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Ethnicity facts and figures

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List of ethnic groups

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In England and Wales, there is an agreed list of ethnic groups you can use when asking for someone's ethnicity. The groups are usually those used in the Census, which happens every 10 years.

Related content

[Population of England and Wales \(/uk-population-by-](#)

If you're in a government service team, there's a design pattern for [asking users for equality information](https://design-system.service.gov.uk/patterns/equality-information/) (<https://design-system.service.gov.uk/patterns/equality-information/>), including their ethnic group.

1. 2021 Census

The main changes to the 2021 Census of England and Wales, compared with the previous Census, were:

- the 'Roma' group was added under the 'White' ethnic group
- a write-in response was added for the 'Black African' ethnic group

The ethnic groups were:

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish

[ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest](#)

[Regional ethnic diversity \(/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest\)](#)

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- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Any other White background

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

In Wales, 'Welsh' is the first option in the White category.

2. How the groups were chosen

The Office for National Statistics runs the Census of England and Wales every 10 years. They decide which ethnic groups to include in consultation with:

- users of Census data (like government departments, local authorities, and the National Health Service)
- people completing the Census, and the interest groups that represent them
- the organisations that run the Censuses in Northern Ireland and Scotland

It is recognised that these ethnic groups do not represent how all people identify. People are encouraged to write in their ethnicity using their own words if they don't identify with any groups in the list.

There has been an ethnicity question in the Census since 1991. It has been updated at every new Census since then. There are separate questions in the Census about national identity, religion and language.

You can read more about:

- [how ONS researched and tested the Census 2021 questions on national identity, ethnic group, language and religion](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups/)

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/nationalidentityethnicgroup/languageandreligion/questiondevelopmentforcensus2021>).

- [how ethnicity data collection has changed over the last 50 years](#)

(<https://history.blog.gov.uk/2019/03/07/50-years-of-collecting-ethnicity-data/>).

3. Exceptions

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) has a [harmonised standard](#) (<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/>) for ethnicity classification.

The ethnic groups used in the harmonised standard and the latest Census are usually the same. The harmonised standard is being reviewed and currently uses the ethnic groups from the 2011 Census.

Not all departments and organisations use the standardised list, for example if:

- they need data on some ethnic groups, but not others
- they want their data to be consistent with data they have collected previously, which uses different ethnic groups
- the small number of people surveyed in some ethnic groups means groups have to be combined to make statistics more reliable, or to protect individual identities

The [dashboard of ethnic categories](#) (</dashboards/ethnicity-classifications>) shows that around 20 different ethnicity classifications are used on Ethnicity facts and figures.

4. Scotland and Northern Ireland

The Censuses in Scotland and Northern Ireland use different ethnicity classifications.

Northern Ireland

The ethnicity question in the [2021 Census in Northern Ireland](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2021-census-questionnaires) (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2021-census-questionnaires>) asked people to choose from the following ethnic groups:

- Black African
- Black Other
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Indian
- Irish Traveller
- Mixed ethnic group
- Roma
- White
- Any other ethnic group

Scotland

Scotland's next Census is in 2022. The ethnic groups will be:

Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian

- Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani
- Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian
- Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi
- Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese
- Other

African, Scottish African or British African

- Respondents write in their ethnic group

Caribbean or Black

- Respondents write in their ethnic group

Mixed or multiple ethnic group

- Respondents write in their ethnic group

White

- Scottish
- Other British
- Irish
- Polish
- Gypsy or Traveller
- Roma
- Showman or Showwoman
- Other

Other ethnic group

- Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab
- Other (for example, Sikh, Jewish)

5. Combining data

If you need to combine data for the different countries of the UK, you can use the GSS harmonised categories for either:

- [England, Wales and Scotland](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#presentation-great-britain)
(<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#presentation-great-britain>)
- [England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#presentation-united-kingdom)
(<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#presentation-united-kingdom>)

These harmonised classifications are based on the 2011 Censuses.

6. 2011 Census

The main changes to the 2011 Census of England and Wales, compared with the previous Census, were:

- the Chinese ethnic group moved from the 'Other' ethnic group (in 2001) to the 'Asian' ethnic group (in 2011)
- there were no 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' or 'Arab' groups listed in 2001

The ethnic groups were:

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

Black, African, Caribbean or Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

7. 2001 Census

Some data on Ethnicity facts and figures still uses the ethnic groups from the 2001 Census when recording people's ethnicity.

The ethnic groups were:

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed background

White

- British
- Irish
- Any other White background

Chinese or other ethnic group

- Chinese
- Any other

Understanding our data

Style guide

[How to read survey data](#)

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