

Article

# Dual citizens living in England and Wales: Census 2021

Passports held, country of birth, age, sex, year of arrival and national identity for dual citizens in England and Wales.



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# 1 . Main points

- In 2021, across England and Wales, 1.26 million usual residents held multiple passports (2.1%), up from 612,000 (1.1%) in 2011.
- 1.2% of UK-born residents were UK-other dual citizens (587,600), rising from 0.5% in 2011 (231,600); for non-UK-born residents, 6.5% were UK-other dual citizens in 2021 (648,700), rising from 5.1% in 2011 (381,200).
- The number of UK-EU passports held increased by five times for UK-born residents and threefold for non-UK-born residents since 2011; UK-Irish passports also saw a fivefold increase for UK-born residents.
- Increases in UK-born UK-EU dual citizens were driven by younger age groups, suggesting increases in the EU-born population have led to a higher number of children eligible for dual nationality; UK-Irish dual citizens were much older.
- Naturalisation among non-UK-born residents was not limited to dual citizens, with over half of non-EU-born single passport holders having a UK-only passport; this was much lower for EU-born single passport holders.
- The majority of UK-other dual citizens identified with a UK national identity, and this increased notably the longer people had lived in the UK; UK identity was stronger for non-EU passport holders than EU passport holders.

## 2 . Dual citizens by passport held

In Census 2021 data, international migration is typically defined by non-UK country of birth or non-UK passport held. The former measure gives a broader definition that includes anyone who arrived in the UK at some point in the past. Defining by passport held provides a different measure that includes those who have naturalised to become UK citizens.

Most Census 2021 outputs use a prioritisation method when looking at passports held to avoid double counting. In this release, we will separate the different combinations of passports held to look at the characteristics of those who hold more than one passport. This allows us to look at both international migrants who have or have not gained a UK passport, as well as UK-born citizens who may also hold non-UK passports.

Census 2021 does not directly collect information on citizenship, so to look at dual citizenship, we use the passports held question as a proxy. The 2011 Census and Census 2021 asked what passports were held, allowing us to view combinations of UK, Ireland and other passports held.

Respondents were only able to include one "Other" passport in the Census 2021 form, even if they held multiple. Combinations of EU and non-EU passports beyond those, including UK and Ireland, cannot be looked at in the standard Census 2021 data. We use the term "dual citizens" to refer to people who held more than one passport, where one of the passports is UK.

## 3 . Overview of passports held

Across England and Wales, 50.3 million usual residents held one passport (84.4%) and 1.26 million held multiple passports (2.1%).

The reasons for holding multiple passports are likely to differ between those who held a UK passport first and those who held a non-UK passport first. Census 2021 does not collect data on when passports were acquired, so being UK-born can be used as a potential indication that a resident held a UK passport first.

Most multiple passport holders were UK-born (592,000), or non-EU-born (508,000). The non-EU-born population showed a large degree of naturalisation, with almost half being UK-only passport holders (49.9%) and 8.0% holding multiple.

## Figure 1: Passports held for usual residents vary based on country of birth

### Passports held by country of birth, all usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

#### Download the data

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Those holding a UK, Irish and other passport made up only 0.4% of all those with multiple passports (5,600). The vast majority of multiple passport holders were dual citizens holding a UK and other passport. This article will mainly focus on these primary passport combinations of interest, those being UK and EU, UK and non-EU, and UK and Irish dual citizens. UK and Irish passports are separated out from UK and EU passports where possible because of the different relationship between the UK and Ireland compared with the rest of the EU.

Other passport combinations such as EU and non-EU passports are not possible to look at in detail because the census data codes for a single response in the other passport field. However, where open text responses were collected for non-UK passports, there are cases of multiple other passports being recorded. Some of the more common combinations included:

- Italy and Argentina
- Italy and Brazil
- Italy and Bangladesh
- Italy and Pakistan
- Portugal and Brazil
- Romania and Moldova
- Spain and Colombia

Most of these combinations follow cultural or economic relations between the given countries. However, because of lower volumes and lower reliability for these data, these passport combinations are not included in further analysis.

## Change from 2011

The overall proportion of dual citizens was relatively low, but comparisons with 2011 can help put this in perspective and show whether the incidence of dual citizenship has increased. The number of dual UK and another citizenship usual residents doubled from 613,000 (1.1%) in 2011 to 1,236,000 (2.1%) in 2021. These changes are likely tied to increases in the non-UK-born population since 2011.

Looking at this by country of birth, 1.2% of UK-born residents were UK-other dual citizens (587,600), an increase from 0.5% in 2011 (231,600). This was higher for non-UK-born residents, where 6.5% were UK-other dual citizens in 2021 (648,700), rising from 5.1% in 2011 (381,200). Figure 2 breaks this down by passport combination.

The percentage of UK and EU passports among usual residents increased from 0.06% (31,400) to 0.32% (156,400) for UK-born residents and from 0.42% (31,300) to 1.47% (147,000) non-UK-born residents. Similar increases were seen for UK-born UK-Irish dual citizens. A larger increase in UK-EU passport holders may reflect the increased EU-born population in the UK compared with 2011. It may also indicate greater uptake of dual citizenship following the end of free movement when the UK left the EU.

## Figure 2: Dual citizenship with a UK and other passport has become more common since 2011

### Percentage of usual residents holding each UK-other dual citizenship by country of birth group, all usual residents, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

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## 4 . Age and sex of dual citizens

### Non-UK-born dual citizens

In many cases, non-UK-born residents will not have been entitled to UK citizenship at birth. Looking at the non-UK-born dual citizen population can provide detail on those who naturalised in the UK. Irish-UK dual citizens are not included in non-UK-born analysis because of lower volumes (20,400).

The non-UK-born dual citizen population was quite concentrated, with more than a third of EU-UK dual citizens aged 35 to 44 years (34.4%). A similar concentration is seen for non-EU-UK dual citizens.

Compared with single passport holders in Figure 3, dual citizens tended to be older, with a median age of 40 years for EU-UK dual citizens and 35 years for EU-only passport holders. Non-EU-UK dual citizens had a median age of 43 years, compared with 34 years for non-EU-only passport holders. These differences are to be expected, as non-UK-born residents usually need to live in the UK for longer before being able to naturalise.

There were large increases in EU-UK dual citizenship since 2011, with the total increasing from 31,300 in 2011 to 147,000 in 2021. There were also increases in non-EU-UK dual citizenship, but primarily in those aged 40 years and over, with women showing the largest increases.

### **Figure 3: Non-UK-born dual citizens with a UK and other passport are older than those holding only an other passport**

**Percentage of other-UK dual citizens and single passport holders by age and sex, non-UK-born other passport holders, 2021, England and Wales**

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### UK-born dual citizens

The UK-born dual citizen population are more likely to have entitlement to UK citizenship at birth, so the population will differ from those born outside the UK. UK-born dual citizens tended to be very young for those holding a UK and EU passport, with 58.7% aged under 16 years. UK and non-EU dual citizens were also younger, but much less so, with 36.7% aged under 16 years. A different picture was seen for UK and Irish dual citizens, where the ages were more spread out.

Compared with equivalent single passport holders, UK-EU and UK-non-EU dual citizens were slightly older. The median age was 12 years for UK-EU dual citizens and eight years for EU-only passport holders. Non-EU dual citizens had a median age of 22 years, compared with eight years for non-EU-only passport holders. UK-Irish dual citizens were much older, with a median age of 47 years, compared with 33 years for Irish-only passport holders. The young ages of most UK-other dual citizens suggest they are the children of first-generation migrants.

Comparisons with 2011 showed large increases across all passport combinations and ages, though increases in UK-Irish dual citizens were most apparent in those aged 50 to 70 years. This suggests many have taken up their dual nationality in a recent period despite immigrating to England and Wales years ago.

### **Figure 4: UK-born dual citizens are older than those holding single passports**

**Percentage of UK-other dual citizens and single passport holders by age and sex, UK-born other passport holders, 2021, England and Wales**

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## 5 . Single passport holder naturalised citizens

Many international migrants who naturalise in the UK are eligible for dual citizenship. Where this is not possible, a naturalised citizen may only hold a UK passport. Census 2021 guidance noted that the passports question should be answered considering all passports the respondent was entitled to, as well as the ones they currently held. However, it is possible this guidance was missed, and naturalised citizens may have not included their original passports.

Looking at passports held by country of birth for single passport holders can provide some insight into UK naturalisation among single passport holders. This method also includes British citizens who were born overseas, such as in overseas military bases. However, this is expected to make up a relatively small proportion of those identified.

Single passport holders born in the UK, Ireland and EU tended to have a passport consistent with their country of birth, as shown in Figure 5. However, only one in three of those born in non-EU countries held a non-EU passport, with over half holding a UK passport only.

The top non-UK countries of birth by proportion of all passport holders are shown in Figure 6. Most EU countries of birth had a low proportion of individuals with a UK-only passport. Cyprus-born (73%), Malta-born (68%) and Germany-born (58%) individuals were notable exceptions to this, with around two in three holding a UK-only passport. This may be related to overseas births in UK military bases in these countries. It may also be heightened by limitations in acquiring dual citizenship for German nationals.

The proportion of UK-only passports among those born outside the EU was consistently higher, with the top 10 non-EU countries of birth all showing naturalisation rates of 64% or higher. UK dual citizenship was low for these countries, with Somalia (0.4%), Afghanistan (1.5%) and Uganda (2.2%) the lowest, suggesting dual citizenship may not be possible for nationals from these countries. Those born in Iran and Hong Kong (Special administrative region of China) showed higher rates of dual citizenship, which might indicate other reasons for holding a UK-only passport.

### **Figure 5: Passport held varied for single passport holders born in non-EU countries, with most holding a UK passport**

Percentage of passports held by country of birth, all single passport holding usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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### **Figure 6: German-born residents were much more likely to hold a UK-only passport than those born in other EU countries**

Percentage of passports held by individual country of birth, top 10 EU and non-EU countries of birth holding a UK passport only, 2021, England and Wales

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## 6 . Most common passports held for dual citizens

## Non-UK-born dual citizens

The most common other passports held by dual citizens alongside a UK passport varied. The top five EU-UK passport combinations were:

- Poland (27,600)
- Ireland (20,400)
- Italy (15,100)
- France (14,800)
- Germany (14,000)

while the most common among non-EU-UK passports were:

- United States (56,200)
- South Africa (47,300)
- Australia (44,700)
- Pakistan (37,600)
- Nigeria (34,700)

The take-up of dual citizenship for all passport holders of a given country is shown in Figure 7. Rates of dual citizenship were relatively low among EU passport holders, with the highest proportions seen for Malta (21.3%), Cyprus (18.5%) and Croatia (15.3%).

For most EU countries, proportions were substantially higher compared with 2011, with large increases seen for Cyprus (up 11 percentage points), Germany (up 9 percentage points), France (up 6 percentage points) and Malta (up 6 percentage points). Increases for EU-UK dual citizenship were likely influenced by a greater increase in residents from EU countries since 2011 but may also indicate greater take-up of dual citizenship for EU nationals. Croatia showed a decrease since 2011 (down 14 percentage points) as the country was not part of the EU in 2011 and those from Croatia may have been more likely to have dual citizenship with the UK in order to be a resident.

Non-EU passport holders showed much higher rates of dual citizenship, with New Zealand (49.2%), South Africa (49.0%) and Australia (47.4%) passport holders most likely to hold dual citizenship with the UK. Non-EU countries also saw similar increases since 2011, though proportionally, the dual citizenship rates were much more similar. Dual citizens with passports from Turkey saw a decrease in volume and proportion since 2011, indicating some emigration of Turkish-UK dual citizens.

### Figure 7: The proportion of dual citizenship among non-UK-born other passport holders increased since 2011

Percentage of non-UK-born dual citizens by other passport held, top 10 EU and non-EU passport holders with other-UK dual citizenship, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

Download the data

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## UK-born dual citizens

UK-born dual citizens held a variety of other passports. The top five UK-EU passports were primarily held by children or young adults, with Ireland having the only older population and the next four countries being much younger:

- Ireland (158,300, median age: 47 years)
- France (24,600, median age: 15 years)
- Germany (22,600, median age: 15 years)
- Poland (22,100, median age: 7 years)
- Italy (18,800, median age: 20 years)

The five most common non-EU passports and showing much greater variety in age were:

- Australia (51,500, median age: 39 years)
- United States (44,300, median age: 21 years)
- Nigeria (24,900, median age: 19 years)
- Canada (20,200, median age: 36 years)
- New Zealand (20,200, median age: 28 years)

The rates of dual citizenship were quite high among some UK-EU dual citizens, as shown in Figure 8, with a large proportion of those holding a passport from Malta (85.4%), Cyprus (84.5%), Germany (70.1%), Croatia (66.0%) and Ireland (63.1%) also having a UK passport. The proportion of dual citizens has increased substantially compared with 2011, with Germany (up 43 percentage points) and Ireland (up 39 percentage points) seeing the greatest increases.

There were especially high rates of dual citizenship among non-EU passport holders, with Australia (97.2%), New Zealand (96.8%), Thailand (95.4%) and Canada (95.1%) all above 95%. Rates of dual citizenship for UK-born non-EU passport holders were relatively similar in 2011, though all countries in the top 10 saw increases. UK and South Africa dual citizens saw the greatest increases among non-EU dual citizens (up 15 percentage points).

### **Figure 8: The proportion of dual citizenship for UK-born EU passport holders shows strong increases since 2011**

**Percentage of UK-born dual citizens by other passport held, top 10 EU and non-EU passport holders with UK dual citizenship, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales**

**Download the data**

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## 7 . Year of most recent arrival and national identity of dual citizens

People born outside of the UK were asked when they most recently arrived to live in the UK. However, this does not necessarily mean a person's first arrival in the UK. While the guidance stipulated not to include short trips away, this is open to interpretation and not all respondents may have applied the same definition of a "short visit".

When looking at the year of most recent arrival, the highest numbers of both EU (71,300) and non-EU (181,200) dual citizens arrived between 2001 and 2010. Looking at the national identity of dual citizens by arrival date can give an indication of how identity changes over time and how this differs between those who have taken up dual citizenship and those who have not.

Someone's national identity is a self-determined assessment of their own identity. It could be the country or countries where they feel they belong or think of as home. It is not dependent on ethnic group or citizenship. In Census 2021, respondents could select more than one national identity.

The national identities reported by non-UK-born dual citizens and single passport-holding usual residents, by year of most recent arrival, are compared in Figure 9. The longer dual citizens had lived in England and Wales, the more likely they were to report having a UK identity. Higher proportions of both EU and non-EU dual citizens who arrived before 1971 reported having a UK identity only, in comparison with those who arrived from 2011 to 2021.

Non-EU dual citizens who arrived over the last decade were more likely to report a UK identity only (45.1%) compared with EU dual citizens (34.9%), suggesting EU citizens had a stronger tie to their country of birth identity. When looking at dual citizens in comparison with single passport holders, the latter group were also more likely to report having a UK identity if they had lived in England and Wales for longer. However, this trend was more apparent for non-EU single passport holders.

Over all decades, higher proportions of EU dual citizens reported having both a UK and a non-UK identity in comparison with non-EU dual citizens.

### **Figure 9: Non-UK-born dual citizens who arrived most recently were most likely to report both a UK and non-UK national identity**

Percentage of national identity by year of arrival decade and passports held, all non-UK-born EU and non-EU passport holders, 2021, England and Wales

Download the data

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## 8 . Geography of dual citizens

### **Non-UK-born dual citizens**

The majority of non-UK-born dual citizens were residing in London and the South East of England. Compared with equivalent single passport holders, dual citizens were more likely to be located in London and the South East for both EU-UK and non-EU-UK dual citizens. Similar distributions among regions were shown in 2011, suggesting no significant changes beyond general increases.

Looking at all non-UK-born dual citizens by local authority in Figure 11, areas around London were the most likely to have dual citizens, with Winchester, Cotswold and St Albans also showing higher proportions.

### **Figure 10: Non-UK-born dual citizens with a UK and other passport were more likely to reside in London and the South East of England**

Percentage of other-UK dual citizens and single passport holders by region, non-UK-born other passport holders, 2021, England and Wales



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### Figure 11: Non-UK-born dual citizens were most common near London

Percentage of other-UK dual citizens by local authority, non-UK-born usual residents, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

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## UK-born dual citizens

The regions where the majority of UK-born dual citizens were residing were London and the South East of England. In comparison with UK-born single passport holders, all dual citizens were more likely to reside in the South East, while UK-EU dual citizens were also more concentrated in London. Looking at all non-UK-born dual citizens by local authority in Figure 13, areas around London were still the most likely to have dual citizens.

### Figure 12: All UK-born dual citizens were more likely to reside in the South East of England compared with single passport holders

Percentage of dual citizens and single passport holders by region, UK-born other passport holders, 2021, England and Wales

Download the data

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### Figure 13: UK-born dual citizens with UK and other passports are most common near London

Percentage of UK-other dual citizens by local authority, UK-born usual residents, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

Download the data

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## 9 . Dual citizens living in England and Wales: Census 2021 data

[Dual citizen population, England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 31 August 2023

Passports held, country of birth, age, sex, industry, year of arrival and national identity for dual passport holders in England and Wales.

## 10 . Glossary

## Usual resident

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.

## Dual citizen

A dual citizen (also known as a dual national) refers to an individual who holds citizenship for multiple countries. As the census data do not include nationality, passports held is used as a proxy to define dual citizens. This release focuses on UK dual citizens, referred to as follows:

- UK-other dual citizen: holding both a UK and one additional passport
- UK-EU dual citizen: holding both a UK and EU passport
- UK-non-EU dual citizen: holding both a UK and non-EU passport
- UK-Irish dual citizen: holding both a UK and Irish passport

To help distinguish UK-born and non-UK-born dual citizens in the article, they are referred to as UK-other dual citizens when looking at the UK-born or overall population and other-UK dual citizens when looking at the non-UK-born population.

## Naturalisation

Naturalisation is the legal process by which a person changes their nationality. The census data do not include nationality and so passports held is used as a proxy. Country of birth is used to indicate whether residents were entitled to UK citizenship at birth, and in this article a non-UK-born resident who holds a UK passport is considered to be a naturalised UK citizen. Some exceptions to this are those born overseas to UK citizens, such as births in overseas military bases.

## EU

EU is the sum of the European Union member countries including: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Malta, Cyprus and Croatia (from 1 July 2013).

Ireland is separated from the EU in some areas of this article because of the different relationship it has with the UK.

## Non-EU

Non-EU is the sum of the rest of the world including the rest of Europe.

## Multiple passports held

In this article, individuals are categorised by each combination of passports held. The 2011 Census and Census 2021 asked what passports were held, allowing us to view combinations of UK, Ireland and "Other" passports held. Respondents were only able to include one "Other" passport in the Census 2021 form.

Census 2021 releases reporting on the passports held variable without passport combinations categorise in the following priority order for statistical purposes to prevent double-counting residents:

- UK passport
- Irish passport
- other country passport

For example, a dual citizen who holds both an EU and a UK passport is not classified in this analysis as a non-UK passport holder.

For further information, please read our [Guidance on using country of birth, nationality, and passports held data methodology](#).

## 11 . Data sources and quality

Census 2021 provides the most detailed picture of the entire population, with the same core questions asked to everybody across England and Wales. Census 2021 results can be more reliable than survey results based on a sample of the population, because the whole population is included. The UK Statistics Authority has assigned [National Statistics](#) status to Census 2021 outputs, providing assurance that these statistics are of the highest quality and value to users.

Census 2021 achieved a very high response rate of 97%. We ensure Census 2021 results reflect the whole population by using statistical methods to estimate the number and characteristics of people who were not recorded on a census response. This means that the Census 2021 statistics are estimates rather than simple counts of responses, so they have some statistical uncertainty associated with them. We take numerous steps to minimise possible sources of error.

Additionally, we apply statistical disclosure control to protect the confidentiality of Census 2021 respondents. Differences in the methods used for statistical disclosure control may result in minor differences in data totals between census products. As we round all figures individually, table totals may not sum exactly.

Quality considerations, along with the general strengths and limitations of Census 2021, are provided in our [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#).

Read more about the specific quality considerations in our [Demography and migration quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#) and our [Labour Market quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#).

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

## 12 . Related links

### [International migration, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 2 November 2022

International migration, including country of birth, passports held and year of arrival, Census 2021 data.

### [The changing picture of long-term international migration, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 27 January 2023

Analysis of the migrant population of England and Wales and how it has changed looking at the characteristics of country of birth and passports held.

### [The changing picture of short-term international migration, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 22 March 2023

Analysis of the short-term migrant population of England and Wales and how it has changed looking at the characteristics of country of birth and passports held.

### [The international student population in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 17 April 2023

Country of birth, age, sex, employment status, industry, housing type and language spoken for the international student population of England and Wales.

### [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: 13 March 2023](#)

Article | Released 13 March 2023

Comparing the percentages of adults in employment and other labour market data between Census 2021 and the Labour Force Survey, and reasons why they differ.

## 13 . Cite this article

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