

Article

Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021

Variations in occupancy rating for bedrooms by tenure, accommodation type, family composition and other household characteristics in households with usual residents



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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Occupancy rating \(for bedrooms\)](#)
3. [Occupancy rating by accommodation type](#)
4. [Occupancy rating by tenure](#)
5. [Occupancy rating by household composition](#)
6. [Occupancy rating by age](#)
7. [Occupancy rating by ethnic group](#)
8. [Occupancy rating by religion](#)
9. [Occupancy rating by employment status](#)
10. [Occupancy rating by country of birth](#)
11. [Occupancy rating by sexual orientation](#)
12. [Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021 data](#)
13. [Glossary](#)
14. [Data sources and quality](#)
15. [Related links](#)
16. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

- In 2021, the majority of households in England and in Wales had more bedrooms than required according to the Bedroom Standard, and therefore were living in under-occupied accommodation (68.8% in England, 76.3% in Wales).
- Flats, maisonettes and apartments were most likely to be overcrowded (8.3%) in England, compared with other accommodation types; In Wales, caravans or other mobile or temporary structures were most likely to be overcrowded (4%).
- Households living in rented accommodation were more likely to be overcrowded in England (8.5%) and in Wales (4.3%), compared with owner-occupied accommodation (1.9% in England and 1.2% in Wales).
- Households where all members identified as “Muslim” were more than five times more likely to be in overcrowded accommodation in comparison to all households in England and six times more likely in Wales.
- Households where all members identified as “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” had the highest level of overcrowding (16.1% in England, 11.9% in Wales) compared with all households (4.4% in England and 2.2% in Wales).
- Households where all members were economically inactive (for example those retired, looking after home or family, or long-term sick or disabled) had the highest proportion of under-occupied accommodation compared with all other employment status combinations.

2 . Occupancy rating (for bedrooms)

Occupancy rating provides a measure of whether a household’s accommodation is overcrowded or under-occupied. An occupancy rating of negative 1 or less implies that a household has fewer bedrooms than required according to the Bedroom Standard, so is overcrowded (for example, negative 1 means one bedroom fewer than required, negative 2 has two fewer than required). An occupancy rating of positive 1 or more implies that a household has more bedrooms than required, so is under-occupied (for example, positive 1 means one bedroom more than required, positive 2 has two bedrooms more than required), and 0 implies that they met the standard required (occupied-to-standard). For further information on the definition for bedroom occupancy, see [Section 13: Glossary](#).

As Census 2021 was carried out during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, circumstances may have affected some people’s place of usual residence; our [Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#) explains the challenges of conducting a census during the coronavirus pandemic and what this means for the data.

In 2021, the majority of households had more bedrooms than required and therefore were living in under-occupied accommodation (68.8% in England, 76.3% in Wales). In England, 26.8% of households and 21.5% of households in Wales had the required number of rooms (occupied-to-standard). Households that had fewer bedrooms than required (overcrowded) made up 4.4% of all households in England and 2.2% in Wales.

Figure 1: London had the highest proportions of overcrowded and occupied-to-standard accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) England, Wales and English regions, 21 March 2021

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The next sections will explore the differences in the distribution of occupancy ratings (bedrooms) across household characteristics.

3 . Occupancy rating by accommodation type

In England, flats, maisonettes and apartments were most likely to be overcrowded (8.3%), while caravans or other mobile temporary structures were most likely to be overcrowded in Wales (4%). Detached properties were most likely to be under-occupied in both England and Wales (90.9% and 91.1%, respectively). There was a higher proportion of detached properties under-occupied by two or more bedrooms in both England (65.6%) and in Wales (64.3%), than under-occupied by one bedroom (25.3% in England, 26.9% in Wales).

Figure 2: Detached houses or bungalows were most likely to be under-occupied

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and accommodation type, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

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Out of all English regions and Wales, London had the highest levels of overcrowding across all accommodation types, ranging from 7.8% in detached properties to 16.8% in caravans or other mobile or temporary structures. More than half of households in London lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment (54.0%), and of these, 13.7% were overcrowded. The North East had the second highest percentage of households living in overcrowded caravans or other temporary mobile structures (5.7%), whereas London had the highest (16.8%). A similar disparity is also seen in detached houses, of which 7.8% are overcrowded in London compared with the second highest, the West Midlands, at 1.6%.

At the local authority level:

- for flats, maisonettes and apartments, the highest levels of overcrowding were found in Barking and Dagenham (22.7%) and Newham (21.8%)
- under-occupancy of flats, maisonettes and apartments was highest in Gateshead (57.5%) and North Tyneside (56.2%)
- for semi-detached houses or bungalows, the highest levels of overcrowding were found in Newham (26.2%) and Tower Hamlets (19.7%).
- under-occupancy of semi-detached houses or bungalows was highest in Richmond upon Thames (85.9%) and Barrow-in-Furness (85.1%)
- for detached houses or bungalows, the highest levels of overcrowding were found in Newham (26.3%) and Tower Hamlets (21.8%)
- under-occupancy of detached houses or bungalows was highest in Rutland (96.1%) and Hart (96%)
- for terraced houses or bungalows, the highest levels of overcrowding were found in Newham (18.7%) and Barking and Dagenham (13.6%)
- under-occupancy of terraced houses or bungalows was highest in Copeland and Kensington and Chelsea (83.8%), which are the [most and least affordable areas](#) in the country.

4 . Occupancy rating by tenure

Rented accommodation (private and social rent) were more likely to be overcrowded in England (8.5%) and in Wales (4.3%), in comparison to owner-occupied accommodation (1.9% in England and 1.2% Wales).

When looking at owner-occupied and rented accommodation:

- except for London, four out of five households that owned their accommodation were in under-occupied properties
- London had a lower proportion of households that owned their accommodation (46.8%), and 72.5% of these were under-occupied
- overcrowding in owner-occupied accommodation was highest in London (4.5%), followed by West Midlands (2.4%)
- there was a higher percentage of households that owned their accommodation living in occupied-to-standard properties in London (23%), followed by South East (13.6%)
- in households that rented their accommodation, all English regions and Wales have a percentage of under-occupancy over 40.9%, except London with 28.1%
- the percentage of renters who lived in occupied-to-standard accommodation ranged from 40.8% in the North East to 55% in London, which is higher than the percentage in owner occupiers (ranging from 10.6% in East Midlands to 23.0% in London).
- in households that rent their accommodation, there was a wider range of overcrowding, ranging from 3.4% in the North East to 7.5% in both the West Midlands and South East (except London); London (16.9%) had more than double this proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation, as well as being the only region where the majority of households rent (53.2%)

Figure 3: Households living in rented accommodation had higher levels of overcrowding than households in owned accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and tenure, English regions and Wales, 21 March 2021

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We can look at occupancy rating (bedrooms) by tenure in more detail by splitting owner-occupied into “owned outright” and “owned with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership”; and rented into “private rent” and “social rent”.

Households in the social rented sector were most likely to be living in occupied-to-standard accommodation (55.6% in England and 50.6% in Wales), while those owned outright, owned with a mortgage loan or shared ownership, and privately rented households were most likely to be under-occupied. The highest proportions of under-occupied accommodation were found with households who own their home outright (89.7% in England and 91.9% in Wales). The highest percentage of households that were living in overcrowded accommodation, was found in those living in the social rented sector (9.6% for England, and 5.2% for Wales).

In English regions and Wales:

- the highest percentage of households living in occupied-to-standard accommodation in the social rented sector was found in the South East (59.6%) and East of England (58%)
- the highest percentage of households living in under-occupied accommodation, among those that owned their accommodation outright, were in the North East and East Midlands (91.9%)
- the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation were occupied by social rented (19.4%) and private rented (15%) households in London.
- the highest percentage of overcrowded accommodation outside of London was found in households in the social rented sector in the South East (8.9%)

Figure 4: Households living in owner-occupied accommodation were less likely to be overcrowded

Percentage of overcrowded households by tenure, local authorities in England and Wales, 21 March 2021

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5 . Occupancy rating by household composition

The Bedroom Standard, which these statistics are based on, takes into account household composition, for example, two young children could share a bedroom.

In 2021, lone-parent-family households with dependent children were most likely to be in overcrowded accommodation (12.9% in England and 6.6% in Wales) compared with other household family compositions.

In single-family households, those with dependent children were more likely to be living in overcrowded accommodation than those without:

- lone-parent families with dependent children were more likely to be living in overcrowded accommodation (6.2% in England, 3.3% in Wales), than lone-parent families with non-dependent children
- couple families with dependent children were more likely to be living in overcrowded accommodation (7.3% in England and 3.9% in Wales) than couple families with all non-dependent children (3.3% in England and 2% in Wales)
- couple-family households with no children had the highest proportion of under-occupied households (89.8% in England and 95.3% in Wales)

Figure 5: Households with dependent children are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than those with non-dependent children in England

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household family composition for single-family households with children, England, 21 March 2021

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Figure 6: Households with dependent children are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than those with non-dependent children in Wales

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household family composition for single-family households with children, Wales, 21 March 2021

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When looking at high-level household family composition groups, for example single-family household types combined, overcrowding is highest in “Other” household types (9.7% in England and 4.8% in Wales). This group includes households all in full-time education, and those all aged 66 years and over along with other family compositions, as shown in our [Household composition classifications: Census 2021](#).

London was a standout region for all household compositions:

- couple-family households with no children had a higher percentage of occupied-to-standard accommodation (30.2%); this was nearly three times higher than the second highest region at 10.8%
- one-person households had a higher percentage of occupied-to-standard accommodation (46.2%) than other regions, with the second highest being in the South East at 30.1%
- lone-parent households where all children were non-dependent had over double the proportion of overcrowded households (13%) than the second highest region (South East, 5.4%)
- lone-parent households with dependent children had nearly three times the proportion (29.7%) of overcrowded houses compared with the second highest region West Midlands (11.7%)

Figure 7: Lone-parent households with dependent children were most likely to live in overcrowded accommodation in London

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household family composition, London, 21 March 2021

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The local authorities with the highest levels of overcrowding were in London:

- lone-parent households with dependent children were most overcrowded in Westminster (38.3%), Newham (37.8%) and Tower Hamlets (37.3%)
- couples with non-dependent children were most overcrowded in City of London (21.4%), Tower Hamlets (20.2%) and Westminster (20%)
- couples with dependent children were most overcrowded in Tower Hamlets (39.9%), Newham (33.4%) and Brent (27%)
- lone-parent families with no dependent children were most overcrowded in Westminster (21.4%), Kensington and Chelsea (19.3%) and Newham (18.8%)

6 . Occupancy rating by age

Households that include at least one person in each of the three age bands (0 to 15 years, 16 to 64 years, and 65 years and over) were over seven times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation (30.8% in England and 19.5% in Wales) compared with “all households”. This may be a result of larger household sizes. In Wales, households with residents in all three age bands were also the most likely to be living in occupied-to-standard accommodation (39.2%), in comparison to other household age combinations. In England, occupied-to-standard accommodation were more common in households where all residents were a mix of two age bands (aged 0 to 15 years and 16 to 64 years) with 38% of all households.

The highest percentages of under-occupancy were found in households where all residents were aged 65 years and over with 86.1% in England and 90.2% in Wales. In England there were more households in this group that are in accommodation that is under-occupied by positive 2 or more (56.8%), than positive 1 (29.3%). In Wales there are more than double positive 2 or more under-occupied accommodation (63.3%) than in positive 1 under-occupied accommodation (27%).

Figure 8: Households where all residents were aged 65 years and over were most likely to live in under-occupied accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident age, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

Notes

1. This chart does not include data for households where all residents were aged 15 years and under. See information on child-only households in [Section 14: Data sources and quality](#)

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7 . Occupancy rating by ethnic group

Households were classified by the ethnic groups that household members identified with. For information about the two-stage process of the ethnic group question in Census 2021, see our [Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article](#).

Households where all residents identified within the “White” high-level ethnic group were the most likely to live in under-occupied accommodation (73% in England and 77.5% in Wales). Highest rates of under-occupancy in this group were found in the East Midlands (77.6%) and Wales (77.5%). Households where all residents identified within the “White” high-level ethnic group had the lowest rates of overcrowding (2.5% in England and 1.9% in Wales), but this was considerably higher in London (5.9%).

Households where all members identified as “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” had the highest level of overcrowding (16.1% in England, 11.9% in Wales) compared with all households (4.4% in England and 2.2% in Wales). However, considering regions, levels of overcrowding were highest in households where all identified with the “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh” ethnic group in the East Midlands (12.7%), East of England (11.5%), North West (15.9%), West Midlands (14.5%), and Yorkshire and The Humber (13.6%).

Age profiles of high-level ethnic groups should be considered when looking at differences in occupancy rating (bedrooms). [Census data](#) show that people who identified within the “White” high-level ethnic group had the oldest average age (42 in England, 43 in Wales). Those who identified as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups had the lowest average age (18 years in England and 19 years in Wales).

Figure 9: Overcrowding was more likely in households where all residents identified as “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African”

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident ethnic group, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

Notes:

1. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only.

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8 . Occupancy rating by religion

In England, 22.5% of households where all people who answered the religion question identified as "Muslim" were overcrowded – this is more than five times more likely than all households (4.4%).

Households where all people who answered the question identified as "Jewish" had the highest proportion living in under-occupied accommodation (75.4%). Closely followed by households where all people who answered the question identified as "Christian" (75.1%).

Occupancy ratings may be influenced by the differing age profiles of religious groups. Our analysis [Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#) found that people who described themselves as "Muslim" had the youngest average age at 27 years, while people who described themselves as "Christian" had the oldest average age at 51 years.

We can look at under-occupancy split into those under-occupied by positive 1 (household has one more bedroom than required according to the Bedroom Standard) and those under-occupied by positive 2 (two or more bedrooms than required). Households where people who answered the question identified as "Christian" only and "Jewish" only had the highest percentages of accommodation with two or more bedrooms than required in England (42.8% for "Christian" only and 42.7% for "Jewish" only). In England, "Christian" only, "Hindu" only, "Jewish" only, "Sikh" only, and "Christian" and "Other religion" households had a larger proportion of accommodation under-occupied by 2 or more bedrooms, than by one bedroom. "Muslim" only households had the lowest proportion of accommodation under-occupied by two or more bedrooms (14.2%).

Figure 10: "Muslim" only households were most likely to live in overcrowded accommodation in England

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident religion, England, 21 March 2021

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In Wales, the highest levels of overcrowding were also found in households where all people who answered the religion question identified as "Muslim" (14.8%), with these households being more than six times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than all households.

The highest percentages of under-occupied accommodation were found in "Christian" only households (83.8%) and "Jewish" only households (80.6%). These had a higher proportion of accommodation that was under-occupied by two or more bedrooms, in comparison to one bedroom (52.1% in "Christian" only households and 45% in "Jewish" only households).

Figure 11: "Christian" only households were most likely to live in under-occupied accommodation in Wales

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident religion, Wales, 21 March 2021

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London had the largest proportion of overcrowding across all religious group combinations, except for households identifying as "Hindu" only where it was the East Midlands (12.1%) and "Jewish" only households where it was the North East (5.5%).

Looking at overcrowding for household combination of resident religion, most of the highest levels were in London:

- for “Muslim” only households, the largest proportion living in overcrowded accommodation was in Tower Hamlets (39.5%), Newham (35.2%) and Camden (33.5%)
- for “No religion” only households, the largest proportion living in overcrowded accommodation was in Barking and Dagenham (13.6%), Slough (9.8%) and Harlow (8.6%)
- in “Christian” only households, the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation was in Newham (19%), Brent (16.8%) and Barking and Dagenham (15.5%)
- in “Buddhist” only households, the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation was in Rushmoor (19.9%), Reading (16.9%) and Hounslow (16.3%)
- in “Hindu” only households, the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation was in Leicester (19.6%), Waltham Forest (19%) and Newham (18.7%)
- in “Jewish” only households, the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation was in Hackney (22%), Salford (12.1%) and Castle Point (11.5%)
- in “Sikh” only households, the largest proportion of households living in overcrowded accommodation was in Hackney (26.6%), Shropshire (23.1%) and Newham (18%)

9 . Occupancy rating by employment status

Households were classified by the employment status of household members aged 16 years and over.

The highest percentage of overcrowding was found in households with a mix of residents in all three employment status groups – employed, unemployed and economically inactive (27.9% in England, 16.3% in Wales). This may be a result of larger household sizes. Households where all members were “unemployed” had the highest proportion of occupied-to-standard housing with 51.5% in England and 44.9% in Wales.

The highest percentage of under-occupancy was found in households where all members identified as economically inactive (74.5% in England and 79.6% in Wales), which included those retired, looking after home or family, students, long-term sick or disabled. Within under-occupied households in England, households where all members were economically inactive was the only employment combination group that had an occupancy rating of positive 2 (45.2%) that was larger than the proportion of occupancy rating positive 1 (29.3%). In Wales there were two groups, over half of all households where all members were economically inactive (50.2%) were in under-occupied accommodation by at least two bedrooms. Houses where all households' members were employed were also most likely to be under-occupied by at least two (40.2%).

Figure 12: Households with a mix of all three employment groups were most likely to live in overcrowded accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident employment status, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

Notes:

1. Employment status is only included for persons aged 16 years and over in households.

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In English regions and Wales:

- when all household members were employed, the largest percentage of overcrowding was found in London (6.9%), followed by the South East and East of England (2.5%); these areas are generally less affordable than the average for England for both [house purchases](#) and [private rentals](#)
- the North East has the largest proportion of under-occupied accommodation (79.8%) in these households
- when all household members were unemployed, over half of these were living in occupied-to-standard accommodation in five regions; these were the West Midlands (52.1%), East of England (52.1%), London (59.3%), South East (52.7%) and South West (51.5%)
- when all household members were economically inactive, over three-quarters of households were living in under-occupied accommodation, except for London (57.1%); Wales had the largest percentage (79.6%), followed by East Midlands (79.4%), while there were 5.9% of these households living in overcrowded accommodation in London
- Households where residents were a mix of employed, unemployed and economically inactive had the highest percentage of overcrowding in all regions, ranging from 42.7% in London to 15.8% in South West

10 . Occupancy rating by country of birth

Households with a mix of residents born in the UK and outside the UK were most likely to live in overcrowded accommodation in both England (14.4%) and Wales (7%). Households with all residents born in the UK were least likely to live in overcrowded accommodation (2.3% in England and 1.8% in Wales).

Under-occupancy was highest in households where all residents were born in the UK (73.6% in England and 77.6% in Wales). This was the only country of birth combination category that had a higher percentage with 2 or more bedrooms than required (under-occupied positive 2 or more) than those with 1 bedroom more than required (under-occupied positive 1), in both England and Wales). Under-occupancy was least common for households where all residents were born outside the UK (52.7% in England and 61.9% in Wales).

Households where all residents were born outside the UK had the highest proportion living in occupied-to-standard accommodation (40.5% in England and 34.1% in Wales).

Figure 13: Households where all residents were born in the UK were more likely to live in under-occupied accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident country of birth, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

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In English regions and Wales:

- the highest percentages of overcrowded accommodation were found in households with a mix of residents born in the UK and outside the UK in all English regions and Wales, ranging from 6.5% in South West to 22.4% in London
- the highest percentage of under-occupied accommodation was found in households where all residents were born in the UK in all areas, ranging from 57.9% in London to 78.2% in East Midlands
- the highest percentage of occupied-to-standard accommodation was found in households where all residents were born outside the UK in all areas, ranging from 30.7% in the North East to 47.1% in London

11 . Occupancy rating by sexual orientation

Households were classified by the sexual orientation of household members aged 16 years and over, who chose to answer the voluntary question on sexual orientation. It is important to consider how age profiles differ by sexual orientation, as shown in our [Sexual orientation: age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article](#), which may influence bedroom occupancy ratings.

Households where all residents who answered the sexual orientation question identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other sexual orientation (LGB+) were less likely to be in overcrowded accommodation in England (3%) and in Wales (1.4%), compared with all households (4.4% in England, 2.2% in Wales). However, households with a mix of Straight or Heterosexual and LGB+ residents were more than twice as likely to live in overcrowded households in England (9%) and nearly three times as likely in Wales (6.3%), when compared with all households (4.4% in England, 2.2% in Wales).

In both England and Wales, households with a mix of Straight or Heterosexual and LGB+ residents had the largest proportion of occupied-to-standard accommodation (38.7% in England, 35.2% in Wales). Followed by households where all members identified as LGB+ (38.1% in England, 30.4% in Wales).

Figure 14: Households that include both members who identify as Straight or Heterosexual and members who identify as LGB+, were more likely to be in overcrowded accommodation

Percentage of households by occupancy rating (bedrooms) and household combination of resident sexual orientation, England and Wales, 21 March 2021

Notes:

1. Household combination of sexual orientation classifies households by the sexual orientation of household members who chose to answer the question. There may be some residents who did not answer the question in any type of household, in addition to those in 'No household members answered the question

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In English regions and Wales:

- the highest percentages of overcrowding were found in households where members identified as “Straight or Heterosexual and LGB+” in all English regions and Wales, ranging from 6.3% in both Wales and North East to 15% in London
- the highest percentages of under-occupancy were found in households where all responding members identified as “Straight or Heterosexual” in all English regions, ranging from 49.7% in London to 75.9% in the North East, however, Wales had a higher percentage of under-occupancy in households where all members did not respond to the sexual orientation question (77.1%)

12 . Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021 data

[Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Dataset | Released 25 August 2023

Occupancy rating (for bedrooms) by household characteristics, for households with usual residents, England and Wales, Census 2021. Data are available at a national, country, region, local authority district, Middle layer Super Output Area and Lower layer Super Output Area level, where possible.

13 . Glossary

Household

A household is defined as:

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

This includes:

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

Occupancy rating bedrooms

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

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

- adult couple
- any remaining adult (aged 21 years or over)
- two males (aged 10 to 20 years)
- one male (aged 10 to 20 years) and one male (aged 9 years or under), if there is an odd number of males aged 10 to 20 years
- one male aged 10 to 20 years if there are no males aged 0 to 9 years to pair with him
- repeat steps 3 to 5 for females
- two children (aged 9 years or under) regardless of sex
- any remaining child (aged 9 years or under)

An occupancy rating of:

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

Accommodation type

The type of building or structure used or available by an individual or household. This could be:

- the whole house or bungalow
- a flat, maisonette or apartment
- a temporary or mobile structure, such as a caravan

Whole house or bungalow

This property type is not divided into flats or other living accommodation. There are three types of whole houses or bungalows.

Detached

None of the living accommodation is attached to another property but can be attached to a garage.

Semi-detached

The living accommodation is joined to another house or bungalow by a common wall that they share.

Terraced

A mid-terraced house is located between two other houses and shares two common walls. An end-of-terrace house is part of a terraced development but only shares one common wall.

Flats (apartments) and maisonettes

An apartment is another word for a flat. A maisonette is a two-storey flat.

Usual resident

For Census 2021, a usual resident of the UK is anyone who, on Census Day, 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.

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
- owned with a mortgage or loan
- part owned on a shared ownership scheme

Rented accommodation can be:

- private rented, for example, rented through a private landlord or letting agent
- social rented through a local council or housing association
- lived in rent free, which is where the household does not own the accommodation and does not pay rent to live there, for example living in a relative or friend's property or live-in carers or nannies

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

Household combination of resident age

Classifies households by the ages of household members on 21 March 2021. Households could be made up of:

- residents aged under 15 years
- residents aged 16 to 64 years
- residents aged 65 years and over
- a combination of the three

Household family composition

Households according to the relationships between members.

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

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

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

Household combination of resident ethnic group

Classifies households by the ethnic groups household members identified with.

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 includes people who identified with one of eight tick-box response options, including "No religion", alongside those who chose not to answer this question. For more information, see our [Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin](#).

Household combination of resident religion

Classifies households by the religious affiliation of household members who chose to answer the religion question, which was voluntary. The classifications may include residents who did not answer the religion question.

Household combination of resident employment status

Classifies households by the employment status of household members aged 16 years and over between 15 and 21 March 2021. Households could be made up of:

- employed residents (employee or self-employed)
- unemployed residents (looking for work and could start within two weeks, or waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted)
- economically inactive residents (not in employment and had not looked for work between 22 February to 21 March 2021, or could not start work within two weeks)
- a combination of the three

Examples of economically inactive residents include those retired, looking after home or family, students, long-term sick or disabled.

Household combination of resident country of birth

Classifies households by the country in which household members were born. This is different to nationality which is the country or countries where a person can have a legal status, although they may not reside in that country.

There are times when someone is not born in a country (for example, at sea). In this situation the country where the birth is registered is usually used. Country of birth does not change, except as a result of an international boundary change.

LGB+

An abbreviation used to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other minority sexual orientations (for example, asexual).

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same.

For example, someone in an opposite-sex relationship may also experience same-sex attraction, and vice versa. This means the statistics should be interpreted purely as showing how people responded to the question, rather than being about whom they are attracted to or their actual relationships.

We have not provided glossary entries for individual sexual orientation categories. This is because individual respondents may have differing perspectives on the exact meaning.

14 . Data sources and quality

The census provides the most detailed picture of the entire population, with the same core questions asked to everybody across England and Wales. Census results can be more reliable than survey results based on a sample of the population, because the whole population is included. The UK Statistics Authority has assigned National Statistics status to Census 2021 outputs, providing assurance that these statistics are of the highest quality and value to users.

Census 2021 achieved a very high overall response rate of 97%. We ensure the census results reflect the whole population by using statistical methods to estimate the number and characteristics of people who were not recorded on a census response. This means that the census statistics are estimates rather than simple counts of responses, so they have some statistical uncertainty associated with them. We take numerous steps to minimise possible sources of error.

Additionally, we apply statistical disclosure control to protect the confidentiality of census respondents. Differences in the methods used for statistical disclosure control may result in minor differences in data totals between census products. As we round all figures individually, table totals may not sum exactly.

Quality considerations along with the strengths and limitations of Census 2021 more generally can be found in our [Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#). Read more about housing quality information in our [Housing quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#). Further information on our quality assurance processes is provided in our [Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates methodology](#).

Comparing with other census releases

There are published Census releases that look at occupancy rating (bedrooms) using a different population base to this release. We focus on households, as occupancy rating (bedrooms) is collected at the household level. Other releases focus on usual residents (people within households), which include:

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

Analysis on the household combination of resident employment status and sexual orientation both only include data for people aged 16 years and over in households. This means the base population for these variables will not include households where all residents were aged 15 years and under (child-only households).

Child-only households

In this analysis, we have excluded households where all residents were aged 15 years and under when looking at the household combination of resident age. This is because there are some instances where the data show a higher-than-expected number of child-only households. See our [Demography and migration quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#) for quality information.

Ethnic group and religion questions

The religion question in census was voluntary. To see the ethnic group and religion questions on the household, individual and Welsh questionnaires, visit our [Census 2021 paper questionnaires web page](#). For quality information affecting ethnic group and religion data from Census 2021, see our [Ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#).

Occupancy ratings (bedrooms) discussed in this publication may be influenced by the differing age and sex profiles of religious or ethnic groups (see our [Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article](#) and [Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales article](#)).

Labour market variables

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change, and it is possible that this 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 2021 article](#) for further information about interpreting census labour market data.

15 . Related links

[Housing: Census 2021 in England and Wales](#)

Webpage | Released 5 January 2023

Data and supporting information about housing from Census 2021 in England and Wales.

[Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 24 March 2023

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

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

Webpage | Released 15 March 2023

Variations in health, disability, overcrowding and home ownership, as well as levels of education and employment.

16 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 25 August 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Overcrowding and under-occupancy by household characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)