

Main language, English proficiency, and national identity in Oxford (2021)

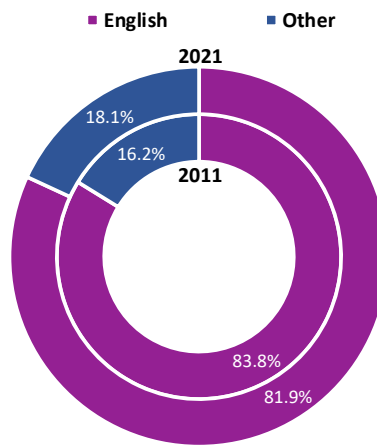
The Office for National Statistics has released the latest 2021 Census figures for national identity and languages for all Local authorities. This summary report focuses on highlighting the main languages spoken in Oxford as well national identity as a proportion of the city's residents. The first part of this summary report will look at the proportion of residents, aged 3 and over, who speak English and those who speak other languages in 2021 compared to 2011. In addition to this, the top 10 languages spoken in the city are listed. The second part of this report looks at English proficiency and national identity perception of residents. For more information on this topic summary, please visit [ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion](#).

Key findings:

- The majority of the resident population aged 3 and over in Oxford selected English as their main language (81.9%), lower than county (91.3%) and national (90.8%) averages.
- Compared to 2011, the number of residents who selected English as their main language has decreased by 1.9%, from 83.8% in 2011 to 81.9% in 2021.
- The second most spoken language among residents in Oxford was Portuguese (2,707 people), followed by Spanish (2,214 people), and Polish (2,185 people).
- Other popular languages include, 'All other Chinese' (1,580), Romanian (1,466), Italian (1,438), Arabic (1,141), German (1,120), French (966), and Urdu (860).
- In terms of English proficiency, the largest group was made up by those whose main language is English (129,117, 81.9%), followed by those who can speak English very well (16,087, 10.2%). The proportion of all groups has remained relatively unchanged since 2011.
- In terms of national identity, there has been a big shift in the number of residents who selected British only, from 22.9% in 2011 to 49.0% in 2021 (+26.1%). Conversely, the proportion of those who selected English only has seen a 34.0% decrease since 2011, from 42.5% in 2011 to only 8.5% in 2021.
- Portuguese has seen the largest increase (+1.3%), followed by Romanian (+0.8%).
- For European national identities overall there has been an increase (3.4%), as well as for EU national identities overall (+2.5%).
- In terms of household language, the largest group was made up by households with all residents aged 16 years of over who have English as their first language (42,337, 76.6%), which was a decrease of 4% compared to 2011.
- The second largest group was households with at least one person who has English as their first language (5,881) which saw a 2% increase since the previous census.
- In terms of multi-language households, the largest group is made up by those households where all members have the same language (56.4%). However, this is lower than both county and national figures at 66.5% and 63.7 respectively.

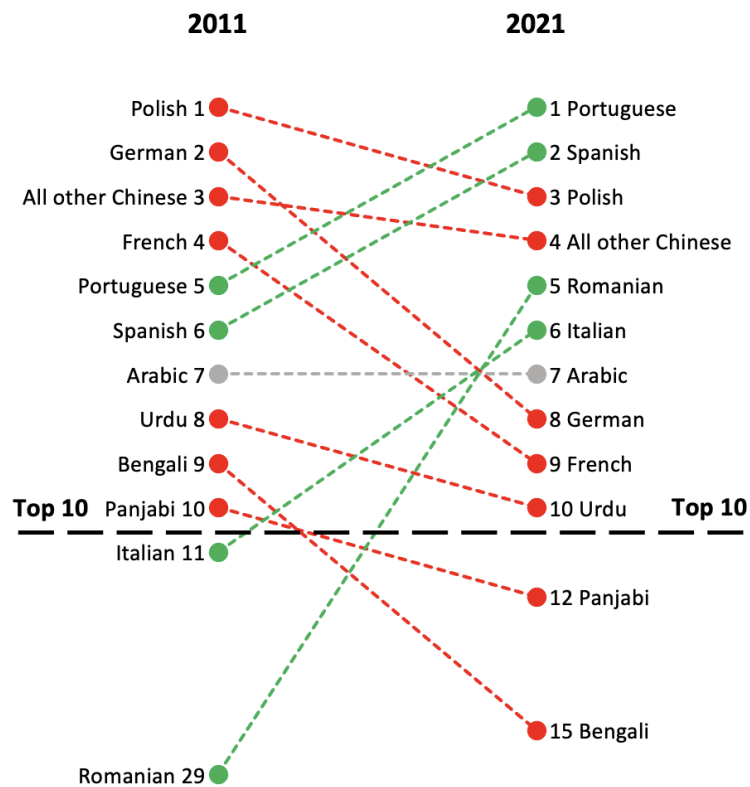
Figure 1. English as main language compared to all other languages in Oxford (2011 and 2021).

English vs other languages in Oxford (2011 and 2021)



Source: Census 2021 and 2011 - ONS, 2022

Figure 2. Main languages spoken in Oxford in 2021 (other than English) *.



Source: Census 2021 - ONS, 2022

* 'All Other Chinese' is an aggregate of Chinese languages and excludes those who wrote in Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese Chinese

Table 1. Proficiency in English in Oxford (2011 and 2021).

Proficiency in English	2011	2021	change
All categories	146,149	157,724	11,575
Main language is English	122,435	129,117	6,682
Main language is not English: Can speak English very well	12,652	16,087	3,435
Main language is not English: Can speak English well	8,414	8,914	500
Main language is not English: Cannot speak English well	2,317	3,129	812
Main language is not English: Cannot speak English	331	477	146

Source: Census 2021 - ONS, 2022

Table 2. Household language in Oxford (2011 and 2021).

Main Household Language	Oxford 2011	Oxford 2021	change
All categories: English as a household language	55,375	55,238	-137
All people aged 16 and over in household have English as a main language	44,600	42,337	-2,263
At least one but not all people aged 16 and over in household have English as a main language	4,881	5,881	1,000
No people aged 16 and over in household but at least one person aged 3 to 15 has English as a main language	865	1,288	423
No people in household have English as a main language	5,029	5,732	703

Source: Census 2021 - ONS, 2022

Table 3. Multi-language households in Oxford, Oxfordshire and England.

Multi language households	Oxford	Oxfordshire	England
One-person household	29.1%	27.1%	30.1%
All household members have the same main language	56.4%	66.5%	63.7%
Main language differs between generations, but not within partnerships	3.0%	1.4%	2.0%
Main language differs within partnerships	4.8%	2.7%	2.2%
Any other combination of multiple main languages	6.6%	2.2%	2.0%

Source: Census 2021 - ONS, 2022

Sources:

[Ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion: Census 2021, ONS, 2022](#)

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