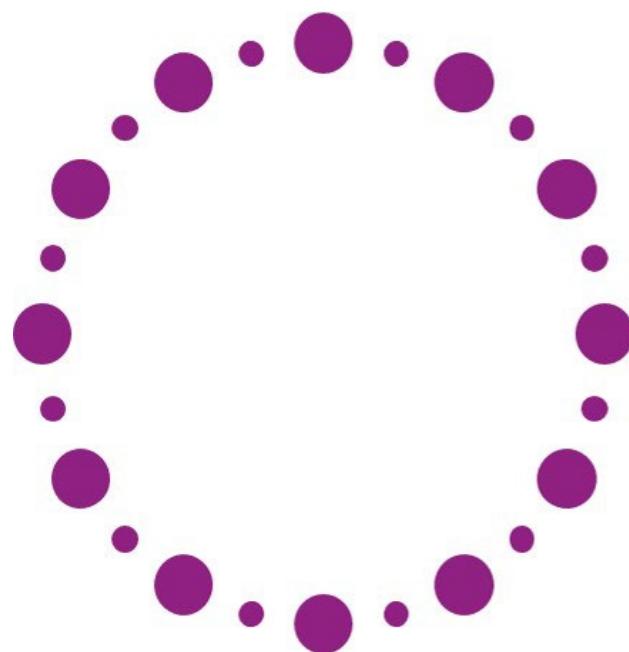


census
2021



Main statistics for Northern Ireland
Statistical bulletin
National identity

22 September 2022



nisra.gov.uk/Census2021

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) today released further results from Census 2021, which was held on 21 March 2021. The statistics released today provide a profile of the Northern Ireland population covering demography, ethnic group, identity, language and religion. The information covers Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs).

This report relates to national identity – for display purposes, figures are appropriately rounded but full figures are available in the [Census 2021 tables](#) on the NISRA website.

2. Key points

The key points relating to the **national identity (national identity based)** topic are as follows:

- In Census 2021, 814,600 people (42.8%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'British'. This is down from 876,600 people (48.4%) in 2011.
- In Census 2021, 634,600 people (33.3%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Irish'. This is up from 513,400 people (28.4%) in 2011.
- In Census 2021, 598,800 people (31.5%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Northern Irish'. This is up from 533,100 people (29.4%) in 2011.
- The national identity question supported respondents selecting more than one national identity. As an example if the respondent noted they were 'British and Irish' they were counted under both the 'British' and 'Irish' groups in the National Identity (nationality based) classification.
- Alternative statistics published today present results for the National identity (person based) classification. This relates to the specific identities people recorded in Census 2021. As examples these include 'British only', 'Irish only', 'British and Northern Irish' etc... Statistics for this classification are shown below.

The key points relating to the **national identity (person based)** topic are as follows:

- In Census 2021 the most numerous person-based national identities were
 - 'British only' - 606,300 people or 31.9% of our population;
 - 'Irish only' - 554,400 people or 29.1% of our population; and
 - 'Northern Irish only' - 376,400 people or 19.8% of our population.
- The number of people who are 'British only' is down from 722,400 in 2011 to 606,300 in 2021. This fall is counterbalanced, but only partially, by increases in the number of people who identify as 'British and Northern Irish', up from 111,700 in 2011 to 151,300 in 2021, and by those who identify as 'British, Irish and Northern Irish', up from 18,400 in 2011 to 28,100 in 2021.
- In contrast, the number of people who are 'Irish only' is up from 457,500 in 2011 to 554,400 in 2021. There has also been an increase in the number of people who identify as 'Irish and Northern Irish', up from 19,100 in 2011 to 33,600 in 2021, and in those who identify as 'British, Irish and Northern Irish' up from 18,400 in 2011 to 28,100 in 2021.
- The number of people who were recorded as 'Northern Irish only' is broadly stable - standing at 379,300 people in 2011 and 376,400 people in 2021. However the total number of people identifying as either 'British and Northern Irish' or 'Irish and Northern Irish' or 'British, Irish and Northern Irish' is up from 149,300 people in 2011 to 213,000 people in 2021.
- Proportionately the fastest growing group is people with 'Other National Identities' - typically identities from outside UK and Ireland. This group is up from 61,900 people in 2011 (3.4% of the population) to 113,400 people in 2021 (6.0% of the population).

3. Questions asked

Census 2021 included a question on national identity. The question, which allowed the respondent to record multiple national identities, is presented in Figures 1 (online) and 2 (paper). The same question was asked in the 2011 Census and what follows includes a comparison between 2011 and 2021.

Figure 1: Census 2021 question on national identity – online

How would you describe your national identity?

Select all that apply

- British
- Irish
- Northern Irish
- English
- Scottish
- Welsh
- Other
You can enter your national identity on the next question

Save and continue

Figure 2: Census 2021 question on national identity – paper

11 How would you describe your national identity?
Tick all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Irish
<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> Welsh
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, write in		

The analysis of the national identity question can produce statistics in two different ways. The first is how many people consider themselves to be British, Irish, Northern Irish, etc., irrespective of whether they have a single national identity or not. These statistics are entitled National Identity (nationality based) and in this classification people can be counted in more than one group.

4. National identity (nationality based) – Census 2021

National identity (nationality based) statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: National identity (nationality based) usual residents (Census 2021)

National identity (nationality based)	Number	Percentage
British	814,600	42.8%
Irish	634,000	33.3%
Northern Irish	598,800	31.5%
English	16,800	0.9%
Scottish	10,200	0.5%
Welsh	2,000	0.1%
Other national identities	113,400	6.0%

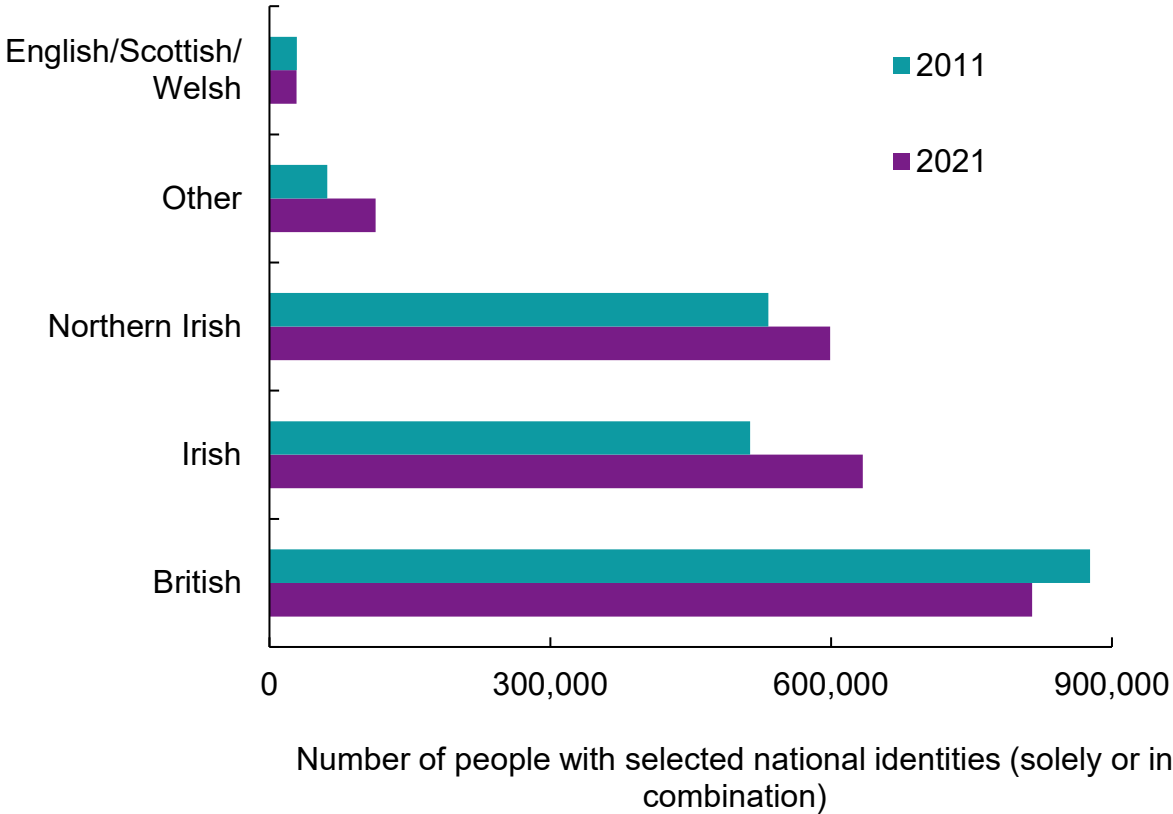
Table 1 shows that in Census 2021 the number of people who consider themselves to be:

- British (solely or in combination with other national identities) was 814,600;
- Irish (solely or in combination) was 634,000;
- Northern Irish (solely or in combination) was 598,800;
- English (solely or in combination) was 16,800;
- Scottish (solely or in combination) was 10,200;
- Welsh (solely or in combination) was 2,000; and
- Other national identities (solely or in combination) was 113,400.

5. National identity (nationality based) – Change over time

Figure 3 shows how national identity (nationality based) statistics have changed since the 2011 Census.

Figure 3: National identity (nationality based) (2011 and 2021)



This shows:

- a decrease in the population who classify themselves as British (solely or in combination with other national identities) from 877,600 people in 2011 to 814,600 people in 2021. In percentage terms this is a fall from 48.4% of the population in 2011 to 42.8% of the population in 2021;
- an increase in the population who classify themselves as Irish (solely or in combination) from 513,400 people in 2011 to 634,000 people in 2021. In percentage terms this is a rise from 28.4% of the population in 2011 to 33.3% of the population in 2021;
- an increase in the population who classify themselves as Northern Irish (solely or in combination) from 533,100 people in 2011 to 598,800 people in 2021. In

percentage terms this is a rise from 29.4% of the population in 2011 to 31.5% of the population in 2021; and

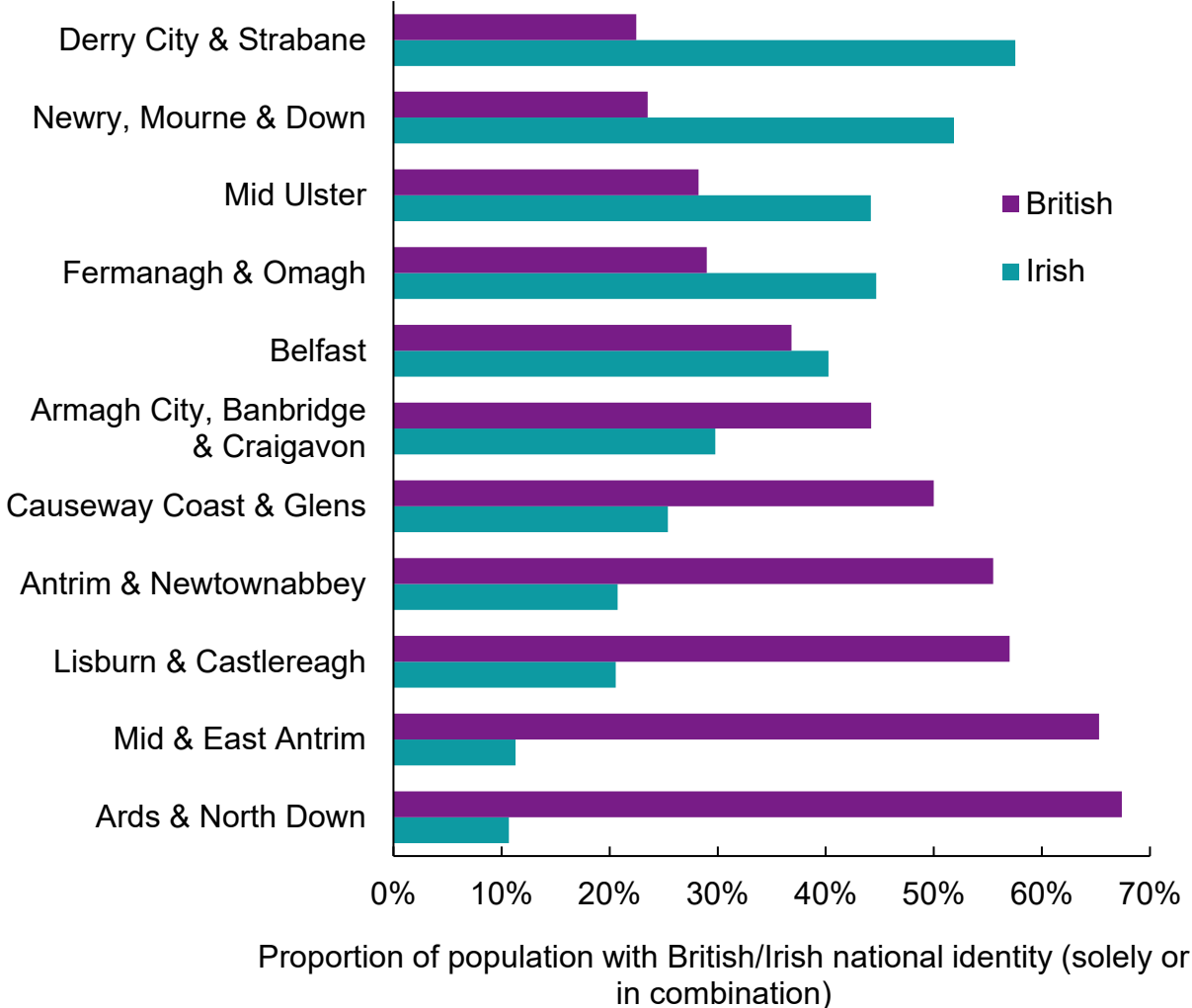
- an increase in the population who classify themselves with an 'Other national identity' (solely or in combination with British/Irish/Northern Irish/English/Scottish/Welsh national identities). This group typically have a national identity from outside UK and Ireland. In numerical terms, this has risen from 61,900 people in 2011 to 113,400 people in 2021. In percentage terms this is a rise from 3.4% of the population in 2011 to 6.0% of the population in 2021.

6. National identity (nationality based) – Local Government District

Looking in more detail shows marked variation in national identity (nationality based) across Local Government Districts. Key findings shown graphically in Figure 4 are:

- six areas (Ards and North Down; Mid and East Antrim; Lisburn and Castlereagh; Antrim and Newtownabbey; Causeway Coast and Glens; and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon) have markedly more people identifying as British (solely or in combination) than Irish (solely or in combination);
- four areas (Derry City and Strabane; Newry, Mourne and Down; Mid Ulster; and Fermanagh and Omagh) have markedly more people identifying as Irish (solely or in combination) than British (solely or in combination); and
- Belfast Local Government District has broadly similar numbers of people identifying as British (solely or in combination) or Irish (solely or in combination).

Figure 4: British/Irish national identity (solely or in combination) by LGD (Census 2021)



7. National identity (person based)

The statistics in the section above relate to the National identity (nationality based) classification which is not mutually exclusive. In that classification some respondents are included under multiple groups, for example, if the respondent identifies as ‘British and Irish’ they are counted under both ‘British’ and ‘Irish’ groups. This leads to an alternative classification entitled National identity (person based) – which is explained below.

In Census 2021 a large number of people recorded a combination of national identities. The main multiple national identities were ‘British and Northern Irish’, ‘Irish and Northern Irish’, and ‘British, Irish and Northern Irish’. National identity (person based) relates to how people identify with specific labels such as ‘British only’, ‘Irish

only', 'Northern Irish only', 'British and Northern Irish only', 'Irish and Northern Irish only', etc. In this case respondents are counted in separate groups which are mutually exclusive. Table 2 shows these statistics for Census 2021.

Table 2: National identity (person based) (Census 2021)

National identity (person based)	Number	Percentage
British only	606,300	31.9%
Irish only	554,400	29.1%
Northern Irish only	376,400	19.8%
British & Northern Irish only	151,300	8.0%
Irish & Northern Irish only	33,600	1.8%
British, Irish & Northern Irish only	28,100	1.5%
British & Irish only	11,800	0.6%
English only/Scottish only/Welsh only	16,200	0.9%
Other combination of British/Irish/Northern Irish/English/Scottish/Welsh only	11,700	0.6%
Other national identities	113,400	6.0%
Polish only	23,900	1.3%
Lithuanian only	11,900	0.6%
Romanian only	7,100	0.4%
Portuguese only	6,900	0.4%
Bulgarian only	4,300	0.2%
Indian only	4,100	0.2%
Other national identity with one or more of British/Irish/Northern Irish/English/Scottish/Welsh only	12,700	0.7%
Other national identities	42,600	2.2%
All usual residents	1,903,200	100.0%

Thus for the National Identity (person based) the major population groupings are:

- 'British only' with 606,300 people (31.9% of the population);
- 'Irish only' with 554,400 people (29.1% of the population);

- ‘Northern Irish only’ with 376,400 people (19.8% of the population);
- ‘British and Northern Irish only’ with 151,300 people (8.0% of the population);
and
- ‘Other national identities’ (see Table 2 for more details) with 113,400 people (6.0% of the population).

Looking in more detail at the 113,400 people with ‘other national identities’ in Census 2021 who have a national identity either solely or in combination from outside UK and Ireland, the largest single national identities are ‘Polish only’ (23,900), ‘Lithuanian only’ (11,900), ‘Romanian only’ (7,100), ‘Portuguese only’ (6,900), ‘Bulgarian only’ (4,300) and ‘Indian only’ (4,100).

8. National identity (person based) – Change over time

Another aspect of this is the change over time - Table 3 shows how these national identity (person based) statistics have changed since the 2011 Census.

Table 3: National identity (person based) (2011 and 2021)

National identity (person based)	2011 number	2011 percentage	2021 number	2021 percentage
British only	722,400	39.9%	606,300	31.9%
Irish only	457,500	25.3%	554,400	29.1%
Northern Irish only	379,300	20.9%	376,400	19.8%
British & Northern Irish only	111,700	6.2%	151,300	8.0%
Irish & Northern Irish only	19,100	1.1%	33,600	1.8%
British, Irish & Northern Irish only	18,400	1.0%	28,100	1.5%
British & Irish only	11,900	0.7%	11,800	0.6%
English only/Scottish only/Welsh only	18,900	1.0%	16,200	0.9%
Other combination of British/Irish/Northern Irish/English/Scottish/Welsh only	9,800	0.5%	11,700	0.6%
Other national identities	61,900	3.4%	113,400	6.0%
All usual residents	1,810,900	100.0%	1,903,200	100.0%

This shows a fall in the number of people who identify as 'British only' from 722,400 in 2011 to 606,300 in 2021. This decline is counterbalanced, but only partially, by increases in the number of people who identify as 'British and Northern Irish', up from 111,700 in 2011 to 151,300 in 2021, and those who identify as 'British, Irish and Northern Irish', up from 18,400 in 2011 to 28,100 in 2021.

In contrast there has been a rise in the number of people who identify as 'Irish only', up from 457,500 in 2011 to 554,400 in 2021, and in those who identify as 'Irish and Northern Irish', up from 19,100 in 2011 to 33,600 in 2021, and in those who identify as 'British, Irish and Northern Irish' up from 18,400 in 2011 to 28,100 in 2021.

The number of 'Northern Irish only' is broadly stable, marginally reducing from 379,300 in 2011 to 376,400 in 2021, but the numbers of people identifying as 'British and Northern Irish' or 'Irish and Northern Irish' or 'British, Irish and Northern Irish' is up from 149,300 in 2011 to 213,000 in 2021.

The fastest growing group proportionately is those people with 'Other National Identities' - typically from outside UK and Ireland. This is up from 61,900 people in 2011 to 113,400 people in 2021.

9. Associated outputs

[Census 2021 outputs on national identity](#) are available to download from the NISRA website, they include:

- MS-B15 National identity (person based) - basic detail (classification 1)
- MS-B16 National identity (person based) - intermediate detail (classification 1)
- MS-B17 National identity (national identity based) - (classification 2)

10. Further Information

Census statistics are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence. In May 2022, following a full assessment, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) and the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). National Statistics status means that the statistics meet the

highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The census plays a fundamental role in the provision of official statistics – census data are used to inform key policies, plan key services and allocate public funds.

10.1. Quality of the results

The census data collection operation was supported by an independent [coverage survey](#). The coverage survey along with administrative data and information from the field operation were combined to allow statistical estimates to be made of the small proportion of people who did not make a return. The statistical estimates discussed here, as with all Census 2021 outputs, reflect the full population of Northern Ireland.

Further information on accuracy, coverage and imputation is provided on the NISRA website in the [Census 2021 quality assurance report \(PDF 275 KB\)](#).

10.2. Confidentiality

Census Office has taken steps to ensure that the confidentiality of respondents is fully protected. All published results from the census have been subject to statistical processes to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. For more information, please refer to the [statistical disclosure control methodology](#). These processes may result in very marginally different results between tables for the same statistic.

10.3. Comparability with previous censuses

The census is designed to provide the most accurate possible picture of the population on the day the census is taken. Whilst this report contains a small number of historical tables that give comparisons at the Northern Ireland level of some key demographic statistics, users should be aware that comparisons may be affected by other differences, in particular, between the census questionnaires, impacts of issues of the day, etc.

As the last three censuses (2001, 2011 and 2021) were all adjusted for under-enumeration and reflect the Northern Ireland population on census day, this supports comparisons between those censuses.

10.4. Supporting material

A number of [supporting documents](#) are available on the census pages of the NISRA website. These documents describe the census methodology in more detail, the quality assurance processes applied, the paper questionnaire used in the census, and a full list of definitions and output classifications.

10.5. More details

Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from Census Customer Services at:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

Email: census@nisra.gov.uk

Responsible Statistician: Dr David Marshall

This report was made possible by the co-operation of the public in responding to the census, the commitment of the census field and headquarters staff, and the assistance of many other people and organisations throughout all aspects of the census. The Registrar General for Northern Ireland, who is responsible for the planning, conduct and reporting of the census, would like to thank all of those who contributed to the census.

10.6. Copyright

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the [Open Government Licence v.3](#). Where any third party copyright information is identified, you need to obtain permission from the copyright holders.