

Article

Analysis of social characteristics of international migrants living in England and Wales: Census 2021

Country of birth, age, sex, housing, family, language, health, qualifications, religion, national identity and ethnicity for the non-UK-born population in England and Wales.



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1 . Main points

- As length of residency increased, those born outside the UK tended to have similar characteristics to those born in the UK, with many of the observed differences between these groups being attributed to age difference.
- The proportion of non-UK-born residents (43%) who lived in owner-occupied accommodation was lower than UK-born (67%); however, 57% of non-UK-born who had been in the UK for at least 10 years lived in owner-occupied accommodation.
- Most non-UK-born usual residents had high levels of English proficiency; 87% of recent arrivals between 2011 and 2021 reported speaking English very well or well, or having it as a main language.
- For those between the ages of 16 and 49 years, both EU-born and non-EU-born usual residents reported better health than UK-born.
- For non-EU-born usual residents, women were more likely than men to hold higher education qualifications (Level 4 or above) until age 54 years, while for EU-born this occurred for all those under the age of 80 years.
- Non-EU-born usual residents were more likely to report having a UK identity only compared with EU-born residents.

2 . Overview

International migration is an important driver of population change. Using Census 2021 data, international migration is typically defined by having a non-UK country of birth or holding a non-UK passport.

This article focuses on country of birth and defines international migrants as those current residents of England and Wales who were born outside the UK who have migrated to the UK at some point in the past. This group will include residents who were British at birth, but born abroad, as well as those who were born abroad then migrated to the UK and subsequently obtained a UK passport.

Our earlier release [The changing picture of long-term international migration, England and Wales: Census 2021](#) reported that for usual residents (hereafter referred to as residents) in England and Wales there were 10.0 million people born outside the UK: 3.6 million (36%) EU-born and 6.4 million (64%) non-EU-born. In Census 2021, of those born outside the UK, 43% held a UK passport.

3 . Age

This article explores various social characteristics of the migrant population, but it is important to note that all of these characteristics are affected by demographic characteristics such as sex and age.

Population pyramids

Figure 1 shows population pyramids for EU-born and non-EU-born compared with UK-born. The UK-born resident population has a very different age-sex distribution to the EU-born and non-EU-born resident populations, which are mainly people of working age.

Figure 1: EU-born and non-EU-born resident populations have younger age structures

Single year of age and sex by country of birth, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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Median age

The median age for UK-born was higher than those born abroad. EU-born residents were younger than the UK-born population, whereas non-EU-born residents were older. Females across all country of birth groupings had an older median age than males (Table 1).

Table 1: Median age of non-EU-born residents is higher in England compared with Wales
Median age by sex by country of birth, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Sex	EU-Born	Non-EU-Born (including British Overseas)	UK-Born
Female	37	42	41
Male	36	42	39

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

The regional breakdown of median age is fairly similar across all regions (Figure 2). London is the only region where the median age of UK-born residents was under 30 years, while the EU-born and non-EU-born median ages remain broadly comparable with other regions.

Figure 2: London is the only region where the UK-born population has a lower median age

Median age by country of birth and region, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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4 . Housing

Residence type

In 2021, 58,555,850 residents lived as part of a household. An additional 1,041,690 lived in communal establishments, of which 225,360 (22%) were non-UK-born and 816,330 (78%) were UK-born. This analysis only includes residents living in a household.

Tenure

Non-EU-born residents (47%) were more likely than EU-born (35%) to be in households that own (outright or with a mortgage) the accommodation they live in; this compares with 67% for UK-born (Figure 3).

Private rented housing levels, by country of birth group, were highest for EU-born at 53%, followed by non-EU-born (36%), and were lowest in the UK-born population (16%). Social rented housing levels were similar across the populations, although slightly lower for EU-born. Comparing 2021 with 2011, across all country of birth groupings, home ownership has decreased while private renting has increased and social renting has remained broadly stable.

Figure 3: Non-UK-born residents are less likely to be in households that own the accommodation they live in

Tenure type by country of birth, usual residents in households, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

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Recent arrivals were most likely to live in private rented accommodation. Residents who arrived longer ago were more likely to be in households who own their home (Figure 4). We see this change occurring more quickly in the non-EU-born. However, we do know other factors play a part in home ownership including age of arrival, income and geographical variations in house prices.

Figure 4: Home ownership increases for both EU-born and non-EU-born with length of stay

Tenure type by country of birth and year of arrival, usual residents in households, 2021, England and Wales

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Overall, the percentage of households who own their home increased as the age of the residents increased. The percentage of households who privately rent their accommodation decreased with age, while the proportion of those in the social rented sector remained broadly stable (Figure 5). The change from private rented to home ownership happened at younger ages for non-EU-born compared with EU-born.

Figure 5: Household ownership increases at a younger age for non-EU-born compared with EU-born

Tenure type by country of birth and age, usual residents in households, 2021, England and Wales

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Read more about country of birth and housing in our [Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics article](#).

5 . Family

Living arrangements

Living arrangements of residents by country of birth group are shown in Figure 6. Approximately 60% of residents lived in a couple, with it being most common to live in a married couple. Non-EU-born residents were more likely to live in a married couple (53%) than EU-born residents (35%), while EU-born residents had a higher proportion of residents living in couples that are cohabiting (not in a marriage or civil partnership; 21%) than non-EU-born residents (7%).

Residents who have never been married or in a civil partnership accounted for the largest proportion of those who do not live in a couple. EU-born and UK-born residents had a higher proportion of residents who have never been married or in a civil partnership (both 27%) than non-EU-born residents (20%), while there is less variation between country of birth groups in divorced, separated and widowed residents who do not live in a couple. These differences in living arrangements are likely influenced by other factors including age, and religious and cultural differences.

Figure 6: Non-EU residents have the highest proportion of citizens living in a couple

Living arrangements by country of birth group, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Notes:

1. Under 16s have been removed from the dataset.

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Living arrangements of non-UK-born residents differ by both age and country of birth (Figure 7). EU-born residents who live in a couple were more likely to be cohabiting than married from ages 16 to 34 years, while non-EU-born residents living in a couple were more likely to be married than cohabiting from ages 20 to 24 years onwards. Residents aged between 25 and 29 years had the highest proportion of those living in a couple that are cohabiting for both EU-born (37%) and non-EU-born (14%).

EU-born residents aged between 70 and 74 years had the highest proportion living in a married couple (53%) of all age groups. Non-EU-born had a larger proportion of residents living in a married couple in younger ages, highest among 40- to 49-year-olds (67%).

Non-EU-born residents aged between 16 and 19 years had a higher proportion living in communal establishments (19%) compared with EU-born-residents (13%). For those aged 85 years and over, there were slightly more EU-born residents living in communal establishments (8%) than non-EU-born (4%). Read more about living arrangements in our [People's living arrangements in England and Wales article](#).

Figure 7: Non-EU-born residents have a higher proportion of married couples living together in younger ages than EU-born residents

Living arrangements by country of birth group by age, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Notes:

1. Under 16s have been removed from the dataset.

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Family status

EU- and non-EU-born residents had a smaller proportion of dependent and non-dependent children than UK-born residents, and also had a higher proportion of residents aged under 66 years who are not in a family (Figure 8). This likely reflects the different age distribution of non-UK-born residents, as well as it being less likely for the parents of non-UK-born residents to also be in the UK, resulting in fewer non-UK-born children and more non-UK-born residents who do not meet the census definition of a family.

Figure 8: Non-UK-born residents have a smaller proportion of dependent and non-dependent children in their resident populations compared with UK-born residents

Family status by country of birth group, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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6 . Language

English proficiency

A high proportion of migrants had English as a main language or speak it well or very well; this can be seen by most recent year of arrival in Figure 9. Arrivals between 2011 and 2021 contained the highest percentage of residents who reported not speaking English well (11%) compared with 4% of arrivals before 1971 who reported not speaking English well.

As of Census 2021, the residents who arrived earliest were more likely to have English as a main language, with 84% of arrivals before 1971 reporting this compared with 37% of arrivals between 2011 and 2021. Recent arrivals tended to speak English well or very well, with 50% of arrivals between 2011 and 2021 reporting this. As of Census 2021, a very small proportion of non-UK-born residents reported not speaking English at all, around 1 to 2% in each arrival group.

Figure 9: Arrivals between 2011 and 2021 had the highest percentage of residents who did not speak English well

English proficiency of non-UK-born residents by year of arrival, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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Figure 10 shows reported English proficiency levels of residents from the top 10 individual non-UK-born countries of birth as of the date of Census 2021.

Some of these countries have English as an official language so as expected the levels of English proficiency were higher. For example, 100% of Ireland-born residents reported their main language as English or reported that they speak it very well or well.

Bangladesh-born residents had the lowest English proficiency from these countries, 38% had English as their main language and 37% reported speaking English very well or well (totalling 74% with high levels of English proficiency). This compares with 95% of the population of England and Wales having high levels of English proficiency, where main language is English (English or Welsh in Wales) or can speak English very well or well. For residents from all these countries we see a similar pattern of those arriving longer ago now more likely to report English as a main language.

Figure 10: High levels of English proficiency are seen across all top 10 country of birth groups

English proficiency by individual country of birth by year of arrival, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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Welsh language proficiency

Welsh language questions were only asked to those living in Wales at the time of Census 2021. Wales-born residents were the most likely to have Welsh-speaking skills (22%), followed by UK-born (excluding Wales) at 8%. For EU- and non-EU-born residents living in Wales, 5% and 4% had Welsh-speaking skills, respectively (Figure 11).

Figure 11: EU- and non-EU-born residents in Wales have a smaller proportion of Welsh speakers compared with UK-born (excluding Wales) and Wales-born

Welsh-language speaking skills by country of birth, usual residents, 2021, Wales

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Across all country of birth groups, younger Welsh residents were more likely to be able to speak Welsh. In 2021, 10- to 15-year-olds had the highest proportion of Welsh speakers for UK-, EU- and non-EU-born at 37%, 27% and 22%, respectively (Figure 12).

There is a large decrease in the proportion of Welsh speakers for all residents aged 20 to 24 years onwards compared with younger ages, with less than 3% of EU- and non-EU-born residents speaking Welsh. From 20 years old, the proportion of Welsh speakers remained similar for all older age groups for EU- and non-EU-born residents.

Figure 12: Welsh-speaking ability is highest in children

Welsh-language speaking skills by country of birth and age, usual residents, 2021, Wales, compared with 2011 Census

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Household language

Of the 58.6 million residents in households in England and Wales, 86% of residents lived in a household where all adults in the household have English (English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language. For UK-born, this number was 94% compared with non-EU-born and EU-born at 48% and 34%, respectively (Figure 13).

For EU-born residents in households, 37% lived in a household where no people in the household have English (English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language; this compares with 21% for non-EU-born. However, among people in households where no one in the household had English as a main language, the majority of EU-born (82%) and non-EU-born (74%) could speak English very well or well.

Figure 13: EU-born residents were more likely to be part of households in which no member has English as their main language

Household language by country of birth, usual residents in households, 2021, England and Wales

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Residents born in Moldova, Syria, Romania, Dominican Republic or Bulgaria were most likely to live in a household where no people in the household have English (English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language. Many of these residents, however, could speak English very well or well, for example, 81% of Romania-born and 72% of Bulgaria-born residents (Figure 14).

Figure 14: English proficiency remains high even for the households where there were the highest numbers of residents from individual countries of birth where no members had English as their main language

Household language by English proficiency by individual country of birth, usual residents in households, 2021, England and Wales

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7 . Health

General health

The percentage of people reporting very good or good health declined with age across all country of birth groups (Figure 15). At ages 0 to 15 years, all country of birth groups had a similar level of health, however, between ages 16 and 49 years we see that the UK-born were less healthy than those born in EU or non-EU countries. It is not until age 75 years and over that we see a change in pattern, when UK-born were the most likely to report very good or good health.

Figure 15: Good health declines with age

Health by country of birth and age, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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Overall, the proportion of non-UK-born residents reporting fair health, or bad or very bad health increased with age. For example, by ages 75 years and over, only 44% reported very good or good health. Figure 16 shows the reported health status for residents from the top 60 individual non-UK-born countries of birth by age.

Figure 16: The youngest ages across most individual countries of birth are the healthiest

Health by individual country of birth, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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8 . Qualifications

Highest qualification

Our earlier release on [How qualification levels across England and Wales differ by country of birth](#) analyses highest qualification by variables including country of birth and region. This article stated that 44% of adult residents born outside the UK reported a higher education qualification in Census 2021, compared with 31% of UK-born residents.

This section focuses on higher education qualifications, defined as those classified as Level 4 qualifications or above. Examples of qualifications at Level 4 or above include: NVQ Level 4 or above, Higher National Certificate (HNC), foundation degree, professional qualifications (for example, teaching or nursing), Undergraduate degrees, Master's degrees, and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Figure 17 shows the percentage point difference in higher education qualification holders by sex, country of birth and age, with any values above zero indicating that there were more men than women holding these qualifications.

For residents up to age 54 years, across all country of birth groupings, there was a higher proportion of women holding higher education qualifications compared with men. For example, among EU-born and non-EU-born 23-year-olds, 8.4% and 7.6% more women, respectively, held higher education qualifications compared with men. From around age 30 years, the non-EU-born differences by sex began to narrow, resulting in a higher proportion of men holding higher education qualifications from the age of 54 years.

EU-born women were more likely to hold higher education qualifications compared with EU-born men across all ages, with the exception of those aged 80 years and over.

Figure 17: Among younger residents, women are more likely to hold higher education qualifications compared with men

Holders of higher education qualifications by country of birth, age and sex, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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Tables 2a and 2b show the proportion of higher education qualification holders for the top 60 individual non-UK-born countries of birth by sex. Out of the countries of birth with the highest proportion of men holding higher education qualifications compared with women, all of the top 10 are countries from Africa, and Middle East and Asia. Thailand shows the biggest disparity, with 44% of men holding higher education qualifications compared with 32% of women.

Out of the countries of birth with the highest percentage point difference in favour of women holding higher education qualifications, 7 of the top 10 are European countries, while 2 are from the Americas and the Caribbean. Women born in Albania had the highest proportion of higher education qualification holders compared with men, with a 13-percentage point difference.

Table 2a: Thailand had the most men holding higher education qualifications compared with women
Top 10 countries out of top 60 with highest proportion of men holding higher education qualifications compared with women, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Country of Birth	Level 4 qualifications or above: Male (percentage)	Level 4 qualifications or above: Female (percentage)	Gender difference: Male to Female (Percentage point difference)
Thailand	44%	32%	12
Bangladesh	30%	20%	10
Mauritius	53%	44%	9
Tanzania	47%	39%	8
Pakistan	34%	25%	8
Somalia	30%	22%	7
Kenya	47%	41%	7
Ghana	50%	44%	6
Eritrea	21%	15%	6
Japan	73%	69%	4

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Under 21s have been removed from the data.

Table 2b: Albania had the most women higher education qualification holders compared with men
 Top 10 countries out of top 60 with highest proportion of women holding higher education qualifications compared
 with men, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Country of Birth	Level 4 qualifications or above: Male (percentage)	Level 4 qualifications or above: Female (percentage)	Gender difference: Male to Female (Percentage point difference)
Albania	23%	36%	-13
Jamaica	21%	33%	-12
Poland	29%	42%	-12
Hungary	36%	47%	-12
Bulgaria	36%	45%	-9
Slovakia	28%	37%	-9
Latvia	26%	36%	-9
Iran	46%	55%	-9
Lithuania	31%	40%	-9
United States	67%	76%	-9

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Under 21s have been removed from the data.

9 . Religion

The religion question was voluntary and the proportion of residents who chose to not answer varied between the top 60 countries of birth, from 2.7% to 12.3%. This compares with 6% of all residents in England and Wales. Given these varying response rates, caution should be used when comparing data between countries of birth.

The highest and lowest percentages of residents reporting a religious affiliation by country of birth is shown in Table 3. The top 10 countries of birth with the highest percentage of residents with a religious affiliation were from Africa or the Middle East and Asia. Bangladesh-born residents had the highest percentage with a religious affiliation (94.9%), followed by Somalia-born (94.8%) and Pakistan-born (94.8%).

China-born residents had the lowest percentage with a religious affiliation (18.9%), although 9.7% chose not to answer the question (3.7 percentage points higher than all usual residents).

Table 3a: Bangladesh was the country of birth with the highest proportion of residents with a religious affiliation
Top 10 countries out of top 60 with highest proportion of residents with a religious affiliation, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Country of Birth	Reported a religious affiliation (percentage)	Reported no religion (percentage)	Not answered (percentage)
All Usual Residents	56.8%	37.2%	6.0%
Bangladesh	94.9%	1.1%	4.1%
Somalia	94.8%	0.8%	4.4%
Pakistan	94.8%	0.9%	4.3%
Eritrea	94.7%	1.2%	4.2%
Sri Lanka	94.2%	3.1%	2.7%
India	93.8%	2.9%	3.3%
Ghana	93.6%	2.9%	3.5%
Nigeria	93.6%	2.9%	3.5%
Afghanistan	93.4%	1.9%	4.7%
Sudan	93.3%	1.9%	4.8%

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Table 3b: China was the country of birth with the lowest proportion of residents with a religious affiliation
 Top 10 countries out of top 60 with lowest proportion of residents with a religious affiliation, usual residents, 2021,
 England and Wales

Country of Birth	Reported a religious affiliation (percentage)	Reported no religion (percentage)	Not answered (percentage)
All Usual Residents	56.8%	37.2%	6.0%
China	18.9%	71.4%	9.7%
Japan	32.0%	57.7%	10.3%
New Zealand	37.0%	57.0%	6.0%
Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)	40.6%	51.7%	7.8%
Australia	41.0%	53.1%	5.9%
Czechia	42.5%	49.1%	8.4%
Canada	47.5%	45.5%	7.0%
France	47.7%	42.0%	10.3%
Vietnam	49.4%	42.3%	8.2%
Sweden	50.2%	41.2%	8.7%

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

10 . National identity

The census question on national identity was introduced in 2011 because of increased interest in "national" consciousness and a demand for people to be able to acknowledge their national identity. The question allows respondents to select all identities that apply.

For both EU-born and non-EU-born residents, those who arrived in the UK earlier were more likely to describe their national identity as being one from the UK only (Figure 18). For example, 94% of non-EU-born residents who arrived before 1951 reported an identity from the UK only, compared with 81% for arrivals between 1981 and 1990, and 20% who arrived between 2011 and 2021.

Non-EU-born residents were more likely to report a UK-only identity than EU-born residents, though this difference was smaller for the most recent arrivals (from 2011 onwards), where reporting a UK-only identity is less common.

EU-born residents were more likely to report a non-UK-only identity if they arrived a long time ago compared with non-EU-born residents. For example, 39% of EU-born arrivals between 1961 and 1970 reported a non-UK-only identity, while only 8% of non-EU-born arrivals during this time reported a non-UK-only identity. Across both country of birth groups and all arrival years, a comparably small proportion of residents reported both a UK-only identity and non-UK identity only, with respondents tending to pick one or the other.

Figure 18: EU-born residents were more likely to report having a non-UK identity compared with non-EU-born residents

National identity by country of birth and year of arrival, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

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11 . Ethnic group

Among EU-born residents, 64.1% of people identified as "White: Other White", compared with 6.2% of the overall population (Figure 19). EU-born residents also had 15.2% identifying as "White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British" (compared with 74.4% of the overall population) and 7.4% as "White: Irish" (compared with 0.9%). There is also a higher percentage of EU-born residents who identified as "White: Roma" (2.0%) compared with the overall population (0.2%).

Non-EU-born residents were more ethnically diverse compared with EU-born and UK-born residents. Among them, 16.2% of people identified as "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Indian", 13.7% as "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African" and 11.6% as "White: Other White" (compared with 3.1%, 2.5% and 6.2% of the overall population, respectively).

Figure 19: EU-born residents were more than 10 times more likely to have identified as "White: Other White" than the overall population

Ethnicity by country of birth, usual residents, 2021, England and Wales

Download the data

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Acknowledgements

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12 . Social characteristics of international migrants: Census 2021 data

[Social characteristics of international migrants, England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 8 September 2023

Country of birth, age, sex, housing, family, language, health, qualifications, religion, national identity and ethnicity for the non-UK-born population in England and Wales.

13 . Glossary

Country of birth

The country in which a person was born.

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

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.

EU

EU is the sum of the EU14, EU8 and EU2, plus Malta, Cyprus and Croatia (from 1 July 2013).

EU2

EU2 is Romania and Bulgaria.

EU8

EU8 is Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

EU14

EU14 is Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

Other EU

Other EU is Malta, Cyprus and Croatia (from 2013).

Non-EU

Non-EU is the sum of the rest of the world including the rest of Europe. British nationals are excluded from these numbers.

Other non-EU

The category "Other non-EU" refers to the following list of countries:

Albania, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Cyprus (non-EU), Faroe Islands, Georgia, Guernsey, Iceland, Isle of Man, Jersey, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Svalbard and Jan Mayen, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Vatican City.

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.

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.

Family

A family is a married, civil partnered, or cohabiting couple with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child who lives in the same household. Children can be dependent or non-dependent. A family can have a mixture of dependent and non-dependent children. All families have a Family Reference Person (FRP).

Dependent child

A dependent child is a person aged 0 to 15 or a person aged 16 to 18 years who is in full-time education and lives in a family with their parent, parents, grandparent or grandparents. It does not include any person aged 16 to 18 years who has a spouse, partner or child living in the household.

Non-dependent child

Sometimes called "adult children", a non-dependent child is a person living with their parent(s) and who is either aged 19 years or over and has no spouse, partner or child living in the household, or aged 16 to 18 years and who is not in full-time education and has no spouse, partner or child living in the household.

Proficiency in English language

How well people whose main language is not English (English or Welsh in Wales) speak English.

Welsh-speaking ability

This classifies a person as being able to "speak Welsh". They may have also ticked one or more of the following:

- understand spoken Welsh
- read Welsh
- write Welsh

In results that classify people by Welsh-language skills, a person may appear in more than one category depending on which combination of skills they have.

Household language

Classifies households by the combination of adults and children (aged 3 to 15 years) within a household that have English (English or Welsh in Wales) as their main language.

General health

A person's assessment of the general state of their health from very good to very bad. This assessment is not based on a person's health over any specified period of time.

Higher education qualification

In Census 2021, qualifications were categorised in a series of levels. Higher education qualifications in England and Wales include all qualifications above Level 3 (A-levels and equivalent) and typically are undertaken from the age of 18 years or older.

Highest Qualification: Level 4 or above

While most people in this group are likely to hold a degree, this group also includes other higher education qualifications below degree level, such as Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND). The census did not collect information specifically on degree holders.

Examples of qualifications at Level 4 and above in Census 2021 were: degree, foundation degree, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master's degrees, Higher National Diploma (HND) or Higher National Certificate (HNC), NVQ Level 4 or above, professional qualifications (for example, teaching or nursing).

14 . Data sources and quality

The census provides the most detailed picture of the entire population, with the same core questions asked to everybody across England and Wales. Census 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 the census 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 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 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 strengths and limitations of Census 2021 more generally 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](#).

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

15 . 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.

[How qualification levels across England and Wales differ by country of birth](#)

Article | Released 15 May 2023

International migrants are more likely than UK-born residents to hold higher education qualifications, but this varies considerably by country of birth.

[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.

[Dual citizens living in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 31 August 2023

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

16 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 18 September 2023, ONS website, article, [Analysis of social characteristics of international migrants living in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)