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STATISTICS

Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion in Wales (Census 2021)

Population and household estimates by ethnic group, national identity, main language and religion of residents and households in Wales from Census 2021.

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Contents

Introduction (#section-110360)

Main points (#section-110362)

Ethnic group (#section-110364)

National identity (#section-110368)

Language (#section-110370)

Religion (#section-110372)

Quality and methodology information (#section-110374)

Contact details (#section-110376)

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published Census 2021 data on ethnicity, national identity, language and religion of individuals and households in Wales and England this morning (Tuesday 29 November 2022) in four separate bulletins.

- Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021
- National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021
- Language, England and Wales: Census 2021
- Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021

This statistical bulletin contains summaries for these four topic areas for Wales.

This bulletin includes data on the main language of respondents and households. A separate bulletin containing Welsh language skills data from the 2021 Census will be published on our website on 6 December 2022.

Main points

Ethnic group

- On Census Day, 21 March 2021, 2.9 million usual residents in Wales identified within the high-level ethnic group category “White” (93.8% of the population, compared to 95.6% in 2011). 90.6% of the population identified as “White: Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” in 2021.
- The second largest high-level category in Wales in 2021 was “Asian, Asian

Welsh or Asian British”, with 89,000 people identifying within this category (2.9% of the population, compared to 2.3% in 2011).

- 49,000 usual residents in Wales identified within the high-level category “Mixed or multiple ethnic groups” (1.6% of the population compared to 1.0% in 2011).
- 28,000 usual residents in Wales identified within the high-level category “Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African” (0.9% of the population, compared to 0.6% in 2011).
- 26,000 usual residents in Wales identified within the high-level category “Other ethnic group” in 2021 (0.9% of the population, compared to 0.5% in 2011).
- The local authorities with the highest proportions of high-level ethnic groups other than “White” were mainly urban areas such as Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.
- 5.3% of households in Wales were multiple ethnic group households, up from 4.2% in 2011.

National identity

- 1.7 million usual residents in Wales identified with a “Welsh” only identity (55.2% of the population, down from 57.5% in 2011).
- 8.1% of the Wales population specified both a “Welsh” and “British” identity, up from 7.1% in 2011.
- The most common UK identities in Wales other than “Welsh” only or both “Welsh” and “British” were “British” only (18.5%), “English” only (9.1%) and both “English” and “British” (1.8%). 1.9% of the population identified with other UK identities or combinations of UK identities.
- 5.4% of usual residents in Wales chose at least one non-UK national identity (up from 3.8% in 2011). Within this group 4.2% of the population did not associate with any UK identity (up from 3.4% in 2011).
- The most common identity amongst people without a UK identity in Wales

was Polish (0.7% of usual residents), followed by Irish (0.3%), Romanian (0.2%) and Indian (0.2%).

- The areas with the largest percentages of “Welsh” only identity included Merthyr Tydfil (70.0%), Rhondda Cynon Taf (69.8%), and Caerphilly (69.2%), while Flintshire (34.7%) had the smallest proportion.
- The percentage of people identifying with a “Welsh” only identity was smaller in 2021 than in 2011 for most local authorities, while all local authorities saw increases in the proportion of people identifying as both “Welsh” and “British”.

Language

- 2.9 million usual residents aged three years and over spoke English or Welsh as their main language (96.7% of the population, down from 97.1% in 2011).
- Of the usual residents in Wales who did not select English or Welsh as a main language in 2021, 78,000 (78.0%) said they could speak English well or very well, while 22,000 (22.0%) could not speak English very well or at all.
- As in 2011, Polish was the most common main language after English or Welsh at 0.7% of the population. Arabic (0.3%) was the most common main language aside from English, Welsh or Polish in 2021.
- British Sign Language (BSL) was the preferred language of 900 (0.03%) usual residents aged three years and over across Wales.
- As in 2011, urban local authorities had lower proportions of people whose main language is English or Welsh in 2021, with Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham and Swansea having the lowest proportions of all Welsh local authorities.
- In 1.3 million households in Wales (96.2% of all households), all usual residents spoke English or Welsh as a main language, which is a smaller proportion than in 2011 (96.7%).

Religion

- 2.9 million respondents in Wales (93.7%) chose to answer the voluntary religion question in 2021, whereas 195,000 (6.3%) chose not to answer. More people answered than in 2011 when 92.4% answered and 7.6% chose not to answer.
- 1.4 million usual residents in Wales reported that they had “No religion” in 2021 (46.5% of the population, up from 32.1% in 2011). More people reported “No religion” than any single religious affiliation.
- 43.6% of usual residents (1.4 million) described their religion as “Christian” in 2021. This religious affiliation had previously been selected by over half of residents in Wales in the 2011 Census (57.6%).
- The proportion of the population identifying as “Christian” decreased in all Welsh local authorities between 2011 and 2021, and the three local authorities with the greatest decreases in the proportion of people identifying as “Christian” across England and Wales were all in Wales (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil).
- The next largest religious affiliation in Wales was “Muslim”, with 2.2% of the population (67,000 usual residents) identifying as “Muslim” in 2021. This is an increase from 1.5% in 2011.
- There was little change from 2011 in the proportions of the population identifying with other religious groups included within the tick boxes included on the Census form.
- For religious groups other than “Christian”, the local authorities with the highest concentrations of each religion tended to be urban areas, with Cardiff having the highest proportions of those identifying as “Muslim” (9.3%), “Hindu” (1.5%) and Sikh (0.4%), and the second highest proportion of those identifying as “Buddhist” (0.4%).

Ethnic group

Since 1991, the census for Wales and England has included a question about ethnic identity. The ethnic group categories, including 'other' categories for write-in responses, were arranged within five high-level ethnic group categories.

1. "White"
2. "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups"
3. "Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British"
4. "Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African"
5. "Other ethnic group"

In 2021, respondents could choose to identify through one of the 'tick box' response options provided on the form, or could choose to write in their ethnic identity through one of the six response options.

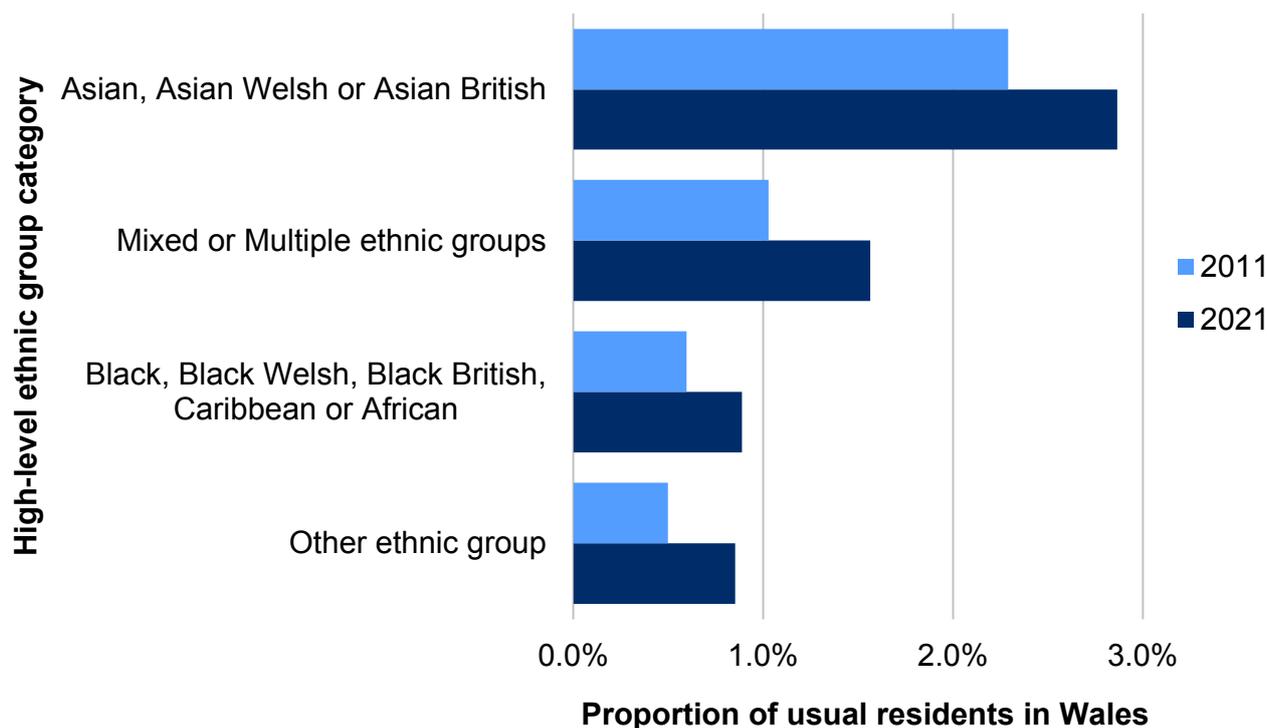
1. "African background"
2. "Any other Asian background"
3. "Any other Black, Black British or Black Caribbean background"
4. "Any other Mixed or Multiple background"
5. "Any other White background"
6. "Any other ethnic group"

In 2021, 155,000 people in Wales (5.0% of the population) chose to write in an ethnic identity.

There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition of Wales, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between censuses.

Ethnic groups in Wales

Figure 1: High-level ethnic group categories in Wales, 2011 and 2021



This bar chart shows how the proportions of usual residents identifying with all high-level ethnic group categories other than "White" increased between 2011 and 2021.

Source: Census 2021

[Note] We have excluded the high-level "White" category from Figure 1 to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the four high-level groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population. "Asian Welsh" and "Black Welsh" ethnic groups were included on the census questionnaire in Wales only,

these categories were new for 2021.

White

The proportion of people in Wales who identified within the largest high-level category, “White” (2.9 million, 93.8% of the population), was smaller than in 2011 (95.6%). As in 2011, this was much larger than the proportion of people identifying as “White” in England (81.0%).

Within the high-level “White” category, 2.8 million people in Wales identified as “Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” (90.6% of total population). This was a decrease from 2011 (93.2%).

The most common response after “White: Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” was “Any other White background”, with 2.7% of the population (83,000) selecting this option. This is an increase from 2011 (1.8%). This option allowed respondents to write in their ethnic group, and the most common write-in responses included “Polish” (22,000, 0.7%) and “Romanian” (5,000, 0.2%). In part, the increases to these ethnic groups may be explained by the new **Search-as-you-type functionality (Office for National Statistics)**

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/searchasyoutypeandaddresslookupfunctionalityforcensus2021>) for Census 2021, making it easier for people to self-define when completing the census online.

13,000 usual residents of Wales reported an “Irish” ethnicity within the high-level “White” category in 2021 (0.4% of the population), a decrease from 2011 (14,000 people, 0.5%).

4,000 usual residents of Wales (0.1%) identified with a “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” ethnicity within the high-level “White” category, an increase from 2011 when almost 3,000 usual residents (0.1%) responded with this ethnic group.

In 2021, “Roma” was included as a tick box category within the high-level “White” category for the first time on a census form, with close to 2,000 usual residents in Wales (0.1%) identifying with this ethnic group.

Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British

The second largest high-level ethnic group category in Wales was “Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British” (89,000, 2.9%), an increase from 2.3% in 2011. A smaller proportion of people in Wales identified as “Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British” than in England (9.6%).

The largest ethnic group within the high-level “Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British” category was “Indian”, with 0.7% of usual residents (21,000) reporting this ethnicity in 2021. This is an increase from 2011, when 17,000 people (0.6%) reported an Indian ethnicity.

A similar number of people selected “Any other Asian background”, which allowed them to write in their ethnic group. 21,000 usual residents (0.7%) selected this response in 2021, an increase from 2011 (16,000, 0.5%). The most common write-in responses included “Filipino” (6,000, 0.2%) and “Sri Lankan” (2,000, 0.1%).

The next most common ethnic group within this high-level category was “Pakistani”, with 0.6% of the population of Wales (18,000) selecting this ethnic group in 2021. This is an increase from 12,000 (0.4%) in 2011.

15,000 usual residents in Wales (0.5%) identified with the “Bangladeshi” ethnic group in 2021 (up from 0.3% in 2011), and the proportion of people identifying as “Chinese” rose to 0.5% (14,000 usual residents), from 0.4% in 2011.

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups

49,000 usual residents in Wales (1.6%) identified with the high-level ethnic group category “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” (an increase from 1.0% in 2011). A smaller proportion of people in Wales in 2021 identified with “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” than in England (3.0%).

Within the high-level category, 14,000 usual residents in Wales (0.5%) identified as “White and Asian”, an increase from 0.3% (9,000) in 2011.

The next most common ethnic group within the high-level “Mixed or Multiple ethnic group” category was “White and Black Caribbean”. 14,000 (0.4%) of usual residents in Wales identified with this group in 2021, which is more people than in 2011 albeit a similar proportion (11,000, 0.4%).

13,000 people (0.4%) responded “Any other Mixed or Multiple background” in 2021, nearly doubling from 7,000 (0.2%) in 2011. This response allowed respondents to write in their ethnic group, and the most common write-in response specifying ethnic groups was “White and Arab” (800 people).

8,000 people (0.3%) identified as “White and Black African” in 2021, increasing from 4,000 (0.1%) in 2011.

Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African

28,000 usual residents in Wales (0.9%) identified within the high-level ethnic group category “Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African” (an increase from 0.6% in 2011). This was a smaller proportion than in England (4.2%), where “Black, Black British, Caribbean or African” was the third largest high level ethnic group.

The largest ethnic group within this high-level category was the write-in

response “African”, with 20,000 people (0.6%) selecting this option in 2021. In comparison, 0.4% of the population (12,000) selected “African” in the 2011 Census, although there was no write-in option for this tick-box in 2011. The most common write-in responses for the “African” ethnic group included “Nigerian” (3,000, 0.1%) and “Somali” (2,000, 0.1%).

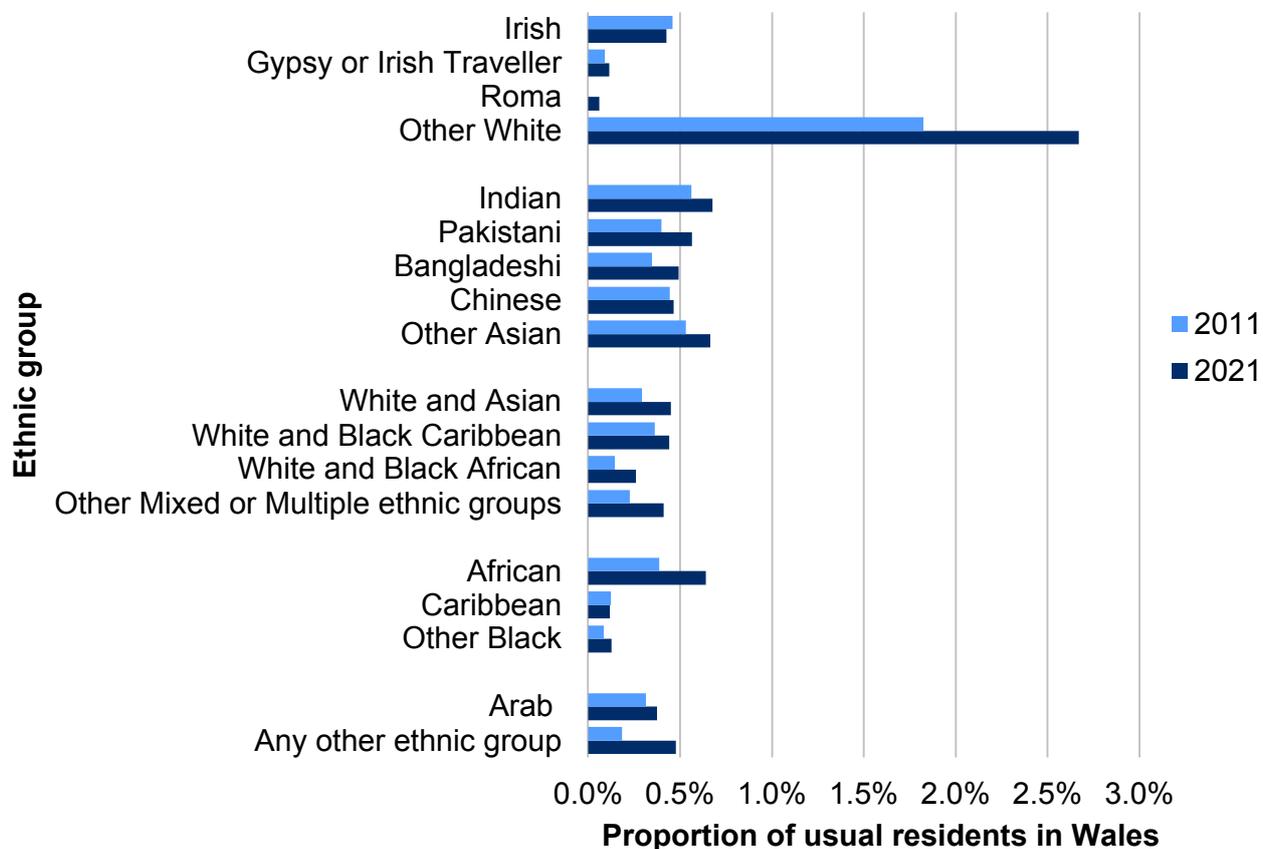
Almost 4,000 usual residents in Wales (0.1%) chose the write-in response “Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background” in 2021. For comparison, 0.1% of people (3,000) identified with “Any other Black, African or Caribbean background” in 2011.

4,000 usual residents in Wales selected “Caribbean” as their ethnic group in 2021, 0.1% of the population. The number of people identifying this way has decreased slightly since 2011.

Other ethnic group

In 2021, 0.9% of usual residents in Wales (26,000) identified with an ethnicity not encompassed within the other high-level ethnic group categories, increasing from 0.5% in 2011 (15,000). This is a smaller proportion of people than in England (2.2%).

Figure 2: Ethnic minority groups in Wales, 2011 and 2021



This bar chart shows how the proportions of usual residents identifying with minority ethnic groups changed between 2011 and 2021, with the proportions increasing for most minority ethnic groups in that period.

Source: Census 2021

[Note] There was no “Roma” tick-box in 2011. “White: Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” has been excluded from this chart for greater visual clarity of the differences for the ethnic groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.

Within the high-level category, 15,000 usual residents in Wales (0.5%) selected the write-in response “Any other ethnic group”. The number of people selecting this option has more than doubled since 2011 (6,000, 0.2%). The most common write-in response was “Kurdish” (2,000, 0.1%). The next most common write-in responses (with 1,000 usual residents each) were “Turkish”, “Iranian” and “Hispanic or Latin American” (less than 0.1% each).

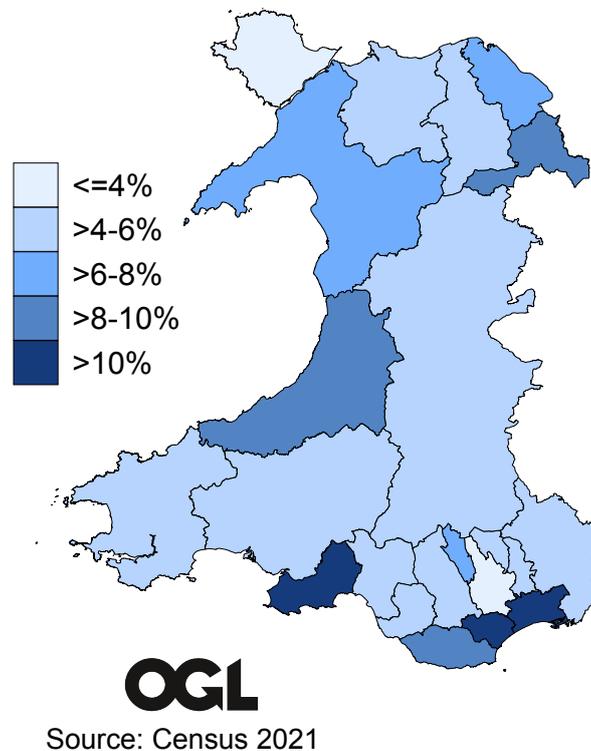
0.4% of usual residents in Wales (12,000) identified with the “Arab” ethnic group in 2021. This is a rise from 0.3% (10,000) in 2011.

How ethnic group varied across Wales

In almost every Welsh local authority, over 80% of the total population identified with the high-level “White” category, with the only exception being Cardiff (79.2%). The Isle of Anglesey (98.1%) had the highest proportion of people identifying with the high-level “White” ethnic group, followed by Blaenau Gwent (97.8%), Caerphilly and Powys (97.7%) and Flintshire and Pembrokeshire (97.6%).

Cardiff (73.6%) was also the only local authority in which less than 80% of the population identified with the largest ethnic group “White: Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British”. The Isle of Anglesey (96.3%) again had the highest proportion.

Figure 3: Percentage of usual residents in Wales identifying with an ethnic minority group by local authority, 2021



This map shows how the proportion of usual residents identifying with a minority ethnic group varied by local authority, with urban areas tending to have the highest proportions.

The local authorities with the highest proportions of people identifying with high-level ethnic groups other than “White” tended to be urban areas. Cardiff had the highest proportions of people identifying within the high-level categories “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh” (9.7%), “Black, Black British, Black Welsh,

Caribbean or African” (3.8%), “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” (4.0%) and “Other ethnic group” (3.3%). Newport had the second highest proportions for each of these high-level ethnic categories. Swansea had the third highest proportions for these categories except for “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups”, for which the Vale of Glamorgan (2.3%) had the third highest proportion.

The largest ethnic minority group in every local authority in Wales was “White: Other White”. The proportion of the population identifying with this ethnic group was highest in Wrexham (4.8%) and was also over 3% in the local authorities of Cardiff, Newport, Flintshire, Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea.

Within the high-level “White” ethnic group, Pembrokeshire was the local authority with the highest proportion of people reporting a “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” ethnic group (0.5%), while Conwy had the highest proportion of those identifying as “Irish” (0.7%) and Newport of those identifying as “Roma” (0.3%).

While Newport had the highest proportion of people identifying as “Pakistani” (3.0%), Cardiff had the highest proportion of people identifying with other ethnic groups within the high-level category “Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British”, and all ethnic groups in the high-level categories “Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African”, “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” and “Other ethnic group”. The largest ethnic groups in Cardiff within these high-level categories were “African” (2.9%), Indian and Pakistani (2.4% each).

Outside of Cardiff, Swansea had the highest proportion of people identifying as “Arab” and “Chinese”. The largest proportions for the remaining ethnic groups within the high-level categories “Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British”, “Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African”, “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” and “Other ethnic group” were in Newport.

Ethnic group identification within households in Wales

The census additionally provides insights into ethnic group identification within the 918,000 households with more than one person in Wales (68.1% of total occupied households). In the majority, all household members identified with the same ethnic group from the 19-category classification (847,000 households, 62.9% of all households). In 2011 a slightly higher proportion of households had all household members identifying with the same ethnic group (65.0%). This does not include the almost 430,000 one-person households in 2021 (31.9%).

In Wales in 2021, 5.3% of households were multiple ethnic group households, up from 4.2% in 2011 and lower than the proportion of English households (10.4%).

Census 2021 provides insight into three combinations of ethnic group identification and relationships within households with more than one person.

1. Ethnic groups differ between generations but not within partnerships (0.9% of all households)
2. Ethnic groups differ within partnerships (3.2%)
3. Any other combination of multiple ethnic identities (1.2%)

In Wales, the percentage of multiple-ethnic group households ranged between 2.5% of all households in Blaenau Gwent and 11.6% in Cardiff.

National identity

The census question on national identity was introduced in 2011 due to increased interest in 'national' consciousness and a demand for people to be able to acknowledge their national identity. The question allows respondents to

tick all identities which apply.

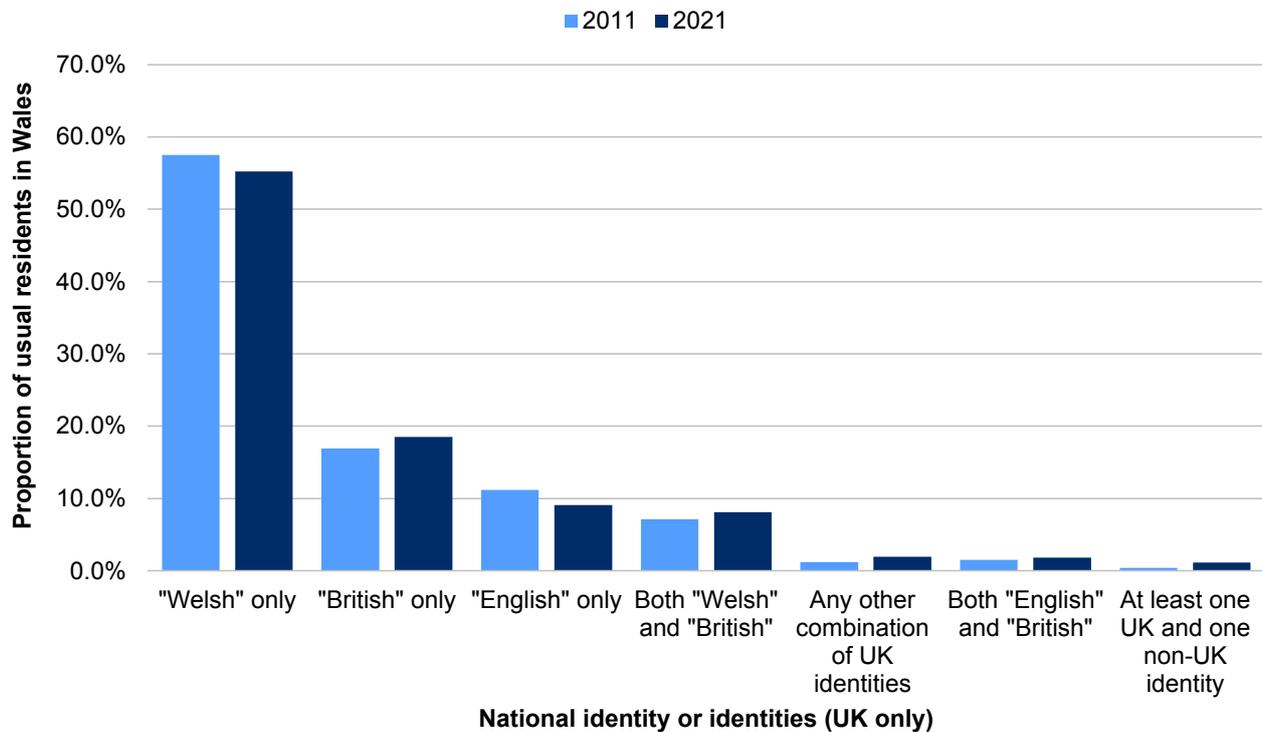
In our **Census 2021 bulletin on Demography and migration in Wales** (<https://gov.wales/demography-and-migration-wales-census-2021>) we summarised data on demography and migration in Wales, including an overview of the non-UK born population. In that bulletin we showed that there were more usual residents in Wales in 2021 born outside of the UK than in 2011, and a higher percentage of people born in England living in Wales. These trends in demography may explain some of the trends in how people describe their national identity explored below.

National identity in Wales

55.2% of the population in Wales (1.7 million) selected a “Welsh” only identity in 2021, down from 57.5% (1.8 million) in 2011. 8.1% of the population (251,000) in Wales selected both a “Welsh” and “British” identity, up from 7.1% (218,000 individuals) in 2011. Wales had a higher proportion of the population who associated with a UK identity (95.8%) than England (90.0%), though this proportion has fallen since 2011 (96.6%).

18.5% of the population of Wales identified with a “British” only identity (574,000 individuals), up from 16.9% in 2011. This is a significantly lower proportion than in England (56.8%), which nearly tripled over the decade. This may have been a result of social, legal, or demographic changes, but may also be an artifact of the changes to the national identity question structure in England. In England, the tick-box for “British” on the Census 2021 questionnaire was the first response option, when in 2011 it was the penultimate response option. In Wales, “British” remained the penultimate response option while Welsh was the first. More information can be found in the **National identity, ethnic group, language and religion question development report for Census 2021 (Office for National Statistics)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/>)

Figure 4: UK national identities in Wales, 2011 and 2021



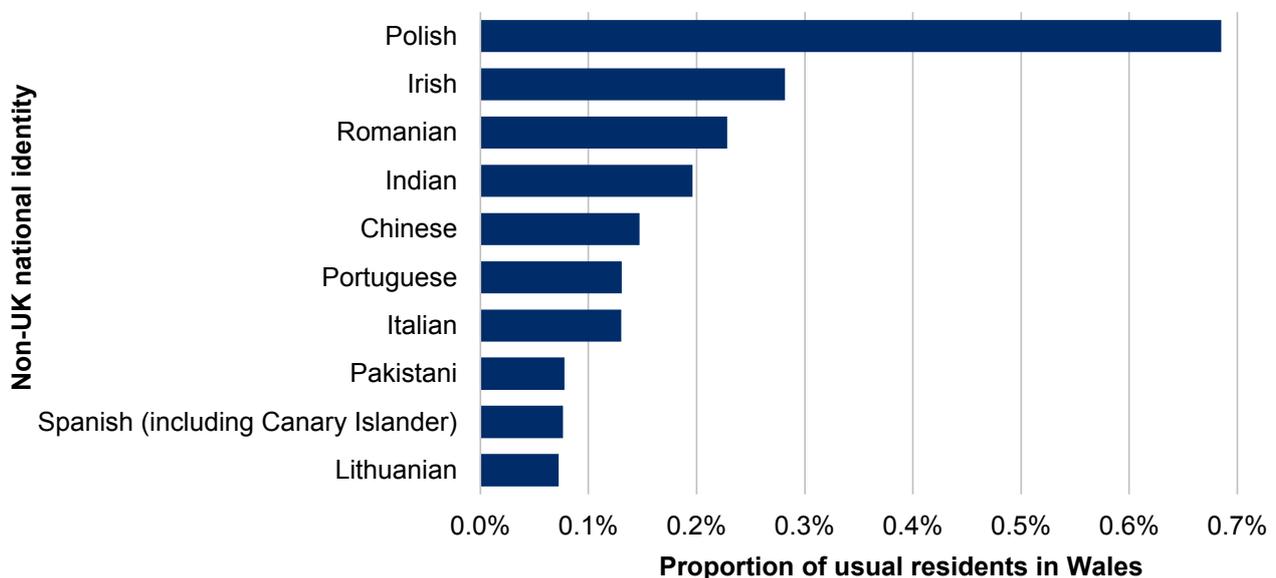
This column chart shows the proportion of usual residents in Wales identifying with UK national identities in 2021, and how these have changed since 2011.

Source: Census 2021

The most common UK identity in Wales in 2021 other than “Welsh” only or “British” only was “English” only with 9.1% of the population (283,000 usual residents), down from 11.2% in 2011. 1.8% of the population selected both “English” and “British” identities (55,000 usual residents), up from 1.5% in 2011. 1.9% of the population identified with other UK identities or combinations of UK identities in 2021, up from 1.5% in 2011.

Overall, 168,000 usual residents (5.4%) in Wales chose at least one non-UK national identity. This has increased since 2011, when 118,000 people (3.8%) in Wales chose at least one non-UK national identity. This group includes usual residents in Wales who did not associate with any UK identity i.e. who only associated with a non-UK identity or multiple non-UK identities. The proportion of the population who did not associate with any UK identity has also risen, from 3.4% in 2011 to 4.2% in 2021.

Figure 5: Top 10 non-UK identities in Wales, 2021



This bar chart shows the top 10 most common non-UK identities reported by usual residents in Wales in 2021. As in 2011, "Polish" was the most common non-UK national identity.

Source: Census 2021

In 2021, the most common non-UK identity amongst people without a UK identity in Wales was "Polish" (21,000, 0.7%). This is an increase from 2011

(19,000, 0.6%), when it was also the most common non-UK identity. The next most common non-UK identities were “Irish” (9,000, 0.3%), “Romanian” (7,000, 0.2%) and “Indian” (6,000, 0.2%).

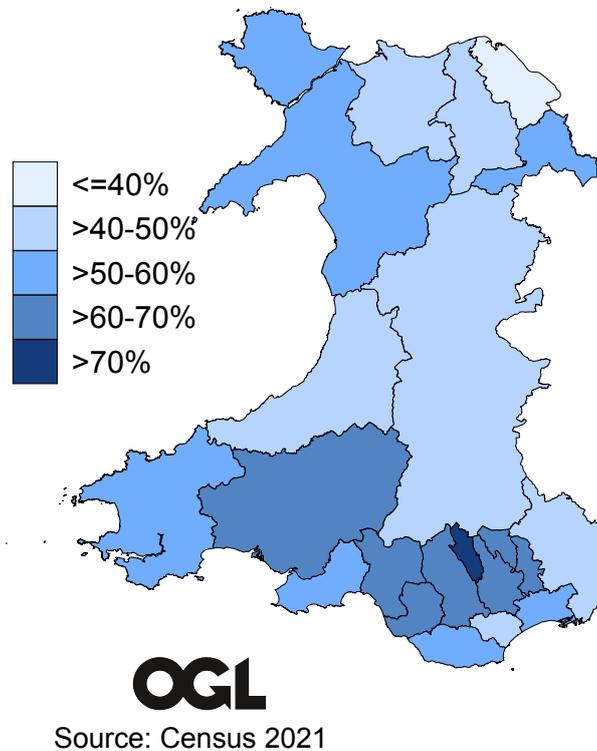
The identities with the largest relative increases over the decade were “Romanian” (7,000 individuals in 2021, more than five times higher than in 2011) and “Hong Kong Chinese” (900 individuals, more than seven times higher than in 2011). These increases are likely driven by working restrictions for Romanian citizens being lifted in 2014, and the British Government’s policy shift on British National (Overseas) visas, which led to an increase in the number of people from Hong Kong choosing to emigrate to the UK.

How national identity varied across Wales

Some of the areas with the highest percentages of the population identifying with a “Welsh” only identity were South Wales valleys areas. This included Merthyr Tydfil (70.0%), Rhondda Cynon Taf (69.8%), and Caerphilly (69.2%). The Welsh local authority with the lowest proportion of people with a “Welsh” only identity was Flintshire on the border with England (34.7%) by a large margin. The percentage of people reporting a “Welsh” only identity was higher in every Welsh local authority than in any English local authority.

Four local authorities in North Wales saw notable increases in the proportions of their populations identifying with a “Welsh” only identity in 2021: the Isle of Anglesey (up 0.9 percentage points to 55.6%), Denbighshire (up 0.6 percentage points to 44.7%), Conwy (up 0.4 percentage points to 42.0%), and Gwynedd (up 0.2 percentage points to 59.3%). Aside from Ceredigion which saw very little change, the proportion of those identifying with a “Welsh” only identity fell in all other local authorities between 2011 and 2021. The local authorities that saw the greatest decreases were Newport (down 4.6 percentage points to 50.9%), Blaenau Gwent (down 4.5 percentage points to 68.0%) and Cardiff (down 3.7 percentage points to 46.7%).

Figure 6: Proportion of people identifying with a “Welsh” only identity by local authority, 2021



This map shows the proportions of people in local authorities who reported a "Welsh" only identity in 2021. Some of the areas with the highest percentages of the population identifying this way were South Wales valleys areas.

In contrast, all local authorities saw increases in the proportion of people identifying as both “Welsh” and “British”, with the greatest increases observed in Torfaen (up 1.9 percentage points to 10.1%), Rhonda Cynon Taf (up 1.6 percentage points to 9.8%) and Conwy (up 1.4 percentage points to 5.8%).

Similarly, the proportions of people identifying as “British” only increased in all local authorities between 2011 and 2021, and around a quarter of people identified as “British” only in Monmouthshire (27.0%), Flintshire (25.8%), Powys (24.4%) and Conwy (24.3%). The lowest proportion of “British” only identities was in Merthyr Tydfil (10.9%).

Caerphilly (98.4%), the Isle of Anglesey (98.2%) and Torfaen (98.1%) had the highest proportions of people identifying with at least one UK identity, while Cardiff (90.0%), Newport (92.8%), Swansea and Wrexham (94.1% each) had the smallest proportions. Cardiff (12.5%), Newport (8.8%) and Swansea (7.4%) had the highest proportions of people identifying with at least one non-UK identity.

The highest concentrations of people identifying as “Polish” were in Wrexham (2.4%), Merthyr Tydfil (1.9%) and Flintshire (1.4%). Eight other local authorities (Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Swansea, Cardiff, Powys and Bridgend) had proportions of the population identifying as “Polish” of at least 0.5%.

Other notable concentrations of non-UK national identity groups include “Chinese” (0.6%) and “Indian” (0.7%) in Cardiff, “Romanian” in Newport and Flintshire (0.6% each), “Portuguese” in Wrexham (0.6%) and Merthyr Tydfil (0.5%), and “Irish” in Conwy (0.5%).

Language

In Wales, people were asked if their main language was anything other than English or Welsh. Therefore, it is not possible to determine from this question how many people in Wales considered Welsh to be their main language. There was a separate question for people in Wales asking them about their Welsh

language ability. This question was not asked in England. We will be publishing information on Welsh language skills in Wales, on 6 December 2022.

However, Welsh was not included in the tick-box text for main language in England, making it possible to determine how many usual residents in England wrote in that Welsh was their main language. In 2021, 7,000 people in England (less than 0.1%) said Welsh was their main language. Bristol, Cheshire West and Chester, Shropshire and Liverpool had the largest proportions of people with Welsh as their main language (0.1% each).

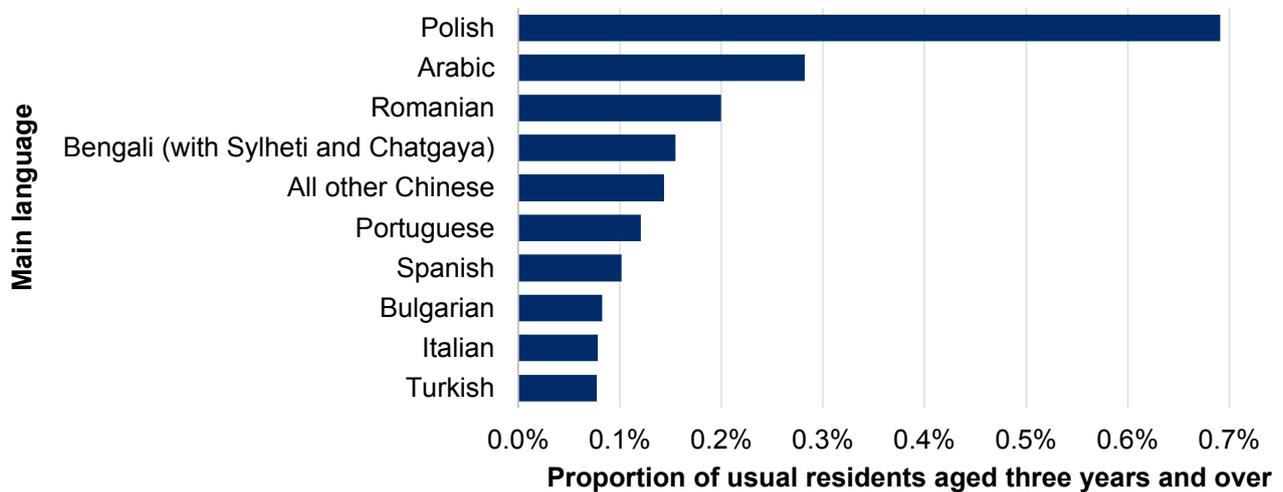
People in Wales who did not report English or Welsh as a main language were asked to report how well they could speak English. They could choose from either “Very well”, “Well”, “Not well” or “Not at all”. This allowed people who did not report English or Welsh as their main language, but may be fluent English speakers, to report that they could speak English well or very well.

Language in Wales

In Wales, 96.7% of usual residents (2.9 million) aged three years and over spoke English or Welsh as their main language, slightly down from 97.1% in 2011. This was a higher proportion than in all English regions.

Of the 101,000 people in Wales who did not select English or Welsh as a main language in 2021, 78.0% (78,000) said they could speak English well or very well, similar to 2011 (77.1%, 65,000). 22.0% of people who did not select English or Welsh as a main language could not speak English very well or at all (22,000 individuals).

Figure 7: Top 10 most common main languages excluding English and Welsh in Wales, 2021



This bar chart shows the top 10 most commonly reported main languages other than English or Welsh in Wales in 2021. Polish was the most commonly reported main language other than Welsh or English.

Source: Census 2021

As in 2011, Polish was the most common main language in 2021 after English or Welsh, for 0.7% of the population (21,000). This is an increase from 2011 (17,000, 0.6 %). Arabic was the next most common main language in Wales (9,000, 0.3%), an increase from 0.2% in 2011.

In addition to spoken languages, British Sign Language (BSL) was the preferred language of 900 (0.03%) usual residents aged three years and over across Wales. This is a small increase from 800 in 2011. A further 300 usual residents who selected a non-spoken language as their main language reported a sign language or communication system other than BSL.

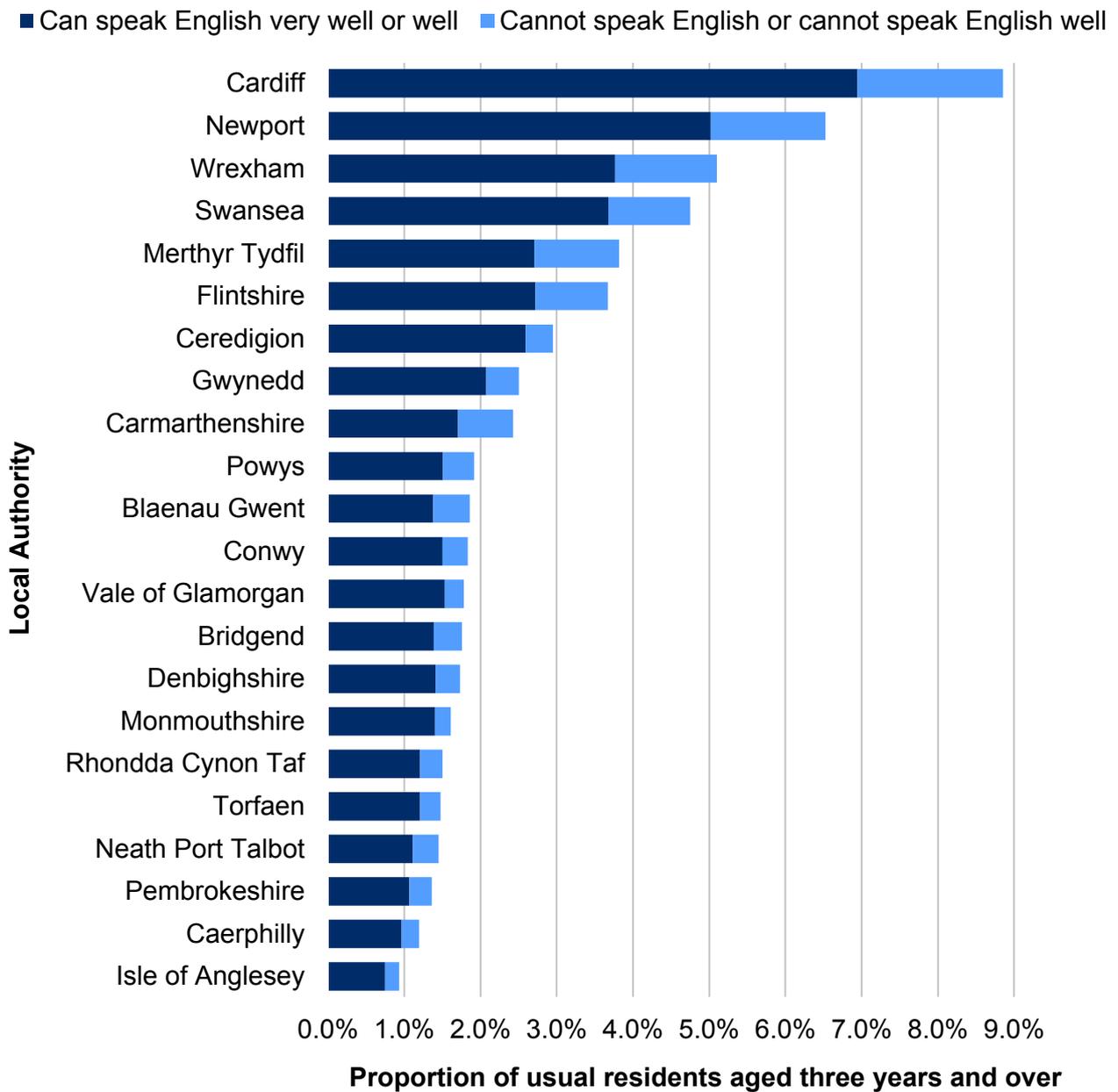
How language varied across Wales

The Isle of Anglesey (99.1%), Caerphilly (98.8%), and Pembrokeshire (98.6%) had the highest proportions of people whose main language was English or Welsh in 2021. While the Isle of Anglesey and Caerphilly were amongst the four local authorities with the highest proportions in 2011, Pembrokeshire previously had the eighth highest proportion.

As in 2011, urban local authorities had lower proportions of people whose main language was English or Welsh, with Cardiff (91.1%), Newport (93.5%), Wrexham (94.9%) and Swansea (95.2%) having the lowest proportions of all Welsh local authorities.

The Isle of Anglesey (99.1%), Pembrokeshire (98.6%) and Gwynedd (97.5%) were the only Welsh local authorities in which the proportion of people whose main language was English or Welsh increased between 2011 and 2021, each rising by 0.1 percentage point. Denbighshire (98.3%) and Ceredigion (97.1%) saw little change from 2011, while the proportion of the population with English or Welsh as a main language decreased in all other local authorities. The greatest decreases were observed in Newport (93.5%) and Flintshire (96.3%), each a 1.6 percentage point decrease from 2011.

Figure 8: Proportion of residents in Wales without English or Welsh as a main language, by local authority and English proficiency, 2021



This bar chart shows the proportion of people without English or Welsh as a main language in each local authority, and their proficiency in English. Urban areas had the highest proportions of people without English or Welsh as a main language.

Source: Census 2021

The highest proportions of people who did not select English or Welsh as a main language and who reported being able to speak English well or very well were in Cardiff (6.9%), Newport (5.0%), Wrexham (3.8%) and Swansea (3.7%). These were also the local authorities with the highest proportions in 2011. In all other local authorities, the proportion was less than 3%.

The local authorities with the highest proportions of people without English or Welsh as a main language and who could not speak English well or at all were Cardiff (1.9%), Newport (1.5%), Wrexham (1.3%), Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil (1.1% each). While Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham and Swansea have seen this proportion increase since 2011, Merthyr Tydfil saw the proportion of people without English or Welsh as a main language and who could not speak English well or at all fall from 1.3%.

As in 2011, the Welsh local authorities with the highest proportion of people who selected Polish as a main language were Wrexham (2.5%) and Merthyr Tydfil (1.9%). Of all the main languages other than English or Welsh, the most common in any local authority was Polish in Wrexham. The largest increases in the number of people with Polish as a main language since 2011 were observed in Flintshire (up 850 people to 1.4%) and Newport (up 800 people to 1.0%).

The Welsh local authority with the highest proportion of Arabic speakers was Cardiff (1.4%), which was also true in 2011 (1.1%). This was more than double the proportion of the next highest local authority (Swansea, 0.5%).

Other notable populations with a non-UK main language include those whose

main language is Chinese in Cardiff (0.7%), Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya) in Cardiff (0.6%) and Newport (0.5%) and Portuguese in Wrexham and Merthyr Tydfil (0.5% each).

Some local authorities also had notable populations who spoke groups of languages from certain geographic areas. Cardiff had the highest proportion of people who spoke African languages (0.5%), West or Central Asian languages (0.6%) and any other South Asian languages (0.5%). Many local authorities had notable populations reporting other European Union languages, with Newport having the highest proportion (1.9%). These groups of languages exclude the most common responses (for example, Polish as an EU language).

Household language

Overall, in 96.2% of households in Wales (1.3 million households), all usual residents said that English or Welsh was their main language, which is a smaller proportion than in 2011 (96.7%,). In a further 1.5% (20,000) of households, at least one adult but not all adults said that English or Welsh was their main language and in 0.5% (7,000) of households, no adults but at least one child said that English or Welsh was their main language. In the remaining 1.8% (25,000) of households, there were no residents who said that English or Welsh was their main language, which is similar to 2011 (1.7%, 22,000).

In Wales, 3.8% (52,000) of households contained a usual resident whose main language was not English or Welsh, an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 2011 (3.3%, 43,000).

The proportion of households in which all usual residents said that English or Welsh was their main language varied from 98.8% in the Isle of Anglesey to 89.4% in Cardiff.

Religion

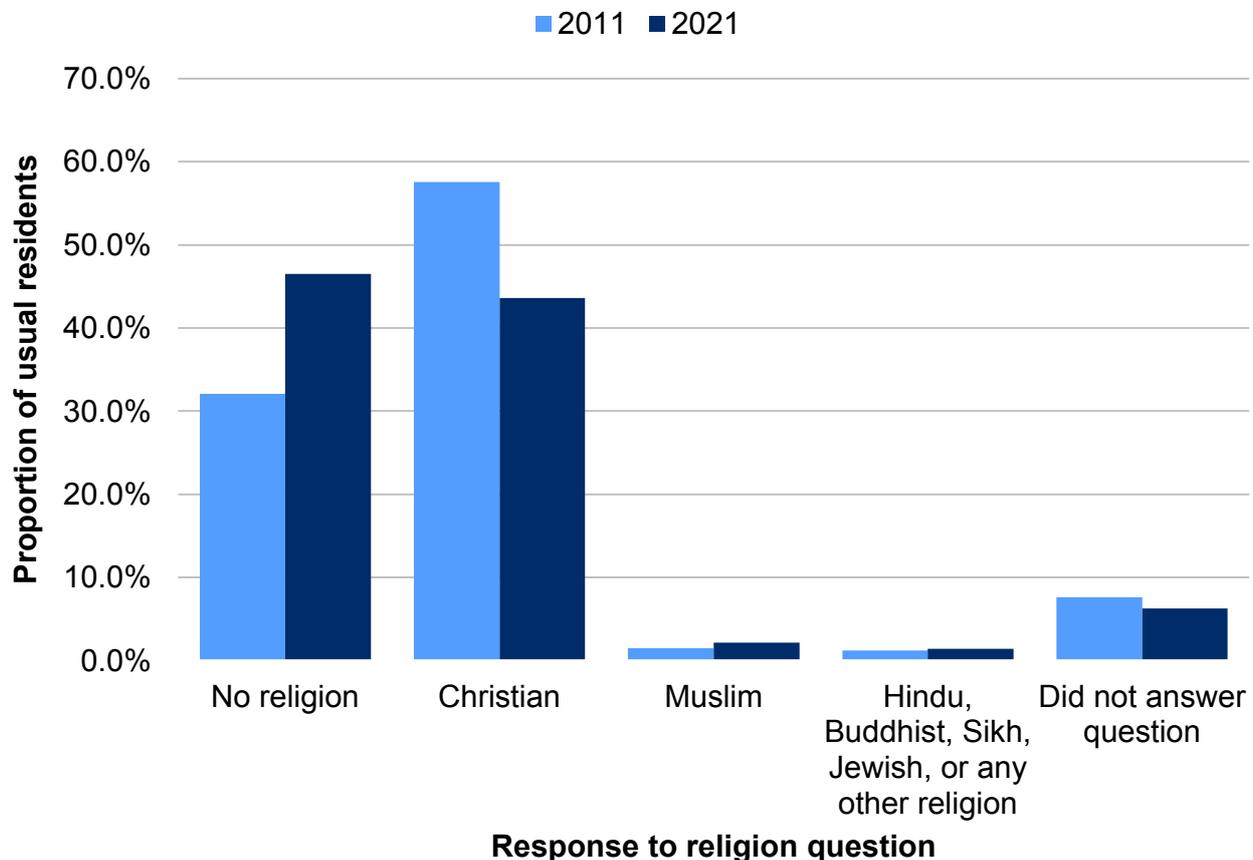
The census introduced a voluntary question on religion in 2001. In the census data, religion refers to a person's **religious affiliation (Office for National Statistics)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion#religion>). This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice.

In total, 2.9 million respondents in Wales (93.7%) chose to answer the religion question in 2021, whereas 195,000 (6.3%) chose not to answer. More people answered than in 2011, when 2.8 million (92.4%) answered the religion question and 234,000 (7.6%) chose not to answer.

Religion in Wales

In 2021, the number of people in Wales reporting “No religion” was larger than those reporting any individual religious affiliation, with 46.5% of the population (1.4 million) reporting “No religion”. This is a 14.5 percentage point increase from 2011 (32.1%, 983,000). This increase was also observed in England (up 11.9 percentage points over the decade to 36.7%), although those identifying as “Christian” remained the largest group in England.

Figure 9: Religious composition of Wales, 2011 and 2021



This column charts shows how responses to the religion question in 2021 have changed since 2011. There has been a large increase in those reporting "No religion", accompanied by a fall in those identifying as "Christian".

Source: Census 2021

The increase in the number of people who reported "No religion" was accompanied by a decrease in the number of people identifying as "Christian". In Wales, less than half of the population (43.6%, 1.4 million people) identified as "Christian" in 2021. Previously accounting for over half responses in the 2011

Census, this marked a 14.0 percentage point decrease over the decade from 57.6% (1.8 million) in 2011. The proportion of people identifying as “Christian” in Wales is lower than in England (46.3%) where, despite also seeing a similar decrease over the decade, “Christian” remains the most common response in 2021.

The next largest religious affiliation in Wales was “Muslim”, with 2.2% of the population (67,000) identifying with this affiliation in 2021. This is an increase from 1.5% (46,000) in 2011.

There was little change from 2011 in the proportions of the population identifying with other tick-box religious groups.

- 12,000 people identified themselves as “Hindu” (0.4%)
- 10,000 people identified themselves as “Buddhist” (0.3%)
- 4,000 people identified themselves as “Sikh” (0.1%)
- 2,000 people identified themselves as “Jewish” (0.1%).

A person could identify their religion through either the tick-box responses or through write in by selecting ‘Any other religion, write in’. Read the ONS blog post on the census religion question for more information.

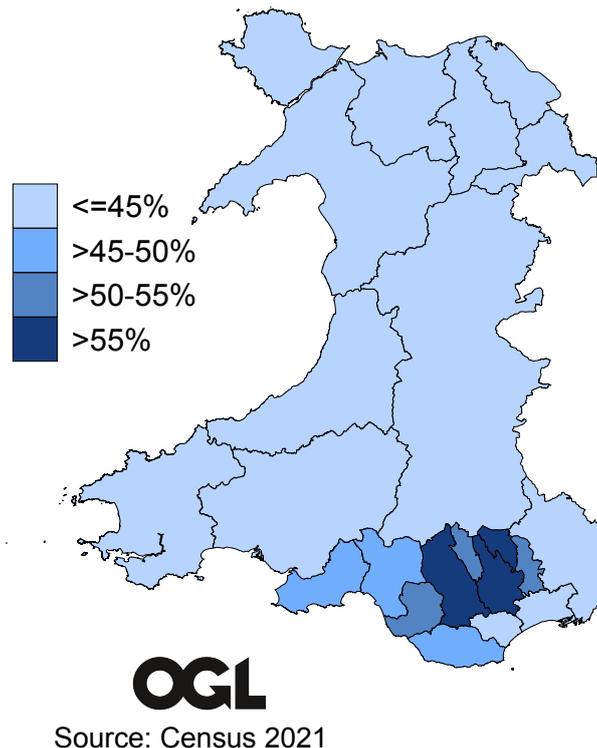
The most common write-in responses in Wales were “Pagan” (5,000, 0.2%), “Spiritualist” (2,000, 0.1%), and “Spiritual” (2,000, 0.1%).

How religion varied across Wales

The proportion of the population identifying as “Christian” fell in all Welsh local authorities between 2011 and 2021. The three local authorities with the greatest relative decreases in the proportion of people identifying as “Christian” across England and Wales were all in Wales: Blaenau Gwent (from 49.9% in 2011 to 36.5% in 2021), Caerphilly (from 50.7% in 2011 to 36.4% in 2021), and Merthyr

Tydfil (from 56.0% in 2011 to 40.1% in 2021).

Figure 10: Proportion of people reporting “No religion” in Wales by local authority, 2021



This map shows the valleys areas in South Wales had the highest proportions reporting "No religion".

The local authorities with the highest proportion of people who reported “No religion” were very similar to those where there had seen the greatest decrease in those identifying as “Christian”. These included Caerphilly (56.7% reporting

“No religion”), Blaenau Gwent (56.4%), and Rhondda Cynon Taf (56.2%).

Urban areas of Wales were the most religiously diverse. For example, Cardiff had the highest proportions of people identifying as “Muslim” (9.3%), “Hindu” (1.5%) and “Sikh” (0.4%), and the second highest proportion of people identifying as Buddhist (0.4%). Newport and Swansea had the second and third highest proportions, respectively, of people identifying as “Muslim” and “Hindu”. Ceredigion had the highest proportion of the population identifying with “Buddhism” (0.5%) and with a religion other than those included in the tick-box responses (0.9%).

Household religion

Census 2021 reported for the first time on the religious composition of households and how this varied across Wales. Each of the categories of household mentioned below may include people who did not state a religion.

Overall, 25.5% of households (344,000 households) were multi-person households whose members all reported “No religion”, whereas 26.4% (356,000) were multi-person households whose members who all reported the same religion.

In 13.8% of households in Wales (185,000), members reported a combination of one religion and “No religion”, and 0.6% (8,000) reported at least two different religions stated. 1.8% of households (25,000) consisted of members who all did not state a religion. The remaining 31.9% (430,000) were one-person households.

Quality and methodology information

For full quality and methodology information, including a glossary of terms, please visit the **ONS' quality and methodology information report** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/methodologies/qualityandmethodologyinformationqmiforcensus2021>). Read more about the specific quality considerations for **Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion (Office for National Statistics)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/methodologies/ethnicgrouppnationalidentitylanguageandreligionqualityinformationforcensus2021>).

Further information on our quality assurance processes is provided in **the Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates methodology (Office for National Statistics)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/methodologies/maximisingthequalityofcensus2021populationestimates>).

Population change in certain areas may reflect how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affected people's choice of usual residence on Census Day. These changes might have been temporary for some and more long-lasting for others.

There will be further releases of Census 2021 data from November, including information about topics such as the Welsh language. For further information about the data and analysis that will be available, see the **ONS' release plans** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/census2021outputs/releaseplans>).

Glossary

For a full glossary of terms, please see the [ONS' Census 2021 dictionary](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/census2021dictionary) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/census2021dictionary>).

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 one out of 19 tick-box response categories, including write-in response options.

Multiple ethnic groups in households

Classifies households by whether household members identify as having the same or different ethnic groups. If multiple ethnic groups are present, this identifies whether they differ between generations or partnerships within the household.

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.

National identity

Someone's national identity is a self-determined assessment of their own identity; it could be the country or countries with which they feel they belong or think of as home. It is not dependent on ethnic group or citizenship.

English language proficiency

How well people whose main language is not English or Welsh (English in England) speak English.

Household language

Household language classifies households by the combination of adults and children within a household that have English or Welsh (or just English in England) as a main language. Household language uses the alternate definition of an adult and child that are used in a small number of census results.

Main language

A person's first or preferred language.

Multiple main languages in household

Classifies households by whether members speak the same or a different main language. If multiple main languages are spoken, this identifies whether they differ between generations or partnerships within the household.

Multi-religious household

Classifies households by whether members identify with the same religion, no religion, did not answer the question, or a combination of these options. This question was voluntary and the variable includes those who answered the question alongside those who chose not to.

Religion

The religion people connect or identify with (their religious affiliation), whether or not they practice 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.

National Statistics status

The **United Kingdom Statistics Authority** (<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the **Code of Practice for Statistics** (<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed to the ONS in June 2022 following a **full assessment against the Code of Practice by the Office for Statistics Regulation** (<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/ed-humpherson-to-sir-ian-diamond-confirmation-of-national-statistics-designation-for-2021-census-in-england-and-wales/>).

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier, and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy

of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the **Wellbeing of Wales report** (<https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales>).

Further information on the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** (<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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