

Statistical bulletin

# Industry and occupation, England and Wales: Census 2021

Industries that people are employed in, types of work people do as their main job and social grades, Census 2021 data.



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# 1 . Main points

This page is also available in [Welsh \(Cymraeg\) \(PDF, 518KB\)](#).

- Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures will have affected the labour market topic.
- Take care when using these data for planning and policy purposes.
- The largest number of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before Census Day, 21 March 2021, worked within the broad wholesale, retail and motor trade industry (15.0%, 4.2 million out of 27.8 million in employment).
- Employment in the manufacturing industry decreased by 1.6 percentage points (7.3%, 2.0 million in 2021, compared with 8.9%, 2.4 million in 2011), whereas employment in human health and social work activities increased by 2.2 percentage points (14.7%, 4.1 million in 2021, compared with 12.5%, 3.3 million in 2011).
- More people were employed in professional occupations compared with any other broad occupation categories (20.2%, 5.6 million people).
- The most common socio-economic classification in England and Wales was lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations (19.9% of usual residents aged 16 years and over, 9.7 million).

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## 2 . Industry

In England and Wales, there were 27.8 million usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment in the week before Census Day, 21 March 2021 (57.2% of all usual residents aged 16 years and over).

The [broad industries](#) that employed the largest numbers of people in England and Wales at the time of Census 2021 were:

- wholesale, retail and motor trade (15.0% of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, 4.2 million)
- human health and social work activities (14.7%, 4.1 million)
- education (9.8%, 2.7 million)
- construction (8.7%, 2.4 million)
- manufacturing (7.3%, 2.0 million)

The broad industry that saw the greatest percentage point increase in employment in England and Wales was human health and social work activities (2.2 percentage point increase, from 12.5%, 3.3 million in 2011 to 14.7%, 4.1 million in 2021). The percentage point increase was greater in Wales (from 14.4% in 2011 to 17.0% in 2021) than in England (from 12.4% in 2011 to 14.6% in 2021).

Employment in the manufacturing industry in England and Wales decreased by 1.6 percentage points (from 8.9%, 2.4 million in 2011 to 7.3%, 2.0 million in 2021), the largest decrease of any broad industry. Wales had a greater percentage point decrease (from 10.5% in 2011 to 8.7% in 2021) than England (from 8.9% in 2011 to 7.3% in 2021).

The industry classification can be broken down further into [divisions](#), to provide an even more detailed overview of employment by industry. This breakdown shows that in England and Wales overall, large industry divisions included:

- retail trade (except of motor vehicles and motorcycles), which employed 10.2% (2.8 million) of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment
- human health activities (8.9%, 2.5 million)
- social work activities without accommodation (4.2%, 1.2 million)
- food and beverage service activities (4.1%, 1.2 million)

## Figure 1: The top 10 industry divisions have remained relatively unchanged

**Top 10 industry divisions in 2021 with 2011 figures for comparison, usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, England and Wales**

**Download the data**

[.xlsx](#)

Industry divisions in England and Wales with percentage point increases in employment between 2011 and 2021 included:

- human health activities (from 6.8%, 1.8 million in 2011 to 8.9%, 2.5 million in 2021)
- computer programming, consultancy and related activities (from 1.9%, 516,000 in 2011 to 2.8%, 790,000 in 2021)

The industry divisions with the largest percentage point decreases included:

- financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding (from 2.4%, 644,000 in 2011 to 1.7%, 483,000 in 2021)
- retail trade (except of motor vehicles and motorcycles) (from 10.7%, 2.9 million in 2011 to 10.2%, 2.8 million in 2021)

### 3 . Occupation

In Census 2021, respondents aged 16 years and over were asked for their full job titles (for their main job, or if not working their last main job) and the main activity of their employer. The answers they gave were coded using the [Standard Occupational Classification 2020](#).

The data published with this statistical bulletin include occupational data broken down into 104 minor groups. These can be combined into the following nine high-level occupational categories:

- managers, directors and senior officials (minor groups including production managers and directors; managers and directors in retail and wholesale; chief executives and senior officials)
- professional occupations (minor groups including teaching and other educational professionals; information technology professionals; nursing and midwifery professionals)
- associate professional and technical occupations (minor groups including sales, marketing and related associate professionals; artistic, literary and media occupations; welfare and housing associate professionals)
- administrative and secretarial occupations (minor groups including secretarial and related occupations; administrative occupations in finance)
- skilled trades occupations (minor groups including construction and building trades; food preparation and hospitality trades; agricultural and related trades)
- caring, leisure and other service occupations (minor groups including caring personal services; teaching and childcare support occupations; hairdressers and related services)
- sales and customer service occupations (minor groups including sales assistants and retail cashiers; customer service occupations)
- process, plant and machine operatives (minor groups including road transport drivers; process operatives)
- elementary occupations (minor groups including elementary cleaning occupations; elementary storage occupations)

In England and Wales, 20.2% of all usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment were employed in professional occupations (5.6 million), making it the largest broad occupation category. In addition, over 3.5 million people were employed in associate professional and technical occupations (13.2%, 3.7 million) and as managers, directors and senior officials (12.8%, 3.5 million) respectively.

A larger percentage in England were employed in professional occupations (20.3% of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment) compared with Wales (18.2%).

Over a fifth of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment were working in professional occupations in London (25.8%) and the South East (21.2%), the largest percentages of all English regions. In the same regions, large percentages of usual residents aged 16 years and over were employed as managers, directors and senior officials (14.6% in London, 14.9% in the South East) and in associate professional and technical occupations (15.3% in London, 14.3% in the South East).

How employment in broad occupational categories varied in England and in Wales is shown in Figure 2.

#### **Figure 2: More people were employed in professional occupations than in any other occupational category**

**Occupation, usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the census, 2021, England, Wales**

## Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Using the 104 categories in our detailed classification, we can understand more about the occupations people were employed in. In England and Wales, the minor occupational groups with the largest numbers of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment included:

- caring personal services (5.0%, 1.4 million)
- sales assistants and retail cashiers (4.7%, 1.3 million)
- functional managers and directors (3.5%, 983,000)
- teaching and other educational professionals (3.5%, 962,000)
- road transport drivers (3.4%, 938,000)

## 4 . National Statistics Socio-economic Classification

The [National Statistics Socio-economic Classification \(NS-SEC\)](#) provides an indication of socio-economic position, based on responses to economic activity status, occupation and employment history questions in Census 2021. It is an Office for National Statistics standard classification.

In England and Wales, all usual residents aged 16 years and over were coded to one of the following broad NS-SEC categories:

- higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (13.1%, 6.4 million)
- lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations (19.9%, 9.7 million)
- intermediate occupations (11.4%, 5.6 million)
- small employers and own account workers (10.6%, 5.1 million)
- lower supervisory and technical occupations (5.4%, 2.6 million)
- semi-routine occupations (11.4%, 5.5 million)
- routine occupations (12.1%, 5.9 million)
- never worked and long-term unemployed (8.5%, 4.1 million)
- full-time students (7.7%, 3.7 million)

How the percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in each NS-SEC category varied in England and in Wales is shown in Figure 3.

### **Figure 3: Around one-fifth of the adult population were in the NS-SEC category “lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations”**

NS-SEC, usual residents aged 16 years and over, 2021, England, Wales

## Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

## 5 . Industry and occupation data

### [Industry](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Census 2021 estimates that classify usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the census in England and Wales by industry. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

### [NS-SEC](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Census 2021 estimates that classify usual residents aged 16 years and over in England and Wales by National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC). The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

### [Occupation](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Census 2021 estimates that classify usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the census in England and Wales by occupation. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

### [Occupation - minor groups](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Census 2021 estimates that classify usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the census in England and Wales by occupation. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

## 6 . Glossary

### **Economic activity**

People aged 16 years and over 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. Economically inactive are those aged 16 years and over 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.

The census definition differs from International Labour Organization definition used on the Labour Force Survey, so estimates are not directly comparable.

### **Industry**

Classifies people aged 16 years and over who were in employment between 15 March and 21 March 2021 by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code that represents their current industry or business.

The SIC code is assigned based on the information provided about a firm or organisation's main activity.

## NS-SEC

The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) indicates a person's socioeconomic position based on their occupation and other job characteristics.

It is an Office for National Statistics standard classification. NS-SEC categories are assigned based on a person's occupation, whether employed, self-employed, or supervising other employees.

Full-time students are recorded in the "full-time students" category regardless of whether they are economically active.

## Occupation

Classifies what people aged 16 years and over 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 the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020.

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

The lowest level of detail available is the four-digit SOC code which includes all codes in three, two and one digit SOC code levels.

## 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.

# 7 . Measuring the data

## Reference date

The census provides estimates of the characteristics of all people and households in England and Wales on Census Day, 21 March 2021. It is carried out every 10 years and gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales.

Labour market data mainly refer to respondents' activity in the last seven days; this refers to 15 to 21 March 2021. In the unemployment and economically inactive groups, the four weeks a person has been looking for a job in are from 21 February to 21 March 2021, and they must be able to start a job in the next two weeks, 21 March to 4 April 2021.

We are responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales but will also release outputs for the UK in partnership with the Welsh Government, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The census in Northern Ireland was also conducted on 21 March 2021, whereas Scotland's census was moved to 20 March 2022. All UK census offices are working closely together to understand how this difference in reference dates will impact UK-wide population and housing statistics, in terms of both timing and scope.

## Response rate

The [person response rate](#) is the number of usual residents for whom individual details were provided on a returned questionnaire, divided by the estimated usual resident population.

The [person response rate](#) for Census 2021 was 97% of the usual resident population of England and Wales, and over 88% in all local authorities. The majority of returns (89%) were received online. The response rate exceeded our target of 94% overall and 80% in all local authorities.

Read more about question-specific response rates at local authority level in [Section 4 of our measures showing the quality of census 2021 estimates](#).

## Industry employment

People in employment were asked to provide their job title and the main activity of their organisation, business, or freelance work. This information was then used to derive the industry in which they worked. This measure of industry employment differs from the measure used in other business surveys, which may lead to different counts of the population in employment.

## Occupational group

Information which people in employment provided about their job title and main activity could also be used to assign usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment to an occupational group.

# 8 . Strengths and limitations

## Labour market quality information

Census 2021 took place during a period of rapid change. We gave extra guidance to help people on furlough answer the census questions about work. However, we are unable to determine how furloughed people followed the guidance. Take care when using these data for planning purposes. Read more about specific quality considerations in our [Labour market quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#).

## Labour market definitions

As the census uses different labour market definitions from those that the Labour Force Survey uses, the estimates differ between these two sources. You can find further information in our article [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: March 2021](#).

## Standard Occupational Classification

Census 2021 data were classified using the 2020 update of the Standard Occupational Classification, while Census 2011 used the 2010 version. These two classifications are not directly comparable because of changes in the way many occupations were classified. More information is found in the [SOC 2020 user guide](#).

## Employment by industry

Census estimates of the number of people employed by industry differ from estimates from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). BRES collects data directly from business. In contrast, Census relies on respondent information about the business they work for in their main job only. The BRES estimates are the preferred measure of the number of jobs within each industry while the Census estimates allow analysis of characteristics of people working in each industry not possible with the BRES data.

## General

You can find the strengths and limitations of Census 2021 more generally in our [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#).

## Quality assurance

Details of the quality assurance processes that we used for Census 2021 are available in our [How we assured the quality of Census 2021 estimates methodology](#).

You can also read about our quality assurance processes in our [Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates methodology](#).



## 9 . Related links

### [Census maps](#)

Interactive content | Updated 8 December 2022

Interactive map tool that visualises Census 2021 data on different topics down to a local authority area and neighbourhood level.

### [Labour market quality information for Census 2021](#)

Methodology | Released 8 December 2022

Known quality information affecting labour market data from Census 2021 in England and Wales.

### [Labour market variables Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 8 December 2022

Variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about labour market.

### [Labour market and travel to work in Wales \(Census 2021\)](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 December 2022

A summary by Welsh Government of Census 2021 data about the labour market and travel to work in Wales.

## 10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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