Office for National Statistics

Article

Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales: Census 2021

Differences in life outcomes across the eight "tickbox" religious groups in health, housing, employment, and education, for England and Wales combined

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1 . Main points

- In 2021, people who identified as "Muslim" were nearly four times more likely to live in overcrowded homes than the overall population of England and Wales.

- Less than half of those who identified as "Muslim" in 2021 lived in households that were owner-occupied (45.6%) compared with 62.8% of the overall population, and they had the highest percentage (26.6%) of people who lived in "social rented" housing, compared with 16.6% of the overall population.

- In 2021, nearly one in every three people who reported "Other religion" were disabled (31.8%), compared with 17.5% of the overall population of England and Wales.

- The highest percentage of unpaid carers in 2021 was among people who reported "Other religion", at 14.5%, compared with 8.8% of the overall population.

- In 2021, people who identified as "Muslim" had the lowest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years in employment (51.4% compared with 70.9% of the overall population); this resulted from the high percentages of people who were students or looking after home or family in this group.

2 . Using the data

In the census data, religion refers to a person's religious affiliation. This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice. The religion question is voluntary and in 2021 94.0% of the overall population in England and Wales (56.0 million people) chose to answer the question.

Our Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021 release showed that religious groups varied considerably in size. In this publication, the data for each religious group is calculated as percentages of that group to aid comparison with the overall population and across religious groups.

Many of the life outcomes discussed in this publication may be influenced by the differing age and sex profiles of religious groups (see our Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 release).

Different age and sex profiles are not the only reason for varied life outcomes. These outcomes often overlap; for example, people in poor health or caring for others may be less able to work or gain education. Income, where people live, and cultural background, will also have an influence on outcomes.

3 . Religion by housing

Less than half of people who identified as "Muslim" lived in a household that owned their home

Among the 58.6 million people in England and Wales who lived in households in 2021, 62.8% (36.8 million) were in households that owned their accommodation.

Home ownership varied considerably across religious groups. Only 45.6% of people who identified as "Muslim" lived in households that owned their home.

Figure 1: People who identified as "Sikh" were more likely to live in households that owned their home

Religion by housing tenure, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of each religious group, using rounded data.

Download the data

.xlsx

In contrast, 77.7% of those who identified as "Sikh" lived in households that owned their home. This was shaped by people living in households that "own with a mortgage, loan, or shared ownership" (49.8%, compared with 35.6% of the overall population). The remaining 27.9% of people who identified as "Sikh" lived in homes their household owned outright (compared with 27.1% of the overall population).

People who identified as "Christian" were most likely to live in households that owned their home outright (36.0%), 8.9 percentage points higher than the overall population (27.1%). This group had a median (average) age of 51 years, compared with 40 years for the overall population, suggesting that they may have had time to pay off a mortgage or loan. The groups with the youngest average ages, those who identified as "Muslims" (27 years) and those who reported "No religion" (32 years), had the lowest percentages of people living in households that owned their home outright (16.0% and 18.6%, respectively).

Other factors can contribute to differences across groups, including income, employment, inherited wealth, housing stock, and prices and where people live.

Note that this analysis focuses on people within households, because religious affiliation is individual. This differs from our Housing, England and Wales: Census 2021 release, where we focused on household-level analysis.

Those who identified as "Muslim" had the highest percentage of people living in "social rented" homes

There was a large disparity across religious groups in the percentage of people in households in the social rented sector, such as through a local council or housing association. People who identified as "Muslim" had the highest percentage living in "social rented" housing (26.6%), ten percentage points higher than the overall population.

Figure 2: People who identified as "Muslim" were more likely to live in "social rented" homes than the overall population

Religion by "social rented" housing, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of each religious group, using rounded data.

Download the data

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Religious groups with the highest percentages of people living in "social rented" homes had very different age profiles. Therefore, age cannot explain differences across all religious groups.

The percentage of people who identified as "Muslim" who experienced overcrowding was four times more than the overall population

Among the 3.9 million people who said they were "Muslim" in 2021, 32.7% lived in overcrowded homes, compared with 8.4% of the overall population.

Figure 3: People who identified as "Christian" or "Jewish" or reported "No religion" were less likely to live in overcrowded homes than the overall population

Religion by occupancy rating of bedrooms, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of each religious group, using rounded data.

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The age profile of religious groups can affect occupancy along with other factors, including multiple generations living together. However, the "occupancy rating of bedrooms" accounts for the different needs of children and adults within households (see Section 12: Glossary for a definition). Therefore, the age profile of a group alone should not be seen as the explanatory factor in differing percentages of overcrowding.

For example, people who said they were "Muslim" had the youngest age profile (median age 27 years) and the highest percentage of overcrowding. Those who reported "No religion" also had a younger age profile (median age 32 years) but had the lowest percentage of people living in overcrowded homes (6.2%).

4 . Religion by general health

Those who selected "Other religion" were most likely to report "bad" or "very bad" health

In 2021, those who identified as "Hindu" had the highest percentage of their population reporting either "very good" or "good" health (87.8%), compared with 82.0% of the overall population.

Figure 4: People who identified with an "Other religion" had the highest percentage who reported "bad" or "very bad" health

Religion by general health, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of each religious group, using rounded data.

Download the data

Age does not explain health outcomes for all religious groups

According to our General health by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021 article, older people were more likely to report worse health. Those who identified as "Christian" had an older age profile and reported poorer health than the overall population.

However, age does not explain the health outcomes for all religious groups. Those who reported "Other religion" had a smaller proportion of people aged 65 years and over (11.8%) when compared with the overall population (18.6%). Yet, this group had the highest percentage of people who reported "bad" (8.2%) or "very bad" health (2.6%), over twice the rate of the overall population (1.2% and 4.0%, respectively).

A higher percentage of females in England and Wales reported "bad" health compared with males (4.4%, compared with 3.7%) across most religious groups. The only group where females reported better health than males were those who identified as "Buddhist"; 3.6% of females reported "bad" health, compared with 4.3% of males.

5 . Religion by disability

Nearly one in every three people who reported "Other religion" were disabled

In Census 2021, people were asked about any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more. People are considered disabled under the Equality Act (2010) if they are limited "a little" or "a lot" in their daily activities by a long-term physical or mental health condition.

In 2021, nearly one in every three people who selected "Other religion" (31.8%) were disabled, compared with 17.5% of the overall population.

The percentage of those who reported "Other religion" who said they were "limited a lot" in their daily activities (13.9%) was almost twice that of the overall population (7.5%).

Figure 5: People who identified as "Hindu" had the lowest prevalence of disability

Religion by disability, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population of each religious group, using rounded data.

Download the data

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Notably, religious groups reporting higher levels of "bad" or "very bad" health (see Section 4: Religion by general health) also reported a higher prevalence of disability. Conversely, those who identified as "Hindu" had the lowest prevalence of disability (8.8%) and reported the highest percentages of "very good" and "good" health.

Older people were more likely to be disabled (see our Disability by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales article), but age is not the only factor influencing these outcomes. Whilst the population who identified as "Christian" is generally older and this likely influences their higher prevalence of disability, age does not explain the higher rates of disability for those who reported "Other religion".

Females were more likely to be disabled when compared with males across all religious groups. However, in those who identified as "Buddhist", a higher proportion of males (16.6%) were disabled compared with females (15.3%).

Females who reported "Other religion" had a substantially higher prevalence of disability (36.4%) when compared with males (25.9%).

6 . Religion by unpaid care

People who reported "Other religion" had the highest percentage of unpaid carers

In 2021, people who reported "Other religion" had the highest percentage of unpaid carers (14.5%), compared with the overall population (8.9%).

Figure 6: The lowest percentage of unpaid carers was among those who identified as "Hindu"

Religion by unpaid care, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for those aged five years and over, using rounded data. For more information on base population, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

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Our Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021 article identifies that people within older age groups were more likely to provide unpaid care. Those who identified as "Christian" had an older age profile and had a higher percentage of unpaid care (10.0%) than the overall population.

Among the overall population, people aged 55 to 59 years old had the highest percentage of unpaid carers (16.5%). People who identified as "Muslim" had a younger age profile, with 84.5% of the group aged under 50 years (compared with 62% of the overall population). With fewer people in the age groups most likely to provide unpaid care, this group had a comparatively high percentage of unpaid carers, even though the percentage (7.2%) was the second lowest across the religious groups.

The percentage of "young carers" among people who selected "Other religion" was more than twice that of the overall population

About 3.6% of people who reported "Other religion" were "young carers" (people aged 5 to 17 years), more than twice that the overall population (1.4%). This group also had the highest percentage of young carers providing 50 hours or more a week (0.5%, compared with 0.2% of the overall population).

Around 8.7% of the "Other religion" group were "young adult carers" (people aged 18 to 24 years), nearly twice that of the overall population (4.6%).

Figure 7: The highest percentage of unpaid carers was among people aged 55 to 59 years for most religious groups

Religion by unpaid care by age, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged five years and over, using rounded data. For more information on base population, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

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People aged 55 to 59 years had the highest percentage of unpaid carers across most religious groups. However, those who identified as "Buddhist" and "Muslim" had the highest percentage of unpaid carers in the 60 to 64 years age group (14.3% and 13.2%, respectively).

These two groups also had the highest percentages providing 50 hours or more of unpaid care in the 60 to 64 years age group (5.5% for the "Muslim" group and 4.1% for the "Buddhist" group). This "peak" in hours of unpaid care was at a younger age than for all other religious groups, which peaked either between 75 to 79 years or 80 to 84 years.

People who identified as "Jewish" had the highest percentage of unpaid carers among people aged 90 years or over, 5.8% (compared with 4.9% of the overall population). The "Jewish" group also had the highest percentage of people providing 50 hours or more a week in this age group (3.4%).

7 . Religion by employment status

People who identified as "Muslim" or reported "Other religion" had the lowest percentages in employment

People identified as "Muslim" had the lowest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years in employment, 51.4%, compared with 70.9% of the overall population. The next lowest percentage, 64.2%, was among people who reported "Other religion".

These differences were shaped by higher percentages of "economically inactive" people within these religious groups (see Section 12: Glossary for a definition). Those who identified as "Muslim" had the highest percentage of "economically inactive" people, 41.9%, followed by 30.3% for those who reported "Other religion" (17.2 and 5.6 percentage points higher than the overall population, respectively).

Figure 8: Figure 8: People who identified as "Christian" had a higher percentage of people in employment than the overall population

Religion by economic activity, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged 16 to 64 years using rounded data. For more information on comparing with other census releases, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

2. Estimates from the census will differ to those collected on the Labour Force Survey because of a range of conceptual differences between the two sources. See our Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: 13 March 2021 article for further information about interpreting census labour market data.

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These groups also had the highest percentages of unemployment (6.7% for the "Muslim" group and 5.5% for "Other religion"), compared with the overall population (4.4%). This difference was more marked in younger age groups. Among people aged 20 to 24 years, the highest unemployment was among people who identified as "Muslim" (13.0%), followed by those who reported "Other religion" (12.6%), compared with the overall population in that age group (9.0%).

The percentage of people looking after home or family was almost three times higher for people who identified as "Muslim" than the overall population

Among the 9,264,620 people aged 16 to 64 years who were economically inactive (24.7%), their reasons for not looking for work varied considerably across religious groups.

Among people who identified as "Muslim", the group with the highest percentage of "economic inactivity", 16.1% were looking after home or family and 13.8% were students (compared with 5.8% and 7.3% of the overall population, respectively).

Figure 9: The percentage of students among those who said they were "Muslim" was almost twice that of the overall population

Religion by economically inactive, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged 16 to 64 years, using rounded data. For more information on comparing with other census releases, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

Download the data

The younger age profile of this group is a contributing factor to these differences. People are more likely to study or look after home or family at younger ages.

People who identified as "Christian", a group with an older age profile, had the lowest percentage of students (5.4%) and the highest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years who were retired (4.6%, compared with 3.1% of the overall population).

Females were more likely than males to be looking after home or family among the overall population (9.7% and 1.9%, respectively). This difference was consistent across religious groups but was largest among people who identified as "Muslim" (28.7% females and 3.9% males).

Those who reported "Other religion" had the highest percentage of people "economically inactive" because of long-term sickness or disability (10.0%), more than twice the percentage among the overall population (4.7%). This shaped the high percentage of "economically inactive" people within this group and was consistent with the higher prevalence of disability and higher levels of "bad" or "very bad" health reported (see Section 4: Religion by general health and Section 5: Religion by disability).

8 . Religion by occupation

People who identified as "Hindu" and "Jewish" had the highest percentages in "professional occupations"

Among people aged 16 to 64 years and in work at the time of Census 2021, the percentage who worked in each of the nine occupation categories (see Section 12: Glossary for definitions) varied considerably across the religious groups.

People who identified as "Jewish" had the highest percentage of people in "managers, directors or senior officials" occupations, 23.1%, and the second highest percentage in "professional occupations" (such as doctors, solicitors and teachers), 33.4%. People who identified as "Hindu" had the second highest in "managers, directors or senior officials" occupations, 14.2%, and the highest percentage of people in "professional occupations", 34.3%.

Figure 10: Those who identified as "Buddhist" and "Muslim" had the highest percentages of people working in "elementary occupations"

Religion by occupation, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged 16 to 64 years, using rounded data. For more information on comparing with other census releases, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

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Among these two groups, there were higher percentages of males in these occupations compared with the overall population. In addition, the "Hindu" group had a higher percentage of males (35.0%) compared with females (33.6%) in "professional occupations" in contrast to the overall population, which had 18.6% males compared with 22.4% females.

9 . Religion by highest level of qualification

People who identified as "Hindu" had the highest levels of qualification

Among the 48.6 million people aged 16 and over in England and Wales in 2021, the highest level of qualifications, "Level 4 or above" (Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications), was most common across all religious groups.

Figure 11: People who identified as "Christian" were less likely to have a "Level 4 or above" qualification than the overall population

Religion by highest level of education qualification, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged 16 years and over, using rounded data. For more information on base population, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

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People who identified as "Hindu" had the highest percentage with a "Level 4 or above" qualification (54.8%), compared with the overall population (33.8%).

The "Level 4 or above" category also had the largest variation across religious groups, ranging from 21 percentage points higher than the overall population for the "Hindu" group (54.8%) to 2.2 percentage points lower for people who identified as "Christian" (31.6%).

Among the overall population, females were more likely to have "Level 4 or above" qualifications (34.6%, compared with 33.0% of males). This was true for most religious groups. However, this pattern was reversed among people who identified as "Hindu" (with 56.5% males and 53.2% females) and "Jewish" (50.5% males, 48.1% females), the group with the next highest percentage of "Level 4 or above" qualifications.

People who identified as "Muslim" were more likely than the overall population to have no qualifications

Among people who identified as "Muslim", 25.3% had no qualifications, 7.1 percentage points higher than the overall population (18.2%). A similar percentage of this group had a "Level 4 or above" qualification (32.3%) to the overall population (33.8%).

Figure 12: Those who reported "Other religion" had the lowest percentage of people with no qualifications

Religion by no qualifications, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated out of the population of each religious group for people aged 16 years and over, using rounded data. For more information on base population, see Section 13: Data sources and quality.

Download the data

Among the overall population, females were more likely than males to have no qualifications (19.2% females, 17.1% males). This was true for most religious groups. Only the "Other religion" (13.7% males, 11.6% females), "No religion" (14.0% males, 13.3% females) and "Jewish" groups (14.7% males, 13.2% females) did not align to this trend.

Many factors contribute to differences in highest level of qualification across religious groups. Qualifications gained in another country (when the equivalent was not known) are included in the "Other" qualification category (see Section 12: Glossary). People who identified as "Sikh" (4.5%) and "Muslim" (4.0%) had the highest percentages of "Other" qualifications, compared with 2.8% of the overall population.

Age is likely to be only a contributing factor to differences in educational outcomes. People who identified as "Muslim" and people who reported "No religion" both had younger age profiles but contrasting educational outcomes. The "No religion" group had 13.7% of people with no qualifications, one of the lowest, compared with 18.2% of the overall population and 25.3% of the "Muslim" group.

10 . Religion by housing, health, employment and education, England and Wales: Census 2021 data

Religion by housing, England and Wales: Census 2021
Dataset | Released 24 March 2023
Religion by household occupancy rating of bedrooms, by sex, by age, and religion by dwelling tenure, by sex, by age, England and Wales combined: Census 2021.

Religion by general health, disability, and unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021
Dataset | Released 24 March 2023
Religion by general health, by sex, by age; religion by disability, by sex, by age; and, religion by unpaid care, by sex, by age; England and Wales combined: Census 2021.

Religion by economic activity status and occupation, England and Wales: Census 2021
Dataset | Released 24 March 2023
Religion by economic activity status, by sex, by age, and religion by occupation, by sex, by age, England and Wales combined: Census 2021.

Religion by highest qualification level, England and Wales: Census 2021
Dataset | Released 24 March 2023
Religion by highest qualification level, by sex, by age, England and Wales combined: Census 2021.

11 . Future publications

More detailed data and analysis on religion will be published in the coming months, alongside the release of multivariate data. Read more about our Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion analysis plans and the Release plans for Census 2021.

12 . Glossary

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.

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).

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

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](#).

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.

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: one to four GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications

- Level 2: five or more GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications

- apprenticeships

- Level 3: two or more A Levels or equivalent qualifications

- Level 4 or above: Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications

- other qualifications, of unknown level (for further information, see Section 8: Measuring the data of our Education, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin)

Household

A household is defined as:

- one person living alone

- a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room, or dining area

This includes:

- all sheltered accommodation units in an establishment (irrespective of whether there are other communal facilities)

- 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.

Housing tenure

Tenure is whether a household rents or owns 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

- 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

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 March 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](#).

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 with 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 are an odd number of males aged 10 to 20

- one male aged 10 to 20 if there are no males aged 0 to 9 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:

- -1 or less implies that a household's accommodation has fewer bedrooms than required (overcrowded)

- +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

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 further information see our Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin.

13 . Data sources and quality

Religion question

The religion question in census is voluntary. To see the religion question on the household, individual and Welsh questionnaires, visit our Census 2021 paper questionnaires web page.

Percentages are calculated out of the overall population, as opposed to out of the population who answered the religion question. This aids comparison across time and between areas, as the percentage of the population who answer the question varies.

Comparing with other census releases

This analysis used different population bases and calculation methods to previous releases on housing, education, health, disability, and unpaid care, and labour market as measured through census.

For health, disability, and unpaid care, this analysis did not use age-standardised rates. We simply stated the percentage of people within a religious group of a particular health or disability status, without adjusting for the age structure of that group.

The base population for our analysis of unpaid care is usual residents of England and Wales aged five years and over.

For employment status and occupation, we used a population base of all usual residents of England and Wales aged 16 to 64 years to focus on differences among those of working age across religious groups. This means figures will be different to releases where we include all usual residents aged 16 and over, such as the measure on census maps.

For housing, this publication focuses on usual residents (people within households), because religious affiliation is individual. This is a different measure to the Housing, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin release, where we focused on household-level analysis, rather than the individuals who lived within them.

The base population for our analysis of highest level of qualification (education) is usual residents aged 16 years and over.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change. It is possible that this affected the way some people responded to labour market questions on the census. Estimates from the census will also differ to those collected on the Labour Force Survey, because of a range of conceptual differences between the two sources. 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.

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 affect UK-wide population and housing statistics, in terms of both timing and scope.

Response rate

The overall person response rate for the census 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 Section 4 of our Measures showing the quality of Census 2021 estimates methodology.

14 . Related links

Ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion: Census 2021 in England and Wales
Bulletins and datasets | 29 November 2022
Data and supporting information about ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion from Census 2021 in England and Wales.

These publications are part of the topic summaries and include: datasets, statistical bulletins, and supporting information.

Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021
Article | Released 30 January 2023
The religion people connect or identify with (their religious affiliation), whether or not they practise or have belief in it, by age and sex using 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 by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021
Article | 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 24 March 2023, ONS website, article, Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales: Census 2021