

Health, disability and unpaid care quality information for Census 2021

Known quality information affecting health, disability, and unpaid care data from Census 2021 in England and Wales to help users correctly interpret the statistics.

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Release date:
19 January 2023

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Quality information

Health

Comparisons between geographies and between censuses

There are higher numbers of people in older age groups reporting that they were in poor health. However, this is because older people are more likely than younger people to be in poor health. Consider this when comparing results for geographies with different age structures and use age-standardisation where appropriate. Read more about age-standardisation in our [blog Age-standardising data: What does this mean and why does it matter?](#)

Comparability between 2011 and 2021 censuses

While the health questions in the 2011 Census and Census 2021 were comparable, our quality assurance revealed a larger-than-expected increase in very good health. This may reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the population and people's perception of their health.

Disability

Comparisons between age and geographies

There are higher numbers of people in older age groups reporting they have a disability. However, this is because older people are more likely than younger people to be disabled. Consider this when comparing results for geographies with different age structures and use age-standardisation where appropriate.

Routing on the paper questionnaire

We used answers to two questions on the census questionnaire to produce the disability estimates. By applying extra quality assurance processes, we corrected answers to questions on the paper questionnaire where people had accidentally followed the question routing in the wrong way.

Changes in disability distribution

Questions about disability in the 2011 Census and Census 2021 are broadly comparable. However, our quality assurance revealed a larger-than-expected decrease in the proportion of disabled people in the population. This may partly reflect changes in question wording. The 2011 Census question specified "include problems related to old age". It may also reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the population and people's perception of their health.

Unpaid care

Unpaid care in older age groups

Unpaid care provision differs dependent on age. Consider this when comparing results for geographies with different age structures and use age-standardisation where appropriate.

Changes in unpaid care distribution

Questions about unpaid care in the 2011 Census and Census 2021 are broadly comparable. However, our quality assurance revealed a larger-than-expected decrease in the proportion of unpaid carers in the population. This may partly reflect a change to the question wording. The question about unpaid care in the 2011 Census specified "look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others". The Census 2021 question used the phrase "look after, or give any help or support to anyone". It may also reflect an impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people's circumstances or behaviours, such as household mixing rules.

Tell us what you think about this publication by [answering a few questions](#).

2 . Related links

[Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#)

QMI | Last revised 9 December 2022

Details the data strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used for Census 2021, England and Wales.

[How we assured the quality of Census 2021 estimates](#)

Methodology | Released 7 November 2022

Methodology for the validation of Census 2021 population estimates for England and Wales, including the assurance of processes, assessment of estimates, and involvement of local authorities.

[Health, disability, and unpaid care variables Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 19 January 2023

Lists variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about health, disability, and unpaid care.

3 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 19 January 2023, ONS website, methodology, [Health, disability, and unpaid care quality information for Census 2021](#).