

Article

Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021

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



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1 . Main points

- In 2021, the average (median) age across the 19 tick-box ethnic groups ranged from 16 years for the “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian” and “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African” to 54 years for people who identified as “White: Irish”.
- Nearly a third (32.1%) of those who identified their ethnic group as “White: Irish” were aged 65 years and over, this compares with nearly a fifth (18.6%) of the overall population in England and Wales who were aged 65 years and over.
- Nearly half of those who identified as “White and Asian” (48.1%) and “White and Black African” (48.6%), within the “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups”, were aged 0 to 15 years, substantially higher than 18.5% of the overall population of England and Wales who were aged 0 to 15 years.
- The highest percentage of males was seen in the “White: Roma” ethnic group (55.4%), this compares with 49.0% of the overall population who were male.
- The highest percentage of females was seen in the “Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Chinese” ethnic group (55.2%), this compares with 51.0% of the overall population who were female.
- Through the write-in functionality of the ethnic group question, it has been possible to provide average (median) ages for 287 ethnic groups that ranged from 6 years for the 2,000 people who identified as “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Mixed South Asian” to 65 years for the 2,070 people who identified as “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Anglo Indian”.

2 . The ethnic group question’s two stages

Since 1991, the census for England and Wales has included a question about ethnic group.

In 2021, the ethnic group question had two stages. Firstly, a person identified through one of the following five high-level ethnic groups:

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

Secondly, a person identifies through 1 of the 19 available response options, which include categories with write-in response options. For more information on question structure, see [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#).

3 . Ethnic group by age

People who identified within the “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” had the youngest average age across high-level ethnic groups

In 2021, the average (median) age across the five high-level ethnic groups ranged from 19 years for those who identified within “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” to 43 years for those who identified within the “White” ethnic group. Comparatively, the median age for the overall population of England and Wales was 40 years.

Figure 1: Average (median) age increased for all five high-level ethnic groups

Average (median) age by high-level ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021

Notes:

1. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.

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When considering the 19 ethnic groups, there was a greater range in median age that ranged from 16 years for those who identified as "White and Asian", and "White and Black African" within the "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups" to 54 years for those who identified as "White: Irish".

Figure 2: Average age was highest for the "White: Irish" ethnic group

Average (median) age by 19 tick-box ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021

Notes:

1. There was no "Roma" ethnic group tick-box in 2011. It is not possible to know how people who identified as "Roma" in 2021 identified their ethnic group in 2011.
2. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.

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Between 2011 and 2021, the median age for the overall population of England and Wales increased from 39 years to 40 years. While median age also increased for most of the 19 ethnic groups, the median age decreased for the "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian" and "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Other Black" ethnic groups (from 17 years to 16 years and 23 years to 19 years, respectively). Meanwhile, the median age for "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African" remained consistent between 2011 and 2021 at 16 years.

4 . Ethnic group by sex

In line with the overall population of England and Wales, there were more females than males within most ethnic groups

Females make up 51.0% of the overall population of England and Wales. Across the five high-level ethnic groups, the percentage of females ranged from 49.2% for those who identified their ethnic group within the "Other ethnic group" to 52.6% for those who identified within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" ethnic group.

When considering the 19 ethnic groups, there was a greater range in the distribution of males and females within each ethnic group. For example, the percentage of females ranged from 44.6% for those who identified as "White: Roma" to 55.2% for those who identified as "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Chinese". The distribution of males and females within each ethnic group can be found in our [Ethnic group by age and sex in England and Wales dataset](#).

5 . Ethnic group by age and sex

This section focuses on ethnic groups with the largest population, the oldest and youngest age profiles and those with the greatest differences in the percentage of males and females. There is also an interactive tool to explore age-sex composition across the 19 ethnic groups.

The population who identified as “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” in England and Wales has aged since 2011

In 2021, the “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” ethnic group remained the largest ethnic group, accounting for 74.4% (44.4 million) of the overall population in England and Wales.

Figure 3 shows that this ethnic group aged between 2011 and 2021, with an increase in both the percentage and absolute numbers of this ethnic group aged 65 years and over (from 18.8% 8,484,733 to 22.5% 9,970,220).

Figure 3: More people within the “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” were aged 65 years and over in 2021

Population pyramid for the “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” ethnic group, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
3. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

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This ethnic group accounted for a smaller percentage of both the female and male population of England and Wales in 2021 when compared with in 2011 (74.1% in 2021 down from 80.6% in 2011 and 74.7% down from 80.4%, respectively).

The ageing of this ethnic group will have contributed towards the decrease in percentage of the overall population who identified within this ethnic group between the two censuses.

Many factors can cause changes in an ethnic group, including changing age structure, people relocating for work or education and differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify (or how a children's ethnic group is reported) between censuses.

More of the population who identified as “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Chinese” were female compared with the overall population

Of the 19 ethnic groups, people who identified as “Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Chinese” had the highest percentage of females in 2021, 55.2% up from 52.7% in 2011. This compares with 51.0% of the overall population of England and Wales who were female.

Females were older than males in this ethnic group, with an average (median) age of 35 years compared with 32 years. This is an increase from the median age in 2011 for this ethnic group: 29 years for females and 27 years for males. In comparison, the median ages, within the overall population of England and Wales, was 41 years for females and 39 years for males.

In part, the increase in average age for this ethnic group can be explained by the decrease in people identifying their ethnic group this way within student age groups (individuals aged 18 to 23 years, see Figure 4); from 22.0% of the population of this ethnic group in 2011 to 14.1% in 2021. This decrease can be partly attributed to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the arrival of international students from China. For further information on how the pandemic may have impacted upon Census 2021 results please see our [Quality and Methodology Information for Census 2021](#).

Figure 4: The “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Chinese” ethnic group peaks around 23 years in 2021

Population pyramid for the “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Chinese” ethnic group, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.
3. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
4. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

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Across the regions of England, the percentage of females ranged from 56.7% (83,655) of this ethnic group in London to 52.9% (28,585) in the North West of England. Geographic variations in the male and female split may be associated with locations of universities.

A higher proportion of the population who identified as “White: Roma” were male compared with the population of England and Wales overall

In 2021, the ethnic group with the highest percentage of males was “White: Roma” (55.4%, 55,905), higher than the percentage of males across the overall population of England and Wales (49%, 29,177,340).

The difference in percentage of males and females was largest in the population aged 16 to 64 years where 56.5% (45,465) were male. Notably, people who identified as “White: Roma” had a higher percentage of respondents aged 16 to 64 years when compared with the overall population (79.7% compared with 62.9%).

Figure 5: The “White: Roma” ethnic group had a higher percentage of people aged 20 to 47 years compared with the overall population of England and Wales

Population pyramid for the “White: Roma” ethnic group, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
3. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

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Across all regions of England, the male population was larger than the female population for this ethnic group. The largest difference was in the South West where males constitute 57.0% of the “White: Roma” population, compared with males accounting for 48.9% of the usual resident population of the South West.

The smallest difference was in Yorkshire and the Humber where males total 52.8% of the “White: Roma” population, compared with 49.1% of the usual resident population of Yorkshire and the Humber.

The population who identified as “White: Irish” were older than the overall population of England and Wales

Nearly a third of the 507,465 usual residents who identified their ethnic group as “White: Irish” were aged 65 years and over (32.1%), substantially older than the overall population of England and Wales of which nearly a fifth (18.6%) were in this age group. A higher percentage of “White: Irish” females were aged 65 years and over (35.4%) compared with males (28.7%).

Figure 6: The “White: Irish” ethnic group had an older age profile compared with the overall population of England and Wales

Population pyramid for the “White: Irish” ethnic group, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
3. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

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In line with the overall population, “White: Irish” males had a higher percentage of their population aged 16 to 64 years (65.9%) than females (59.9%).

In contrast, males and females aged 0 to 15 years accounted for a lower percentage of the “White: Irish” population (5.4% and 4.8%, respectively) when compared with the same age group for the overall population of England and Wales (19.4% and 17.7%, respectively).

People who identified as “White: Irish” in Wales had an older age profile than those who lived in England. In Wales, 34.1% (4,505) of those who identified as “White: Irish” were aged 65 years and over, compared with 32.1% (158,610) in England. In addition, 3.9% (510) of those who identified in this way in Wales were aged 0 to 15 years, compared with 5.1% (25,380) in England.

Age profiles of the population who identified as “White: Irish” also varied across regions of England where the average age ranged from 49 years in the North East to 59 years in the West Midlands.

The population who identified as “White and Black African” within the “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” had the youngest age profile

In 2021, nearly half (48.6%, 121,310) of the population who identified as "White and Black African" were aged 0 to 15 years. Comparatively, 18.5% of the overall population of England and Wales were aged 0 to 15 years.

Figure 7: The “Mixed or Multiple: White and Black African” has a young age profile when compared with the usual resident population of England and Wales

Population pyramid for “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African”, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
3. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

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The majority of the remaining population for this ethnic group were aged 16 to 64 years (48.9%, 122,105). This is substantially lower than 62.9% of the overall population that were aged 16 to 64 years.

Only 2.5% (6,180) of the population who identified as being "White and Black African" were aged 65 years or over. This compares with 18.6% of the overall population in England and Wales who were aged 65 years and over.

The average (median) age for those who identified as “White and Black African” was 16 years in both England and Wales. The median age for people who identified with the “White and Black African” ethnic group had a higher degree of variation across the regions of England and ranged from 14 years in Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, North East and the East of England to 20 years in London.

The population who identified as “White and Asian”, within the “Mixed and Multiple ethnic groups” had a very similar young age profile. Similarly, nearly half of those who identified as “White and Asian” (48.1%) were aged 0 to 15 years.

Diverse age and sex profiles across the 19 ethnic groups

Age profiles across the 19 tick-box ethnic groups can be further explored in our interactive population pyramid in Figure 8, comparing the overall population of England and Wales.

Figure 8: Age and sex profiles for ethnic groups and the overall population of England and Wales

Population pyramid for the 19 ethnic groups and the usual residents population, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
2. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.
3. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
4. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

Download the data

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Figure 9 is an interactive tool that can be used to explore the age and sex profiles of the 19 ethnic groups in 2021 compared with 2011.

Figure 9: Age and sex profiles for ethnic groups in 2021 compared with 2011

Population pyramid for the 19 ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021

Notes:

1. There was no "Roma" ethnic group tick-box in 2011. It is not possible to know how people who identified as "Roma" in 2021 identified their ethnic group in 2011.
2. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.
3. Those who were aged 100 years and over have been grouped together because of statistical disclosure.
4. To ensure that individuals cannot be identified in the data, population counts have been rounded to the nearest five and counts under 10 are not included.
5. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of this ethnic group, using rounded data.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

6 . Age and sex insights from the detailed ethnic group classification

The write-in functionality has allowed us to produce a detailed ethnic group classification, providing insight for 287 ethnic groups. Find out how write-in responses are included in the detailed classification for the ethnic group, national identity, language and religion questions in our blog post [How am I represented in Census 2021 data?](#)

The "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Mixed South Asian" ethnic group had the lowest median age of six years; 2,000 usual residents identified their ethnic group this way. This ranged to 65 years for the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Anglo Indian" ethnic group, which was made up of 2,070 usual residents.

Figure 10: The average age varied across the 287 ethnic groups

Average (median age) by 287 ethnic groups, 2021, England and Wales

Notes:

1. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only, these categories were new for 2021.
2. The 287 detailed ethnic group classifications have been grouped by the five high-level classifications for this chart.
3. Ethnic identity is multi-dimensional and complex, as such some identities may appear in more than one of the five high-level ethnic groups.

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When comparing the median ages within the five high-level ethnic groups, "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" had the largest range. Within this ethnic group the median age ranged from 11 years for those who identified as "Mixed South Asian" to 65 years for "Anglo Indian". In comparison, the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" (16 years to 44 years) and "Other ethnic group" (21 years to 49 years) classifications had the smallest range.

7 . Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 data

[Ethnic group by age and sex in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 23 January 2023

Census 2021 data: 19 tick-box ethnic groups, by age, sex, and age and sex.

[Detailed ethnic group by age and sex in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 23 January 2023

Census 2021 data: detailed (287) ethnic groups by age, sex, and age and sex.

8 . Future publications

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

9 . Glossary

Ethnic group

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.

High-level ethnic group

This refers to the first stage of the two-stage ethnic group question. High-level groups refer to the first stage where the respondent identifies through one of the following options:

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

Median age

The median age is the middle value when all the ages are arranged in order from youngest to oldest. Ages used are the age at last birthday, on 21 March 2021 (in whole years).

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.

10 . Data sources and quality

Reference date

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

We are responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales, but will also release outputs for the UK in partnership with the Welsh Government, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The census in Northern Ireland was also conducted on 21 March 2021, 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. Most returns (89%) were received online. The response rate exceeded our target of 94% overall and 80% in all local authorities.

Read more about [question-specific response rates at local authority level](#) in our Measures showing the quality of Census 2021 estimates methodology.

Ethnic group question

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

Ethnic groups in the detailed ethnic group classification

An ethnic group will be shown in the detailed classification if the number of people who identified with the group within a write-in response option are large enough to disaggregate from other ethnic groups. For this reason, some ethnic groups appear in multiple high-level categories. Where the number of people identifying with an ethnic group are small enough for individuals to be identified, an ethnic group will be aggregated with other ethnic groups in the same write-in response option.

Quality

Quality considerations along with the strengths and limitations of Census 2021, more generally, can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#). Read more about the specific quality considerations for [Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion](#).

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

11 . Related links

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

Bulletin | Released 29 November 2022

The ethnic groups of usual residents and household ethnic composition in England and Wales, Census 2021 data.

[Population estimates by ethnic group and religion, England and Wales: 2019](#)

Article | Released 16 December 2021

Experimental statistics of population by ethnic group and religion by age and sex at the national and regional level for England and Wales.

[Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion variables Census 2021](#)

Census 2021 dictionary | Last updated 5 December 2022

Variables used in Census 2021 data, includes languages, national identity, ethnic group, multiple religions in household and main language.

12 . Cite this article

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