

Census 2021 release on Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion

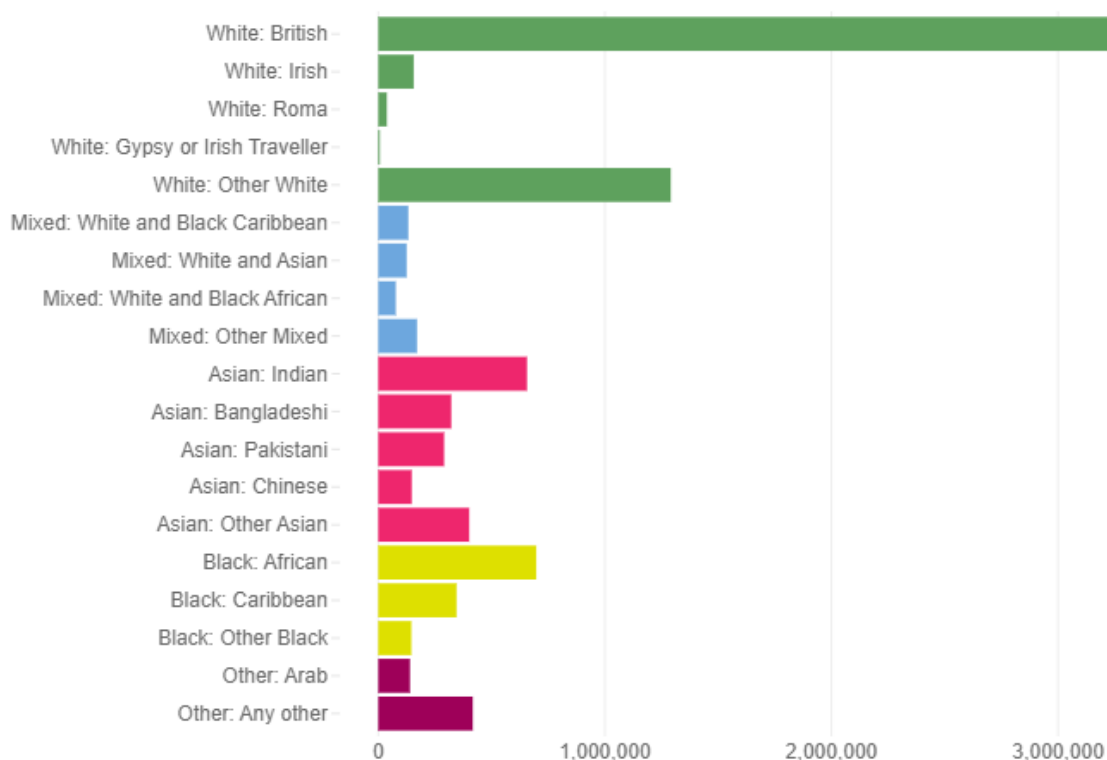
December 2022

On 29 November, the Office for National Statistics released the first statistics on the identity characteristics of people in England and Wales derived from the March 2021 Census. The release includes persons' ethnic group, main language and proficiency in English, Religion, and UK and other national identities. This note sets out key points for London for ethnic group, main language and English proficiency, and Religion.

Ethnic group

- In 2021, London's population of 8.80 million comprised 4.73 million White, 1.82 million Asian, 1.19 million Black, 0.51 million Mixed or multiple ethnicities and 0.56 million Other ethnic groups.
- White groups made up 54 per cent of London's population in 2021, a decrease of 6 percentage points compared to 2011. Of the remaining 46 per cent, Asian groups made up 21 per cent (up 2 percentage points from 2011), and Black groups 14 per cent, a similar share to 2011. Mixed increased in share a little from 5 per cent in 2011, to 6 per cent while the number of Londoners who identified with Other ethnic groups nearly doubled over the decade increasing from 3 to 6 per cent of London's total.
- 3.24 million people, 37 per cent of the total identified as White British. The largest individual groups other than White British were Black African, 697,000 and Indian 656,000. These two groups combined were almost matched by the 1.29 million, 15 per cent of London's population identifying with Other White groups.
- The largest growth in population over the decade was in Other White groups which increased by 295,000, increasing its share of London's population from 13 per cent in 2011 to 15 per cent in 2021. 'Other' ethnicities increased 242,000 (from 2 per cent to nearly 5 per cent). Black African increased by 123,000, Indian by 113,000 and Bangladeshi by 99,000. The White British population fell by 430,000 (from 45 per cent in 2011 to 37 per cent in 2021) Other Black fell 24,000, and White Irish 20,000 with the population shares in each case remaining around 2 per cent.

London population by ethnic group Census 2021

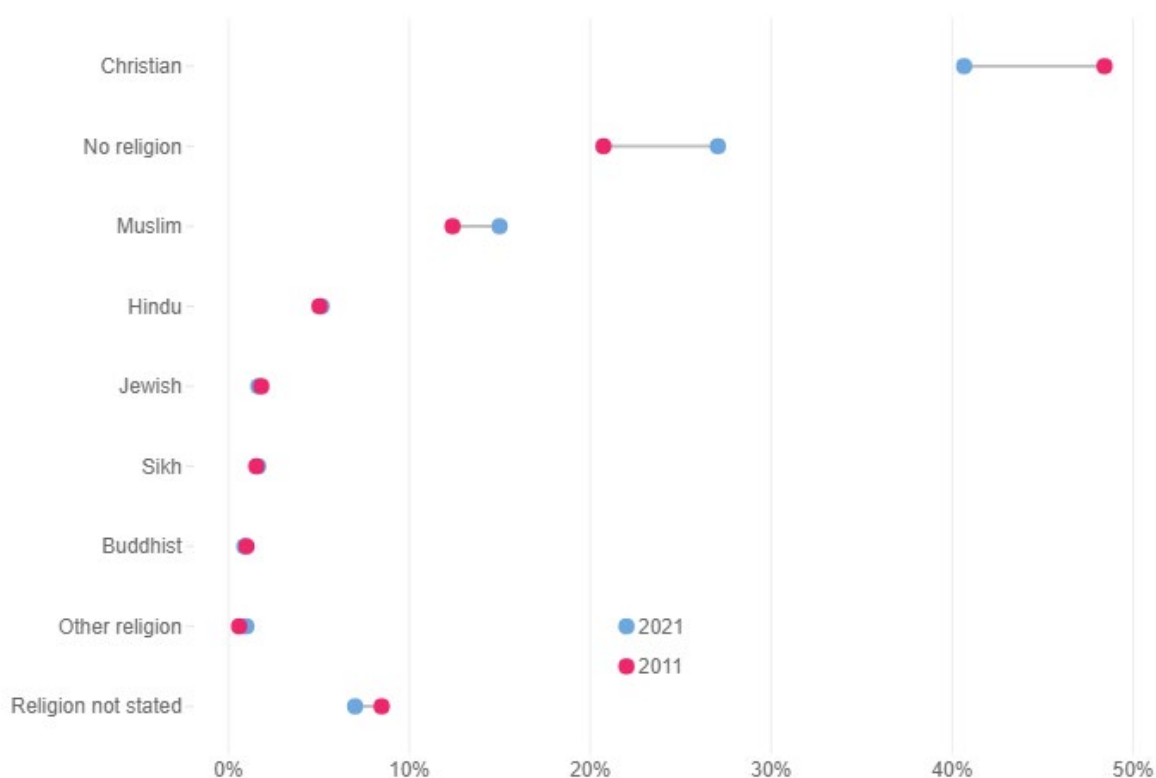


- Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnicities made up more than half the total population in ten London boroughs up from six boroughs in 2011. These six boroughs were Newham, Brent, Redbridge, Harrow, Tower Hamlets and Ealing and these were joined in 2021 by Hounslow, Barking & Dagenham, Hillingdon and Croydon. As in 2011, Newham had the highest combined proportion of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnicities of any local authority in England and Wales, 69 per cent.
- The largest populations of individual ethnic groups by borough were for the Asian ethnicities Bangladeshi and Indian. 107,000 Bangladeshis lived in Tower Hamlets, 35 per cent of the borough's total and 56,000 lived in Newham. The largest populations of Indian ethnicity were in west London: 77,000 in Harrow, 29 per cent of the borough total, 66,000 in Brent, 61,000 in Hounslow, 57,000 in Hillingdon and 55,000 in Ealing. The largest populations of Black ethnicity were in Southwark (48,000), Greenwich (44,000), Newham (41,000) and Croydon (40,000).
- Over three-quarters of a million (763,000) households in London included individuals from multiple ethnic groups. This was nearly a third (31 per cent) of households with more than person. The next highest proportion was in the South East region (16 per cent multi ethnic group households).

Religion

- 3.58 million Londoners reported their religion as Christian, some two-fifths (41 per cent of London's total population). There were 1.32 million Muslims (15 per cent), 453,000 Hindus (5 per cent), and 454,000 (5 per cent) who reported another religion. 2.38 million people stated no religion, a quarter (27 per cent) of all Londoners. The census question on religion is voluntary and 616,000 people (7 per cent of all people) chose not to answer.
- The number of London residents that identified as Christian fell by 380,000 since the 2011 census. This represented a decrease of 7.7 percentage points from 48 per cent of London's population in 2011 to 41 per cent in 2021. Muslims increased by 306,000 (up 2.6 percentage points) and Hindus by 42,000 (a marginal 0.1 percentage points increase). However, the largest change was in people reporting no religion, up 686,000 over the decade from 21 per cent in 2011 to 27 per cent in 2021.
- Despite the fall in overall numbers, Christian was the most prevalent religion in every borough except Tower Hamlets and Redbridge. In two boroughs, Havering (52 per cent) and Bexley (50 per cent), Christians constituted a majority of the total. In Camden, City of London, Hackney and Islington there were more residents reporting no religion than reported Christian.
- In Tower Hamlets and Redbridge, Islam was the most widespread religion (124,000 Muslims in Tower Hamlets and 97,000 in Redbridge); there were also 122,000 Muslims in Newham.
- Sikhs and Jews each accounted for less than 2 per cent of London's population, and Buddhists less than 1 per cent, as did all other religions combined. At borough level, Sikhs were most numerous in Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing (around 8 per cent of the population in each borough), Jews were most numerous in Barnet (15 per cent), while Hindus made up more than one in four of Harrow's population.

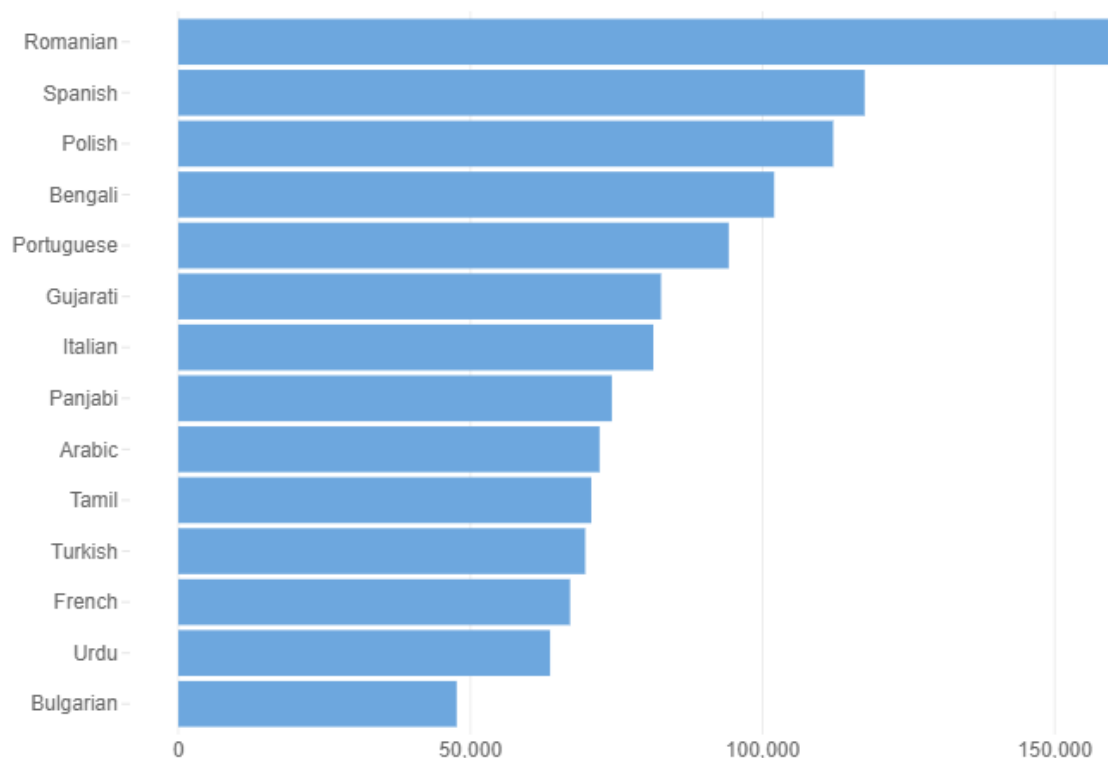
Religions in London, percentage of population, 2011 and 2021



Language and English Proficiency

- 1.83 million London residents aged 3 and over reported a main language other than English. This was over a fifth (22 per cent) of London's population. For England excluding London, 7 per cent reported a main language other than English.
- Top main languages other than English in London were Romanian with 159,000 speakers, Spanish (117,000), Polish (112,000) and Bengali (102,000).
- Romanian speakers increased the most over the decade since 2011 up 120,000. Other increases were Spanish, up 46,000 speakers, Italian (up 32,000), Bulgarian (up 25,000) and Portuguese (up 23,000). The numbers of Polish-speakers fell by 36,000, as did those speaking Gujarati (down 19,000), Somali (down 18,000) and French (down 17,000).

Languages spoken by more than 40,000 people London in 2021



- The main language spoken by most residents in an individual borough was Bengali spoken by 33,000 residents of Tower Hamlets, a tenth of the borough's total population. Bengali was also the main language for 21,000 residents of Newham. Numbers using other languages include Gujarati, spoken in Brent by 22,000 residents and Harrow (17,000); Romanian in Harrow (19,000), Newham (18,000) and Brent (16,000). Ealing had the most Panjabi speakers (17,000) and Polish speakers (15,000).
- The majority of Londoners with a main language other than English reported they were able to speak English very well (840,000, 46 per cent) or well (636,000, 35 per cent) but a fifth could not speak English well (303,000, 17 per cent) or at all (52,000, 3 per cent). In all this means that around 4 per cent of London's residents could not speak English well or at all.
- Boroughs with the highest numbers of residents that could not speak English well or at all were Newham (27,000), Brent (25,000), Ealing (23,000) and Enfield (21,000).

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