

Briefing Note

Census 2021

Topic summary release (008)

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census 2021

Education

Census data can be used to identify the number of schoolchildren and students (aged five years and over) in full-time education.

It also helps us to understand educational ability in England and Wales through residents' highest level of qualification.

Residents of England and Wales aged 16 years and over (48.6 million) were asked to record any qualifications (including academic, vocational, and professional qualifications) they had achieved in England, Wales or worldwide. This is used to calculate the highest level of qualification (so, the highest level of qualification that an individual reported irrespective of previous qualifications listed) using the following categories:

- no qualifications: no formal qualifications
- Level 1: one to four GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications
- Level 2: five or more GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications
- apprenticeships
- Level 3: two or more A Levels or equivalent qualifications
- Level 4 or above: Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications
- other qualifications, of unknown level

It is difficult to make direct comparisons with 2011 data as the structure and content of Census 2021 questions on qualifications differ from those in the 2011 Census. However, we have included 2011 figures where possible.

Headline data – the national picture

- There were 11.5 million schoolchildren and full-time students in 2021 across England and Wales, representing 20.4% of the population aged five years and over.
- More than 3 in 10 usual residents aged 16 years and over had Level 4 or above qualifications (for example, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree and post-graduate qualifications); this was 33.8%, or 16.4 million people.
- In 2021, almost one in five (18.2%, 8.8 million) reported having no qualifications.
- Across England and Wales, apprenticeships were the highest qualification for 5.3% of people (2.6 million).
- The region with the highest percentage of the population with Level 4 or above qualifications was London with 46.7% (3.3 million).

Other key points:

- Student term-time address is key data to help inform funding decisions such as university campus bus links and bike lanes, jobs and training.
- Census 2021 was conducted during the Covid 19 pandemic and, as such, guidance was issued by ONS on how students should complete the census.
- Students are enumerated at both their usual term-time address and their usual out-of-term address. This is consistent with previous censuses.
- There was some evidence of changes to the term-time population resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. More information and guidance on this can be found on the ONS website - [Students: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/students-census-2021)

South Gloucestershire and regional data

Schoolchildren and full-time students

In South Gloucestershire, 53,414 residents aged five years or over were classed as schoolchildren or full-time students. This equates to 19.5% of the total population, which is slightly higher than the proportion of residents in the South West (18.7%), but lower than in England and Wales (20.4).

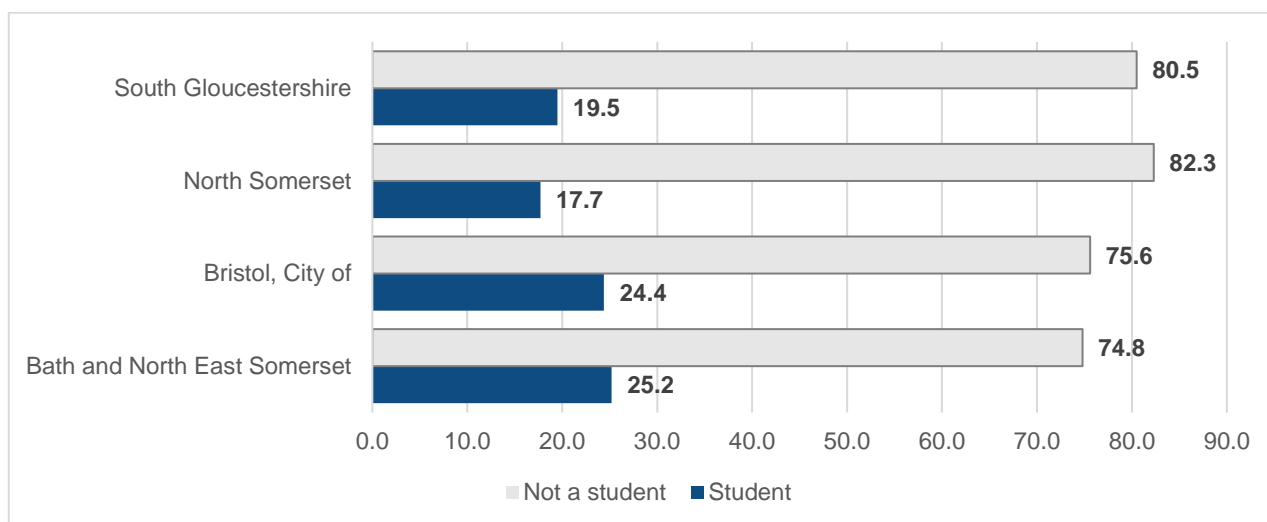
Figure 1 – Figures and percentages of students in South Glos, South West, England and Wales (2021).

Schoolchild or full-time student indicator	South Glos		South West		England and Wales	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total: All usual residents aged 5 years and over	274,306	100.0	5,426,740	100.0	56,365,506	100.0
Student	53,414	19.5	1,014,579	18.7	11,508,092	20.4
Not a student	220,892	80.5	4,412,161	81.3	44,857,414	79.6

(Source - Census 2021, TS078)

- Of the neighbouring local authorities, Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) had the greatest student population, with 25.2% of residents either a schoolchild or full-time student.
- North Somerset had the smallest proportion, with 17.7% of residents either a schoolchild or full-time student.

Figure 2 – Percentage of residents over 5 years that are school-children or full-time students in South Glos, North Somerset, the City of Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset (2021).



(Source - Census 2021, TS078)

Highest level of qualification

The highest qualification questions ask people to indicate all qualifications held – including foreign qualifications where they are matched to the closest UK equivalent. These will generally be defined as:

- Level 1 and entry level qualifications: 1 to 4 GCSEs grade A* to C, Any GCSEs at other grades, O levels or CSEs (any grades), 1 AS level, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic or Essential Skills
- Level 2 qualifications: 5 or more GCSEs (A* to C or 9 to 4), O levels (passes), CSEs (grade 1), School Certification, 1 A level, 2 to 3 AS levels, VCEs, Intermediate or Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First or General Diploma, RSA Diploma
- Level 3 qualifications: 2 or more A levels or VCEs, 4 or more AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression or Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
- Level 4 qualifications or above: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)
- Other qualifications: vocational or work-related qualifications, other qualifications achieved in England or Wales, qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)

In South Gloucestershire, 78,233 (33.0%) of residents stated they had level 4 qualifications, reflecting the national picture of 33.8%. 33,972 (14.2%) had no qualifications with 15,142 (6.4%) having an apprenticeship. Of the neighbouring local authorities, the City of Bristol had the greatest proportion of residents with a level 4 qualification or above, at 42.1%. This was closely followed by Bath and North East Somerset, with 39.8%.

North Somerset had the greatest proportion of residents with no qualifications (14.9%), whereas BaNES had the smallest (12.3%). South Gloucestershire had the greatest proportion of residents who had completed an apprenticeship, but the smallest proportion of those who had a level 4 qualification or above.

Figure 3 Highest level of qualification among residents of South Gloucestershire 2021).

Highest level of qualification	2021	
	number	%
Total: All usual residents aged 16 years and over	237,364	100.0
No qualifications	33,792	14.2
Level 1 and entry level qualifications	23,996	10.1
Level 2 qualifications	33,959	14.3
Apprenticeship	15,142	6.4
Level 3 qualifications	46,440	19.6
Level 4 qualifications or above	78,233	33.0
Other qualifications	5,802	2.4

(Source - Census 2021, TS067)

Figure 4 - Highest level of qualification among residents of South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset, the City of Bristol and North Somerset (2021).

Highest level of qualification	Bath and North East Somerset	Bristol	North Somerset	South Glos
Total: All usual residents aged 16 years and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No qualifications	12.3	14.5	14.9	14.2
Level 1 and entry level qualifications	7.4	7.5	9.6	10.1
Level 2 qualifications	11.8	10.7	14.8	14.3
Apprenticeship	4.7	3.9	6.0	6.4
Level 3 qualifications	21.9	19.0	18.1	19.6
Level 4 qualifications or above	39.8	42.1	33.9	33.0
Other qualifications	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.4

(Source - Census 2021, TS067)

Whilst highest qualification is a useful indicator, there are quality considerations as to the accuracy of how people respond to the question and comparability with 2011. In Census 2021, the question included the same categories, but the question was revised and split up to group together different qualifications. People answering the question may have answered differently to 2011 so data cannot be fully compared with 2021 results. The accuracy of census responses for the qualifications questions is also expected to be lower where the specific qualification is not listed on the census questionnaire. This is likely to be a particular issue for older people who obtained qualifications that no longer exist.

The issue of qualifications not being specifically listed on the census questionnaire is also likely to affect responses to these questions from those who obtained their qualifications overseas. This meant that people with qualifications obtained overseas had to convert their achieved attainment levels into the equivalent listed on the census questionnaire.

Additional information

Census dictionary

ONS have published a 'Census 2021' dictionary with detailed information about variables, definitions and classifications. This can be viewed on their [website](#).

Census maps

ONS have published an [interactive mapping tool](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps>) where you can view all the latest census data to Output Area level (where applicable).

About the Census

Every ten years a census is carried out in England and Wales to produce an accurate estimate of the population. The 2021 Census for England and Wales took place on 21 March 2021 and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has now published the first release of data.

Data Source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence.

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