



2021 Census: first results

Corporate Research and
Information Unit

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Conwy - Sir flaengar sy'n creu cyfleoedd

Conwy - a progressive County creating opportunity

Contact us

If you have any suggestions about how we could improve this monitor, or if you require further information, please contact us.

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2021 Census: first results – research bulletin

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Introduction

This bulletin looks at the first results from the 2021 Census for England and Wales, which were published by the Office for National Statistics on 28 June 2022. These first results include population and household estimate at a Wales and local authority level. More data will be released in phases over the next 18 months and will include detailed data at small area level about people, households and living arrangements, work and housing/amenities.

As well as providing analysis of the Census data, the Corporate Research and Information team was closely involved in co-ordinating Conwy CBC's work to support the Office for National Statistics (ONS) who undertook the decennial survey. We helped to ensure that we counted all residents in Conwy CB wherever they were living. Without an accurate Census count, Conwy County Borough could lose out, as information from the Census helps us:

- develop policies
- plan and run services, such as schools, health services, roads and libraries
- decide how to allocate funds to make sure public money gets to where it is needed most

The key results for Conwy County Borough

- On Census Day, 21 March 2021, the size of the usual resident population in Conwy County Borough was 114,800.
- The population of Conwy County Borough has decreased by -450 (-0.4%) since the last census in 2011, when it was 115,250. Wales saw an increase of 1.4%, and England and Wales an increase of 6.3%.
- There were more people than ever before in the older age groups; the proportion of the population who were aged 65 years and over was 27.4%, (up from 24.4% in 2011). This was the second highest in Wales (after Powys at 27.8%) and was a total of 31,400 people. The population aged 65+ in Wales as a whole = 21.3%; in England and Wales = 18.6% (up from 18.4% and 16.4% respectively).
- There were 4,500 residents in Conwy County Borough aged 85 and over in 2021, compared with 4,200 in 2011 and 3,600 in 2001. At 3.9% of the population this was the highest proportion in Wales.
- The number of people aged under 15 was 17,200 or 15.0% of the total population (down from 19,150 or 15.4% in 2011). The population aged under 15 in Wales as a whole = 16.5%; in England and Wales = 17.4% (down from 16.9% and 17.6% respectively).
- There were 52,200 households with at least one usual resident in Conwy County Borough on Census Day; this is an increase of 1,000 (2.0%) since 2011, when there were 51,200 households. Wales saw an increase of 3.4%, and England and Wales an increase of 6.1%.
- About 3.7% of the population of Wales lives in Conwy County Borough. This is a slight decline since 2011.
- Eight local authorities in Wales had lower populations in 2021 than in 2011, and a further five saw growth of less than 1.4% (the Welsh average). The greatest rates of population decline since 2011 were in Ceredigion (5.8%), Blaenau Gwent (4.2%) and Gwynedd (3.7%).

- The rate of population growth in Wales was considerably lower than in England, where the population grew by 6.6%. Population growth was also lower in Wales than in all English regions. The rate of growth in Wales was nearly six times lower than the East of England, the English region with the highest percentage change in the size of the population (8.3%). It was also lower than the English region with the lowest population growth, the North East (1.9%).

Comparison with other population bases

Table 1: comparison of different population bases

Sources: 2021, 2011 and 2001 Census of population, ONS; 2020 mid-year population estimates, ONS, 2018-based population projections, WG)

	2021 Census	2011 Census	2020 mid-year estimate	2021/22 RSG settlement*	2001 Census
Total population	114,800	115,250	118,200	118,000	109,600
As % of Wales total	3.694%	3.761%	3.729%	3.732%	3.775%
Total households	52,200	51,200	53,350	53,350	48,050
Difference					
Total population		-450	-3,400	-3,200	5,200
As % of Wales total		-0.067%	-0.034%	-0.037%	-0.081%
Total households		1,000	-1,150	-1,150	4,150

* The population base used in the Rate Support Grant calculation is taken from the 2018-based population projections produced by Welsh Government and uses the projected population figures for mid-2021.

The Census estimate of our population shows that the most recent officially produced population figure (2020 mid-year estimate of population, ONS) significantly over-estimated the population of Conwy County Borough. The population base that was used in the 2021/22 Rate Support Grant (RSG) calculation is also an over-estimation of the population total.

This difference does not mean that Conwy County Borough has suddenly lost 3,400 people (or 3,200, or 450). The difference can be described as a ‘counting error’. The Council will not have to adjust its resources to provide for this change as it does not mean there has been a change in the number of people who are using our services.

However, the new Census figures may have resource implications in terms of what they mean for our RSG settlement. (see the ‘Possible implications – population figures’ section below).

Why is there a difference?

There will be a number of reasons why the census estimates look different. One reason is that population change may reflect how the 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. It is also not clear how exiting the European Union has affected population change in Wales and across the UK.

The population estimates over the 10-year period since 2011 Census have been prepared by starting with the 2011 Census-based population estimates, and every year adding on births, subtracting deaths, and adding in any net migration that has taken place since 2011. The estimates become increasingly more uncertain over

time as we move further away from the 2011 Census baseline. The 2021 Census has therefore provided the opportunity for us to update our understanding of the population as it was in March 2021.

Births and deaths data are very reliable as they are underpinned by a comprehensive registration systems. This means the difference between the rolled-forward population estimates and the 2021 Census estimates is most likely be due to net migration being over-estimated over the 10-year period. (Migration figures include both international migration and migration from elsewhere within the UK.)

There is also the possibility that the 2011 Census over-estimated the population base. For 2011 there was a significant increase in Conwy County Borough's population estimates compared to the 2010 mid-year population, which was not fully explained by the statistical methods used by the Office for National Statistics. The 2021 Census results may be a correction to that rebasing for 2011.

Mid-year population estimates also form the basis of the 2018-based population projections that provide the population data used in the RSG calculation, so they will have been affected by the over-estimations too.

Later this year the ONS is planning to publish more analysis comparing the Census population estimates with other sources of population data. This will include comparisons with the latest mid-year estimates and the more experimental admin-based population estimates. The ONS will also publish more information on what the Census results mean for updating the existing series of population and migration statistics.

Possible implications – population figures

The decrease in the estimate of our population on its own does not necessarily have an impact on our service provision. As stated above, these people are not 'lost' to the County Borough, they have instead been miscounted in previous estimates of our population. The revision of the population count in isolation does not make a difference to how we operate as a Council.

However, what does potentially have an impact is the change in our proportion of the population as a percentage of the Wales total. This is true for the population as a whole and within specific age groups. This is because the Rate Support Grant (RSG) calculation relies heavily on population data.

As a proportion of the total for Wales, Conwy CB's 2021 Census population figure is 0.034% lower than the 2021/22 RSG settlement (3.694% of the Wales total, compared to 3.732%). Though this seems a slight difference, it could have significant impact on our income from the RSG settlement.

The exact impact is not easily assessed, as the RSG calculation is extremely complicated.

It is important to remember that our share of the RSG settlement may also be affected by decrease in total funding, as the size of the total RSG settlement for the whole of Wales in 2023/24 is likely to be considerably smaller than in 2022/23, as the Census estimates a smaller population relative to the UK total than had been suggested by the previous mid-year population estimates.

In addition, the use of Census data to rebase the mid-year population estimates will have wide ranging impacts. Where rates or percentages of population are used to

measure relative need or service efficiency they are likely to be revised (for example – proportion of the population aged 0-4; unemployment rates; ratio of dependents to working age population). This will change some of the evidence we use to monitor our services and the wider community. In particular, the new mid-year population estimates which are due to be published in October/November 2022 will be used to calculate some performance indicators. Depending on how each performance indicator uses the population data, there may be a step change in performance results for next year.

Possible implications – household figures

Despite the decrease in the estimated population total, household numbers have risen in the past decade. This is because the average size of households has continued to decrease, as it has been doing for several decades. The size of the growth in households is, however, less than had been predicted by Welsh Government's official estimates and the 2018-based sub-national household projections.

As with the population figures any rates, percentages and ratios which relate to household numbers and which are used to measure need or monitor service provision are likely to be revised (for example – ratio of households accepted as homeless per 10,000 households).

Both the change in population numbers and the size of households will ultimately have an impact on future dwelling requirements as provided for by the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). However, it will not be possible to predict what this impact may be until detailed Census data about household composition (who lives in what kind of household) is released in 2023. Revised Welsh Government household projections are unlikely to be produced before 2024. Current advice from Welsh Government's Planning Directorate is to continue with schedule laid out in the RLDP delivery agreement and move ahead with the consultation on the deposit stage of the Plan. When published, the revised projections will inform the RLDP monitoring process.

Data release schedule

Table 2: release schedule for 2021 Census and related population data

Dataset	Release date
Mid year population estimates for 2021 (using Census data)	October/November 2022
Topic summaries and area profiles	October to end of 2022
Start of the Census 2021 analysis programme; multivariate data for the usual resident population base; short-term resident population data	Winter 2022 to early 2023
Revised mid-year population estimates for 2012-2020	Spring/summer 2023
Alternative population bases; small populations; detailed migration data; origin-destination data or 'flow' data	From spring 2023
UK census data (including results for Scotland and Northern Ireland)	From summer 2023
2021-based population projections (Welsh Government statistics)	Autumn 2023
2021-based household projections (Welsh Government statistics)	2024

The first release data from the Census only covers headline population figures. More data will be released in phases over the next 18 months and will include detailed data at small area level about people, households and living arrangements, work and housing/amenities.

About the Census

The census happens every 10 years and gives us a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales.

Your answers to census questions help organisations make decisions on planning and funding public services in your area, including transport, education and healthcare.

Census Day was on Sunday 21 March 2021.

The main census website is:

<https://census.gov.uk/>

A statistical bulletin summarising the key results for Wales is available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimateswales/census2021>

The Welsh Government's Chief Statistician has produced a blog about the first release and what it means for Wales

<https://digitalanddata.blog.gov.wales/2022/06/28/chief-statisticians-update-and-the-population-of-wales-is/>

ONS have also published a range of supporting data with the first release.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/initialfindingsfromthe2021censusinenglandandwales>

The full data release schedule for the 2021 Census is available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/census2021outputs/releaseplans>