

Article

Sikh identity, England and Wales: Census 2021

Exploring the outcomes of people who identified as Sikh compared with the usual resident population of England and Wales using Census 2021 data.



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Release date:
15 December 2023

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

- 525,865 people identified themselves as Sikh in Census 2021 (0.9% of the usually resident England and Wales population).
- 426,230 people identified as Sikh through the religion question alone, 1,725 through the ethnic group question alone and 97,910 through both questions in combination.
- Home ownership rates were high among people who identified as Sikh, with most residents reporting owning their home outright or having a mortgage, loan or shared ownership (77.7%), compared with 62.7% of the England and Wales population.
- Just under one in three people who identified as Sikh lived in multi-family or multi-generational households (29.9%) compared with 11.1% of the England and Wales population.
- People who identified as Sikh were more likely to be married than the England and Wales population (61.0% and 44.4%, respectively) and were more likely to have married younger.
- People who identified as Sikh made up the majority of Panjabi speakers in England and Wales, where 63.9% of Panjabi speakers identified as Sikh.

2 . Definition

In this article we refer to people who identified as Sikh as those who stated their religion, ethnic group, or both as Sikh on Census Day 21 March 2021.

This includes people who selected the "Sikh" tick-box under the religion question. It also includes people who reported "Sikh" through one of the write-in responses under any of the five high-level ethnic group categories.

More information on how people identified their ethnic group is in [Section 12: Glossary](#).

3 . People who identified as Sikh in Census 2021

In Census 2021, 525,865 usual residents in England and Wales identified their religion, ethnic group or both as Sikh (0.9% of the population).

Figure 1: Most people who identified as Sikh did so through the religion question

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh through religion, ethnic group or both, England and Wales, Census 2021

Notes:

1. Total may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The doughnut chart in Figure 1 shows:

- 426,230 people (81.1%) identified as Sikh through the religion question only
- 97,910 people (18.6%) identified as Sikh through the religion and ethnic group questions
- 1,725 people (0.3%) identified as Sikh through the ethnic group question only

This means, in total, 524,140 people identified as Sikh through the religion question. This is 99.7% of all people who identified as Sikh. So, our [published census data covering the religion question](#) covers nearly all people who identified as Sikh.

Of the people who identified as Sikh through ethnic group only, 55.4% did not report their religion, 13.6% reported their religion as Muslim, 12.5% reported no religion and 8.7% reported their religion as Christian.

Figure 2: Increase in people who identified as Sikh in Census 2021 compared with Census 2011

People who identified as Sikh in Census 2011 and Census 2021 split by how they identified, England and Wales, Census 2021

Notes:

1. For Census 2021, counts have been rounded to the nearest 5.

The slope chart in Figure 2 shows an increase in the number of people who identified as Sikh from 430,020 in Census 2011 to 525,865 in Census 2021. This is an increase of 22.3%, which is more than the England and Wales population increase of 6.3%.

Figure 3: People who identified as Sikh had a younger age profile compared with the England and Wales population

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh and the England and Wales population by age and sex, Census 2021

Notes:

1. Because of statistical disclosure controls, people aged 100 years and over have been grouped together.
2. To ensure individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest 5 and counts under 10 are excluded.

The population pyramid in Figure 3 shows that for the people who identified as Sikh, both the male and female population had a younger age profile than the England and Wales population, with a higher proportion of those who identified as Sikh around the ages of 30 to 50 years.

There were similar numbers of males and females who identified as Sikh in England and Wales; 50.1% were male, and 49.9% were female. For the England and Wales population, 49.0% were male and 51.0% were female.

Most people who identified as Sikh lived in England, with 521,805 residents in England who identified as Sikh. There was also a larger proportion of people who identified as Sikh in England (0.9% of the population of England) than Wales, where 4,065 people identified as Sikh (0.1% of the population of Wales).

Figure 4: West Midlands had the largest concentration of people who identified as Sikh

Percentage of those who identified as Sikh in each Lower Tier Local Authority (LTLA) in England and Wales, Census 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using the Sikh population as the denominator.
2. Owing to statistical disclosure rules, the following local authorities have been combined: Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, City of London and Westminster.
3. Figures are based on geography boundaries as of 1 April 2022.

The map in Figure 4 shows that out of the 10 Lower Tier Local Authorities (LTLAs) with the largest concentrations of individuals who identified as Sikh, five were in West Midlands (26.4% of those who identified as Sikh lived in either Sandwell, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall or Coventry), four were in Outer London (18.5% lived in either Ealing, Hillingdon, Hounslow or Redbridge), and one was in the South East (3.4% lived in Slough).

In Wales, the LTLAs with the largest percentages of individuals who identified as Sikh were Cardiff and Newport (0.3% and 0.1% of the total number of people who identified as Sikh in England and Wales, respectively).

4 . Housing

This section is about people living in households and communal establishments. The analysis looks at percentages of people, rather than percentages of households or communal establishments. This is because ethnic group and religion are individual. Therefore, the analysis differs from household-based census analysis, such as our [Housing: Census 2021 in England and Wales release](#).

Tenure

Figure 5: Higher percentages of home ownership among people who identified as Sikh

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by housing tenure type compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 5 shows that there were higher rates of home ownership among people who identified as Sikh (77.7%), compared with the England and Wales population (62.7%). This includes those who owned their home outright, with a mortgage or loan, or through shared ownership.

Accommodation type

Figure 6: People who identified as Sikh more likely to live in either detached or semi-detached housing

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by accommodation type compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 6 shows that for the people who identified as Sikh, 70.5% lived in detached or semi-detached housing, compared with 58.8% of the England and Wales population.

There was a smaller percentage of people who identified as Sikh living in flats, maisonettes or apartments (10.2%), as well as terraced housing (19.2%) compared with the England and Wales population (16.6% and 24.3%, respectively).

Occupancy rating for bedrooms

The occupancy rating for bedrooms provides a measure of whether accommodation is overcrowded or under-occupied. Accommodation is classed as overcrowded when the household has fewer bedrooms than required according to the Bedroom Standard. More information on how occupancy rating is defined can be found in [Section 12: Glossary](#).

Figure 7: People who identified as Sikh more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by bedroom occupancy rating compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 7 shows that those who identified as Sikh had higher proportions of people living in overcrowded accommodation, compared with the England and Wales population (14.9% and 8.4%, respectively).

Overcrowding was most reported for both populations who lived in either flats, maisonettes or apartments, or mobile temporary structures such as caravans. However, people who identified as Sikh were more likely to be living in overcrowded conditions in all accommodation types compared with the England and Wales population, including detached and semi-detached housing.

Living arrangements

The most common living arrangement of people who identified as Sikh and residents of England and Wales was "Single-family household: Couple-family household: Dependent children" (26.5% compared with 23.2% of the England and Wales population). This includes married or cohabiting couples or couples in a civil partnership with dependent children.

The second most common living arrangement for people who identified as Sikh was "Other household types: With dependent children", at 19.6% compared with 4.9% of the England and Wales population. This includes multi-family or multi-generational households with dependent children.

The household types that are most likely to include multi-family or multi-generational households are "Other household type: With dependent children" and "Other household type: Other family composition". Approximately one in three who identified as Sikh were categorised as either of these household types (29.9%), compared with 11.1% of the England and Wales population.

Communal establishments

For the people who identified as Sikh, 4,465 or 0.8% lived in communal establishments as of Census Day 2021, compared with 1.7% of the England and Wales population.

Of people who identified as Sikh, 11.6% of those living in communal establishments were living in care homes with or without nursing; this is a lower figure than the England and Wales population (33.3%).

Most of the people who identified as Sikh and were living in a communal establishment were living in university accommodation (62.5%); this is a higher rate than the England and Wales population (39.4%).

As those who identified as Sikh had a younger age structure, this may in part explain the lower percentages living in care homes and the higher percentages in university accommodation.

5 . Health, disability and unpaid care

Health

Of the people who identified as Sikh, 84.9% reported "Very good" health or "Good" health, compared with 82.0% of the England and Wales population. This may in part be explained by the younger age profile of those who identified as Sikh.

Figure 8: Older age groups who identified as Sikh more likely to report worse health outcomes than younger age groups, more so than the England and Wales population

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by reported health compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

Like the England and Wales population, the bar chart in Figure 8 shows that younger age groups who identified as Sikh were more likely to report better health outcomes than older age groups.

However, over the age of 55 years, people who identified as Sikh were less likely to report their health as "Very good" or "Good" than the England and Wales population. The largest difference was for people aged 75 to 79 years, where 42.7% of people who identified as Sikh reported having "Very good" or "Good" health, compared with 57.3% of the same age group in the England and Wales population.

The largest percentage difference between people who identified as Sikh and the wider England and Wales population who reported their health as "Very bad" or "Bad" was for over the age of 85 years (33.0% compared with 22.1%, respectively).

Disability

In line with the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#), people who assessed their day-to-day activities as limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses were considered disabled. Those who stated that they had a condition that did not limit their day-to-day activities or had no condition were considered non-disabled.

There was a lower percentage of people who identified as Sikh with a disability compared with the England and Wales population (10.7% compared with 17.5%, respectively).

Figure 9: People who identified as Sikh less likely to be disabled across most age groups

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by disability and age compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 9 shows that the largest difference between people who identified as Sikh and the England and Wales population was for those aged between 20 and 24 years, where 91.4% of people who identified as Sikh were "Non-disabled; no condition", compared with 80.6% of the England and Wales population of the same age.

The second largest difference was for people aged 85 years and over, where 15.0% of people who identified as Sikh were "Disabled; limited a little", compared with 21.7% of the England and Wales population of the same age.

Unpaid care

Providing unpaid care includes looking after or giving any help or support to anyone because they have a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness, or problems related to old age, excluding work as part of paid employment.

There were very few differences between the percentages of people who provided unpaid care among those who identified as Sikh and the England and Wales population. For example, for people that identified as Sikh, 8.4% provided unpaid care, compared with 8.9% of the England and Wales population.

6 . Education

Highest level qualification

In Census 2021, residents aged 16 years and over were asked to record their qualifications. More information about the different levels of qualifications can be found on our [Highest level of qualification variable: Census 2021 web page](#).

Around a third (36.7%) of people who identified as Sikh reported a Level 4 or above qualification, similar to the percentage for the England and Wales population (33.8%). Examples of these qualifications include Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications.

Of people who identified as Sikh, 22.5% reported having no qualifications, compared with 18.2% of the England and Wales population.

Figure 10: Older age groups more likely to have no qualifications among those who identified as Sikh and the England and Wales population

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by highest level qualification and age compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 10 shows that in all age bands above 25 years, a higher percentage of those who identified as Sikh reported no qualifications, compared with the England and Wales population.

Comparatively, there were higher percentages of those who identified as Sikh in the younger age bands (from 16 to 44 years) with a Level 4 or above qualification compared with the England and Wales population. From ages 45 years and over, the inverse is true with higher percentages obtaining a Level 4 or above qualification in the England and Wales population compared with those who identified as Sikh.

7 . Employment

This section looks at the employment status and occupation among those aged 16 to 64 years.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and it is possible that this affected the way people responded. See our [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: 13 March 2023 article](#) for further information about interpreting census labour market data.

Employment status

Of those aged 16 to 64 years who identified as Sikh, 70.0% were in employment (including self-employment), which is similar to the percentage for the England and Wales population (70.9%).

Figure 11: People who identified as Sikh and were economically inactive less likely to be long-term sick or disabled

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by employment status compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

Notes:

1. Only includes people aged 16 to 64 years as of Census Day 2021.

The bar chart in Figure 11 shows that people who identified as Sikh were less likely to be long-term sick or disabled (2.9%) and less likely to be retired (1.5%) compared with the England and Wales population (4.7% and 3.1%, respectively). This may in part be explained by the younger age structure of the population who identified as Sikh.

By contrast, people who identified as Sikh were more likely to be looking after the home or family (7.4%) or inactive for another reason (5.0%) compared with the England and Wales population (5.8% and 3.8%, respectively).

Occupation

For this section, we looked at the occupations of employed people aged 16 to 64 years (including self-employed).

The most common occupations among those who were employed and identified as Sikh were professional occupations, such as teachers and doctors (21.2%), followed by managers, directors and senior officials, including production managers and directors (14.1%).

There were similar percentages for the England and Wales population, where 20.4% were employed in professional occupations, and 12.6% were employed as managers, directors and senior officials.

Figure 12: Males who identified as Sikh less likely than male England and Wales population to be employed in skilled trades occupations

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by occupation and sex compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

Notes:

1. Only includes employed people aged 16 to 64 years as of Census Day 2021.

The bar chart in Figure 12 shows that 10.5% of males who identified as Sikh were employed in skilled trades occupations such as construction or building trades, compared with 17.6% of the male England and Wales population. It also shows that males who identified as Sikh were more likely to be employed as process, plant and machine operatives, such as delivery drivers (15.7% compared with 11.6% of the male England and Wales population).

Females who identified as Sikh were less likely than the female England and Wales population to be employed in caring, leisure and other service occupations, such as childcare support and hairdressers (10.6% compared with 15.8%, respectively).

8 . Cultural identity

Language

For main language, we looked at individuals aged three years and over in England and Wales.

The most common main language for people who identified as Sikh was English (English or Welsh in Wales) at 62.1%, compared with 91.1% of the England and Wales population. The second most common main language for people who identified as Sikh was Panjabi (36.6%). In comparison, only 0.5% of the England and Wales population reported Panjabi as their main language.

Those that identified as Sikh were the majority of Panjabi speakers in England and Wales (63.9%). Panjabi is the native language of the Panjabi people who primarily reside in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan.

Older age groups who identified as Sikh were more likely to report their main language as Panjabi than younger age groups. For example, only 23.4% of those aged 20 to 24 years listed their main language as Panjabi, and 74.8% listed their main language as English (English or Welsh in Wales). In comparison, 85.7% of those aged 85 years and over reported their main language as Panjabi, and 13.9% reported their main language as English (English or Welsh in Wales).

English language proficiency

For English language proficiency, we explored individuals aged three years and over in England and Wales.

For those who identified as Sikh and whose main language was not English (English or Welsh in Wales), just over three in four could speak English well or very well (76.2%), a similar rate to the England and Wales population whose main language was not English (79.7%).

Figure 13: Older people who identified as Sikh more likely to not speak English than younger people

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by English language proficiency and age compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 13 shows that older residents who identified as Sikh whose main language was not English were more likely to say they could not speak English compared with younger residents. For those aged 85 years and over who identified as Sikh, 27.9% stated that they could not speak English, compared with 23.1% of the England and Wales population aged over 85 years.

In comparison, for those aged 20 to 24 years who identified as Sikh, only 0.7% of the age group stated that they could not speak English.

National identity

The question on national identity allows respondents to select all identities that apply. The term "only" refers to those who selected with a single national identity.

In England, the most common national identity for those who identified as Sikh was British only with approximately three in four of those who identified as Sikh reporting this (74.7%), followed by Indian (13.4%).

In Wales, the three most common national identities for those who identified as Sikh was British only (48.1%), Welsh only (16.4%) and Indian (13.4%).

Among those who identified as Sikh in England and Wales, younger age groups were more likely to identify as British only than older age groups. For example, for those aged 20 to 24 years, 73.6% identified as British only and 12.9% identified as Indian. In comparison, 60.0% of those aged 85 years and over identified as British only, and 32.8% identified as Indian.

9 . Country of birth

Of those who identified as Sikh, 56.5% were born in England and 34.1% were born in India. The next most common countries of birth were Kenya (2.5%) and Afghanistan (2.5%).

In contrast, for the England and Wales population, England was the most common country of birth at 77.3% of the population, followed by Wales at 4.5%. Of the England and Wales population, 1.5% were born in India.

The majority of non-UK born people who identified as Sikh and had a year of arrival of 2020 to 2021 (the year before Census Day) were born in India (87.6%). This was followed by Italy (4.1%) and Afghanistan (2.5%).

Of people who identified as Sikh and were born in India, a similar percentage arrived in England or Wales between the years of 2001 and 2010 (20.5%), and between the years of 1961 and 1970 (20.0%).

10 . Marital or civil partnership status

For marital or civil partnership status, we explored individuals aged 16 years and over in England and Wales.

For people who identified as Sikh, 61.0% of those aged 16 years and over were married or in a civil partnership, compared with 44.6% of the England and Wales population. However, over half of people who identified as Sikh were married (61.0%) and only 0.1% were registered in a civil partnership, compared with 44.4% and 0.2% of the England and Wales population, respectively.

The second most common marital status was "Never married or never registered in a civil partnership", at 26.3% of those who identified as Sikh, compared with 37.9% of the England and Wales population.

Figure 14: People who identified as Sikh more likely to be married or in a civil partnership in younger age groups

Percentage of people who identified as Sikh by marital or civil partnership status compared with the England and Wales population, Census 2021

The bar chart in Figure 14 shows that people who identified as Sikh were more likely to be married or registered in a civil partnership younger, and less likely to be divorced across all age groups compared with the England and Wales population.

The largest difference between people who identified as Sikh and the England and Wales population was for those aged 35 to 39 years, where 75.3% of people who identified as Sikh were married, compared with 50.8% of people aged 35 to 39 years in England and Wales.

11 . Sikh identity data

[Sikh identity by age and sex in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by age and sex across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by country of birth in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by country of birth, with age, sex and year of arrival breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by education in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by highest level qualification, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by health and disability in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by health and disability, with age and sex, breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by unpaid care provision in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by unpaid care provision, with age and sex, breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by language and cultural identity in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by main language, English language proficiency and national identity, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by housing in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by tenure, accommodation type, bedroom occupancy rating and communal establishments, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by living arrangements in England and Wales : Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by living arrangements, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by marital status in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by marital status, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

[Sikh identity by labour market breakdowns in England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 15 December 2023

Census 2021 data: Sikh identity by economic status and occupation, with age and sex breakdowns across different geographical areas.

12 . 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

More information about accommodation types

Flats (apartments) and maisonettes: an apartment is another word for a flat; a maisonette is a two-storey flat.

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

Age bands

A person's age on Census Day, 21 March 2021, in England and Wales. Infants aged under 1 year are classified as aged 0 years.

Country of birth

The country in which a person was born. For people not born in one of the four parts of the UK, there was an option to select "elsewhere". People who selected "elsewhere" were asked to write in the current name for their country of birth.

Disability

In Census 2021, people who assessed their day-to-day activities as limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses were considered disabled. This definition of a disabled person meets the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard for measuring disability and is in line with the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#). This requires that a person has a physical or mental impairment, and that the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Therefore, those reporting conditions that limited their day-to-day activities a little or a lot were classified as disabled. People who had no long-term physical or mental health conditions, or who had conditions that did not limit their day-to-day activities were classified as non-disabled.

For more information, see our [Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Employment status

People are economically active if, between 15 March and 21 March 2021, they were:

- in employment (an employee or self-employed)
- unemployed, but looking for work and could start within two weeks
- unemployed, but waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted

It is a measure of whether or not a person was an active participant in the labour market during this period.

For more information, see our [Economic activity status, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Economically inactive are people who did not have a job between 15 March to 21 March 2021 and had not looked for work between 22 February to 21 March 2021, or could not start work within two weeks.

People are inactive if they were recorded as being one of the following:

- retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- studying
- looking after home or family
- long-term sick or disabled
- another reason

For information on how a respondent's reason for inactivity was recorded, please read our [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: 13 March 2023 article](#).

Because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the UK labour market, the estimated number of people who were economically inactive might be higher than anticipated in some areas. It is possible that some people on furlough may have identified as economically inactive, instead of temporarily away from work.

English language proficiency

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

Ethnic group

"Ethnic group" refers to the ethnic group that the person completing the census feels they belong to. This could be based on their culture, family background, identity or physical appearance.

Respondents could choose 1 out of 19 tick-box response categories, including write-in response options.

There were two stages to the ethnic group question. The respondent identifies first through one of the following high-level options before selecting a tick-box:

- "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African"
- "Mixed or Multiple"
- "White"
- "Other ethnic group"

Some of the tick-boxes required further identification through a write-in response.

To see the ethnic group question on the household, individual and Welsh questionnaires, visit our [Census 2021 paper questionnaires page](#).

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.

For more information, see our [General health, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Highest level of qualification

The highest level of qualification is derived from the question asking people to indicate all qualifications held, or their nearest equivalent. This is used to calculate the highest level of qualification (so, the highest level of qualification that an individual reported irrespective of previous qualifications listed) using the following categories:

- No qualifications – no formal qualifications
- Level 1 and entry level qualifications – one to four GCSEs grade A* to C , any GCSEs at other grades, O levels or CSEs (any grades), one AS level, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic or Essential Skills
- Level 2 qualifications – five or more GCSEs (A* to C or 9 to 4), O levels (passes), CSEs (grade 1), School Certification, one A level, two or three AS levels, VCEs, Intermediate or Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First or General Diploma, RSA Diploma
- Apprenticeship
- Level 3 qualifications – two or more A levels or VCEs, four or more AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression or Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
- Level 4 qualifications or above – degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)
- Other – vocational or work-related qualifications, other qualifications achieved in England or Wales, qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)

For further information, see [Section 8: Measuring the data of our Education, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Household family composition and living arrangements

Households according to the relationships between members.

Single-family households are classified by the number of dependent children and family type (married, civil partnership or cohabiting couple family, or lone-parent family).

Other households are classified by the number of people, the number of dependent children and whether the household consists only of students or only of people aged 66 years and over.

Housing tenure

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

Owner-occupied accommodation can be:

- owned outright, which is where the household owns all of the accommodation
- owned 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
- lived in rent free, which is where the household does not own the accommodation and does not pay rent to live there, for example, living in a relative or friend's property or live-in carers or nannies

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

Main language

A person's first or preferred language.

Respondents could tick English (or English or Welsh in Wales) or write in another option, including British Sign Language.

For more information, see our [Language, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

National identity

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.

Respondents could select more than one national identity.

For more information, see our [National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Occupancy rating bedrooms

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

The number of bedrooms the household requires is calculated according to the Bedroom Standard, where the following should have their own bedroom:

- adult couple
- any remaining adult (aged 21 years or over)
- two males (aged 10 to 20 years)
- one male (aged 10 to 20 years) and one male (aged nine years or under), if there is an odd number of males aged 10 to 20 years
- one male aged 10 to 20 years if there are no males aged zero to nine years to pair with him
- repeat steps three to five for females
- two children (aged nine years or under) regardless of sex
- any remaining child (aged nine years or under)

An occupancy rating of:

- negative 1 or less implies that a household's accommodation has fewer bedrooms than required (overcrowded)
- plus 1 or more implies that a household's accommodation has more bedrooms than required (under-occupied)
- 0 suggests that a household's accommodation has an ideal number of bedrooms

Occupation

Classifies what people aged 16 to 64 years do as their main job. Their job title or details of activities they do in their job and any supervisory or management responsibilities form this classification. This information is used to code responses to an occupation using our [Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) 2020](#).

It classifies people who were in employment between 15 and 21 March 2021 by the SOC code that represents their current occupation.

In this publication, we use nine "high-level" categories for the types of work people do:

- "managers, directors or senior officials"
- "professional occupations"
- "associate professional and technical occupations"
- "administrative and secretarial occupations"
- "skilled trades occupations"
- "caring, leisure and other services"
- "sales and customer service"
- "process, plant and machine operation"
- "elementary occupations"

For more information, see our [Industry and occupation, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Religion

The religion people connect or identify with (their religious affiliation), whether or not they practise or have belief in it.

This question was voluntary, and the variable includes people who answered the question, including "No religion", alongside those who chose not to answer this question.

This variable classifies responses into the eight tick-box response options. Write-in responses are classified by their "parent" religious affiliation, including "No religion", where applicable.

For more information, see our [Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Sex

This is the sex recorded by the person completing the census. The options were "Female" and "Male".

Sikh

Recorded by the person completing the census. Respondents could choose to self-identify as Sikh through their religion, ethnic group, or both. To do this, respondents had to identify through the "Sikh" tick-box under the religion question or one of the write-in responses under any of the five high-level ethnic group categories.

Unpaid care

A person is a provider of unpaid care if they look after or give help or support to anyone because of long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age. This does not include any activities as part of paid employment. No distinction is made about whether any care that a person provides is within their own household or outside the household.

For more information, see our [Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

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

13 . Data Sources and quality

Census data collection and response rate

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.

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% in England and Wales and 80% in all local authorities.

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, can be found in our [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#).

14 . Related links

[Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion: data and analysis](#)

Web page | Last updated 13 December 2023

List of Census 2021 analysis reports we have published or plan to publish about ethnic group, national identity, language and religion.

[Small populations, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 25 September 2023

Statistics about small population groups, defined by ethnic group, religion, national identity, main language, or country of birth, Census 2021 data.

[Ethnic group differences in health, employment, education and housing shown in England and Wales' Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 15 March 2023

Life outcomes vary a lot between ethnic groups. Using the England and Wales Census 2021, we look at variations in health, disability, overcrowding and home ownership, as well as levels of education and employment.

[Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion analysis plans](#)

Web page | Last updated 19 July 2023

Web page detailing the analysis we plan to publish on the topics of ethnic group, national identity, language and religion.

[Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 23 January 2023

Information from Census 2021 on the sex and age characteristics of ethnic groups and how this has changed since 2011 in England and Wales.

15 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 15 December 2023, ONS website, article, [Sikh identity, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)