

Census 2021 health & housing statistics released

9.30am Thursday 15 December

The Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency today released the third set of results from Census 2021.

The information published provides data at a Northern Ireland level and for the 11 councils on the health of our population, housing (including renewable energy in homes) and also car ownership.

For the first time in the Census:

- a question was included which listed ‘Autism or Asperger syndrome’ as a health condition. Over 35,000 people recorded this condition, of which 19,000 were children aged 0 to 14 years (one child in twenty or 5.3%);
- over 1 million cars or vans (1.067m) were recorded as available for use. This is a four-fold increase from the 1971 Census (0.27m) and a 21% increase on Census 2011 (0.88m); and
- over half a million households (501,500) were recorded as living in an owner occupied home – either outright or with a mortgage. This is up over 25,000 from 2011 (474,800).

Today’s results show that just under four persons in every five (78.7%) reported good health. However, the percentage of our population who reported bad health has increased over the last decade (5.6% in 2011 to 7.7% in 2021). This change will be driven partly by our ageing population.

On housing, the statistics point to ongoing improvements in our housing stock. The vast majority of households had central heating (99.7%), more households had been designed or adapted for disability (17.2%) and around one household in twenty (5.3%) had a renewable energy system.

The key points are listed below.

Health, disability and unpaid care

General health

- In total 1.497 million people, or just under four persons in every five (78.7%), indicated they had **'Good or very good' general health**.
- In contrast, nearly 150,000 people indicated they had **'Bad or very bad' general health**. The remaining 260,000 people indicated they had **'Fair' general health**.
- **The standard of general health falls with age**. While less than 1% of people aged under 15 had 'Bad or very bad' general health, this rises to 17% of people aged 65 or more. In contrast nearly 97% of people aged under 15 had 'Good or very good' general health, this falls to half of people aged 65 or more.
- **Over the decade (2011 to 2021), the number and percentage of people with 'Bad or very bad' general health has risen**. In 2011, 100,000 people had 'Bad or very bad' general health, by 2021 this had risen to nearly 150,000 people. In percentage terms this is a rise from 5.6% of the population in 2011 to 7.7% in 2021. This will be driven partly by the increasing number of older people in our population.
- **In 2021, Belfast and Derry City & Strabane councils** had the highest percentage of their population with 'Bad or very bad' general health (at 10.0% and 9.5% respectively).

- Over the decade to 2021, every **local council has seen an increase in the percentage of its population with ‘Bad or very bad’ general health.**

Limiting long-term health problem or disability

- Census 2021 again included a question on limiting long-term health problem or disability. **One person in four (24.3% or 463,000 people) had a limiting long-term health problem or disability.**
- **The number of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability increased from the 2011 to 2021 Census.** The increase, from 374,600 people in 2011 to 463,000 people in 2021 (an increase of 23.6%), will be driven partly by our ageing population.
- **All local councils had a rise** in the number and percentage of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability in the decade to 2021. The increase was highest in Antrim & Newtownabbey at 32.0% and lowest in Belfast at 17.6%.

Long-term health condition

- Census 2021 included a further question on specific long-term health conditions. The most prevalent conditions were **‘Long-term pain or discomfort’** (11.6% of people), **‘Mobility or dexterity difficulty that limits basic physical activities’** (10.9% of people) and **‘Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing’** (10.3% of people).
- For the first time Census 2021 included **‘Autism or Asperger syndrome’** as a listed health condition and 35,000 people (1.9%) were recorded with this condition. Of this, 19,000 children (or one child in twenty) had ‘Autism or Asperger syndrome’ recorded.
- A few key results for other listed conditions are **‘Emotional, psychological or mental health’** 165,100 people (8.7%), **‘Deafness or partial hearing loss’**

109,500 people (5.8%), **'Learning difficulty (for example dyslexia)'** 59,900 (3.1%) people and **'Blindness or partial sight loss'** 34,000 people (1.8%). The full set of results with age-specific prevalence rates are given in the reports and tables released today.

Provision of unpaid care¹

- Census 2021 recorded that one person in eight (or 222,200 people) provided **unpaid care to a relative or friend who had a health condition or illness.**
- Census 2021 also recorded how many hours the carer provided each week. **One person in twenty five (68,700 people) provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week.**
- While people of all ages provided unpaid care, it was most common among those **aged 40 to 64, at one person in five (124,600 people).**
- **The census also found that 2,600 children aged 5 to 14 provided unpaid care.**
- The overall number of people providing unpaid care has not changed markedly from Census 2011 to Census 2021. However the **number of people providing 50 or more hours unpaid care each week has increased** (up from 56,300 people in 2011 to 68,700 people in 2021).

¹ Provision of unpaid care statistics relate to the population aged 5 or more.

Household spaces & accommodation

Vacant households

- **The total number of vacant households recorded in Census 2021 was 52,300, with an overall vacancy level of 6.4%.**
- **The highest vacancy level across Northern Ireland was in the Causeway Coast & Glens area at 13.5% or 9,000 vacant households.**

Accommodation type

- **For the first time in a Northern Ireland census, more than 500,000 occupied households were recorded as living in detached or semi-detached accommodation.**
- **The number of households living in a flat, maisonette or apartment has risen markedly over the decade. In 2021, 77,300 households lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment (10.0% of all households), compared to 62,600 households (8.9%) in 2011 – an overall increase of 23.5%.**

Household Adaptations

- **Around one household in six (17.2% or 132,400 households) was designed or adapted to cater for a person with a health problem or disability.**
- **Internal wheelchair use was the most common type of adaptation, at 9.0% of all households (69,200 households).**
- **The number of households with an adaptation has increased from 84,700 in 2011 to 132,400 in 2021, an overall increase of over 50%.**

Central Heating

- **The most common type of central heating system is oil heating** with 480,600 households (or 62.5%) having access to this type of central heating system (either solely or in combination with another system).
- **Second to that is mains gas heating** with 256,500 households (or 33.4%) having access to this heating system (solely or in combination with another system).
- **In total 2,400 households** in the 2021 Census (0.3% of all households) had **no access to a central heating system**. The 2021 Census continues the downward trend in this statistic. For comparison in 1991, 17.3% of households had no access to a central heating system.
- **There is variation across local areas in the type of systems available**. For example, of the 256,500 households with access to a mains gas system, 111,000 (or 43.3%) are in Belfast.

Renewable Energy Systems

- This is the first time a question on renewable energy systems has been asked in the Census. **In total over 5% of households had one or more renewable energy systems installed**.
- **In total around 47,800 renewable energy systems are installed in 40,400 households across Northern Ireland**.
- The most common systems are **solar panels for electricity (24,200 households)** and **solar panels for heating water (18,600 households)**.
- **Access to renewable energy systems varies by local area**. The highest levels of installation were in Fermanagh & Omagh and Newry, Mourne & Down, where around 7.5% of households had one or more renewable energy

systems. The lowest levels were in Belfast, where 3.3% of households had one or more renewable energy systems.

Housing (people in households)

Car or van availability

- For the first time in a Northern Ireland census, **over one million cars or vans (1.067 million) were recorded as owned or available for use** by people living in households.
- **In the last fifty years (1971 to 2021) there has been a four-fold increase in the numbers of cars or vans available for use.** Up from 271,500 cars or vans in the 1971 Census to 1.067 million cars or vans in the 2021 Census.
- In 2021 **over 80% of households had a car or van available.** For the first time if a household had a car or van available, it was more likely to have two or more than to have one (40.7% of households with two or more cars or vans compared to 39.7% of households with one car or van).
- **In contrast, in 2021 one in five households (19.5%) did not have access to a car or van.** The proportion of households without access to a car or van has fallen at every Census, indeed in the 1971 Census nearly half of households (46.4%) did not have a car or van.
- In 2021, urban areas **Belfast (33.9%) and Derry & Strabane (24.6%)** had the highest percentage of households **without a car or van available.**
- In contrast, in 2021 rural areas had the highest percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available, with over half of households in **Mid Ulster (51.5%) having two or more cars or vans available.**

Household Tenure

- For the first time in a Northern Ireland census, **over half a million households (501,500) owned their home – either outright or with a mortgage.**
- In total 65.2% of households owned their home and 34.8% of households rented their home.
- **The private rented group is the fastest growing sector.** Over the last forty years (1981 to 2021) the percentage of households privately renting has nearly doubled (from 9.1% of households in 1981 to 17.2% in 2021). In 2021, 307,000 people lived in 132,000 privately rented households.
- **There are marked variations in household tenure by local area.** The percentage of households that owned their own home ranged from 74.7% in Lisburn & Castlereagh to 51.0% in Belfast.

Notes for Editors

1. The statistics released today complement previously released census data and provide a wide ranging profile of the Northern Ireland population as well as for each of the 11 local councils. The full information, including the census statistics and bulletins underlying this press notice, and supporting papers on Census 2021, can be accessed on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website at:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-main-statistics-for-northern-ireland-phase-2>
2. The statistics released today relate solely to information gathered from the Census 2021 questionnaire (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2021-census-questionnaires>).
3. Alongside today's release Census Office has published a number of infographics which can be accessed at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-infographics>. In addition, the statistics can also be explored interactively through our explorer website at <https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/area-explorer-2021/>.
4. Census statistics are produced by statisticians in the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence and have been assessed as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation (<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>). Census 2021 statistics meet the highest standards of trust, quality and value and are produced using standards set out in the statutory Code of Practice for Statistics (<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>). 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.
5. Media queries to Department of Finance Press Office by email dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9081 6724.

6. We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback to the email address below.
7. Today's release of results from the 2021 Census will be followed by a number of other planned releases. Further information about these is set out in the Census 2021 Output Prospectus (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/outputs-prospectus/release-plans>), which will be regularly updated as the release programme proceeds.
8. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from Census Customer Services at:

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