

A view of Oxford through the Censuses, from 1801 to 2001

Boundary changes

- The boundary of Oxford has expanded from the historic medieval centre out to what were once the surrounding villages of Headington, Barton, Summertown etc.
- Historic statistics calculated for the modern boundary of Oxford have been calculated by Portsmouth University and are available on the 'Vision of Britain Through Time' website at www.visionofbritain.org.uk

Population growth

- Urban development saw the population grow ten-fold from 13,000 in 1801 to 134,000 in 2001
- The fastest population growth took place between 1911 and 1971 when the population grew by 10,000 every ten years, due to interwar and postwar housing construction (from 62,000 to 125,000)
- In 1851 one-third of the population was aged under 15 years, and only one in 25 (4%) were aged over 65 years
- In 2001 15% were aged under 15 years, and 13% aged over 65 years
- The working age population has risen from 60% to 70%

Households

- The total number of households has risen from 19,000 in 1931 to 52,000 in 2001
- The numbers of households with more than one person per room decreased from 1951 to 1991, but actually rose between 1991 and 2001 suggesting household overcrowding is again becoming an issue in the city

Employment

- In 1931 only half as many women as men were in work or seeking it; in 2001 numbers were nearly equal
- People working in professional occupations rose from 3% in 1941 to nearly 30% in 2001
- Employment in services increased from 50% in 1841 to 78% in 2001. Manufacturing accounted for nearly one in three jobs by 1971, but was at 10% in 2001. It has continued to decline in importance since, to around 7% in 2010

Education

- The percentage of people with a degree shot up from 7% in 1971 to around 40% in 2001
- The percentage of people with no qualifications fell from 80% in 1951 to 20% in 2001

Diversity

- Only two censuses have collected information on religion – the 2001 Census and the 1851 Census of Religion. The 1851 Census assumed everyone was Christian and collected information about denominations.
- 13% of population were non-white in 2001. There was also a very large white non-British population.

See also the monthly chart for March 2011 at www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/March2011.pdf

What are we looking for in the 2011 Census?

- The estimate of population for 2009 (149,000) suggests that population growth has been very strong over last decade
- Levels of migration especially from new EU eastern European states
- Changes in ethnic and religious structure
- Documentation of the baby boom in recent years
- Changes in adult skills
- An estimate of the number of short-term migrants not counted in the 'usual resident' population

Changes in the administration of the Census¹

- The 1753 Census bill was opposed due to concerns that it would be used as a basis for new taxation or conscription – and was considered “subversive of English liberty”
- The 1800 Population Act which authorised the first Census was passed with a background of food scarcity, high food prices and the work of Thomas Malthus (which was published 1798)
- Throughout the census, questions have appeared, been dropped and reappeared according to the perceived social issues
- The 1801 Census was taken on March 10th and counted only houses, persons (male/female) and occupations. It was counted by 'Overseers of the poor' by house to house enumeration or 'other substantial householders'.
- First data on age captured in 1821
- The 1841 Census introduced Enumeration Districts within each Registration District, and employed 35,000 enumerators. Schedules were delivered to each householder. People were counted where they slept on the night of Sunday June 6th. This is the basis for modern Census administration
- The 1841 Census collected name, sex, age and occupation of every person.
- The 1851 Census also collected relationship to head of household and any disability.
- Punch card machines were used for tabulation in 1911
- 1921 allowed confidential returns and introduced a question on place of work
- There was no Census in 1941 but there was national registration in September 1939 which created a wartime population register. Substantial population movements had taken place by the time it was undertaken, however.
- Post-enumeration survey for quality control was taken in 1951
- 1961 used a computer for processing the results, for the first time. It also covered internal migration and education
- A 1966 Census was taken of a 10% sample of households
- 1981 had a first attempt at a coverage survey
- 1991 included an ethnicity question, and 2001 included a religion question
- 2001 used dual system estimation for the first time to estimate the number of people who did not complete a questionnaire

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¹ Taken from www.visionofbritain.org.uk and <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/census-history/modern-census/index.html>