



Equality, Diversity & Protected Characteristics

Wirral Intelligence Service

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Equality, Diversity & Protected Characteristics

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Contents

Introduction	3
Age and Sex	3
Disability & Health	5
Disability	5
Health	7
Pregnancy and Maternity	7
Ethnicity	9
Ethnic group	9
Ethnic groups (detailed).....	10
Religion and Belief	11
Sexual Orientation	12
Marriage and Civil Partnership	14
Gender Reassignment	15
Contact Details	15

Introduction

[The Equality Act](#) came into force on 1st October 2010. The Equality Act brought together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Combined, they made up a new Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. Within the Equality Act, it states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of these protected characteristics:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

You're protected from discrimination in any of the following settings:

- At work
- In education
- As a consumer
- When using public services
- When buying or renting property
- As a member or guest of a private club or association

This document provides an overview of these various protected characteristics in Wirral, and, with evidence and research in this field constantly evolving, is designed as a starting point for local commissioners and policy makers to help support local decision making. The document is not a systematic review, rather a summary of key sources of information related to these protected characteristics.

Age and Sex

Between the last two Censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Wirral increased by just 0.1%, from around 319,800 in 2011 to around 320,200 in 2021 (+400 people). This is a smaller percentage increase than observed in the overall population of the North West (+5.2%), as well as the overall population of England (up 6.6% since the 2011 Census).

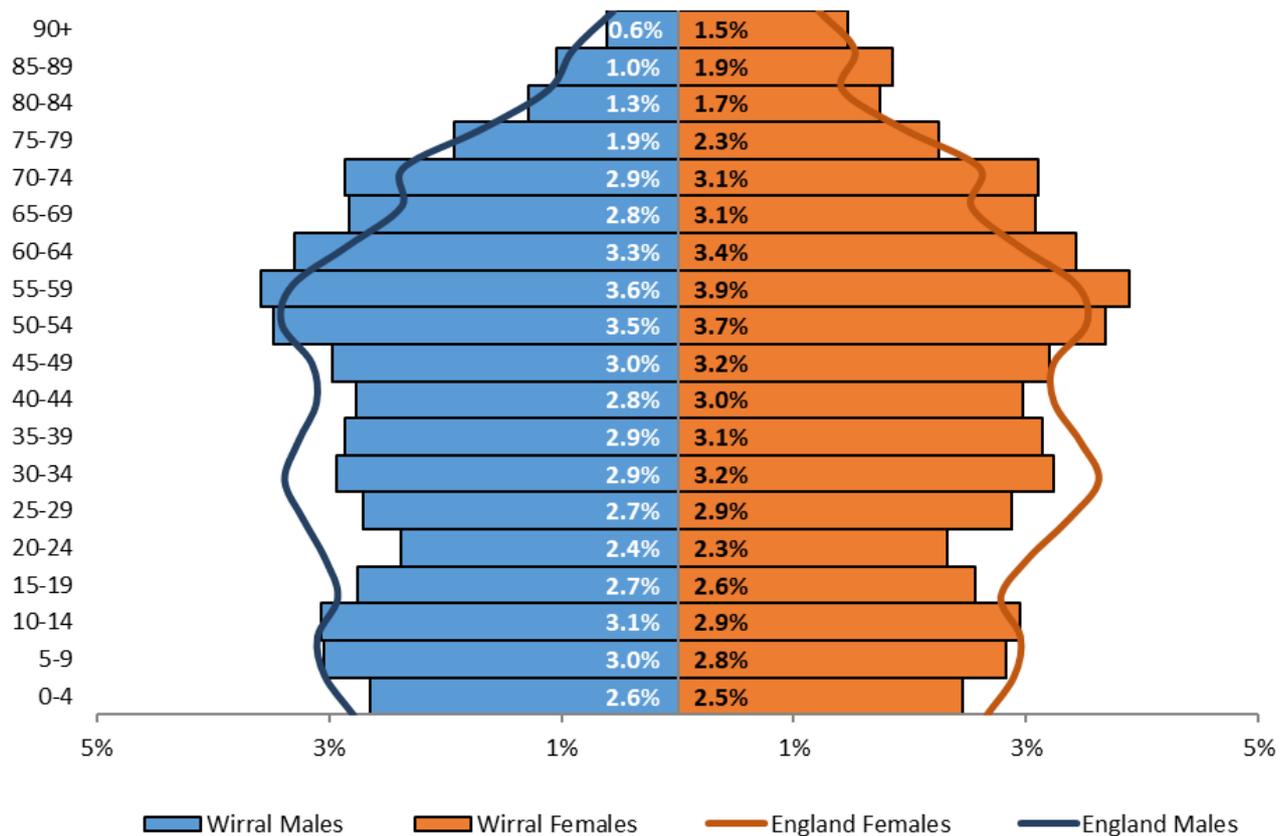
There were 165,122 women (51.6% of the overall population) and 155,077 men (48.4%) in Wirral.

Between the last two Censuses, the average (median) age of Wirral increased by two years, from 42 to 44 years of age. This is higher than the average (median) age of the North West in 2021 (40 years) and a higher average (median) age than England (40 years).

The median age is the age of the person in the middle of the group, meaning that exactly half of the group is younger than that person and the other half is older.

This information is shown in **Figure 1**. For both males and females, Wirral has a higher proportion of older people aged 50+ than in England. This is shown by the bars (representing Wirral) being above the lines (representing England). As the bars are below the lines for both genders in the younger age groups, this shows that England has a greater proportion of the population in that age group.

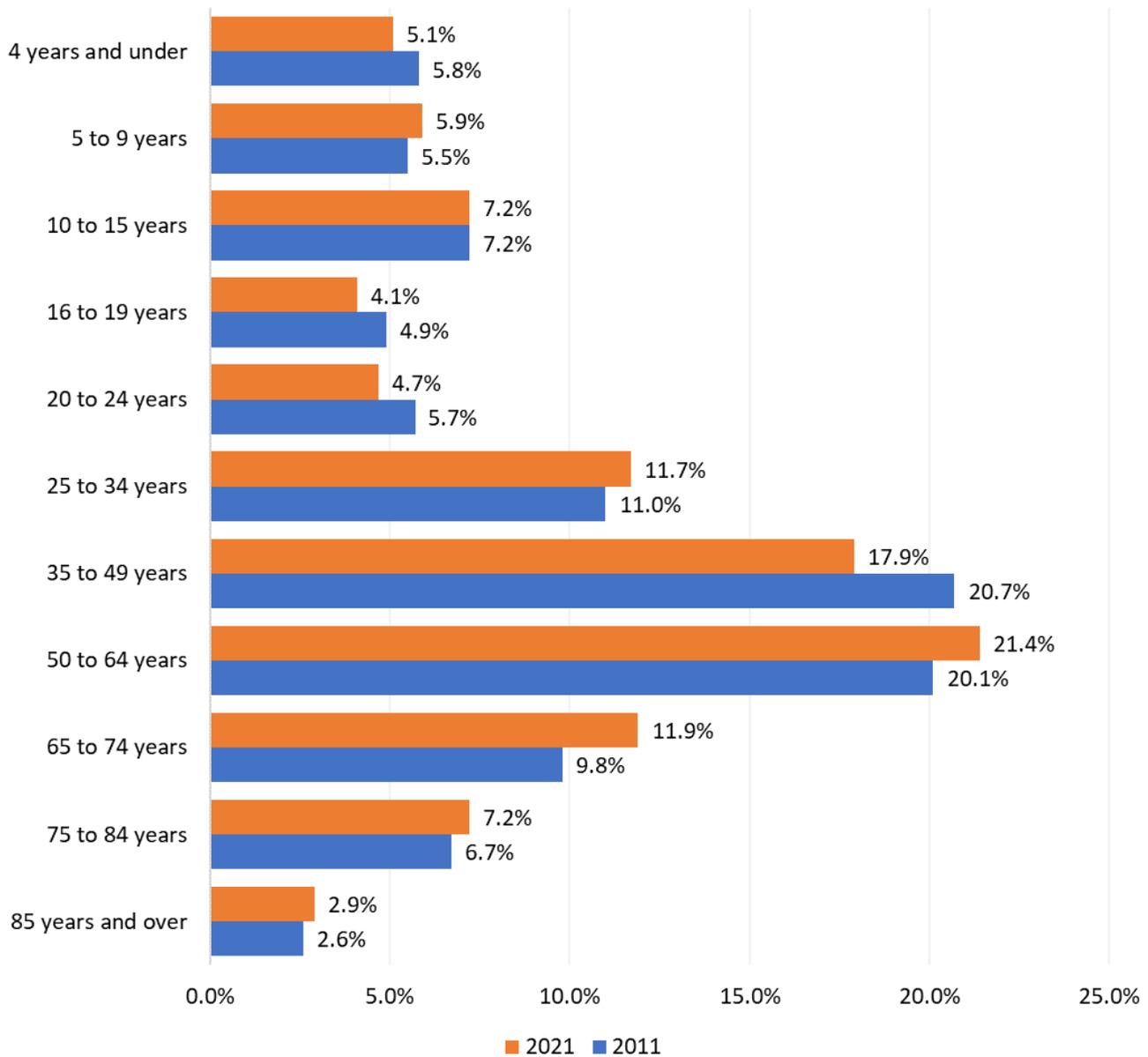
Figure 1: Population Pyramid of Wirral and England by Gender, 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

The number of people aged 65 to 74 years in Wirral rose by around 6,700 (an increase of 21.4%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by around 8,900 (13.4% decrease) – see **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Percentage of usual residents by age group, Wirral, 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Disability & Health

Disability

To identify disability in England and Wales, the latest Census asked people "Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?". If they answered yes, a further question "Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?" was presented. The identification of disability differs from the 2011 Census question used, which asked "Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or expected to last, at least 12 months?".

The question changed in order to collect data that more closely aligned with the definition of disability in the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#). The Equality Act defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The way disabled people are identified via the Census has therefore changed between 2011 and 2021 and this may have had an impact on the number of people identified as disabled.

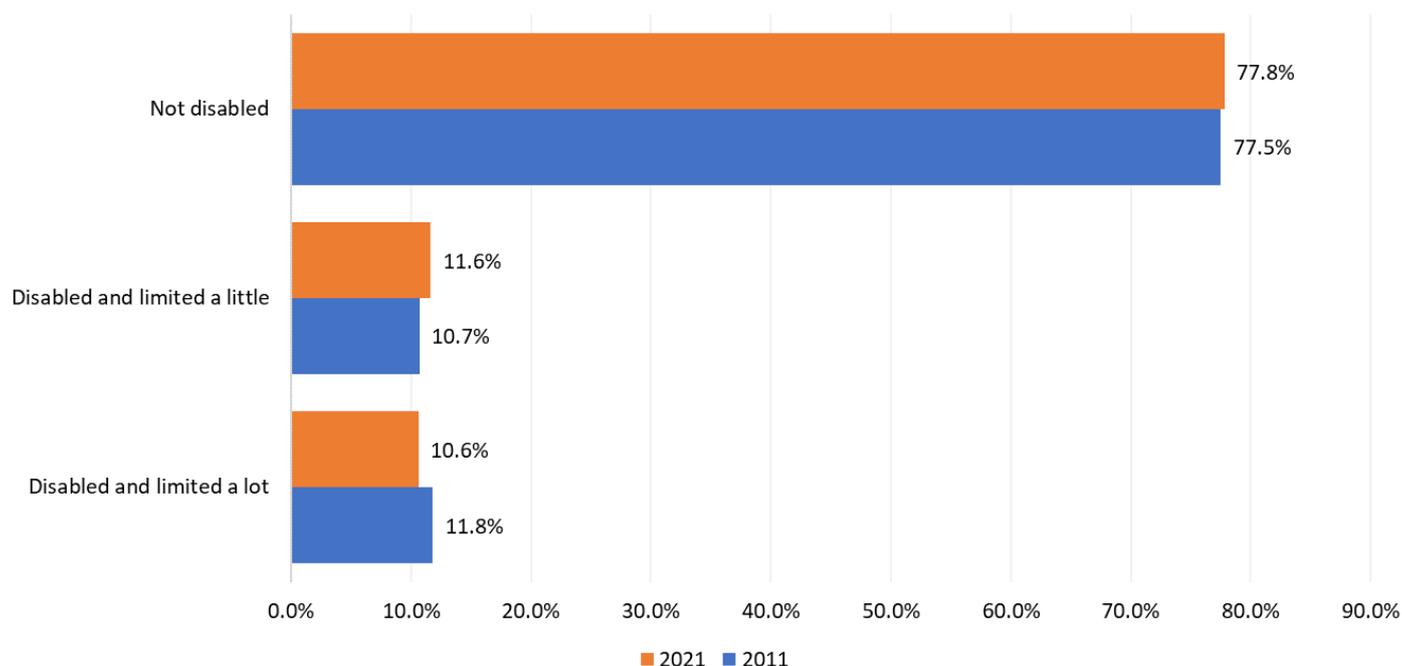
Census 2021 was also undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which may also have influenced how people perceive their health status and activity limitations and therefore may affect how people chose to respond.

Percentages within this section have been age-standardised. Disability and age are closely related, with older people being more likely to be disabled. Age-standardised proportions (ASPs) account for different age structures and population sizes between geographies and are more appropriate than crude percentages when drawing comparisons over time and across areas.

In the 2021 Census, 10.6% of Wirral residents identified themselves as being disabled and responded that their activities were 'limited a lot'. This figure decreased from 11.8% in the 2011 Census as shown in **Figure 3**. The decrease in the proportion of residents who self-identified as being disabled and said their activities were 'limited a lot' was greater across the North West (2.1 percentage points, from 11.2% to 9.1%) than in Wirral (1.2 percentage points). Like Wirral, across England, the proportion also fell by 1.6 percentage points, from 9.1% to 7.5%.

Just over one in nine people (11.6%) self-identified as being disabled and said their activities were 'limited a little', compared with 10.7% in 2011, while the proportion of Wirral residents who reported that they were not disabled increased slightly from 77.5% to 77.8%.

Figure 3: Age-standardised proportion of usual residents by long-term health condition or illness status, Wirral, 2011 and 2021

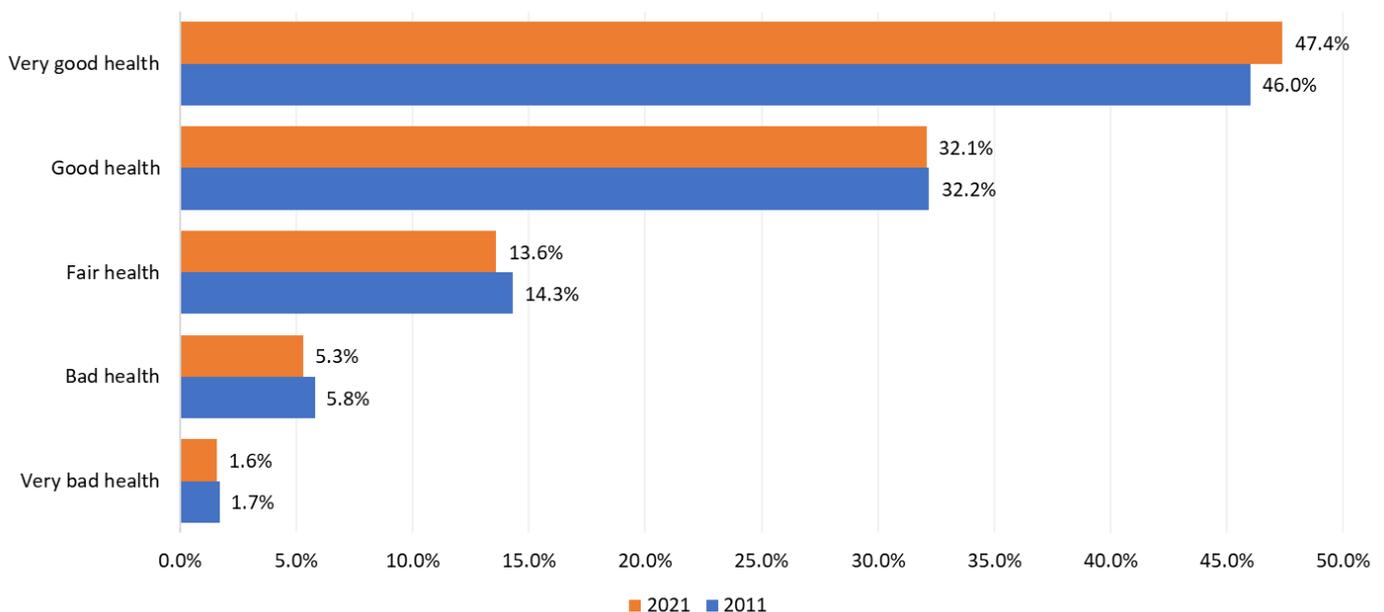


Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Figure 4 shows that, in 2021, 47.4% of Wirral residents described their health as "very good", increasing from 46.0% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from 32.2% to 32.1%. These figures, like in the 'Disability' section, are age-standardised proportions to enable comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure.

The proportion of Wirral residents describing their health as "very bad" was 1.6% (similar to 2011 when it was 1.7%), while those describing their health as "bad" fell from 5.8% to 5.3%. These data reflect people's own opinions in describing their overall health on a five point scale, from very good to very bad.

Figure 4: Age-standardised proportion of usual residents by self-reported health, Wirral, 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Pregnancy and Maternity

Questions on pregnancy and/or maternity were not available in the latest Census. Information is still, however, available via the Office for National Statistics dedicated webpage on pregnancy and maternity: '[Birth characteristics in England and Wales](#)'.

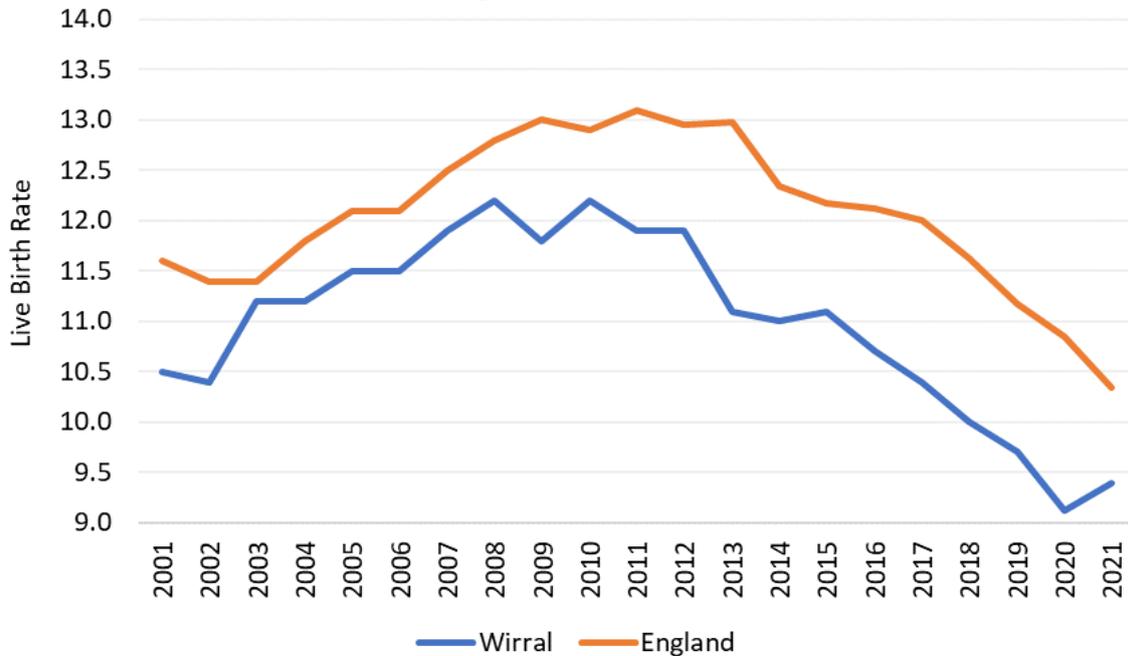
In Wirral, there were 3,024 live births in 2021, an increase of 2.2% from 2,958 births in 2020, but still well below the 2019 number of 3,150. The most recently available data for 2021 remains in line with the long-term trend of decreasing live births observed before the coronavirus (COVID-19 pandemic), from a peak of 3,816 live births in 2012. **Figure 5** shows the comparison between live birth rates (the number of live births per 1,000 residents) for Wirral and England.

The general fertility rate (GFR) in Wirral in 2021 was an estimated 55.0 children per 1,000 women aged 15-44 compared to 54.1 in 2020; this is the first time since 2015 that the GFR has increased.

In 2021 there were 15 stillbirths, an increase of 6 from 2020 when there were 9 stillbirths; this is similar to the 17 stillbirths observed before the coronavirus pandemic in 2019. The stillbirth rate in 2021 was 4.9 stillbirths per 1,000 births compared with 3.0 in 2020 and 5.4 in 2019.

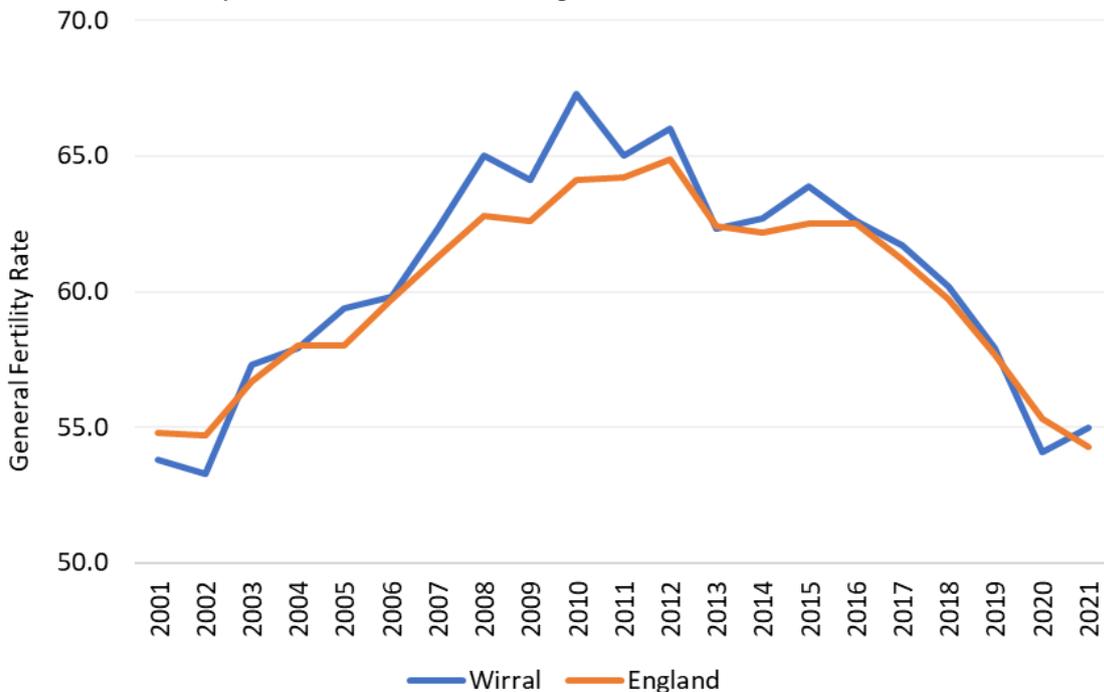
For more information please visit the Office for National Statistics bulletin on '[Provisional births in England and Wales: 2021](#)' or the Births and Maternities page of the Population and Demographics report within the [State of the Borough](#)

Figure 5: Live Birth Rate in Wirral and England, 2001 to 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics, [Birth characteristics, 2021](#)

Figure 6: General Fertility Rate in Wirral and England, 2001 to 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics, [Birth characteristics, 2021](#)

Ethnic group

Since 1991, the Census for England and Wales has included a question about ethnic group. The ethnic group question has two stages. Firstly, a person identifies with one of the following five, high-level ethnic groups:

- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African"
- "Mixed or Multiple"
- "White"
- "Other ethnic group"

Secondly, a person identifies with one of the 19 available response options, which include categories with write-in response options:

- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi"
- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Chinese"
- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Indian"
- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Pakistani"
- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh: Other Asian"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Caribbean"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Other Black"
- "Mixed or Multiple: White and Asian"
- "Mixed or Multiple: White and Black African"
- "Mixed or Multiple: White and Black Caribbean"
- "Mixed or Multiple: Other Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups"
- "White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British"
- "White: Irish"
- "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller"
- "White: Roma"
- "White: Other White"
- "Other ethnic group: Arab"
- "Other ethnic group: Any Other Ethnic Group"

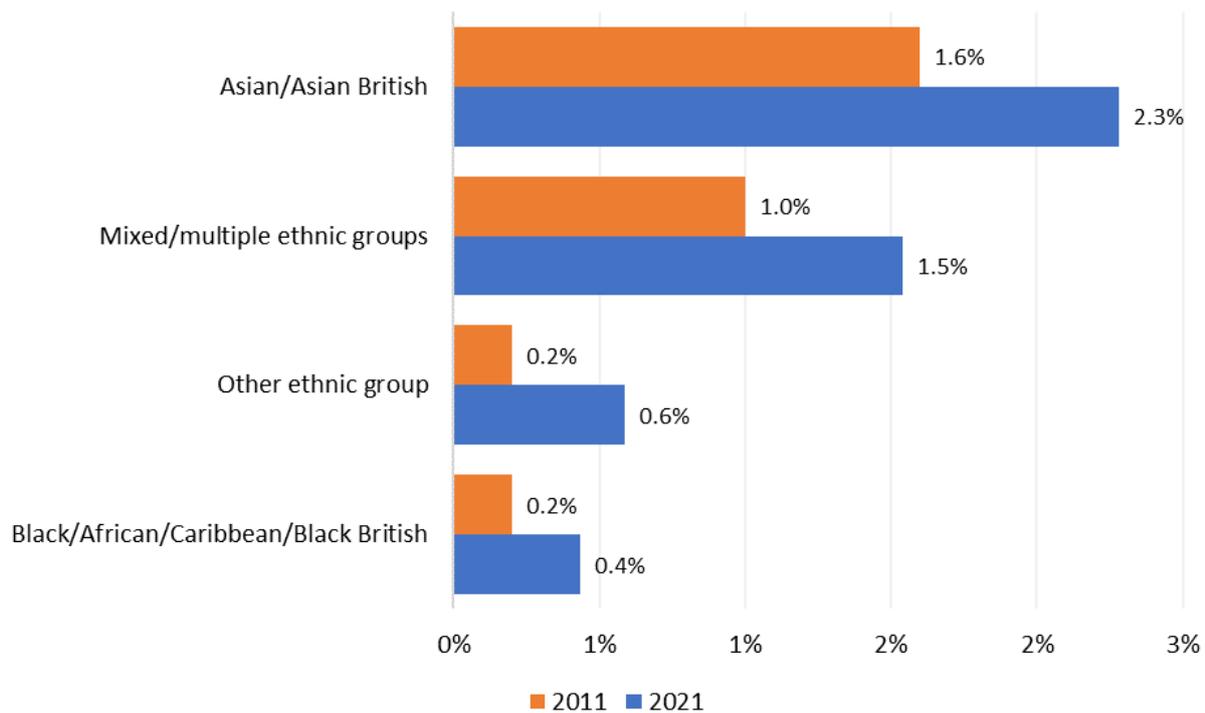
In 2021, 95.2% of people in Wirral identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 97.0% in 2011). Across the North West, the percentage of residents who identified their ethnic group as "White" decreased from 90.2% to 85.6%, while across England the percentage decreased from 85.4% to 81.0%.

The percentage of people in Wirral who identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category was 2.3%, up from 1.6% in 2011. The 0.7 percentage-point change was the largest increase amongst the 5 high-level ethnic groups. Across the North West, the percentage of people from the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" ethnic group increased from 6.2% to 8.4%, while across England the percentage increased from 7.8% to 9.6%.

The percentage of people in Wirral who identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category increased from 1.0% in 2011 to 1.5% in 2021, while 0.6% identified their ethnic group within the "Other" category ("Arab" or "Any other ethnic group") compared with 0.2% the previous decade.

Finally, the percentage of people in Wirral who identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category increased from 0.2% in 2011 to 0.4% in 2021.

Figure 7: The percentage of population in the four high-level ethnic groups, (excluding "White") in Wirral, 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Note: We have excluded the "White" ethnic group from this chart to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the four high-level ethnic groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.

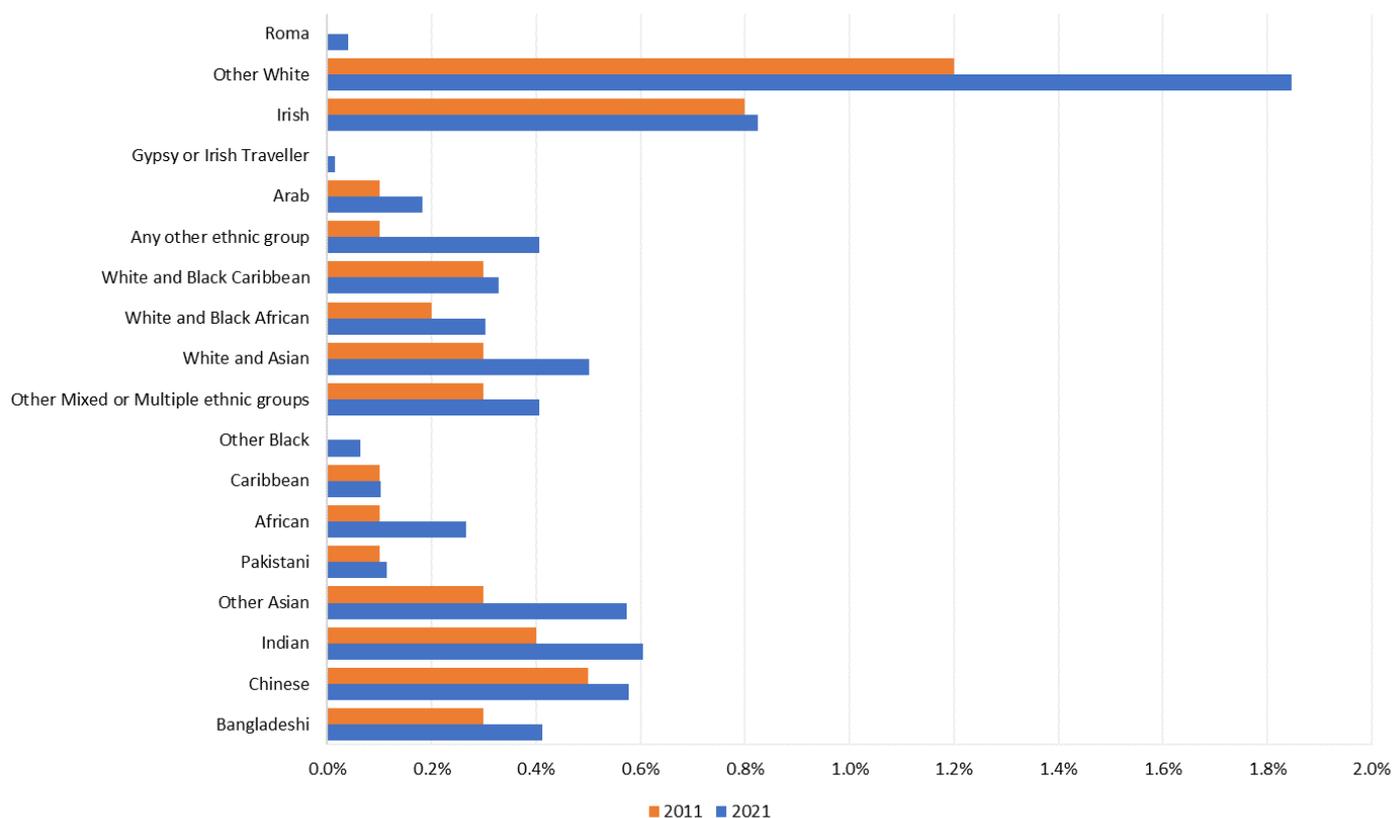
There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition locally, as well as nationally, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between Censuses.

Ethnic groups (detailed)

Within the "White" ethnic group, 97.1% (~296,000) of usual residents in Wirral identified their ethnic group as "English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British". This was a slight decrease from 97.9% in 2011, and a continued decrease from 2001, when 98.2% identified as "White: British".

The percentage of people identifying their ethnic group as "White: Irish" remained the same between 2011 and 2021 at 0.8%. The remaining 17 ethnic groups across the 19 available response options all increased in size, as shown in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8: Ethnic minority groups, Wirral, 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Note:

- 1) We have excluded the "White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British" ethnic group from this chart to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the four high-level ethnic groups that account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.
- 2) There was no "Roma" ethnic group tick-box in 2011

In 2021, there was a new response option for "Roma" within the high-level "White" ethnic group. Overall, 0.04% of usual residents identified this way.

The three largest percentage increases since 2011 were observed in the following ethnicity groups:

- "White: Other White" (1.8% in 2021, up from 1.2% in 2011)
- "Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group" (0.4% in 2021, up from 0.1% in 2011)
- "Asian, Asian British: Other Asian" (0.6% in 2021, up from 0.3% in 2011)

Religion and Belief

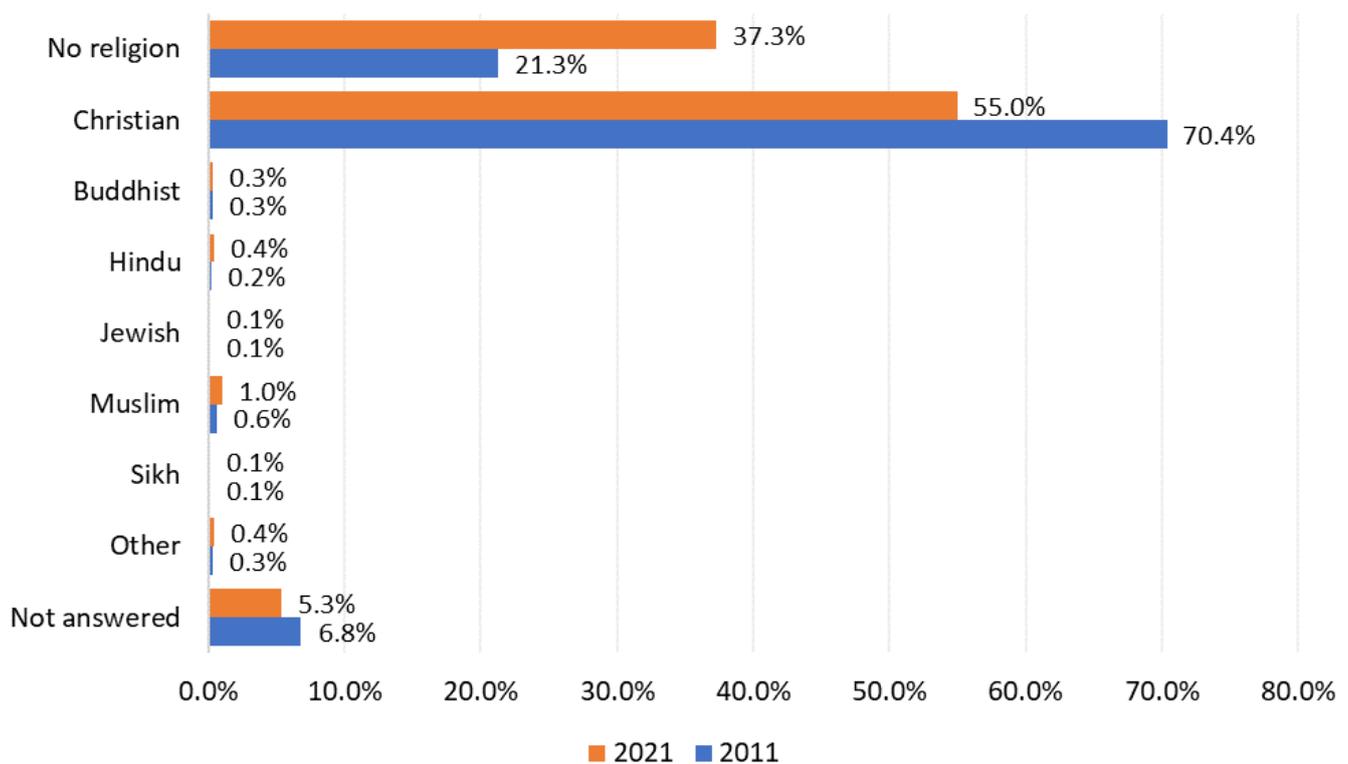
The Census introduced a voluntary question on religion in 2001. In the Census data, religion refers to a person's religious affiliation. This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice. As the question is voluntary, caution should be taken when comparing figures between different areas or between Censuses because of varying response rates.

As in 2011, the most common response to the religion question in Wirral was "Christian" at 55.0%. This was, however, a 15.4 percentage point decrease from 70.4% in 2011. This continues the decrease since 2001, when 80.6% described themselves as "Christian".

This coincided with an increase in the number of people reported having “No religion” at 37.3% for Wirral residents, up from 21.3% in 2011. The rise of 16.0 percentage points was the largest increase of all broad religious groups in Wirral. Across the North West, the percentage of residents who described themselves as having "No religion" increased from 19.8% to 32.6%, while across England the percentage increased from 24.8% to 36.7%.

There are many factors that can cause changes to the religious profile of an area, such as a changing age structure or residents relocating for work or education. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between Censuses. Religious affiliation is the religion with which someone connects or identifies, rather than their beliefs or religious practice.

Figure 9: Percentage of usual residents by religion, Wirral, 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same. For example, someone in an opposite-sex relationship may also experience same-sex attraction and vice versa. This means the statistics below should be interpreted purely as showing how people responded to the question in the 2021 Census, rather than being about whom they are attracted to or their actual relationships.

The question on sexual orientation was new for Census 2021. The Office for National Statistics have previously collected data on sexual orientation through the Annual Population Survey (APS); including the question on the Census questionnaire, however, enables a much more detailed understanding of sexual orientation across England and Wales.

The data will meet the need for better quality information on the LGB+ population (“gay or lesbian”, “bisexual” or “other sexual orientation”) for monitoring and supporting anti-discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010.

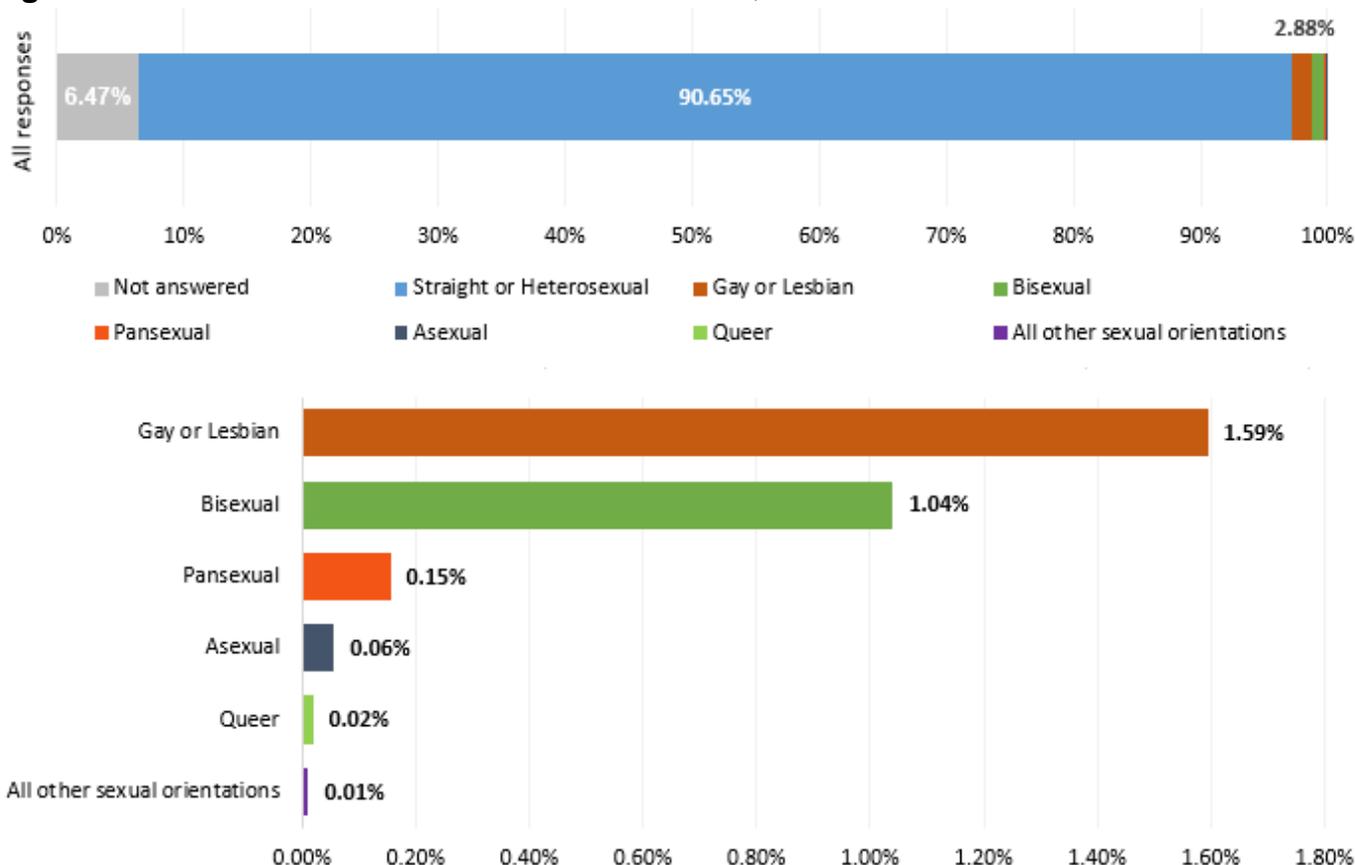
The question was voluntary and was only asked of people aged 16 years and over. People were asked “Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?”. The different sexual orientations that people could choose from included:

- straight or heterosexual
- gay or lesbian
- bisexual
- other sexual orientation

If they selected “Other sexual orientation”, they were asked to write in the sexual orientation with which they identified.

Figure 10 shows the results of this Census question for Wirral below. Approximately 90.7% of residents aged 16 and over identified as straight or heterosexual, whilst almost 6.5% of residents did not answer the question. The remaining 2.8% of residents identified with an LGB+ in some way. This includes those who identify as gay or lesbian (1.6%), bisexual (1.0%) and pansexual (0.2%). The remaining sexualities, including asexual and queer, made up 0.1% of residents aged 16+.

Figure 10: Breakdown of Sexual Orientation in Wirral, 2021



Source: [Office for National Statistics, Census 2021: Sexual orientation](#)

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Of Wirral residents aged 16+, just over 4 in 10 (42.6%) said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 44.8% in 2011. These figures include same-sex marriages and opposite-sex civil partnerships in 2021, neither of which were legally recognised in England and Wales in 2011. Same-sex marriages have been legally recognised in England and Wales since 2014 and opposite-sex civil partnerships have been recognised since 2019. The questions on marriage and civil partnerships were updated for the 2021 Census to reflect this.

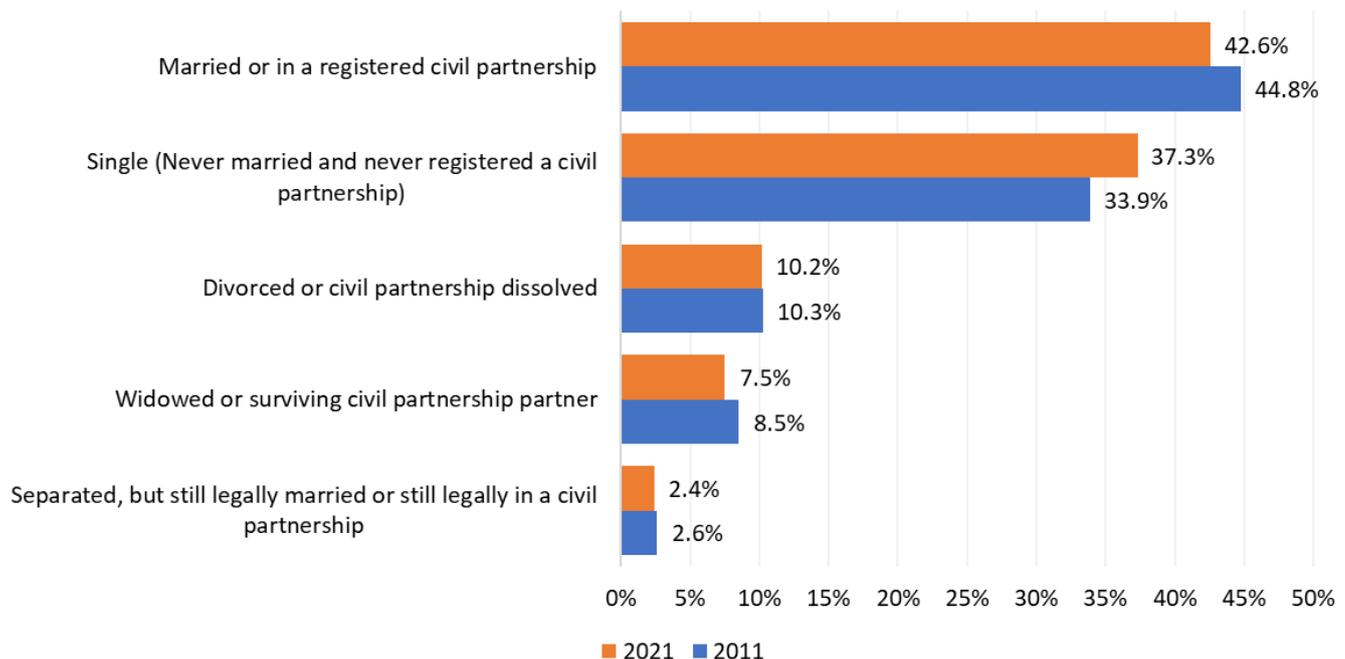
Of those who were married or in a civil partnership, 0.3% were in same-sex couples, compared with 99.7% in opposite-sex couples. A total of 0.1% reported that they were in civil partnerships, of whom 71.0% were in same sex couples, compared with 29.0% in opposite-sex couples.

On the other hand, just over a third (37.3%) said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 33.9% in 2011. The increase in the percentage of people aged 16 years and over who had never been married or in a civil partnership in Wirral (3.5 percentage points) was similar to the increase across the North West (3.8 percentage points, from 35.6% to 39.4%). Across England, the percentage increased by 3.3 percentage points, from 34.6% to 37.9%.

The percentage of adults in Wirral that had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership decreased from 10.3% to 10.2% between 2021 and 2011.

Finally, there were declines in the proportion of people who were widowed or the surviving partner of a civil partnership, from 8.5% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2021, and in those who were separated but still legally married or in a civil partnership, from 6,681 (2.1%) in 2011 to 6,358 (2.0%) in 2021.

Figure 11: Legal partnership status by usual residents aged 16 years and over, 2011 and 2021, Wirral



Source: Census 2021 via [Office for National Statistics](#) and Census 2011 via [NOMIS](#)

Note: 'Does not apply' is the sum of the total number of residents aged under 16 years of age, i.e. not legally allowed to marry

Gender Reassignment

Gender identity refers to a person's sense of their own gender, whether male, female or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth.

The question on gender identity was new for Census 2021. It was added to provide the first official data on the size of the transgender population in England and Wales. The data will help to:

- provide better quality information for monitoring purposes
- support anti-discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010
- aid allocation for resources and policy development

The question was voluntary and was only asked of people aged 16 years and over. People were asked "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?", and had the option of selecting either "Yes", or selecting "No" and writing in their gender identity.

Table 1 shows the results of this Census question for Wirral below. It shows that 94.9% of residents aged 16+ had the same gender identity as sex registered at birth, whilst 4.8% did not answer the question. The remaining 0.3% reported that their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth, whether that be a trans woman (0.1%), a trans man (0.1%) or with no specific gender identity given (0.1%).

Table 1: Gender Identity in Wirral, 2021

Gender Identity	Number	Percentage
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	248,682	94.9%
Not answered	12,474	4.8%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	353	0.1%
Trans woman	209	0.1%
Trans man	183	0.1%
Non-binary	124	0.0%
All other gender identities	86	0.0%

Source: [Office for National Statistics, Census 2021: Gender identity](#)

Contact Details

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