

Statistical bulletin

Housing, England and Wales: Census 2021

Accommodation type, tenure, rooms and bedrooms, central heating and car or van availability in England and Wales, Census 2021 data.



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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Accommodation type](#)
3. [Tenure](#)
4. [Rooms, bedrooms, and occupancy rating](#)
5. [Central heating](#)
6. [Car or van availability](#)
7. [How housing varied across England and Wales](#)
8. [Future publications](#)
9. [Housing, England and Wales: data](#)
10. [Glossary](#)
11. [Measuring the data](#)
12. [Strengths and limitations](#)
13. [Related links](#)
14. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

- Across England and Wales, 77.9% (19.3 million) of households lived in a house or bungalow, 21.7% (5.4 million) lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment and 0.4% (104,000) lived in a caravan, or other mobile or temporary structure.
- The proportion of households living in a flat, maisonette or apartment increased the most over the decade, from 21.0% (4.9 million) in 2011 to 21.7% (5.4 million) in 2021.
- In 2021, 62.5%, (15.5 million) of households owned the accommodation they lived in, 37.3% (9.3 million) rented their accommodation and 0.1% (33,000) of households lived rent free.
- Across England and Wales, a similar number, but smaller proportion, of households had fewer bedrooms than required (4.3%, 1.1 million), compared with 2011 (4.5%, 1.1 million).
- Almost all households reported that they had central heating in 2021 (98.5%, 24.4 million); of these, 0.9% (233,000) used at least one renewable energy source.
- In 2021, 23.3% (5.8 million) of households had no cars or vans (down from 25.6%, 6.0 million in 2011).

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2 . Accommodation type

In 2021, there were 24.8 million households in England and Wales (23.4 million in England, 1.3 million in Wales), in which 58.6 million usual residents (98.3% of all usual residents) lived. The number of households has increased by more than 1.4 million since 2011 (from 23.4 million).

The proportions of households in different types of accommodation remained very similar across the decade from 2011 to 2021.

Almost 8 in 10 households lived in houses or bungalows, however the proportion decreased across the last decade (from 78.6%, 18.4 million in 2011 to 77.9%, 19.3 million in 2021).

More detailed data showed small changes in the proportion of households living in different types of houses or bungalow including:

- 7.8 million households (31.5% of all households) were in semi-detached properties, up from 31.3% (7.3 million) in 2011
- 5.8 million (23.2%) were in detached properties, up from 5.3 million (22.7%) in 2011
- 5.7 million (23.2%) were in terraced properties, down from 5.8 million (24.6%) in 2011

Figure 1: Accommodation type, 2021, England, Wales, all households

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The largest increase for any type of accommodation was for households in a flat, maisonette or apartment. In 2021, 21.7% (5.4 million) of households were in a flat, maisonette or apartment, up from 21.0% (4.9 million) in 2011.

The remaining 0.4% (104,000) were households that lived in a caravan, or other mobile or temporary structure. This was similar to the proportion in 2011, but with an increase in numbers (0.4%, 85,000).

The proportion of different accommodation types is relatively similar across both England and Wales. The biggest exception is London; more than half of the households in London lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment (54.0%, 1.8 million). This is considerably higher than all other English regions (varying from 21.6% in the South East to 11.4% in the East Midlands) and Wales (12.5%).

3 . Tenure

Tenure is whether a household rents or owns the accommodation that it occupies. Households that rent their accommodation were asked what type of landlord owns or manages it.

The census data on tenure in England and Wales show:

- a decrease in the proportion of households that owned their accommodation, to 62.5%, 15.5 million in 2021 (from 64.3%, 15.0 million, in 2011)
- an increase in the proportion of households that rented their accommodation, to 37.3%, 9.3 million, in 2021 (from 34.3%, 8.0 million, in 2011)
- a decrease in the proportion of households that lived rent free, to 0.1%, 33,000, in 2021 (from 1.4%, 315,000, in 2011)

The data on accommodation ownership and renting can be broken down further to show that:

- 32.8% of households (8.1 million) owned the accommodation they lived in outright, an increase from 30.8% (7.2 million) in 2011
- 29.7% (7.4 million) owned their accommodation with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership, which is a smaller proportion than in 2011 (33.5%, 7.8 million)
- 20.3% (5.0 million) rented their accommodation privately, up from 16.7% (3.9 million) in 2011
- 17.1% (4.2 million) were in the social rented sector, for example through a local council or housing association; this is a smaller proportion than in 2011 (17.6%, 4.1 million)

How tenure varied across England and Wales

Overall home ownership (the percentage of households who owned their accommodation outright or with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership) was higher in Wales (66.4%) than in England (62.3%). Home ownership decreased slightly in both nations since 2011 (from 67.8% in Wales and 64.1% in England).

Figure 2: Tenure type, 2021, England, Wales and regions of England, all households

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Two English regions had higher rates of overall home ownership than Wales: the South East (67.1%) and the South West (67.0%). However, Wales had a higher percentage of those who owned their home outright (38.0%) than any English region.

Within England, London had the lowest level of overall home ownership (46.8%) of any English region. London also had the highest proportion of households that rented privately (30.0%) or in the social rented sector (23.1%).

Within Wales, overall home ownership varied from 58.3% in Cardiff to 72.3% in Monmouthshire. Cardiff also had the highest percentage of households that rented their accommodation privately (24.3%), whereas Torfaen had the highest percentage of households in the social rented sector (23.8%).

Figure 3: Tenure type, 2021, local authorities in England and Wales

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

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4 . Rooms, bedrooms, and occupancy rating

Rooms

Census 2021 used Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data to count the number of rooms in a dwelling. This was instead of using the approach from previous censuses of asking the question on the census form. All rooms in a dwelling apart from bathrooms, toilets, halls or landings, kitchens, conservatories, or utility rooms are counted. For households living in a shared dwelling, the number of rooms are counted for the whole dwelling and not the individual household.

Across England and Wales, 10.9% (2.7 million) of households had one or two rooms, 74.1% (18.4 million) had three, four or five rooms, 13.9% (3.5 million) had six, seven or eight rooms and 1.1% (278,000) had nine or more rooms.

The VOA method for counting number of rooms differs in several ways from the method used in the 2011 Census. For example, the VOA method includes storage rooms (which were excluded in the 2011 Census) but excludes kitchens, conservatories, and utility rooms (which were included in the 2011 Census). For this reason, Census 2021 data on number of rooms should not be directly compared with the equivalent 2011 Census data. For more information, see our [Estimating the number of rooms in Census 2021: an update on imputation methods for Valuation Office Agency data article](#).

Bedrooms

As in 2011, Census 2021 directly asked about the number of bedrooms available to the household.

The data show that the proportion of households with one, two, or three bedrooms decreased across the past decade, whereas the proportion with four or more bedrooms increased:

- 11.4% (2.8 million) of households had one bedroom (down from 11.8%, 2.8 million in 2011)
- 27.1% (6.7 million) had two bedrooms (down from 27.6%, 6.5 million in 2011)
- 40.4% (10.0 million) had three bedrooms (down from 41.6%, 9.7 million in 2011)
- 21.1% (5.2 million) had four or more bedrooms (up from 19.0%, 4.4 million in 2011)

The percentage of households that had three bedrooms was higher in Wales (48.0%) than in England (40.0%), whereas the percentage of households with four or more bedrooms was slightly higher in England (21.1%) than in Wales (20.6%).

Overcrowding and under-occupancy

Occupancy rating provides a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under-occupied.

An occupancy rating of negative 1 or less implies that a household has fewer bedrooms than the standard requirement, positive 1 implies that they have more bedrooms than required, and 0 implies that they met the standard required. For further information on the definition for bedroom occupancy, see the [Glossary](#).

Across England and Wales as a whole, 4.3% of households (1.1 million) had fewer bedrooms than required, down from 4.5% (1.1 million) in 2011. Some 26.5% (6.6 million) of households had the required number of bedrooms, and the remaining 69.2% (17.2 million) of households had more bedrooms than required.

In Wales, the proportion of households with fewer bedrooms than required (2.2%, 30,000) was lower than it was in England (4.4%, 1.0 million). In both nations, the proportion has decreased since 2011, when it was 2.9%, (38,000) in Wales, and 4.6%, (1.0 million) in England.

Conversely, the proportion of households that had more bedrooms than required was higher in Wales (76.3%, 1.0 million) than it was in England (68.8%, 16.1 million).

Figure 4: Bedroom occupancy rating, 2021, England, Wales

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Across the regions of England, London had the highest proportion of households that had fewer bedrooms than required (11.1%, 380,000). This was highest for the local authorities of Newham (21.5%, 25,000) and Barking and Dagenham (17.8%, 13,000).

5 . Central heating

The vast majority of households across England and Wales reported that they had central heating in 2021 (98.5%, 24.4 million). However, 1.5% (367,000) of households had no central heating.

The most common responses were, mains gas (73.8%, 18.3 million), two or more types of central heating (not including renewable energy; 8.5%, 2.1 million) and electric (8.5%, 2.1 million).

Figure 5: Types of central heating, 2021, England, Wales

Notes:

1. Category "Other central heating" also includes the categories "Tank or bottled gas only", "Oil only", "Wood Only" and "Solid Fuel only".

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Households with no central heating

England had a higher proportion of households with no central heating (1.5%, 352,000) compared with Wales (1.2%, 15,000).

Across the two nations, the local authority with the highest proportion of households with no central heating was the Isles of Scilly (17.5%). This was almost 12 times higher than the national estimate, and more than four times higher than the rate in the next highest local authority, Westminster (3.9%).

In Wales, Gwynedd had the highest proportion of households with no central heating (3.2%), more than twice the estimate for Wales as a whole. This was followed by Ceredigion (2.6%) and the Isle of Anglesey (2.3%).

Renewable energy

For the first time, Census 2021 recorded whether a household's central heating used renewable energy sources. Overall, 0.9% of households in England and Wales (233,000) used at least one renewable energy source. A total of 0.5% (135,000) reported using renewable energy alongside another type of central heating, and the remaining 0.4% (99,000) used only renewable energy sources.

The proportion of households using at least one renewable energy source was slightly higher in Wales (1.1%, 14,000) than in England (0.9%, 219,000).

Across the two nations, the local authority with the highest percentage of households using at least one renewable source was the Isles of Scilly (6.1%), followed by Ceredigion (4.1%). Ceredigion also had the highest percentage of households that used only renewable energy (2.6%).

The local authority with the lowest percentage of households using any renewable energy source was Blackpool (0.2%).

6 . Car or van availability

As in previous censuses, Census 2021 asked households how many cars or vans the household owned or had available to them. In 2021:

- 23.3% (5.8 million) of households had no cars or vans (down from 25.6%, 6.0 million in 2011)
- 41.3% (10.2 million) had one car or van (down from 42.2%, 9.9 million in 2011)
- 26.2% (6.5 million) had two cars or vans (up from 24.7%, 5.8 million in 2011)
- 9.2% (2.3 million) had three or more cars or vans (up from 7.4%, 1.7 million in 2011)

The percentage of households with no cars or vans decreased across the past decade in both England (23.5% in 2021, 25.8% in 2011) and Wales (19.4% in 2021, 22.9% in 2011).

London had a higher percentage of households with no cars or vans (42.1%) than the other English regions and Wales. The local authorities with the highest percentages of households with no cars or vans were also all in London, with the City of London (77.2%), Islington (66.9%), and Tower Hamlets (66.4%) topping the list.

Figure 6: Car or van availability, 2021, England, Wales and regions of England

Download the data

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7 . How housing varied across England and Wales

Use [Census maps](#) to view the distribution of housing variables down to a neighbourhood level.

8 . Future publications

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

9 . Housing, England and Wales: data

[Accommodation type](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by accommodation type. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Car or van availability](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates on the number of cars or vans available to members of households for England and Wales. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Central heating](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify occupied household spaces in England and Wales by the type of central heating present. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Number of bedrooms](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify all household spaces with at least one usual resident in England and Wales by number of bedrooms. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Number of rooms](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify all household spaces with at least one usual resident in England and Wales by number of rooms. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Occupancy rating for bedrooms](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by occupancy rating based on the number of bedrooms in the household. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Occupancy rating for rooms](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by occupancy rating based on the number of rooms in the household. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

[Tenure](#)

Dataset | Released 5 January 2023

This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by tenure. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

10 . Glossary

Accommodation type

The type of building or structure used or available by an individual or household.

This could be:

- the whole house or bungalow
- a flat, maisonette or apartment
- a temporary or mobile structure, such as a caravan

Whole house or bungalow

This property type is not divided into flats or other living accommodation. There are three types of whole houses or bungalows.

Detached

None of the living accommodation is attached to another property but can be attached to a garage.

Semi-detached

The living accommodation is joined to another house or bungalow by a common wall that they share.

Terraced

A mid-terraced house is located between two other houses and shares two common walls. An end-of-terrace house is part of a terraced development but only shares one common wall.

Flats (apartments) and maisonettes

An apartment is another word for a flat. A maisonette is a 2-storey flat.

Tenure type

Whether a household owns or rents the accommodation that it occupies.

Owner-occupied accommodation can be:

- owned outright, which is where the household owns all of the accommodation
- with a mortgage or loan
- part owned on a shared ownership scheme

Rented accommodation can be:

- private rented, for example, rented through a private landlord or letting agent
- social rented through a local council or housing association

This information is not available for household spaces with no usual residents.

Heating type

Central heating is a heating system used to heat multiple rooms in a building by circulating air or heated water through pipes to radiators or vents. Single or multiple fuel sources can fuel these systems.

Central heating systems that are unused or not working are still considered. No information is available for household spaces with no usual residents.

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.

Number of bedrooms

The number of bedrooms available for use in a household's accommodation. This number is not available for household spaces with no usual residents.

Number of rooms (VOA)

A room can be any room in a dwelling apart from bathrooms, toilets, halls or landings, kitchens, conservatories, or utility rooms. All other rooms, for example, living rooms, studies, bedrooms, separate dining rooms and rooms that can only be used for storage are included. If two rooms have been converted into one, they are counted as one room.

The number of rooms is recorded by address. This means that for households living in a shared dwelling, the number of rooms are counted for the whole dwelling and not the individual household.

This definition is based on the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) definition.

Occupancy rating bedrooms

Whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded, ideally occupied or under-occupied. This is calculated by comparing the number of rooms the household requires with the number of available rooms.

The number of rooms the household requires uses a formula that states that:

- one-person households require three rooms, comprised of two common rooms and one bedroom
- two-or-more person households require a minimum of two common rooms and a bedroom for each person in line with the bedroom standard

The people who should have their own room according to the bedroom standard are:

1. married or cohabiting couples
2. single parents
3. people aged 16 years or over
4. pairs of same-sex persons aged 10 to 15 years
5. people aged 10 to 15 years who are paired with a person aged under 10 years of the same sex
6. pairs of children aged under 10 years, regardless of their sex
7. people aged under 16 years who cannot share a bedroom with someone in 4, 5 or 6 above

An occupancy rating of:

- negative one or less implies that a household's accommodation has fewer rooms than required (overcrowded)
- positive one or more implies that a household's accommodation has more rooms than required (under-occupied)
- zero suggests that a household's accommodation has an ideal number of rooms

Usual resident

For Census 2021, a usual resident of the UK is anyone who, on Census Day, 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.

11 . 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, but 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 affect UK-wide population and housing statistics, in terms of both timing and scope.

Response rate

The person [response rate](#) 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](#).

12 . Strengths and limitations

Quality considerations, along with the strengths and limitations of Census 2021 more generally, can be found in our [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 report](#).

13 . 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 \(Census 2021\)](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 5 January 2023

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

14 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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