and could help first-time buyers and movers alike. The analysis also notes that mobility benefits extend to mortgage affordability and product innovation, and urges policy makers to consider longer-term reform beyond temporary tweaks. It also highlights regional variations in impact across regions.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-stamp-duty-land-tax/stamp-duty-land-tax-rates-31-october-2024-to-31-march-2025> - Official government guidance sets out current Stamp Duty Land Tax rates and thresholds for residential property from 31 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. The bands are 0% up to £250,000, 5% on the next £675,000, 10% on the next £575,000, and 12% above £1.5 million. There is a higher 17% rate on interests in residential dwellings costing more than £500,000 purchased by non-natural persons, and an extra 5% on top of standard rates for additional dwellings when the buyer owns more than one property. The page also notes related regimes and exemptions. These rates apply to England and Northern Ireland unless stated.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/aug/20/rachel-reeves-considering-tax-expensive-homes> - Guardian reporting indicates that Chancellor Rachel Reeves is weighing a new proportional property tax, potentially replacing stamp duty on owner-occupied homes and introducing an annual levy on high‑value properties. The review focuses on homes above £500,000 and models the impact of a national tax, with possible local levy in the longer term to fund councils. The discussions come ahead of the autumn budget, and officials are being asked to explore how such a reform could raise revenue while preserving incentives to move. No final decision has been announced, but the proposals reflect a broader rethink of property taxation in the UK.
6. <https://www.propertymark.co.uk/resource/phil-spencer-backs-propertymark-s-call-for-stamp-duty-reform.html> - Propertymark reports that Phil Spencer has backed its Autumn Budget representations urging stamp duty reform. The article highlights the case for keeping the current zero-stamp duty threshold for first-time buyers at £425,000, arguing it helps entrants to the market, particularly in pricier regions. Spencer also emphasises the importance of encouraging 'right-sizing' for buyers aged 55 and over to free up family homes. The piece notes that the Autumn Budget presents an opportunity to simplify SDLT, reduce moving costs, and accelerate transactions, while balancing affordability with revenue needs across the housing market. It also signals industry support for targeted relief to sustain housing supply.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/aug/19/explainer-potential-property-tax-stamp-duty> - An explainer published by The Guardian outlines potential property tax reform that could replace stamp duty and possibly council tax with a national or local property levy. It describes a plan whereby sellers pay a proportional annual tax on high-value homes and suggests the tax might be iterative and regionally varied to reflect affordability gaps. The piece notes political risk and the need to balance revenue generation with housing market liquidity, accessibility for first-time buyers, and regional disparities. It emphasises that no final policy was announced, but the broad direction is under active discussion within the Treasury.