

Statistical bulletin

Communal establishment residents, England and Wales: Census 2021

Information about people who live in communal establishments, including age, sex and type of establishment, Census 2021 data.



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1 . Main points

- In 2021, there were 1,042,000 communal establishment residents in England and Wales (1.7% of the usual resident population).
- The number of those living in communal establishments has risen by 37,000 since 2011 (when 1,005,000 lived in communal establishments), but declined very slightly as a proportion of the usual resident population (from 1.8%).
- In total, 51.1% of communal establishment residents were female and 48.9% were male.
- Almost half (46.3%) of communal establishment residents were aged 16 to 24 years, and a further 16.3% were aged 85 years and over.
- Close to half of communal establishment residents (45.7%, 477,000) lived in education establishments, and almost a third (33.0%, 344,000) were in care homes.

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2 . Communal establishment residents in England and Wales

A communal establishment is an establishment with full-time or part-time supervision providing residential accommodation, such as student halls of residence, boarding schools, armed forces bases, hospitals, care homes, and prisons.

When interpreting the data, it is important to keep in mind that the census was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which may have affected the number of residents in certain types of communal establishment. For example, the disruption of international travel may have led to a lower number of students in education establishments than would otherwise have been expected, because of a reduction in the number of students arriving from overseas.

This bulletin describes the breakdown of the communal establishment resident population by age and sex, and gives estimates of the population size for different types of communal establishment. Other bulletins in the Housing topic summary focus on [housing characteristics](#) and [people with second addresses](#).

Communal establishment residents by age and sex

In 2021, there were 1,042,000 usual residents in England and Wales (1.7% of all usual residents) who lived in communal establishments, compared with 58,556,000 (98.3%) who lived in households.

The number of people living in communal establishments has risen by almost 37,000 since 2011 (when 1,005,000 lived in communal establishments), but declined very slightly as a proportion of the usual resident population (from 1.8%).

Figure 1: Most communal establishment residents were aged 16 to 24 years or 85 years and over

Communal establishment residents by sex and banded age groups, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated separately for male and female population, meaning each sex will total 100 percent. Figure only includes residents within a communal establishment.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

In our statistics, we distinguish between those who are resident in a communal establishment and those who manage or work in it (and their families). We provide breakdowns by sex and age for residents, but not for the smaller numbers of the owners and staff of communal establishments, their family members, and those who were staying in a communal establishment temporarily with no usual UK address.

The breakdown by sex for this group showed that 51.1% of communal establishment residents (512,000) were female and 48.9% (489,000) were male. This is very similar to the usual resident population for England and Wales as a whole (51.0% female, 49.0% male).

The breakdown by age shows that the communal establishment resident population is mostly concentrated within two age groups. Overall, 46.3% of communal establishment residents (463,000) were aged 16 to 24 years. It is likely that this group primarily consists of those in education establishments, such as university halls of residence or boarding schools, which was the most common type of establishment that residents lived in.

A further 16.3% (163,000) were aged 85 years and over. The breakdown by sex within this age group shows that the percentage of females (78.0% of all communal establishment residents aged 85 years and over) was much higher than the percentage of males (22.0%). This may reflect the care home communal establishment population and the difference in life expectancy between men and women. In England and Wales, [life expectancy is lower for males \(78.6 years\) than it is for females \(82.6 years\)](#).

3 . Types of communal establishment

The census data show the number of people residing in specific types of communal establishment.

Figure 2: The largest increase since 2011 was for people in education establishments

Type of communal establishment, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

Notes:

1. In 2011, "Sheltered housing only" was classified as a communal establishment. In 2021, this is classified as a household.
2. The categories of "Staff/worker accommodation only" and "Other" have been combined in the 2011 data to match the 2021 classification.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

The most common type of communal establishment was "Education", which includes university halls of residence and boarding schools. In total, 45.7% of communal establishment residents (477,000) were in education establishments. This was an increase of almost 89,000 from 2011 (up from 388,000, 38.6%). This is most likely to reflect the growth in the number of university students in England and Wales across the past decade, and may also reflect changes in student housing choices.

A further 33.0% of communal establishment residents (344,000) were in care homes, down from 38.0% (382,000) in 2011. Of these:

- 53.4% (184,000) were in care homes without nursing (down from 230,000 in 2011)
- 46.6% (160,000) were in care homes with nursing (up from 151,000 in 2011)

There were considerably fewer people residing in other types of communal establishments:

- 67,200 (6.5% of all communal establishment residents) were in prison, probation or detention centres
- 42,100 (4.0%) were in defence establishments
- 17,800 (1.7%) were in travel or other temporary accommodation establishments
- 14,100 (1.4%) were in hostels or temporary shelters for the homeless
- 14,000 (1.3%) were in hospitals (including secure units)
- 6,500 (0.6%) were in other medical and care establishments
- 3,700 (0.4%) were in religious establishments
- 3,600 (0.3%) were in children's homes (including secure units)

A further 23,800 (2.3%) were in staff or worker accommodation within the communal establishment or listed another type of communal establishment.

There have been [small changes to housing definitions since the 2011 Census](#), meaning some sheltered housing units were enumerated as communal establishments in 2011 but as households in 2021. Users should keep this in mind when comparing 2011 and 2021 census data for this topic, as described in Housing variables Census 2021.

4 . How communal establishment populations varied across England and Wales

The proportion of people living in communal establishments was similar between England and Wales. In England, 1.74% of the total usual resident population (986,000) resided in communal establishments, compared with 1.80% (56,000) in Wales.

Education establishments and care homes were the most common communal establishment types in both England and Wales. The percentage of the usual resident population who resided in education establishments was 0.80% in England (452,000) and 0.79% in Wales (24,000). The percentage who resided in care homes was 0.57% in England (324,000) and 0.63% in Wales (20,000).

Within England, the East Midlands had the highest percentage of the population who resided in educational establishments (1.07%) of all English regions, whereas London had the lowest (0.52%). At the local authority level, the areas with the highest percentage of the population in educational establishments were all university cities and towns, with Oxford (12.41%) and Cambridge (12.20%) at the top of the list. The local authority in Wales with the highest percentage was Ceredigion (4.34%).

The percentage of the population who resided in care homes ranged from 0.7% in the North East to 0.3% in London. The three English local authorities with the highest percentage of care home residents were all in the South East: Worthing (1.32%), Eastbourne (1.25%) and Arun (1.22%). In Wales, the local authorities with the highest percentages of care home residents were Denbighshire (1.22%) and Conwy (1.16%).

The data also show which areas had the highest percentage of the population residing in hostels or temporary shelters for the homeless. This includes residents and day visitors if they have no other residence. The area with the highest percentage of the population in this type of communal establishment was the City of London, where approximately 1 out of every 100 usual residents was in a hostel or temporary shelter for the homeless (0.99%). Next highest was Exeter (0.18%). Almost every other local authority in England and Wales had 0.1% or less of the population residing in hostels or temporary shelters for the homeless.

Figure 3: Communal establishment resident populations, 2021, local authorities in England and Wales, communal establishment residents per 10,000 usual residents

Notes:

1. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of residents in the communal establishment by the total local authority usual resident population, and then multiplying by 10,000.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

5 . Future publications

More detailed data and analysis on communal establishments will be published in the coming months, alongside the release of multivariate data. Read more about our [housing analysis plans](#) and the [release plans for Census 2021](#) more generally.

6 . Communal establishments, England and Wales: data

[Communal establishment residents by age and sex](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify communal establishment residents in England and Wales by age and sex.

[Communal establishment management and type](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify communal establishment residents in England and Wales by the type of communal establishment they reside in.

7 . Glossary

Communal establishment

A managed communal establishment is a place that provides managed full-time or part-time supervision of residential accommodation.

Examples include:

- university halls of residence and boarding schools
- care homes, hospitals, hospices and maternity units
- hotels, guest houses, hostels and bed and breakfasts, all with residential accommodation for seven or more guests
- prisons and other secure facilities
- Single Living Accommodation (SLA) in military bases
- staff accommodation
- religious establishments

It does not include sheltered accommodation, serviced apartments, nurses' accommodation, and houses rented to students by private landlords. These are households.

Communal establishment resident

A usual resident of a communal establishment is either:

- someone who lives there
- someone who works and lives there
- someone who is a family member of staff that works there and lives there

Household

A household is defined as:

- one person living alone, or
- a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room, or dining area

This includes:

- all sheltered accommodation units in an establishment (irrespective of whether there are other communal facilities), and
- all people living in caravans on any type of site that is their usual residence; this will include anyone who has no other usual residence elsewhere in the UK

A household must contain at least one person whose place of usual residence is at the address. A group of short-term residents living together is not classified as a household, and neither is a group of people at an address where only visitors are staying.

Usual resident

A usual resident is anyone who on Census Day, 21 March 2021 was in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months.

8 . Measuring the data

Reference date

The census provides estimates of the characteristics of all people and households in England and Wales on Census Day, 21 March 2021. It is carried out every 10 years and gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales.

We are responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales, but will also release outputs for the UK in partnership with the Welsh Government, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The census in Northern Ireland was also conducted on 21 March 2021, whereas Scotland's census was moved to 20 March 2022. All UK census offices are working closely together to understand how this difference in reference dates will impact UK-wide population and housing statistics, in terms of both timing and scope.

Response rate

The [person response rate](#) for the census is the number of usual residents for whom individual details were provided on a returned questionnaire, divided by the estimated usual resident population.

The person response rate for Census 2021 was 97% of the usual resident population of England and Wales, and over 88% in all local authorities. Most returns (89%) were received online. The response rate exceeded our target of 94% overall and 80% in all local authorities.

Read more about question-specific response rates at local authority level in [Section 4 of our Measures showing the quality of Census 2021 estimates methodology](#).

9 . Strengths and limitations

Quality considerations along with the strengths and limitations of Census 2021 more generally can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#). Read more about the [Housing quality information for Census 2021](#).

Further information on our quality assurance processes is provided in our [Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates methodology](#).

10 . Related links

[Census maps](#)

Interactive content | Updated 5 January 2023

Interactive map tool that visualises Census 2021 data on different topics down to a local authority area and neighbourhood level.

[Housing quality information for Census 2021](#)

Methodology | Released 5 January 2023

Known quality information affecting housing data from Census 2021 in England and Wales.

[Housing variables, Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 4 January 2023

Variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about housing.

[Housing in Wales \(Census 2021\)](#)

Headline release | Released 5 January 2023

A summary by Welsh Government of Census 2021 data about housing in Wales.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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