



**WIRRAL  
INTELLIGENCE  
SERVICE**

# **Census 2021: Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion**

**Wirral Intelligence Service**

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# Census 2021: Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Ethnic group .....	3
High-level ethnic groups.....	3
Ethnic groups (detailed).....	4
The 19 ethnic groups in Wirral .....	4
Ethnic groups with households .....	5
<b>National Identity</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Language</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Main Language.....	7
British Sign Language.....	7
Proficiency in English .....	7
<b>Religion</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Find Out More</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Future Census Data Releases</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Contact details</b> .....	<b>10</b>

## Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published the next phase of Census 2021 topic summaries for England and Wales looking at [ethnic group, national identity, language and religion](#) (release page). This includes univariate data (one variable only) down to Output Area (OA) level, where possible. This release gives information from Census 2021 about:

- which ethnic groups people identified with
- the main language people use
- how well people, who do not have English as a main language, could speak English
- how people describe their national identity
- which religious groups people identified with

As in previous topic summary releases, ONS have produced a number of statistical bulletins explaining the data, showing charts, tables and supporting information including statistical methods and quality measures. You can view them below:

- [ethnic group](#)
- [national identity](#)
- [language](#)
- [religion](#)

## Ethnicity

### Ethnic group

Since 1991, the census for England and Wales has included a question about ethnic group. The ethnic group question has two stages. Firstly, a person identifies through one of the following five high-level ethnic groups:

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

Secondly, a person identifies through one of the 19 available response options, which include categories with write-in response options.

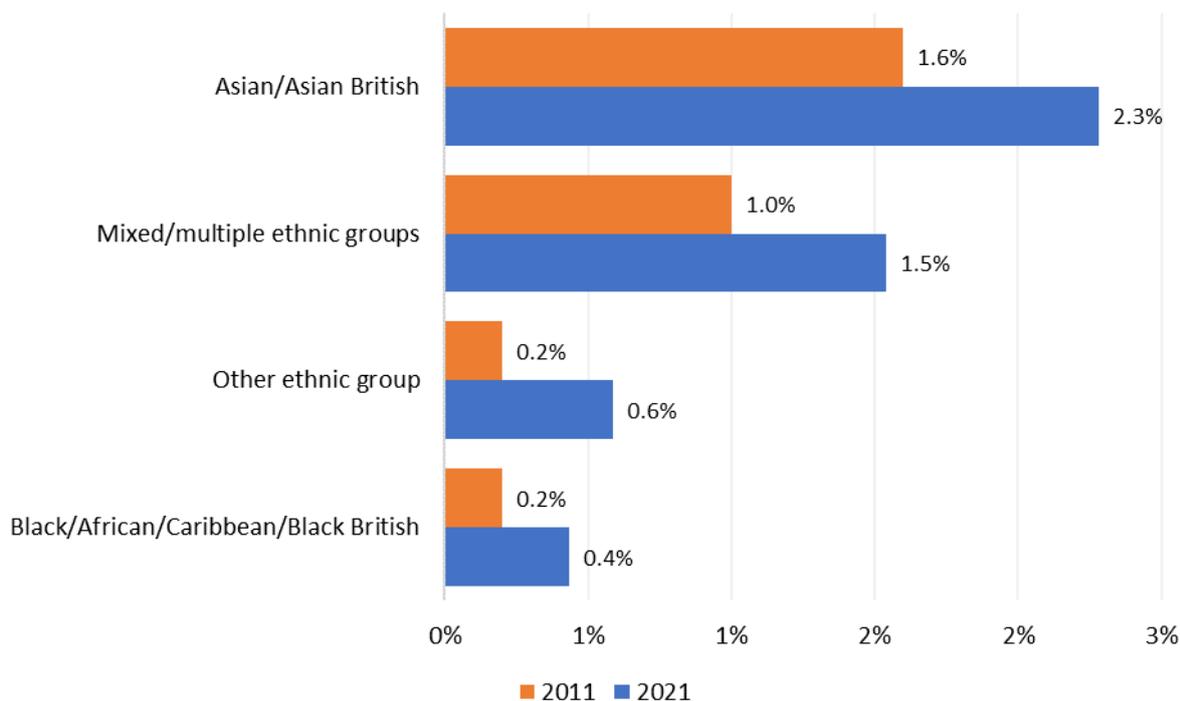
### High-level ethnic groups

"White" remained the largest high-level ethnic group in Wirral; 95.2% (~305,000) of usual residents identified this way in 2021, a decrease from 97.0% (~310,000) in 2011.

**Figure 1** shows the largest increases were seen in the number of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category (2.3%, ~7,300 people in 2021, up from 1.6%, ~5,100 people in 2011) and within "Mixed/multiple ethnic groups" (1.5%, ~4,900 people in 2021, up from 1.0%, ~3,300 people in 2011).

There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition of England and 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.

**Figure 1:** The percentage of population in all high-level ethnic groups, excluding “White” in Wirral, 2011 and 2021



**Source:** Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

**Note:** We have excluded the "White" ethnic group from this chart to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the four high-level ethnic groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.

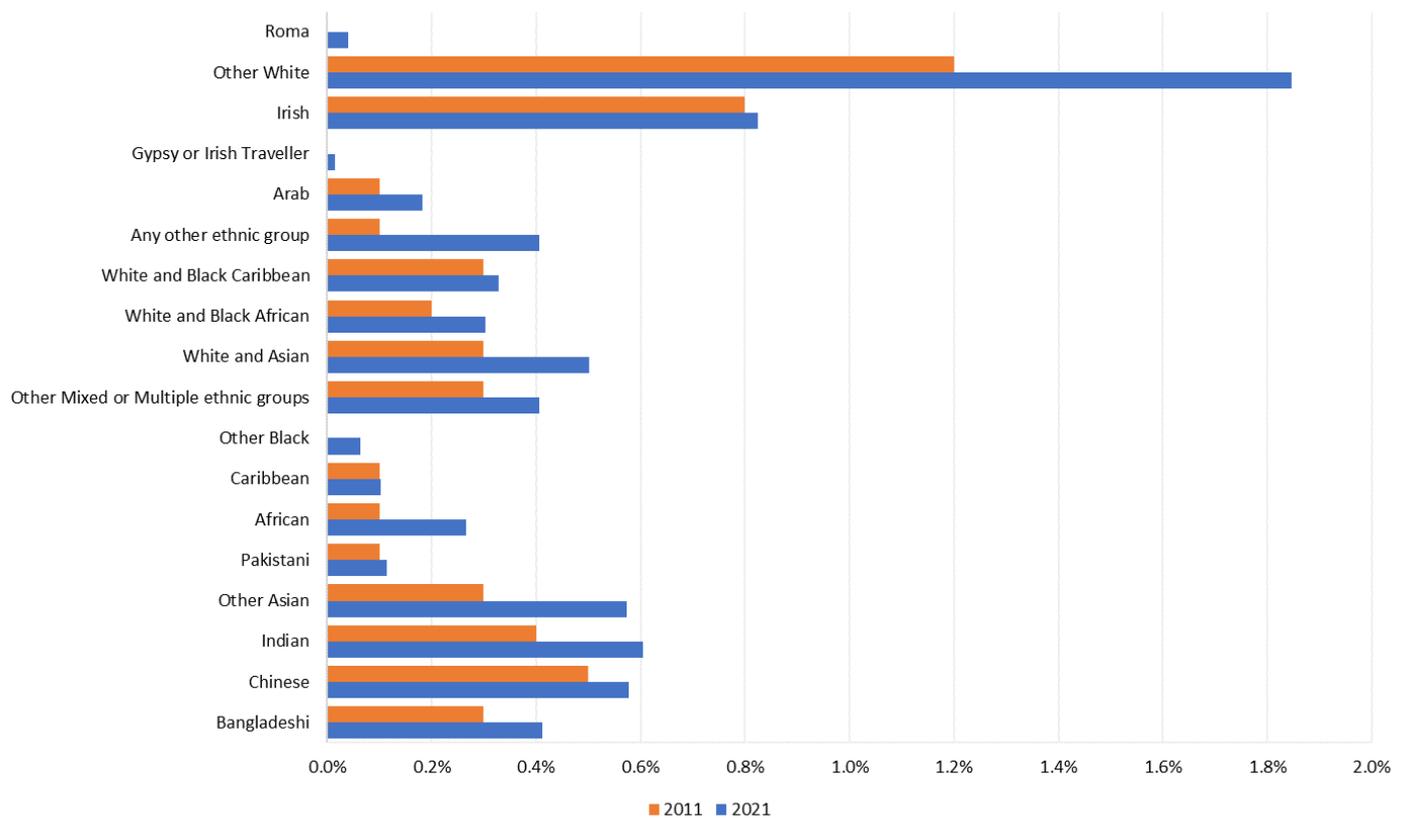
## Ethnic groups (detailed)

### The 19 ethnic groups in Wirral

Within the "White" ethnic group, 97.1% (~296,000) of usual residents in Wirral identified their ethnic group as "English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British". This was a slight decrease from 97.9% (~303,000) in 2011, and a continued decrease from 2001, when 98.2% (~301,000) identified as "White: British".

There was a similar number of people identifying their ethnic group as "White: Irish", from ~2,700 (0.8%) in 2011 to ~2,600 (0.8%) in 2021. The remaining 17 ethnic groups across the 19 available response options all increased in size, as can be seen in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2: Ethnic minority groups, 2011 and 2021, Wirral**



**Source:** Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

**Note:**

- 1) We have excluded the "White" ethnic group from this chart to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the four high-level ethnic groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.
- 2) There was no "Roma" ethnic group tick-box in 2011

In 2021, there was a new response option for "Roma" within the high-level "White" ethnic group. Overall, 0.04% (~150) of usual residents identified this way.

The three largest increases since 2011 were seen in the number of people identifying through:

- "White: Other White" (1.8%, ~5,900 in 2021, up from 1.2%, ~3,700 in 2011)
- "Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group" (0.4%, ~1,300 in 2021, up from 0.1%, ~500 in 2011)
- "Asian, Asian British: Other Asian" (0.6%, ~1,800 in 2021, up from 0.3%, ~1,000 in 2011)

## Ethnic groups with households

Census 2021 provides insights into ethnic group composition within the ~93,500 households that had more than one person living in them (65.3% of ~143,300 occupied households). A further 34.7% (~49,700) of households were occupied by just one person.

In 92.3% (~86,300) of multi-person households in Wirral, all household members identified with the same ethnic group. This was a decrease from 94.2% (~87,900) in 2011. Therefore, in the remaining 7.7% (~7,200) of multi-person households in Wirral, two or more ethnic groups were represented. This is an increase from 2011 (5.8%, ~5,400).

Census 2021 provides further insight into three combinations of ethnic group identification and relationships, within households where members report different ethnic groups:

- "Ethnic groups differ within partnerships" (3.4%, ~4,900 households with more than one person)
- "Ethnic groups differ between generations but not within partnerships" (0.8%, ~1,200 households)
- Any other combination of multiple ethnic identities between household members with other types of relationship, including those who are not related, such as friends (0.8%, ~1,100 households)

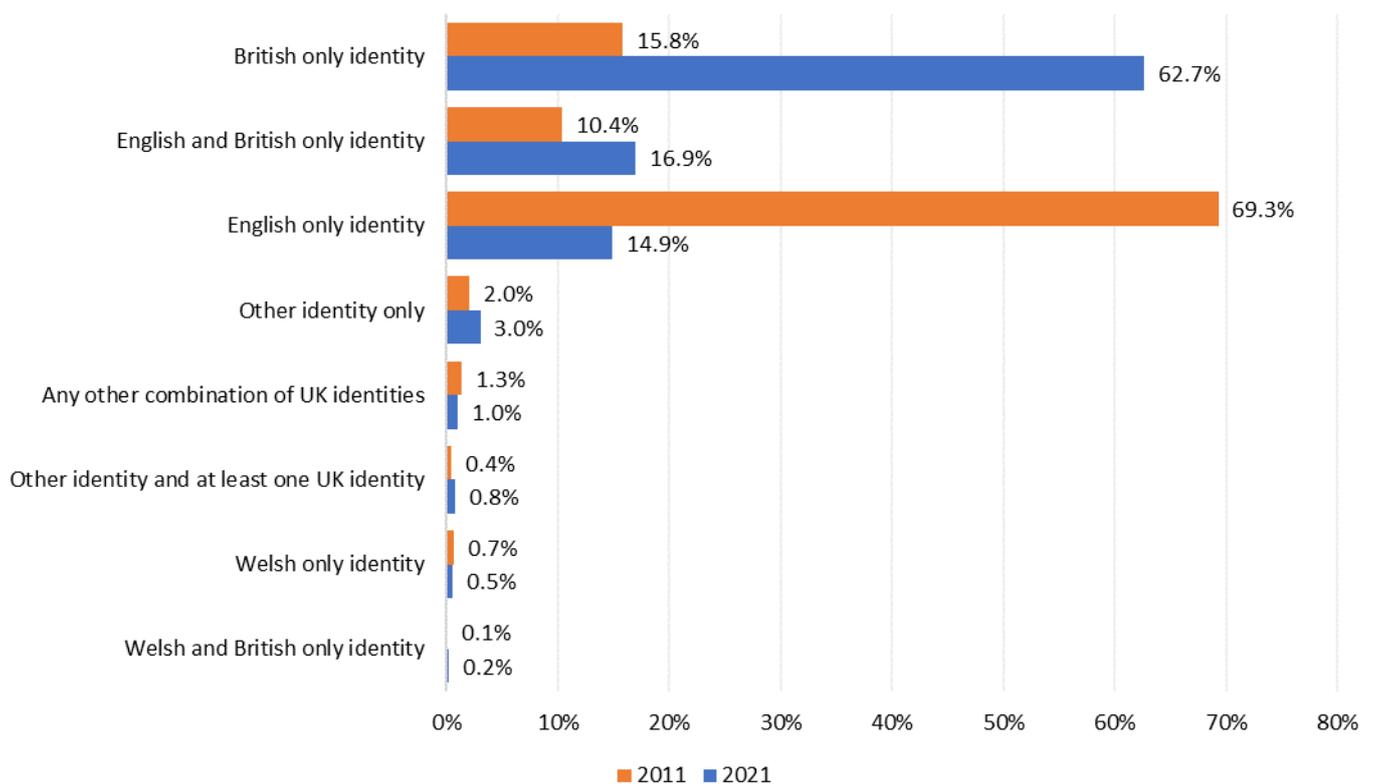
## National Identity

The census question on national identity was introduced in 2011 because of increased interest in "national" consciousness and a demand for people to be able to acknowledge their national identity. The question allows respondents to select all identities that apply.

Overall, 90.3% of the population (53.8 million people) in England and Wales identified with at least one UK national identity (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, and Cornish). This is a slight decrease since 2011, when 92.0% of the population (51.6 million people) identified this way.

In Wirral, 97.0% of the population (~310,500) identified with at least one UK national identity. This is also a slight decrease since 2011, when 97.6% of the population (~319,800) identified this way.

**Figure 3:** National identities, 2011 and 2021, Wirral



**Source:** Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

**Note:** While the increase in the number of usual residents describing their national identity as "British" and the fall in the number describing their national identity as "English" may partly reflect true change, it is most likely to be a result of the changes to the question structure where "British" became the top response option in 2021 for England only.

## Language

### Main Language

In Wirral, 97.7% of all usual residents aged 3 years and over (~303,000 out of ~311,000) had English as a main language. This compares to 91.1% in England. This is a percentage decrease compared with 2011, when 98.4% (~304,000) in Wirral had English as a main language.

**Table 1** shows that Polish remained the most common main language in both Wirral and England for those who do not have English as a main language, accounting for 0.31% (~1,000) of usual residents in Wirral and 1.08% (~591,000) of usual residents in England.

In 2021, Romanian moved into the top 10 main languages in both Wirral and England, excluding English. This was the largest increase over the decade. In total, 0.2% of people in Wirral (~600) listed Romanian as their main language, up from 0.02% (~80) in 2011.

**Table 1:** The percentage of population by main language spoken, excluding “English” in Wirral and England, 2021

Wirral		England	
Language	%	Language	%
Polish	0.31%	Polish	1.08%
Romanian	0.20%	Romanian	0.85%
All other Chinese	0.14%	Panjabi	0.53%
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	0.14%	Urdu	0.49%
Tamil	0.12%	Portuguese	0.40%
Arabic	0.11%	Spanish	0.39%
Malayalam	0.09%	Arabic	0.36%
Cantonese Chinese	0.09%	Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	0.36%
Spanish	0.09%	Gujarati	0.34%
Hungarian	0.07%	Italian	0.29%

Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

### British Sign Language

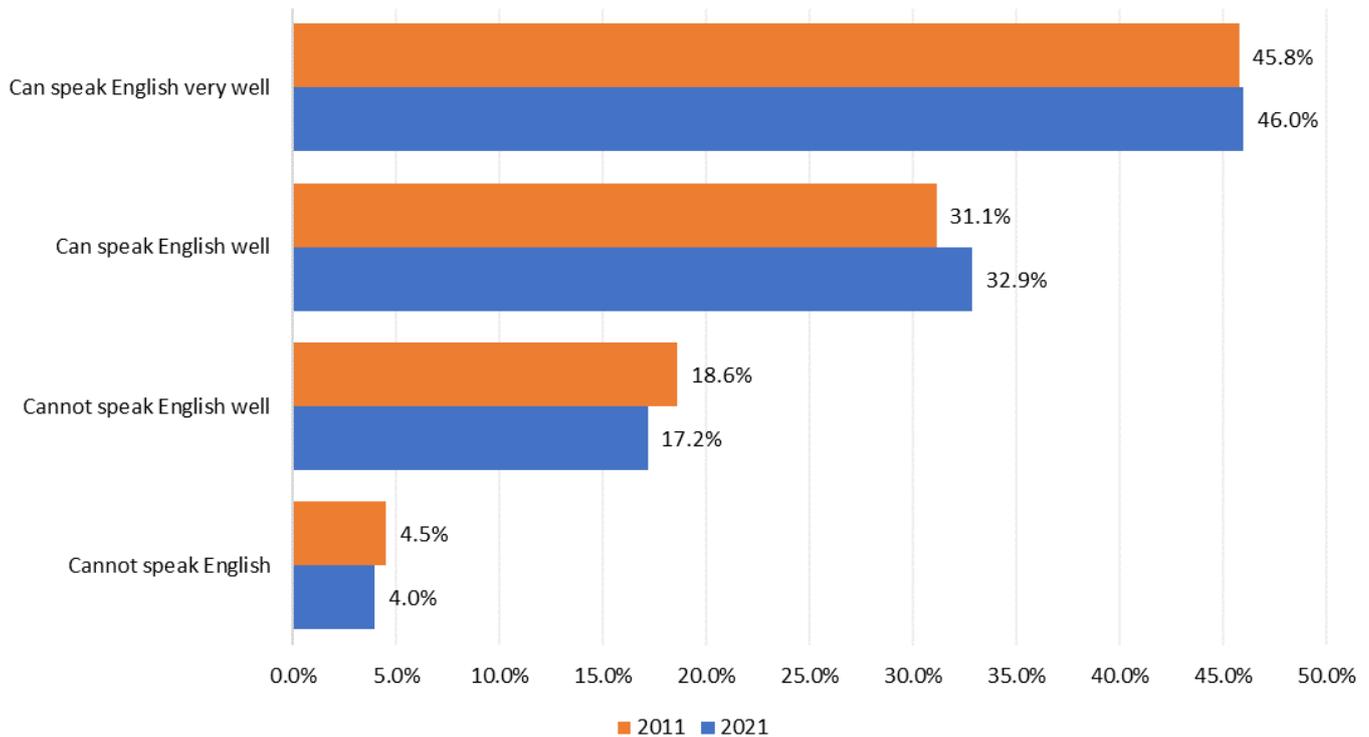
In addition to spoken languages, British Sign Language (BSL) was the main language of ~130 (0.04%) usual residents aged three years and over in Wirral. This is a 16.7% increase of almost 20 people since 2011 (~110, 0.03%).

### Proficiency in English

People who did not report English as a main language were asked to report how well they could speak English (2.3%, ~7,200). Of those ~7,200 people, 46.0% (~3,300) could speak English very well, 32.9% (~2,400) could speak English well, 17.2% (~1,200) could not speak English well, and 4.0% (~300) could not speak English at all.

In 2021, there was a slight increase in the proportion of people who did not report English as their main language but can speak English ‘well’ (45.8% in 2011 to 46.0% in 2021) or ‘very well’ (31.1% in 2011 to 32.9% in 2021). Conversely, there was a slight decrease in those who do not report English as a main language and cannot speak English ‘well’ (18.6% in 2011 to 17.2% in 2021) or speak English at all (4.5% in 2011 to 2.0% in 2021).

**Figure 4:** Percentage of usual resident population, aged three years and over, who do not identify English as their main language, by English language proficiency, Wirral, 2011 and 2021



**Source:** Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

## Religion

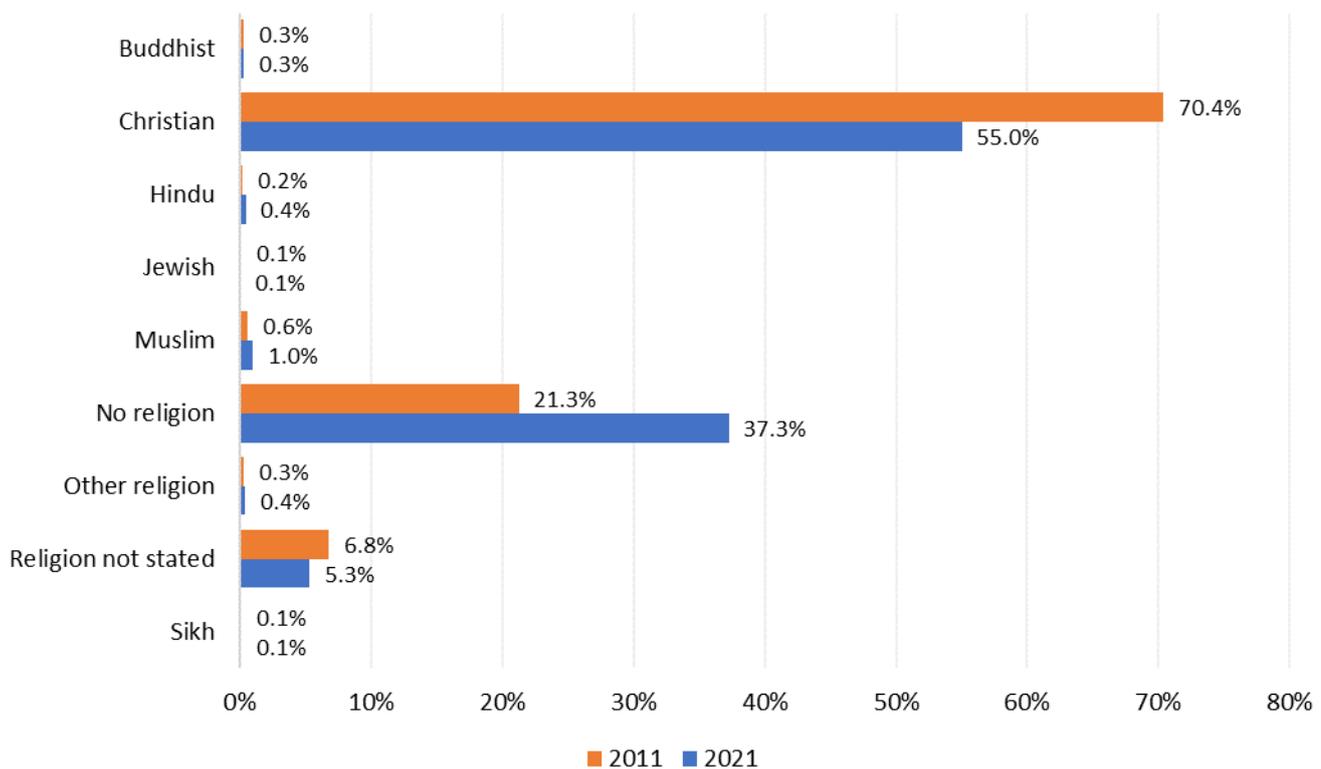
The census introduced a voluntary question on religion in 2001. In the census data, religion refers to a person's religious affiliation. This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice. As the question is voluntary, caution should be taken when comparing figures between different areas or between censuses because of varying response rates.

As in 2011, the most common response to the religion question in Wirral was "Christian" (55.0% of the overall population, ~176,000 people). However, it was a 15.4 percentage point decrease from 70.4% in 2011 (~225,000 people). This continues the decrease since 2001, when 80.6% (~252,000) described themselves as "Christian".

This coincided with an increase in the number of people reporting "No religion" to 37.3% (~119,000) in 2021 from 21.3% (~68,000) in 2011. Again, this continues the trend between 2001 and 2011, when the number of people reporting "No religion" had risen from 10.5% (~33,000 people).

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

**Figure 5: Religion, 2011 and 2021, Wirral**



**Source:** Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

## Find Out More

ONS's new digital [Census maps](#) enables users to find out what people's lives are like across England and Wales and explore Census 2021 data for different topics down to a local authority and neighbourhood level. ONS have also published two statistical bulletins, containing charts, tables and supporting information including statistical methods and quality measures.

The Census first release data will also be available in the Council's mapping and reporting tool Local Insight within a number of days of release. This can be found [here](#)

## Future Census Data Releases

The next Census 2021 release is due on 8th December, looking for the first time at [labour market and travel to work](#). The remaining topic summaries will be published in a rolling programme throughout November, December and early 2023, followed by multivariate data and analysis. ONS have provided a [release calendar](#) with provisional publication dates for the following topic summaries on the links below:

- [Labour Market and Travel to Work](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Sexual orientation and gender identity](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Health, disability and unpaid care](#)

## Contact details

For further details please contact: [wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk)

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