



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2025

Population

For further information, or if you have questions regarding this document,
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Introduction

This document is a companion to the online dashboard of the Population chapter of the 2025 JSNA. It is designed to complement and provide a narrative version of some of the key data in the dashboard.

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List of abbreviations

MSOA – Middle-Layer Super Output Area

GFR – General Fertility Rate

TFR – Total Fertility Rate

HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency

ONS – Office for National Statistics

MOD – Ministry of Defence

ALS – Annual Location Statistics

AA – Attendance Allowance

DLA – Disability Living Allowance

ESA – Employment and Support Allowance

PIP – Personal Independence Payment

FTE – Full-Time Equivalent

Population Change

Introduction

Natural change refers to the difference between births and deaths within a population.

Net migration is the difference between the number of people coming in or moving out of a location. This takes into account both internal and international migration.

England and South East

There has been a rise in the population in both the South East and England between 2014 and 2024.

County

There has been a gradual rise in Oxfordshire's population between 2014 and 2024, including an increase from 890,086 in mid-2023 to 902,144 in mid-2024.

Net migration increased from 4022 in mid-2014 to 10,694 in mid-2024, however this was a drop from the mid-2023 figure of 12,638.

Natural change has varied over the decade within Oxfordshire, with a general downwards trend. For example, in mid-2014, natural change was 2557, while in mid-2024, it was 947.

Districts

There has been a gradual rise in the population of Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse between 2014 and 2024. Oxford showed a similar trend until 2018, where the population started to fall. It was overtaken by Cherwell as the most populated district in 2020, however, since 2021, the population in Oxford has started to increase again.

Net migration has fluctuated between 2014 and 2024, especially in Oxford. In 2024, Vale of White Horse had the highest net migration (3477), while Oxford had the lowest (102).

Births

Introduction

The crude birth rate is the number of babies born in a year for every 1,000 people in the population.

The general fertility rate (GFR) is the number of live births per 1,000 women of childbearing age.

The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if she were to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates through her lifetime.

A live birth occurs when a foetus exits a mother showing any definite sign of life.

County

Births in Oxfordshire have fallen over the decade from 7830 in mid-2014 to 7186 in mid-2024.

Districts

The crude birth rate has fallen in all districts since 2013, with the biggest decline being in Oxford, where it decreased from 12.40 per 1,000 in 2013, to 8.70 per 1,000 in 2023. This was the lowest 2023 crude birth rate across all the Oxfordshire districts, with the highest being in Cherwell (10.40 per 1,000). In Vale of White Horse this was 9.80 per 1,000, and in both South Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire it was 9.30 per 1,000.

There has been a general decline in both the GFR and TFR across all the districts.

Oxford has seen the largest change in the number of live births, falling from 1919 in 2013, to 1444 in 2025.

Life Expectancy

Introduction

This section shares data from the Department of Health and Social Care's Fingertips service. The indicators used refer to life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. Further indicators related to life expectancy can be viewed on the [Fingertips public health profiles](#).

England

In England in 2021-23, life expectancy at birth was 79.11 years for males, while healthy life expectancy at birth was 61.52 years. For females, this was 83.05 years and 61.88 years respectively.

County

In Oxfordshire in 2021-23, life expectancy at birth was 81.31 years for males, while healthy life expectancy at birth was 67.10 years. For females, this was 84.89 years and 68.25 years respectively. All these values were significantly better than the values for England.

Districts

Life expectancy at birth for males differed across the districts, with the values for 2021-23 being the following:

- South Oxfordshire – 81.96 years
- West Oxfordshire – 81.66 years
- Vale of White Horse – 81.39 years
- Cherwell – 80.68 years
- Oxford – 80.36 years

For females, in the same period, these were:

- South Oxfordshire – 85.75 years
- Vale of White Horse – 85.50 years
- West Oxfordshire – 85.21 years
- Oxford – 83.92 years
- Cherwell – 83.83 years

Despite the variation between the districts, these values were all still significantly better than the values for England.

Students

Introduction

This section contains information about the student population of Oxfordshire's two universities: the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University. This data comes from the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#). The majority of University of Oxford students live within Oxford City, although some part-time students might not be Oxford residents. Oxford Brookes has a campus in Headington, two campuses close to Oxford (in Wheatley and Harcourt Hill, Botley), and a campus in Swindon.

County

In 2023, the University of Oxford had 54,680 students in total. This consisted of 31,080 undergraduate students, and 23,600 postgraduate students. 41,910 studied full-time, and 12,765 studied part-time.

Meanwhile, Oxford Brookes University had 37,770 students overall in 2023. 27,005 were undergraduate students, and 10,765 were postgraduate students. 30,735 studied full-time, and 7035 studied part-time.

The total number of students attending these universities in 2023 was 92,450.

Ethnicity

Introduction

The data in this section is taken from the 2021 Census. Please visit the [Office for National Statistics' Census](#) pages to learn more.

England

According to the 2021 census, the England and Wales population had the following ethnic composition:

- White – 81.7%
- Asian – 9.3%
- Black – 4.0%
- Mixed – 2.9%
- Other – 2.1%

County

In 2021, the breakdown of Oxfordshire inhabitants by ethnicity was as follows:

- White – 86.88% (630,090)
- Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh – 6.39% (46,379)
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups – 3.12% (22,634)
- Other ethnic group – 1.56% (11,327)
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh of African background – 1.3% (9445)
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh or Caribbean background – 0.75% (5405)

Districts

In 2021, Oxford had the highest percentage of inhabitants who were not in the 'White' ethnic group out of all the districts, including an 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' population of 15.42%, and a 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups' population of 5.55%. These were the second and third largest groups in the district respectively.

Meanwhile, West Oxfordshire had the highest proportion of inhabitants who were in the 'White' ethnic group, at 95.22%.

MSOAs

In 2021, the MSOAs with the highest percentage of 'White' inhabitants were Chadlington & Wychwoods (97.51%) and Leafield, Minster Lovell & Duckington (96.97%).

The MSOAs with the highest percentage of 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' were Cowley North (24.54%) and Churchill (21.70%).

The MSOAs with the highest percentage of 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh of African background' inhabitants were Greater Leys (7.22%) and Blackbird Leys (5.94%)

Immigration Groups

Introduction

The [data](#) in this section comes from the Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on specific groups identified as of interest by local authorities. It does not provide data on any other migration cohorts that may require support from local authorities or for which local authorities are required to provide support.

This information has been extracted from local management databases. As such, it should be treated as provisional and subject to change.

Districts

There was an increase in the population of those in the Afghan Resettlement Programme, Homes for Ukraine (not including super sponsors) and Supported Asylum groups across all Oxfordshire districts from 2023 to 2024.

In 2023-24, the group with the highest population across all districts was Homes for Ukraine (not including super sponsors).

Vale of White Horse had the highest overall population from these immigration groups, with the breakdown being the following:

- Homes for Ukraine (not including super sponsors) – 550 people
- Afghan Resettlement Programme – 356 people
- Supported Asylum – 87 people

The district with the lowest overall population from these immigration groups was West Oxfordshire, with the following breakdown:

- Homes for Ukraine (not including super sponsors) – 469 people
- Supported Asylum – 199 people
- Afghan Resettlement Programme – 89 people

Travellers

Introduction

This data comes from the 2021 Census and uses the definitions for ethnicity contained therein.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities face significant discrimination and stigma. [They are among the most disadvantaged minority groups in the UK. A 2004 nationwide study](#) found that these communities were significantly more likely to have an enduring condition, suffer poorer health, and experience an earlier death than the general population.

The Office for National Statistics [has explored the outcomes for Gypsy or Irish Travellers](#) compared with the usual resident population of England and Wales.

County

In Oxfordshire, there was a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population of 1867 in 2021. The largest age band within this population was 24 years and under (619), while the smallest was 65 years and over (89).

Districts

In 2021, Oxford had the largest population of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals (556), followed by Cherwell (518), West Oxfordshire (301), Vale of White Horse (249), and South Oxfordshire (243).

MSOAs

In 2021, the MSOAs with the largest Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population were Littlemore & Rose Hill (82) and Banbury Grimsbury (66).

Kingston & Bagpuize, Shiplake & Binfield Heath, and Wheatley and Great Haseley all had the smallest Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations of 2 in each MSOA.

Homelessness

Introduction

The data in this section comes from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's [statutory homelessness statistics](#). These provide quarterly information about those who local authorities have a duty to accommodate as they are homeless through no fault of their own, eligible for assistance, and have a 'priority need'. This primarily includes those with children or a vulnerability, including mental ill-health or a disability. It also includes information about new statutory duties created by the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#) to try and prevent and relieve homelessness for single people, regardless of priority need, or intentional homelessness.

England

In England, there has been a rise in the number of households assessed as homeless per 100,000, from 6.36 in 2021 to 7.38 in 2024.

There has also been a rise in the number of households assessed as threatened with homelessness, with the figure rising from 5.06 per 100,000 in 2021 to 6.05 per 100,000 in 2024.

Districts

The number of households assessed as homeless per 100,000 has remained stable between 2021 and 2024 in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. West Oxfordshire had the highest rate out of these districts in 2024 (3.23 per 100,000), while South Oxfordshire had the lowest (1.15 per 100,000).

In Oxford, there was a decline in homelessness between 2021 and 2022, followed by a sharper rise again between 2023 and 2024, leaving Oxford with a 2024 rate of households assessed as homeless per 100,000 of 9.00, much higher than any other Oxfordshire district.

All Oxfordshire districts had an upwards trend of households assessed as threatened with homelessness per 100,000 between 2021 and 2024.

Armed Forces

Introduction

The data in this section comes from the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Annual Location Statistics (ALS) data tables. This statistical release presents figures on the national and international locations of all UK Regular Forces personnel and MOD civilian personnel. The definitions below are provided by the MOD:

- UK Regular Forces – Figures are for UK Regular Forces (including both Trained and Untrained personnel), and therefore excluding Gurkhas, Full Time Reserve Service personnel, and mobilised reservists. Royal Navy/Royal Marines personnel on sea service are included against the local authority containing the home port of their ship. RAF Other Ranks serving in the South Atlantic are shown against the location containing their home base.
- MOD Civilian Personnel – Civilian figures are reported as Full Time Equivalent (FTE). FTE is a measure of the size of the workforce taking into account that some people work part-time. Part-time staff are counted according to the number of hours they work per week as a proportion of normal hours for their grade and location.

Districts

In 2024, the local authority with the largest population of Armed Forces personnel was West Oxfordshire (4010 total, 3780 Regular Force, 230 Civilian), followed by Vale of White Horse (2180 total, 1800 Regular Force, 380 Civilian), South Oxfordshire (1430 total, 1340 Regular Force, 90 Civilian), Cherwell (950 total, 750 Regular Force, 200 Civilian), and Oxford (70 total, 70 Regular Force, 0 Civilian).

Benefits Claimants

Introduction

This section explores data regarding benefits claimants in Oxfordshire.

- Attendance Allowance – A benefit for individuals over State Pension age who require assistance with personal care or supervision due to physical or mental disabilities.
- Disability Living Allowance – A monthly, tax-free benefit for disabled people, which is paid at different rates depending on the level of support needed.
- Employment and Support Allowance – A benefit for people with disabilities or health conditions that affect their work.
- Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Fund – This has now been replaced by the Employment and Support Allowance.
- Personal Independence Payment – A benefit that support working-age people with the costs of living with a health condition or a disability.

England and South East

From 2018 to 2025, the rate of people receiving Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, and Personal Independence Payment trended up slightly in England and the South East.

Meanwhile, the rate of people receiving Employment and Support Allowance and the Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Fund trended down.

County

From 2018 to 2025, the rates of people receiving Attendance Allowance were between 15.93 per 1,000 and 18.77 per 1,000 within Oxfordshire. The rates of people receiving Disability Living Allowance were between 15.90 per 1,000 and 19.34 per 1,000.

The rate of people receiving Employment and Support Allowance and the Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Fund trended down.

Meanwhile, the rate of people receiving Personal Independence Payment trended up.

The average number of claimants for each type of benefit in 2025 in Oxfordshire were as follows:

- Attendance Allowance – 14,323 people
- Disability Living Allowance – 13,442 people
- Employment and Support Allowance – 7,721 people
- Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Fund – 146 people
- Personal Independence Payment – 24,873 people

These figures were all lower than the values for England that year.

Districts

In 2025, the district with the highest rate of people receiving Attendance Allowance was West Oxfordshire (21.94 per 1,000), while the lowest was Oxford, with a rate of 12.85 per 1,000.

Meanwhile, Cherwell had the highest rate of people receiving Personal Independence Payment (38.33 per 1,000), while South Oxfordshire had the lowest (26.68 per 1,000).

Disability

Introduction

The data in this section comes from the 2021 Census. To find out more information from this data set, see the Office for National Statistics' ['Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021' article](#).

This section uses the [Equality Act's definition of disability](#). This includes individuals who have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

England and South East

In England, in 2021, around 9.8 million people were disabled (17.7% of the population). The English region with the highest proportion of disabled people was the North East (567,304 people, 21.2%), while the South East had a relatively lower proportion (1,496,340 people, 16.1%)

County

In Oxfordshire in 2021, there were 98,636 people who were disabled according to the Equality Act. This was 14.21% of the county's total population. 6.29% were male, and 7.92% were female.

Districts

In 2021, the disabled population in each district was as follows:

- West Oxfordshire – 14.68%
- Vale of White Horse – 14.42%
- Oxford – 14.34%
- Cherwell – 14.10%
- South Oxfordshire – 13.66%

MSOAs

The MSOA with the highest percentage of their population having a disability in 2021 was Banbury Ruscote (18.29%), while the lowest was Bicester North (10.94%).

Unpaid Care

Introduction

Unpaid carers provide care for family members, friends and neighbours in need of support due to disability, long-term illness, or older age.

The data in this section comes from the 2021 Census. In England and Wales, it suggests that five million people are unpaid carers, providing care valued at £162 billion. See the Office for National Statistics [Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#) article for further information.

County

In 2021, there were a total of 39,042 unpaid carers in Oxfordshire.

Districts

In 2021, the total number of unpaid carers in each district were as follows:

- Cherwell – 8379 people
- South Oxfordshire – 8330 people
- Vale of White Horse – 7944 people
- Oxford – 7756 people
- West Oxfordshire – 6633 people

MSOAs

In 2021, South Wantage, Harwell and Blewbury was the MSOA with the highest number of unpaid carers (808 people). This was followed by Shrivenham, Watchfield and Uffington, with 734 unpaid carers.

The MSOA with the lowest number of unpaid carers was Henley North (297 people), followed by Grandpont and New Hinksey, which had 298 unpaid carers.

Living Arrangements

Introduction

The population in this section includes all usual residents aged sixteen years and over in households.

This data comes from the 2021 Census. To find out more information about this data set, see the Office for National Statistics' [People's living arrangements in England and Wales: Census 2021](#) article.

County

In 2021, the most prevalent living arrangement in Oxfordshire was opposite-sex couples who were married or in a civil partnership, accounting for 46.88% of residents aged sixteen years or over (265,273 people). This was followed by those who were single (never married and never registered a civil partnership), accounting for 24.47% of residents aged sixteen or over (138,454 people), and cohabiting opposite-sex couples at 13.62% (77,051 people).

Districts

In 2021, Oxford had the highest proportion of those who were single (never married and never registered a civil partnership), with the grouping accounting for 38.12% of its population (44,317 people). The other districts had a similar distribution of living arrangement groupings to the general Oxfordshire statistics.

MSOAs

In 2021, the MSOA with the highest percentage of those who were divorced or in a civil partnership that is now legally dissolved was Banbury Grimsbury (2.36%), while the MSOA with the lowest percentage was Shiplake and Binfield Heath, with 0.59%.

The MSOA with the highest percentage of those married or in a registered civil partnership was Cowley South & Iffley, with a percentage of 5.19%, while the lowest was Sonning Common & Kidmore End, with a percentage of 0.23%.

Gender Identity

Introduction

The data in this section comes from the 2021 Census. These are no longer accredited official statistics and are now classified as [official statistics in development](#). The Office for National Statistics' ['Gender identity in England and Wales: Census 2021'](#) article provides further clarity about the usefulness of these statistics.

For more information about ongoing work on these statistics, please refer to the Office for Statistics Regulation's ['Our work on data about sex and gender identity'](#) article.

England

Those aged 16 or over in England and Wales, when asked about gender identity in the 2021 Census, gave the following responses:

- Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth – 93.50%
- Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given – 0.24%
- All other gender identities – 0.10%
- Trans man – 0.10%
- Trans woman – 0.10%
- Not answered – 6.00%

County

In 2021, the breakdown of Oxfordshire residents' gender identities was as follows:

- Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth – 555,387 people
- Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given – 1420 people
- All other gender identities – 908 people
- Trans man – 598 people
- Trans woman – 548 people
- Not answered – 36,171 people

Districts

In 2021, the breakdown of Oxford residents' gender identities was as follows:

- Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth – 121,466 people
- Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given – 758 people
- All other gender identities – 487 people
- Trans man – 255 people
- Trans woman – 212 people

- Not answered – 13,540 people

Meanwhile, for Cherwell, these figures were:

- Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth – 122,879 people
- Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given – 279 people
- All other gender identities – 132 people
- Trans man – 125 people
- Trans woman – 121 people
- Not answered – 7,050 people

Sexual Orientation

Introduction

The data in this section comes from the 2021 Census and reports on the usual resident population aged sixteen years and over in Oxfordshire.

For more information, please refer to the Office for National Statistics' [Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#).

County

In 2021, 88.45% of Oxfordshire inhabitants identified as Straight or Heterosexual, 1.68% identified as Bisexual, 1.48% as Gay or Lesbian, 0.44% as All Other Sexual Orientations, and 7.95% did not answer.

Districts

In 2021, West Oxfordshire had the highest percentage of people identifying as Straight or Heterosexual (91.55%), while Oxford had the lowest (80.36%).

Oxford had the highest percentage of people identifying as Bisexual (3.62%) and Gay or Lesbian (2.37%), while South Oxfordshire had the lowest percentage of people identifying as Bisexual (0.97%) and Gay or Lesbian (1.14%).

MSOAs

In 2021, only 64.60% of people in Oxford Central identified as Straight or Heterosexual, with the next highest group being those who did not answer, at 20.50%.

Religion

Introduction

Please refer to the Office for National Statistics' [Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021](#) article for more information about this topic.

England

In 2021, England and Wales had the following distribution of religion:

- Christian – 46.2%
- No religion – 37.2%
- Muslim – 6.5%
- Not answered – 6.0%
- Hindu – 1.7%
- Sikh – 0.9%
- Other religion – 0.6%
- Buddhist – 0.5%
- Jewish – 0.5%

County

In 2021, Oxfordshire had the following distribution of religion:

- Christian – 47.33% (343,314 people)
- No religion – 40% (290,115 people)
- Not answered – 6.9% (50,016 people)
- Muslim – 3.24% (23,484 people)
- Hindu – 0.87% (6332 people)
- Other religion – 0.58% (4234 people)
- Buddhist – 0.54% (3908 people)
- Jewish – 0.29% (2115)
- Sikh – 0.25% (1779 people)

Districts

In 2021, West Oxfordshire had the highest percentage of Christians within its population (51.47%), while Oxford had the lowest (38.11%).

Meanwhile, Oxford had the highest percentage of inhabitants who were Muslim (8.7%) in proportion to its population, while West Oxfordshire had the lowest percentage (0.66%).

The district with the highest percentage of inhabitants not following any religion was Vale of White Horse, at 41.68%.

MSOAs

Kingham, Enstone and Middle Barton was the MSOA with the highest percentage of Christians in its population (56.44%) in 2021. Oxford Central had the lowest, with only 25.02% of people there identifying as Christians.

In the same year, the MSOA with the highest percentage of those with no religion was Oxford Central (48.51%), and the MSOA with the lowest percentage was Lye Valley & Cowley East, which had 28.41%.

Cowley North was the MSOA with the highest percentage of Muslims within its population (22.29%), while Watlington & Nettlebed had the lowest percentage (0.11%).