

Article

# Coastal communities, characteristics of built-up areas, England and Wales: Census 2021

Characteristics of coastal built-up areas in England and Wales including health, disability, unpaid care, employment status, highest qualification, and tenure.



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# 1 . Main points

- Median age was higher in coastal (42 years) than non-coastal (39 years) built-up areas (BUAs), with more residents over the age of 16 years being retired (coastal 24.7%, non-coastal 20.6%).
- Accounting for the population age, coastal BUAs had a smaller proportion of people reporting very good health (45.4%) than non-coastal BUAs (47.7%), and more people in bad (4.9%) or very bad health (1.5%) than non-coastal (bad health 4.1%, very bad health 1.2%) BUAs.
- After controlling for the age of the population, there were higher proportions of people who were "disabled: limited a lot" in coastal (9.2%) compared with non-coastal (7.5%) BUAs.
- Coastal BUAs had a lower proportion of residents aged 16 to 64 years that were working (68.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (71.0%).
- Coastal BUAs had lower proportions of residents with higher education qualifications (28.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (34.5%).

## 2 . Coastal classification of built-up areas

This article describes the characteristics of coastal built-up areas (BUAs). There are 7,018 BUAs identified in England and Wales, as discussed in our article [Towns and cities, characteristics of built-up areas, England and Wales: Census 2021](#). This article focuses on the 568 of these BUAs that have been classified as coastal.

The coastal definition used focuses on the physical location of the BUA. While activities traditionally associated with coastal locations such as tourism, marine industries, or ports are found in many coastal BUAs, the presence of such activities was not a requirement within the definition. For the full definitions, see [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#). A list of the coastal BUAs used is available as a [downloadable dataset](#).

BUAs are classified by population size as minor, small, medium, large or major, and characteristics are explored using Census 2021 data. Data for all sizes of coastal BUA are included in the accompanying dataset and calculations, but only small, medium, large and major BUAs are included as examples within the article. Note that categories containing counts less than 10 have been suppressed to prevent the potential identification of respondents.

For an interactive visualisation comparing individual coastal BUAs across multiple topics, jump to our tool [Find out more about coastal built-up areas in England and Wales](#)

### Figure 1: Investigate populations in BUAs

Usual resident population counts, by individual coastal and non-coastal built-up area (BUA), England and Wales, 2021

## 3 . Age and sex

## Median age

Median age was higher in coastal (42 years) than non-coastal (39 years) built-up areas (BUAs) and increased as BUA size decreased.

Table 1: Median age by BUA size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021

<b>BUA size classification</b>	<b>Coastal median age</b>	<b>Non-coastal median age</b>
<b>Minor</b>	53	47
<b>Small</b>	48	43
<b>Medium</b>	44	40
<b>Large</b>	41	37
<b>Major</b>	36	35

Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Large and major coastal BUAs had the youngest populations (Cardiff and Southampton, 34 years), along with minor, small, and medium BUAs near London (Purfleet-on-Thames, 32 years) or those co-located with a facility, such as a military or communal establishment.

Coastal BUAs with higher median ages were generally clustered along the East of England and in the South West, and included small BUAs Sutton on Sea and Trusthorpe (64 years) and Budleigh Salterton (62 years).

## Figure 2: Explore population characteristics of individual coastal BUAs

Usual resident population counts and median age, by individual coastal built-up area (BUA), England and Wales, 2021

## Population structure

There were slightly higher proportions of females in coastal BUAs compared with non-coastal BUAs, related to the older populations. The proportion of females was highest in small and medium coastal BUAs, while major coastal BUAs had similar proportions of males and females.

## Figure 3: Coastal BUAs had higher proportions of older females

Population pyramids for usual residents living in coastal and non-coastal built-up areas (BUAs), by BUA size classification, England and Wales, 2021

## 4 . Health, disability, and unpaid care

Older populations in coastal built-up areas (BUAs) mean that age-related health conditions, disabilities, and unpaid care are likely to be more prevalent as a share of population. In this section, analysis is focused on age-standardised proportions (ASPs), to indicate if poorer health outcomes are more frequent in coastal areas even once the age structure of the population has been accounted for. For methodological reasons, care should be taken when interpreting the information for individual minor BUAs. You can find detailed information on our ASP method in [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#), and our blog post [Age standardising data: What does this mean and why does it matter?](#)

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health or disability status and, therefore, may have affected how people chose to respond. See [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#) for more information.

## General health

Across all BUA sizes, there was a lower average ASP of people in coastal BUAs reporting "very good" health (45.4%) than in non-coastal BUAs (47.7%). Those reporting "good" health were the same in both coastal and non-coastal BUAs (34.0%).

People reporting "bad" health were a small proportion of the total, but higher in coastal (4.9%) than non-coastal (4.1%) BUAs.

The total proportion of people in "very bad" health was small, but also higher in coastal (1.5%) BUAs compared with non-coastal (1.2%) BUAs.

### Figure 4: Those living in coastal BUAs were more likely to report bad or very bad health

Age standardised proportions of usual residents by general health and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021

Coastal BUAs with the highest ASPs of people in "very good" health were minor BUAs concentrated along the South West of England and the south and west coasts of Wales.

The proportion of people with "bad" and "very bad" health was highest in large and major coastal and non-coastal BUAs.

Coastal BUAs with the highest proportions of "bad" and "very bad" health included small and minor BUAs along the Lincolnshire coast, in North Wales, and the North West.

In Blackpool, 6.7% of respondents reported "bad" health, higher than the average for large coastal BUAs (5.2%). Those reporting "very bad" health in Blackpool was 2.2%, higher than the average for large coastal BUAs (1.6%).

Of the small BUAs, Jaywick and Horden on the east coast had the highest proportions of "very bad" health (3.1% and 2.9%, respectively). The highest proportions in the medium BUA group were Port Talbot (2.5%) and Rhyl (2.4%), both in Wales.

### Figure 5: Explore health trends in coastal BUAs

Age standardised proportions of usual residents by general health, disability status, and unpaid carer status, by individual coastal built-up areas (BUA), England and Wales, 2021

## Disability

Disability data includes people who have assessed themselves as having a physical or mental impairment resulting in difficulties carrying out day-to-day activities. For more information on the definition used, please see our [Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Coastal BUAs had higher ASPs of disabled people who were "limited a little" (11.4%) and "limited a lot" (9.2%) than non-coastal BUAs (10.0% were "limited a little", 7.5% were "limited a lot").

### Figure 6: Coastal BUAs had higher levels of disability

Age standardised proportions of usual residents by disability status and built-up areas (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021

Coastal BUAs that were among the highest ASP for disabled people who were "limited a lot" were concentrated in North Wales (Rhyl, 14.3%) and the North West of England (such as Wallasey, 12.1%), as well as in the North East (Sunderland, 11.9%) and East Midlands (Mablethorpe, 16.0%).

Concentrations of coastal BUAs with the highest proportions of disabled people who were "limited a little" were in the East Midlands (Skegness, 13.5%) and East of England (Great Yarmouth, 13.4%).

See Figure 5: [Explore health trends in coastal BUAs for more detail.](#)

## Unpaid Care

Unpaid carers look after or provide unpaid care to those with mental or physical health conditions, illness, or old age.

For further information on this variable, please see our [Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

ASP showed residents of coastal areas provided more unpaid care (9.7%) than non-coastal areas (8.8%) across all built-up area (BUA) sizes.

Provision of unpaid care was highest in minor BUAs for both coastal (10.5%) and non-coastal (9.6%) areas, with provision decreasing as BUA size increased. The biggest difference in provision of unpaid care was in large BUAs, where the ASP of unpaid care providers was higher in coastal (9.9%) than non-coastal (8.7%) BUAs.

### Figure 7: Unpaid care was highest in minor coastal BUAs

**Age standardised proportions of usual residents by unpaid carer status and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021**

Coastal BUAs with the highest provision of unpaid care were minor BUAs along the north coast of Wales, along the east coast of England and on the Isle of Wight.

Many of the findings in this section show that coastal BUAs had poorer outcomes than non-coastal BUAs after age standardisation. This highlights that the poorer health outcomes seen in coastal areas are not just because of these coastal BUAs having an older age structure.

See Figure 5: [Explore health trends in coastal BUAs for more detail.](#)

## 5 . Employment status

### Economic activity in residents aged 16 years and over

This section focuses on employment status of usual residents aged 16 years and over. This highlights differences in the economically inactive between coastal and non-coastal built-up areas (BUAs), particularly the retired.

Generally, coastal BUAs had a high proportion of retired people, resulting from the age structure of the population. Proportionately, coastal areas had a smaller proportion of residents aged 16 years and over working.

Find out more about interactions between age and employment in our article: [Diversity in the labour market, England and Wales: Census 2021](#).

Please note that labour market data may have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. You can read more in [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#).

## Figure 8: Coastal BUAs had higher levels of retirement

Proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over by employment status and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021

Coastal BUAs had a higher proportion of retired people (24.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (20.6%).

Minor coastal BUAs had the highest proportion of retired people (35.7%). The proportion of those who were retired decreased as BUA size increased in both coastal and non-coastal BUAs.

The highest proportions of retired people in coastal BUAs were generally in minor BUAs in the North East, the East of England, and on the south coast from the South West as far as the Isle of Wight. For example, 54.0% of residents aged 16 and above reported their status as retired in the small BUA Barton on Sea.

The average proportion of people "economically inactive: long term sick or disabled" was higher in coastal (5.3%) compared with non-coastal BUAs (4.1%).

Proportions of people who were long-term sick or disabled increased with BUA size, up to large BUAs. Proportions ranged from 4.0% in minor coastal BUAs to a peak of 5.8% in large coastal BUAs. In non-coastal BUAs, this ranged from 3.2% in minor BUAs to a peak of 4.4% in large BUAs.

The largest proportions of residents aged 16 and above who were long-term sick or disabled were generally located along BUAs in North Wales (Rhyl 9.2%), Liverpool (7.5%), near Hartlepool (Horden 11.1%) and the East Midlands (Mablethorpe 10.0%).

## Figure 9: Explore employment status and highest level of qualification in coastal BUAs

Proportions of usual residents by employment status (aged 16 years and above or aged 16 to 64 years) and highest level of qualification (aged 16 years and over), by individual coastal built-up area (BUA), England and Wales, 2021

## Economic activity across residents aged 16 to 64 years

In this second section, we have explored employment patterns in usual residents aged 16 to 64 years, to more closely assess how the economically active (working or unemployed) population compares across BUA size and coastal classification.

Coastal BUAs generally had a lower proportion of residents aged 16 to 64 years that were working (68.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (71.0%).

In both coastal and non-coastal BUAs, the proportion of residents working decreased as BUA size increased. In minor coastal BUAs, the proportion of those aged 16 to 64 years working was 70.7% compared with 75.2% in non-coastal BUAs, decreasing to 65.4% in major coastal and 66.8% in major non-coastal BUAs.

## Figure 10: Coastal BUAs had lower levels of people working

Proportion of usual residents aged 16 to 64 years and over by employment status and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021

The highest proportions of residents who were working were typically in minor BUAs in the South West and along the south coast of England. Wales had a mix of high and low proportions dotted along its coastline.

Small and medium BUAs with the highest working proportion of residents aged 16 to 64 years were Portishead in the South West (80.4%), Marchwood in the South East (80.3%), and Carnforth in the North West (79.2%). Large BUAs with the highest proportions were Worthing in the South East (75.8%), Poole (75%), and Weston-super-Mare (74.6%), both in the South West.

Proportions of residents aged 16 to 64 years that were unemployed were slightly higher in coastal (4.7%) than non-coastal (4.4%) BUAs.

Proportions of unemployed residents increased with BUA size, with higher proportions in all coastal sizes except major BUAs. In minor BUAs, the proportions of unemployed were higher in coastal (3.7%) compared with non-coastal (3.0%) BUAs. Major BUAs had lower unemployment in coastal (5.2%) compared with non-coastal (5.7%) BUAs.

The highest proportions of residents aged 16 to 64 years that were unemployed were primarily small and minor BUAs located along the east coast of England (Jaywick 7.9%, Mablethorpe 6.9%) and along the Welsh coast (Bangor 7.3%, Aberystwyth 7.1%). Unemployment was also high in the medium BUAs Great Yarmouth (7.4%) and Skegness (6.6%), as well as major BUAs Kingston upon Hull (5.9%), Liverpool (5.7%), and large BUA Blackpool (5.5%)

See Figure 9: [Explore employment status and highest level of qualification in coastal BUAs for more detail.](#) See Figure 9:

## 6 . Highest level of qualification

Numerous factors can affect attainment of qualification level, including the age profile of the built-up area (BUA). For more information, see our article, [How qualification levels across England and Wales differ by country of birth.](#)

Regardless of BUA size, coastal BUAs typically had higher proportions of residents aged 16 years and above with no qualification (19.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (18.1%).

### Figure 11: Coastal BUAs had higher proportions of residents with no qualifications

**Proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over by highest level of qualification and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021**

BUAs located along the east coast of England and in North Wales had the highest proportions for no qualifications. Examples include small BUAs Jaywick (42.9%), Mablethorpe (36.9%), and Horden (32.9%) and medium BUAs Skegness (32.4%) and Great Yarmouth (32.1%).

Coastal BUAs had lower proportions of residents with higher qualifications (28.7%) than non-coastal BUAs (34.5%).

In coastal BUAs, residents of major BUAs were most likely to have achieved a higher education qualification (32.5%), followed by those in minor coastal BUAs (31.2%). Medium coastal BUAs had the lowest proportions (26.6%) of residents achieving higher education qualifications. The same trend was noted for non-coastal BUAs.

Coastal BUAs with the highest proportion of higher education qualifications were generally in the South East, South West, and Wales; these included Penarth (48.6%), Brighton and Hove (44.5%), and Budleigh Salterton (41.5%). Coastal BUAs with the lowest proportions of higher education qualifications were along the east coast of England, from Durham down to the Thames Estuary; these included small BUAs Jaywick (12.9%), Sheerness (13.7%), and Mablethorpe (13.8%).

See Figure 9: [Explore employment status and highest level of qualification in coastal BUAs for more detail.](#)

## 7 . Tenure

Tenure of accommodation describes the proportion of households in an area that rent or own the accommodation that they occupy.

Proportions of households that resided in owner-occupied (owned outright, with a mortgage or shared ownership) were similar in coastal (61.8%) and non-coastal (61.7%) built up areas (BUAs).

The proportion of owner-occupied tenure was lower in minor, small, and medium coastal BUAs than non-coastal. In large and major coastal BUAs, the proportion was higher.

### **Figure 12: In smaller BUA sizes, fewer owned their own homes in coastal compared with non-coastal areas**

**Proportion of households by tenure and built-up area (BUA) size classification, coastal and non-coastal, England and Wales, 2021**

The majority of BUAs with the highest proportion of owner-occupied tenure were small or minor BUAs on the south coast or in the South West, including the small BUAs Barton on Sea (88.9%), Littlestone-on-Sea (85.4%), and Fremington (83.6%). The BUAs with the lowest proportions of owner-occupied tenure tended to be large and major coastal BUAs in England and Wales, or small and minor coastal BUAs in North Wales.

Households reporting social rented tenure were lower in coastal BUAs (16.0%) compared with non-coastal BUAs (18.0%). In both coastal and non-coastal BUAs, the proportion of social rented households increased as BUA size increased.

BUAs with the highest proportions of social rented tenure were generally located on the Welsh coast (Caernafon 28.5%, Milford Haven 28.1%), in the North East (South Shields, 29.9%), and the major BUAs Kingston upon Hull (26.6%) and Liverpool (26.1%).

The proportion of households reporting privately rented (or lived rent free) tenure was higher in coastal BUAs (22.2%) than non-coastal BUAs (20.3%). The proportion of households who rented privately were higher in major BUAs and decreased as BUA size decreased.

Many BUAs with the highest proportions of private rental were large and major coastal BUAs, including Bournemouth (33.5%), Brighton and Hove (32.9%), and Blackpool (31.4%). Of medium and small BUAs, those with the highest proportions included Aberystwyth (38.1%), Great Yarmouth (37.8%), and Purfleet on Thames (36.8%).

### **Figure 13: Find out more about coastal built-up areas in England and Wales**

## 8 . Coastal communities, characteristics of built-up areas, England and Wales: Census 2021 data

[Coastal communities, characteristics of built-up areas, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 7 Feb 2024

Population and household characteristics for coastal and non-coastal built-up areas (BUA) by size classification and individual BUAs, England and Wales, Census 2021. Data are available at a national (England and Wales), BUA size classification and individual BUA level.

[Coastal built-up areas, England and Wales, 2022 BUA classification](#)

Dataset | Released 7 Feb 2024

A list of coastal built-up areas derived through methodology developed by the Office for National Statistics from Ordnance Survey data.

## 9 . Glossary

### 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.

### Household

A "household" is defined as either one person living alone, or a group of people living at the same address and sharing both cooking facilities and a living room or dining area.

### Median age

The median age is the age of the person in the middle of the group, such that one half of the group is younger than that person and the other half is older.

### Age

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.

### Sex

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

### 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.

### Disability

People who assessed their day-to-day activities as limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses are considered disabled. This definition of a disabled person meets the harmonised standard for measuring disability and is in line with the Equality Act (2010).

## Unpaid care

An unpaid carer may look after, give help or support to anyone who has long-term physical or mental ill-health conditions, illness or problems related to old age. This does not include any activities as part of paid employment. This help can be within or outside of the carer's household.

## Employment status: working

The proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the last seven days before Census 2021. "Working" excludes those who were unemployed, retired, studying, looking after home or family, or long-term sick or disabled. This category is also referred to as "employed" when looking in the higher-level (3 category) version of this variable.

## Employment status: not-employed

The proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over not in employment the last seven days before Census 2021. "Not-employed" includes those who are unemployed, retired, studying, looking after home or family, or long-term sick or disabled.

## Economic activity

People aged 16 years and over who were active participants in the labour market between 15 and 21 March 2021, as they were:

- in employment as 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

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

This classification splits out full-time students from those who are not full-time students when they are employed or unemployed. It is recommended to sum these together to look at all of those in employment or unemployed, or to use the four-category labour market classification, for those with a particular labour market status.

## Economically inactive

People aged 16 years and over who did not have a job between 15 and 21 March 2021 and had not looked for work between 22 February and 21 March 2021 or could not start work within two weeks.

Economically inactive people could state that, between 15 and 21 March 2021, they were:

- retired
- studying
- looking after home or family
- long-term sick or disabled
- other

For definitions of labour market variables more generally, see our [Guide to labour market statistics](#).

## Qualification

The highest level of qualification is derived from the question asking people to indicate all qualifications held, or their nearest equivalent. This may include foreign qualifications where they were matched to the closest UK equivalent.

Higher education qualifications are level 4 qualifications and above. These include:

- degree
- foundation degree
- PHD
- Master's degrees
- Higher National Diploma (HND)
- Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 and above
- professional qualifications (for example, teaching or nursing)

All other qualification levels include qualifications from entry level up to level 3 that are most commonly gained at school or at college from ages 15 to 19 years, such as GCSEs, A-levels and their technical or vocational equivalents. These include:

- Level 3 qualifications
- Level 2 qualifications
- Level 1 qualifications
- entry level qualifications
- apprenticeships

Level 3 qualifications include:

- two or more A levels
- four or more AS levels
- Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate
- NVQ level 3
- City and Guilds Advanced Craft
- Ordinary National Certificate (ONC)
- Ordinary National Diploma (OND)
- Business and technology education council (BTEC) national
- International Baccalaureate
- Level 3 Scottish Vocational qualifications

Level 2 qualifications include:

- five or more GCSEs (A\* to C or 9 to 4)
- O levels (passes)
- CSEs (grade 1)
- Intermediate Welsh Baccalaureate
- one A level
- two to three AS levels
- NVQ level 2
- BTEC general
- City and Guilds Craft
- level 2 Scottish vocational qualifications

Level 1 and entry level qualifications include:

- any GCSEs at other grades
- O levels or CSEs (any grades)
- Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate
- one AS level
- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1
- basic or essential Skills
- skills for life
- literacy and numeracy
- level 2 Scottish vocational qualifications

Census questions did not identify the level or type of apprenticeships, so the apprenticeship Highest Level of Qualification (HLQ) was placed between Level 2 and Level 3. Care must be taken when interpreting this classification.

No qualifications means that the respondent has no formal qualifications.

Qualifications of unknown level include:

- vocational or work-related qualifications
- other qualifications achieved in England or Wales
- qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)

For more information on different levels of qualifications, please see our [Education, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

## **Communal establishment**

A managed communal establishment is a place that provides managed full-time or part-time supervision of residential accommodation.

Examples include:

- university halls of residence and boarding schools
- care homes, hospitals, hospices, and maternity units
- hotels, guest houses, hostels, and bed and breakfasts, all with residential accommodation for seven or more guests
- prisons and other secure facilities
- Single Living Accommodation (SLA) in military bases
- staff accommodation
- religious establishments

It does not include sheltered accommodation, serviced apartments, nurses' accommodation, and houses rented to students by private landlords. These are households.

## Accommodation tenure

Whether a household owns or rents the accommodation that it occupies.

Owner-occupied accommodation can be:

- owned outright, which is where the household owns all of the accommodation
- with a mortgage or loan
- part-owned on a shared ownership scheme

Rented accommodation can be:

- private rented, for example, rented through a private landlord or letting agent, or lives rent free
- social rented through a local council or housing association

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

## 10 . Data sources and quality

This article uses data from Census 2021, England and Wales. Details of the strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used are provided in our [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#).

Read more about the specific quality considerations for:

- demography in our [Demography and migration quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#)
- health and care in our [Health, disability and unpaid care quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#)
- economic activity in our [Labour market quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#)
- education in our [Education quality information for Census 2021](#)
- housing in our [Housing quality information for Census 2021](#)

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on 21 March 2021, a period of unparalleled and rapid change. This may have affected the way some people responded to the 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.

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

## Built-up area geography

Built-up areas (BUAs) are derived from a process that uses Ordnance Survey topographic data to classify the boundaries of built-up area development and identify individual built-up area settlements (equating to cities, towns, and villages).

The 2022 edition of the geography, produced by Ordnance Survey, includes several changes to previous versions. The main change is that the geography has been simplified into a single layer, providing one boundary and a single set of statistics for each settlement.

Changes and updates to the geography boundaries since 2011 mean that statistics from 2022 BUAs cannot be directly compared with those from 2011. The single layer used in the new geography most closely resembles the 2011 BUA subdivision layer.

Boundary files and geography lookups for the 2022 BUAs are available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Geography Portal.

Please contact [subnational.geographies@ons.gov.uk](mailto:subnational.geographies@ons.gov.uk) with any feedback on the new BUA geography. More details about the BUA methodology can be found in [Ordnance Survey's Open built-up areas technical specification: 2022 \(PDF, 700KB\)](#).

## Coastal built-up area classification

Coastal BUAs include:

- BUAs which have a boundary within 1 kilometre (km) of the statistical coastline and with a surface area of 50% or more within 3km of the statistical coastline

or

- BUAs which have a perimeter of more than 2.5km within 25 metres of the statistical coastline

This means BUAs with large proportions of their areas within a short distance of the coast are included and retains coastal BUAs with substantial hinterlands.

Please note, Middlesbrough was identified as coastal because it is merged with an uninhabited industrial area which has a perimeter greater than 2.5km within 25m of the statistical coastline. Middlesborough has been re-classified as non-coastal.

Technical information on the statistical coastline can be found on the [ONS Geography GitHub repository](#).

## Age-standardised proportions

For this article, age-standardised proportions (ASPs) were calculated on wide age brackets (0 to 15 years, 16 to 64 years, 65 years and above). Categories containing counts less than 10 were suppressed to prevent the potential identification of respondents.

This means:

- ASP data are available for BUAs with small populations
- ASPs are not comparable with other published census ASP data provided for five-year age groups
- total ASP values across categories for individual BUAs will sum to 100% despite suppression
- populations in two BUAs may have different age structures within the 16 to 64 years age bracket, so ASP may not fully control for the effect of age

## 11 . Related links

### [Towns and cities, characteristics of built-up areas, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 2 August 2023

Characteristics of built-up areas (BUAs) in England (excluding London) and Wales. Characteristics include age and sex, country of birth, housing, qualifications and employment.

### [Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#)

QMI | Last revised 9 December 2022

Details the data strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used for Census 2021, England and Wales.

### [How we assured the quality of Census 2021 estimates](#)

Methodology | Released 7 November 2022

Methodology for the validation of Census 2021 population estimates for England and Wales, including the assurance of processes, assessment of estimates, and involvement of local authorities.

### [Data and Analysis from Census 2021](#)

Webpage | Released 8 June 2023

The census analysis programme homepage links to the detailed and comprehensive research programme based on Census 2021 in England and Wales. Alongside the production of basic facts and figures of the population, the programme will produce statistics which highlight issues of public policy concern. The programme includes a wide range of topics, covering a diverse range of sub-populations. Our aim is to provide up-to-date and meaningful analysis that will help users to inform decisions on future policy and services.

### [Census maps](#)

Interactive map | Released 2 November 2022

Use our maps to find out what people's lives were like across England and Wales in March 2021.

### [Create a custom dataset](#)

Dataset | Released 28 March 2023

We group Census 2021 data together based on who or what the information is about, for example, people or households. We make population types from these groups or subsets of them. For example, people who are usually resident in England or Wales make up the population type usual residents.

### [ONS Open Geography Portal: Built Up Areas \(2022\) GB BGG](#)

Boundaries dataset | Released 7 December 2022

This file contains the digital vector boundaries for built-up areas in Great Britain as of December 2022. The built-up area boundaries are generalised and created using an automated approach based on 25m grid squares (BGG). This file has been created from OS open built-up areas. Further information about this product can be found in our FAQ document or from Ordnance Survey's product information page. Please note that this product contains both Ordnance Survey and ONS Intellectual Property Rights.

## 12 . Cite this article

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