

**census**  
2021

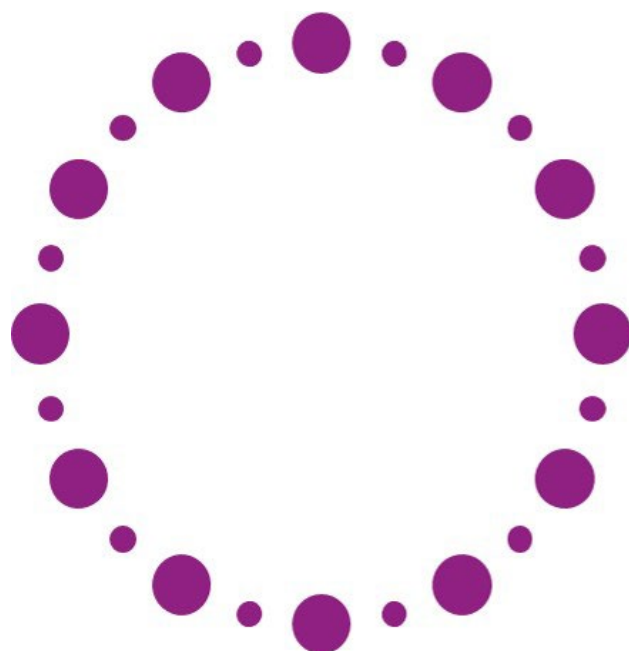


# Main statistics for Northern Ireland

## Statistical bulletin

### Housing (people in households)

15 December 2022



## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Key points .....	4
2.1. Car or van availability .....	4
2.2. Household tenure .....	4
3. Car or van availability .....	6
3.1. Questions asked .....	6
3.2. Number of cars or vans available – Census 2021 .....	7
3.3. Car or van availability – Census 2021 .....	8
3.4. Car or van availability – Change over time .....	8
3.5. Car or van availability by Local Government District – Census 2021 .....	10
4. Household tenure (ownership/renting) .....	13
4.1. Questions asked .....	13
4.2. Household tenure – Census 2021 .....	15
4.3. Household tenure by Local Government District – Census 2021 .....	17
4.4. Household tenure – Change over time .....	19
5. Associated outputs .....	21
6. Further information .....	21
6.1. Quality of the results .....	22
6.2. Confidentiality .....	22
6.3. Comparability with previous censuses .....	22
6.4. Supporting material .....	22
6.5. More details .....	23
6.6. Copyright .....	23

## 1. Introduction

On 15 December 2022, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) released further results from Census 2021, held on 21 March 2021. The statistics released provide a profile of the Northern Ireland population covering:

- **Housing:** vacant housing, type of accommodation, household adaptations, type of central heating, renewable energy systems, housing tenure and car ownership; and
- **Health, disability and unpaid care:** general health, limiting long term illness, types of condition and provision of unpaid care.

The information covers Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs).

This **housing (people in households)** report covers the topics car availability, housing tenure (owner occupied, rented) and the nature of rental arrangement (private, social).

For display purposes, figures are appropriately rounded; however, full figures are available in the [Census 2021 tables](#) on the NISRA website.

## 2. Key points

The key points relating to the **housing (people in households)** topic are as follows:

### 2.1. Car or van availability

- For the first time in a Northern Ireland census, over one million cars or vans (1.067 million) were recorded as owned or available for use by people living in households.
- In the last fifty years (1971 to 2021) there has been a four-fold increase in the numbers of cars or vans available for use. Up from 271,500 cars or vans in the 1971 Census to 1.067 million cars or vans in the 2021 Census.
- In 2021 over 80% of households had a car or van available. For the first time if a household had a car or van available, it was more likely to have two or more than to have one (40.7% of households with two or more cars or vans compared to 39.7% of households with one car or van).
- In contrast, in 2021 one in five households (19.5%) did not have access to a car or van. The proportion of households without access to a car or van has fallen at every Census, indeed in the 1971 Census nearly half of households (46.4%) did not have a car or van.
- In 2021, urban areas Belfast (33.9%) and Derry & Strabane (24.6%) Local Government Districts (LGDs) had the highest percentage of households without a car or van available.
- In contrast, in 2021 rural areas had the highest percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available, with over half of households in Mid Ulster LGD (51.5%) having two or more cars or vans available.

### 2.2. Household tenure

- For the first time in a Northern Ireland census, over half a million households (501,500) owned their home – either outright or with a mortgage.

- In total 65.2% of households owned their home and 34.8% of households rented their home.
- The private rented group is the fastest growing sector. Over the last forty years (1981 to 2021) the percentage of households privately renting has nearly doubled (from 9.1% of households in 1981 to 17.2% in 2021). In 2021 307,300 people lived in 132,400 privately rented households.
- There has been a steady decline in the percentage of social rented households in the forty years from 1981 to 2021 (40.2% down to 15.3%).
- There are marked variations in household tenure by Local Government District. The percentage of households that owned their own home ranged from 74.7% in Lisburn & Castlereagh to 51.0% in Belfast.

### 3. Car or van availability

#### 3.1. Questions asked

Census 2021 included a question on cars or vans owned or available to the household. The Census 2021 question, reproduced in Figure 1 (online) and Figure 2 (paper), is broadly similar to a question included in every census from 1971 and thus this section will also include comparisons across the last fifty years.

**Figure 1: Census 2021 online questionnaire – car or van availability**

**In total, how many cars or vans are owned, or available for use, by members of this household?**

Include any company cars or vans available for private use

None

1

2

3

4 or more

**Save and continue**

**Figure 2: Census 2021 paper questionnaire – car or van availability**

**H13** In total, how many cars or vans are owned, or available for use, by members of this household?

➔ Include any company cars or vans available for private use.

None

1

2

3

4 or more, write in number

### 3.2. Number of cars or vans available – Census 2021

On census day 2021, 1,067,400 cars or vans were owned or available for use by people living in households in Northern Ireland. The phrase ‘available to the household’ has been used within this report to describe this.

This is the first census in Northern Ireland when more than one million cars or vans were available to households. As a comparison, the last census recorded 884,600 cars or vans.

The change in the total number of cars or vans available to households from 1971 to 2021 is shown in Table 1. This shows the continual increase in the number of cars or vans available to households, with a four-fold increase over the fifty years from 1971 to 2021.

**Table 1: Total number of cars or vans available to households (1971-2021 Censuses)**

<b>Census year</b>	<b>Total number of cars or vans</b>
1971	271,500
1981	343,500
1991	464,800
2001	691,700
2011	884,600
2021	1,067,400

### 3.3. Car or van availability – Census 2021

Looking in more detail at the 2021 results – Table 2 shows that 150,300 households did not have access to a car or van – this equates to around one household in every five (19.5%).

**Table 2: Number of cars or vans available to the household (Census 2021)**

<b>Number of cars or vans available to household</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>No car or van</b>	<b>150,300</b>	<b>19.5%</b>
<b>1 or more cars or vans</b>	<b>618,500</b>	<b>80.5%</b>
1 car or van	305,400	39.7%
2 cars or vans	222,600	28.9%
3 cars or vans	60,900	7.9%
4 cars or vans	20,000	2.6%
5 <u>or more</u> cars or vans	9,700	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>768,800</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In contrast, 305,400 households had 1 car or van available (39.7% of all households). Combining responses for 2, 3, 4 and 5 or more, shows that 313,100 households had two or more cars or vans available (40.7% of all households), with 9,700 of those households (1.3% of the overall total) having five or more cars or vans available.

### 3.4. Car or van availability – Change over time

There has been a marked change in the distribution of cars or vans available to the household over the last fifty years. The figures are set out in Tables 3a and 3b.

The tables show that in the 1971 Census, just under half of households 46.4% (198,300) had no car or van availability, indeed in 1971 this was the most frequently reported situation for all households. By 2021 the percentage of households without a car or van available had fallen to 19.5% (150,300).



**Table 3a: Number of households by number of cars or vans available (1971-2021 Censuses)**

<b>Census year</b>	<b>0 cars or vans</b>	<b>1 car or van</b>	<b>2 or more cars or vans</b>	<b>Total households</b>
1971	198,300	191,300	37,800	<b>427,400</b>
1981	183,100	211,800	61,400	<b>456,300</b>
1991	188,100	236,700	105,600	<b>530,400</b>
2001	164,900	278,600	183,200	<b>626,700</b>
2011	159,700	291,000	252,600	<b>703,300</b>
2021	150,300	305,400	313,100	<b>768,800</b>

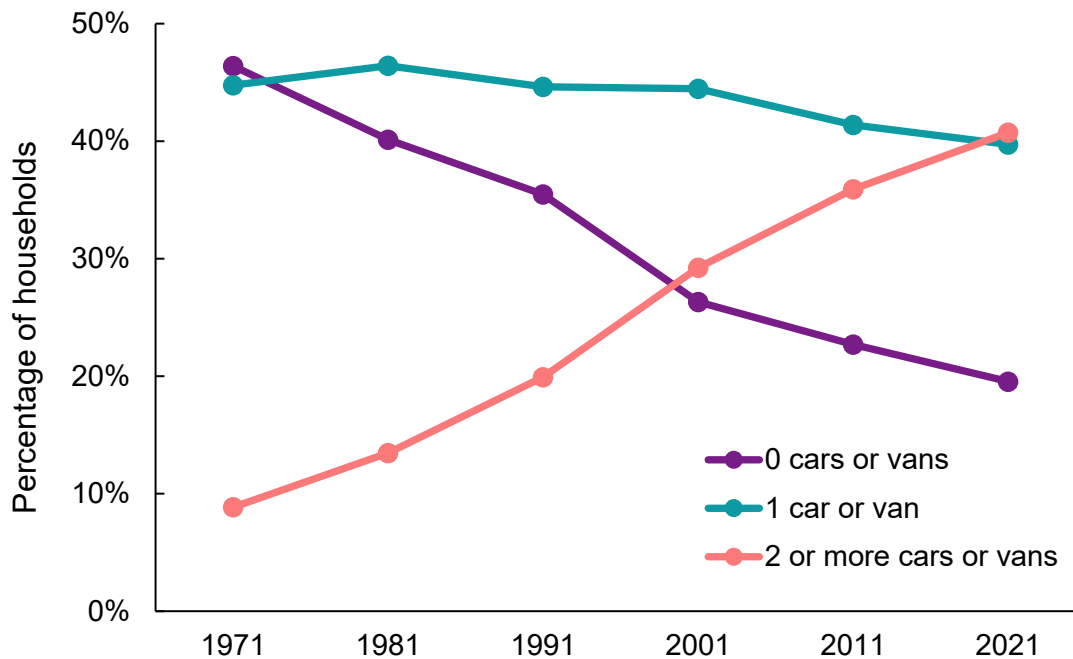
**Table 3b: Percentage of households by number of cars or vans available (1971-2021 Censuses)**

<b>Census year</b>	<b>0 cars or vans</b>	<b>1 car or van</b>	<b>2 or more cars or vans</b>	<b>Total</b>
1971	46.4%	44.8%	8.8%	<b>100.0%</b>
1981	40.1%	46.4%	13.5%	<b>100.0%</b>
1991	35.5%	44.6%	19.9%	<b>100.0%</b>
2001	26.3%	44.5%	29.2%	<b>100.0%</b>
2011	22.7%	41.4%	35.9%	<b>100.0%</b>
2021	19.5%	39.7%	40.7%	<b>100.0%</b>

In contrast, 8.8% of households in 1971 (37,800) had two or more cars or vans available. By 2021 this had risen to 40.7% of households (313,100), an eight fold increase in numbers in fifty years. Indeed by 2021 if a household had a car or van available, it was more likely to have two or more cars or vans available than one car or van.

Table 3b is also reproduced in Figure 3 which shows the rise in the percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available over the last fifty years.

**Figure 3: Percentage of all households by number of cars or vans available (1971-2021 Censuses)**



### 3.5. Car or van availability by Local Government District – Census 2021

Looking in more detail at cars or vans available to households shows that there is a marked variation across Northern Ireland.

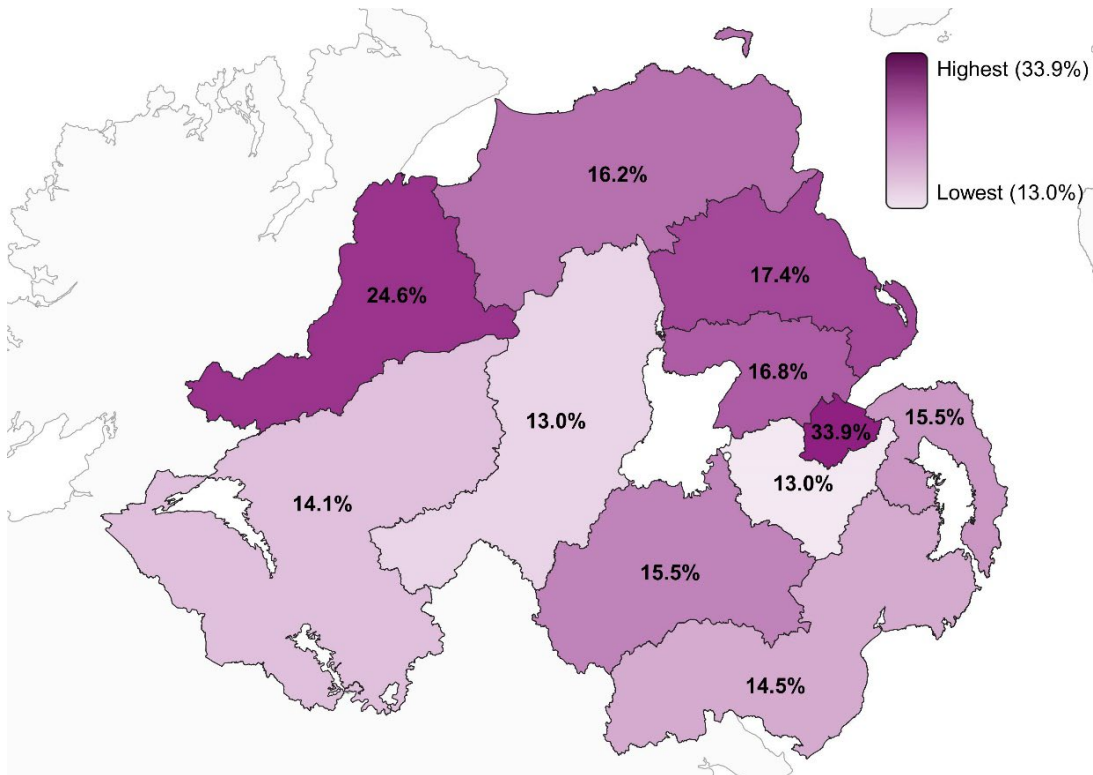
In overall terms, 19.5% of households in Northern Ireland do not have a car or van available. This varies across all Local Government Districts (LGDs) from 13.0% in Lisburn & Castlereagh and Mid Ulster LGDs to 33.9% in Belfast LGD. The overall distribution of this indicator is shown in Table 4 and Figure 4a. It can be seen that the more urban areas (Belfast and Derry & Strabane LGDs) have the highest percentage of households that do not have a car or van available.

In contrast, Table 4 and Figure 4b shows the percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available. In Mid Ulster (51.5%), Fermanagh & Omagh (48.8%) and Newry, Mourne & Down (48.3%) LGDs, around half of all households had two or more cars or vans available to the household. The overall distribution of this indicator is shown in Table 4 and Figure 4b. It can be seen that the more rural areas in Northern Ireland have the highest percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available.

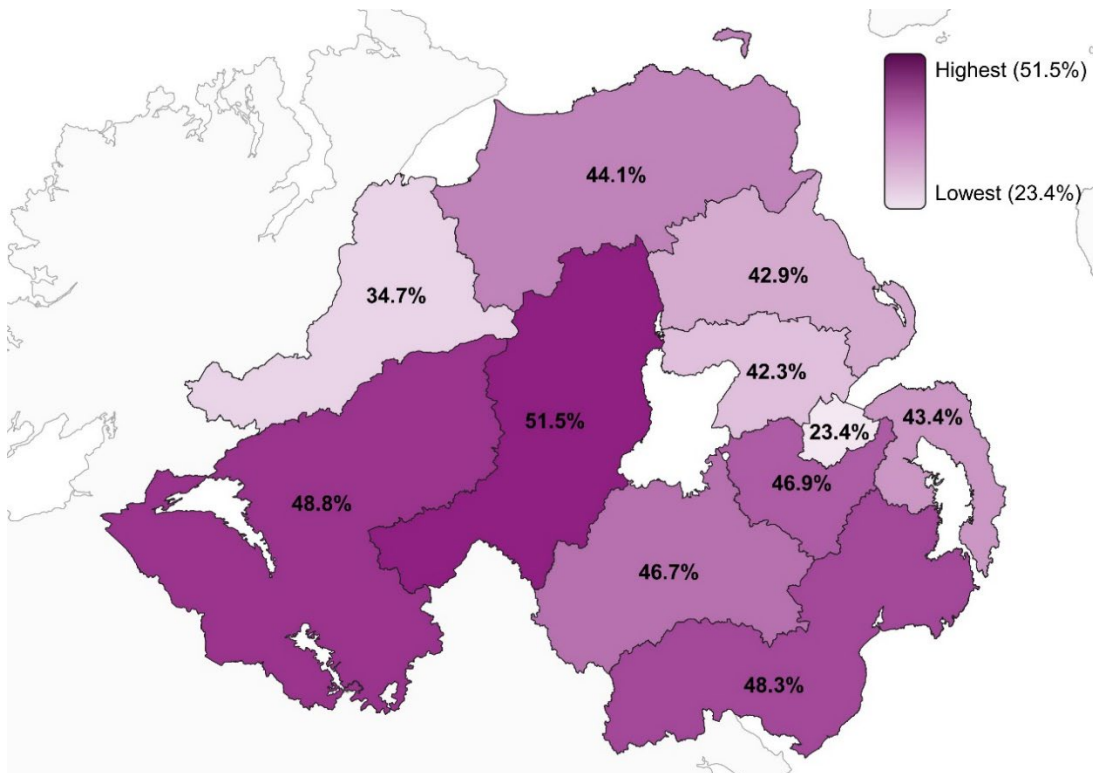
**Table 4: Percentage of households with car or van availability by number of cars and LGD (Census 2021)**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Total households</b>	<b>0 cars or vans</b>	<b>1 car or van</b>	<b>2 or more cars or vans</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	59,500	16.8%	41.0%	42.3%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	84,600	15.5%	37.8%	46.7%
Belfast	149,200	33.9%	42.7%	23.4%
Causeway Coast & Glens	57,600	16.2%	39.7%	44.1%
Derry City & Strabane	60,900	24.6%	40.7%	34.7%
Fermanagh & Omagh	45,700	14.1%	37.1%	48.8%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	60,100	13.0%	40.1%	46.9%
Mid & East Antrim	58,300	17.4%	39.6%	42.9%
Mid Ulster	54,000	13.0%	35.5%	51.5%
Newry, Mourne & Down	68,400	14.5%	37.2%	48.3%
Ards & North Down	70,400	15.5%	41.2%	43.4%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>768,800</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>40.7%</b>

**Figure 4a: Percentage of households without a car or van available by LGD (Census 2021)**



**Figure 4b: Percentage of households with two or more cars or vans available by LGD (Census 2021)**



## 4. Household tenure (ownership/renting)

### 4.1. Questions asked

Census 2021 included two questions on household tenure – the first question was around owning or renting the property, and is reproduced in Figure 5 (online) and Figure 6 (paper).

**Figure 5: Census 2021 online questionnaire – household tenure**

### Does your household own or rent this accommodation?

Owns outright

Owns with a mortgage or loan

Part-owns and part-rents  
Shared ownership

Rents  
With or without housing benefit

Lives here rent-free

**Figure 6: Census 2021 paper questionnaire – household tenure**

**H11** Does your household own or rent this accommodation?

➡ Tick one box only.

Owns outright ➡ GO TO H13

Owns with a mortgage or loan ➡ GO TO H13

Part-owns and part-rents (shared ownership)

Rents (with or without housing benefit)

Lives here rent-free

Census 2021 then included a second question, asked only of those householders who did not own their property, about the nature of their rental arrangement. This question is reproduced in Figure 7 (online) and Figure 8 (paper).

Figure 7: Census 2021 online questionnaire – rental arrangement

**Who do you rent from?**

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Housing association or charitable trust
- Private landlord
- Private renting with a letting agent
- Employer of a household member
- Relative or friend of a household member
- Other

Figure 8: Census 2021 paper questionnaire – rental arrangement

**H12** Who do you rent from?

 Tick one box only.

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Housing association or charitable trust
- Private landlord
- Private renting with a letting agent
- Employer of a household member
- Relative or friend of a household member
- Other

## 4.2. Household tenure – Census 2021

Census 2021 shows us that on 21 March 2021 there were 768,800 occupied households in Northern Ireland and that 1.877 million people lived in those households (the remaining 26,300 of the 1.903 million usual residents in Northern Ireland lived in communal establishments).

In overall terms, for the first census ever in Northern Ireland over half a million households (501,500) were owned by their occupier (65.2% or just under two-thirds of all households). This is shown in Table 5a.

**Table 5a: Tenure of occupied households (Census 2021)**

Tenure of household	Households	Percentage
<b>Owner occupier</b>	<b>501,500</b>	<b>65.2%</b>
Owns outright	267,100	34.7%
Owns with mortgage or loan	227,900	29.6%
Shared ownership	6,600	0.9%
<b>Rents</b>	<b>267,300</b>	<b>34.8%</b>
Social rented (NI Housing Executive)	82,900	10.8%
Social rented (Association/Trust)	34,500	4.5%
Private rented	132,400	17.2%
Lives rent free	17,400	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>768,800</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In contrast, 267,300 households (or 34.8% of all households) rented their property, with the biggest grouping being the private rented sector, at around one household in every six (17.2%).

The figures released also show the tenure of people living in households. Table 5b shows that around 1.294 million people (or 68.9% of the people living in households) lived in owner occupied households, while over half a million (583,300 people) rented their accommodation.

**Table 5b: Tenure of all people living in households (Census 2021)**

<b>Tenure of people living in households</b>	<b>People living in households</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Owner occupier</b>	<b>1,293,600</b>	<b>68.9%</b>
Owns outright	578,400	30.8%
Owns with mortgage or loan	698,500	37.2%
Shared ownership	16,600	0.9%
<b>Rents</b>	<b>583,300</b>	<b>31.1%</b>
Social rented (NI Housing Executive)	171,500	9.1%
Social rented (Association/Trust)	72,400	3.9%
Private rented	307,300	16.4%
Lives rent free	32,100	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,876,800</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



### 4.3. Household tenure by Local Government District – Census 2021

Looking at the percentage of households that are ‘Owner occupied’ and those that are ‘Rented’ shows a marked variation across Local Government Districts (LGDs) in Northern Ireland.

Table 6 shows that in terms of owner occupied households, the percentage ranges from a high of 74.7% in Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD (almost three in every four households were owner occupied) to a low of 51.0% in Belfast LGD (just over one in two households were owner occupied).

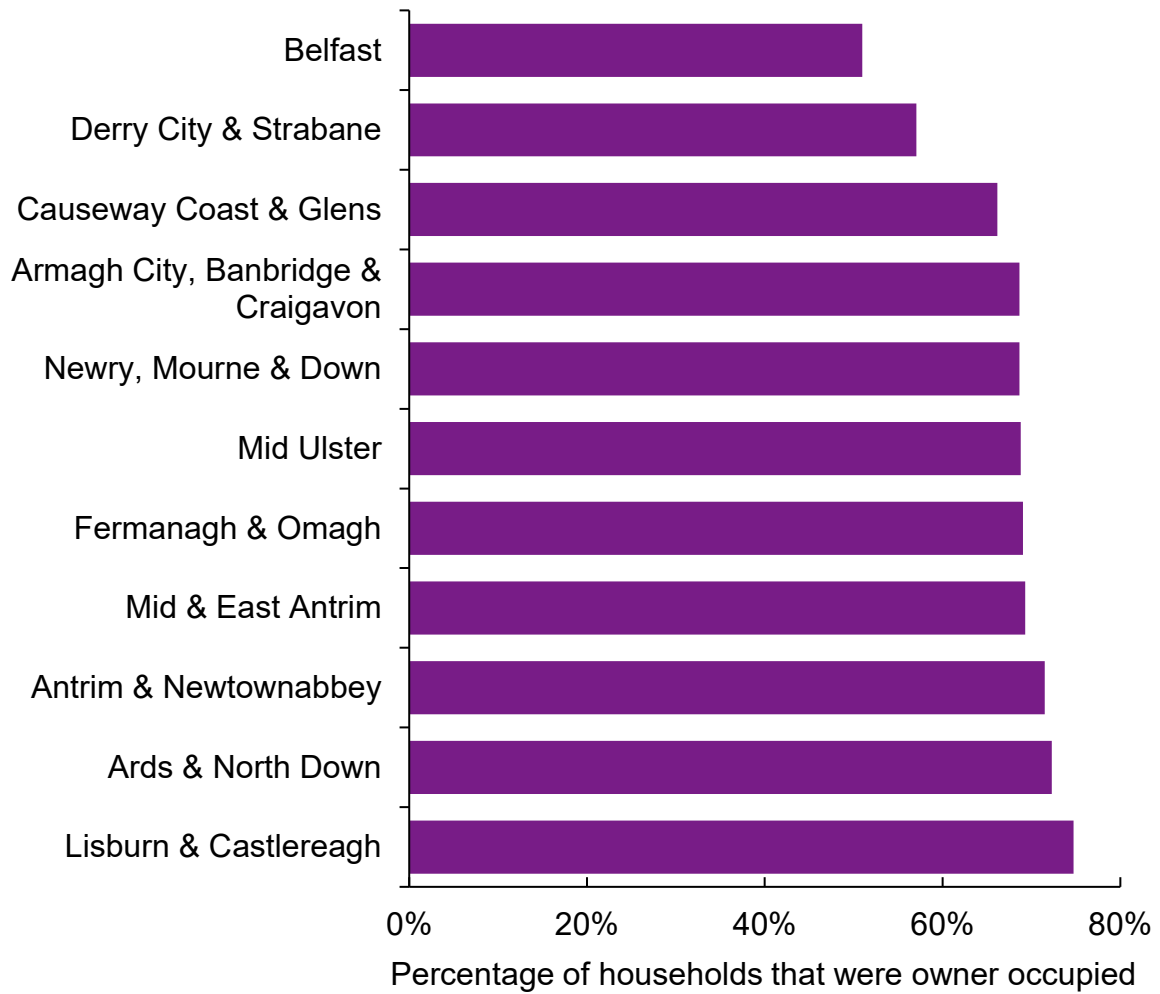
In turn, these two LGDs experienced the highest and lowest levels of rented accommodation respectively (Belfast with 49.0% and Lisburn & Castlereagh with 25.3%).

**Table 6: Percentage of households owner occupied or rented by LGD (Census 2021)**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Total households</b>	<b>Owner occupied</b>	<b>Rented</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	59,500	71.5%	28.5%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	84,600	68.7%	31.3%
Belfast	149,200	51.0%	49.0%
Causeway Coast & Glens	57,600	66.2%	33.8%
Derry City & Strabane	60,900	57.1%	42.9%
Fermanagh & Omagh	45,700	69.0%	31.0%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	60,100	74.7%	25.3%
Mid & East Antrim	58,300	69.3%	30.7%
Mid Ulster	54,000	68.8%	31.2%
Newry, Mourne & Down	68,400	68.7%	31.3%
Ards & North Down	70,400	72.3%	27.7%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>768,800</b>	<b>65.2%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>

Figure 9 shows the percentage of households in each LGD that were owner occupied in Census 2021. All but two LGDs were above the Northern Ireland average of 65.2%.

**Figure 9: Percentage of households that were owner occupied by LGD (Census 2021)**



#### 4.4. Household tenure – Change over time

Table 7 and Figure 10 below show the percentage of households in each census over the past forty years (1981 to 2021) by their tenure.

**Table 7: Percentage of households by tenure (1981-2021 Censuses)**

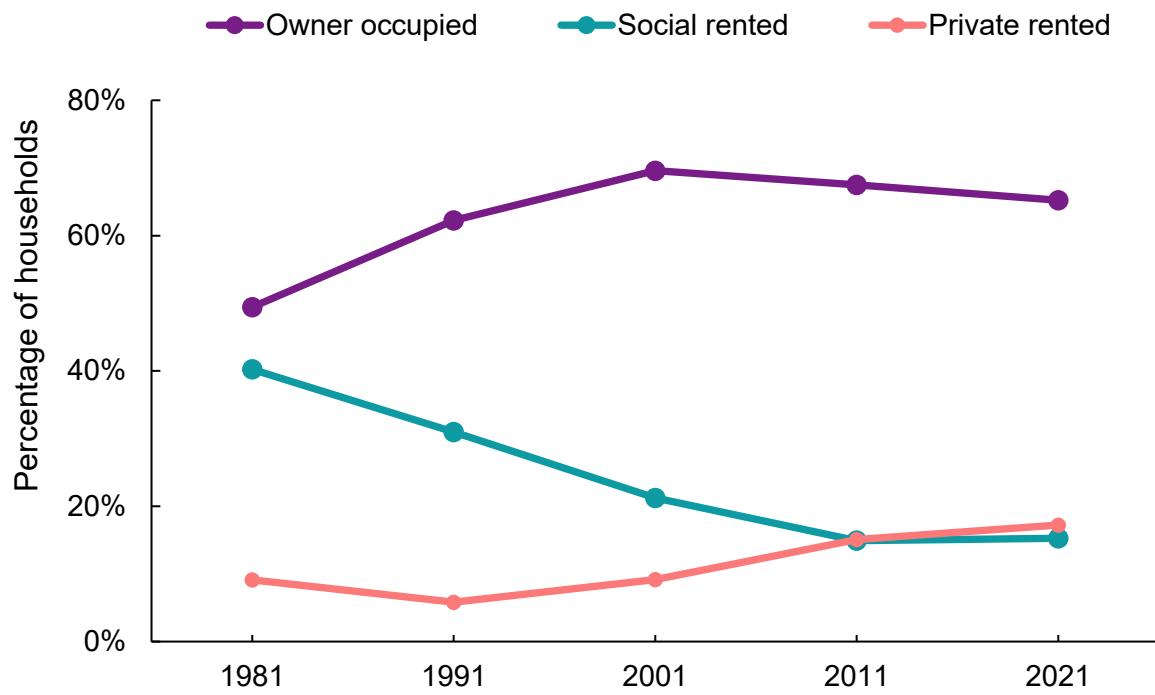
Tenure of households	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Owner occupied	49.4%	62.3%	69.6%	67.5%	65.2%
Social rented	40.2%	31.0%	21.2%	14.9%	15.3%
Private rented	9.1%	5.8%	9.2%	15.1%	17.2%
Lives rent free [note 1]	-	-	-	2.5%	2.3%
Other and not stated	1.2%	1.0%	-	-	-

**Note 1:** In 1981 to 2001, 'social rented' and 'private rented' included 'living rent free'.

Looking at tenure of households since the 1981 Census shows a rise in the percentage of owner occupied households from 49.4% in 1981, to a peak in 2001 of 69.6%, then a marginal fall to 65.2% in 2021.

In contrast, there has been a marked change in the rented sector over the last forty years. Overall, there has been a steady decline in the percentage of households that were social rented (40.2% in 1981, down to 15.3% in 2021), while in contrast there has been an overall increase in the percentage of households renting their accommodation privately (9.1% in 1981, up to 17.2% in 2021).

Figure 10: Percentage of households by selected tenure (1981-2021 Censuses)



## 5. Associated outputs

[Census 2021 outputs on housing and accommodation](#) are available to download from the NISRA website, they include:

- MS-E04 Household spaces
- MS-E05 Accommodation type - usual residents
- MS-E06 Accommodation type - households
- MS-E07 Accommodation type - household spaces
- MS-E08 Number of adaptations to accommodation
- MS-E09 Adaptation of accommodation
- MS-E10 Car or van availability
- MS-E11 Central heating (household based) - (classification 1)
- MS-E12 Central heating (system based) - (classification 2)
- MS-E13 Renewable energy systems
- MS-E14 Tenure - usual residents
- MS-E15 Tenure – households

A series of [commissioned tables from the 2011 Census](#) have also been produced to support the commentary for Census 2021 outputs on housing and accommodation.

## 6. Further information

Census statistics are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence. In May 2022, following a full assessment, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) and the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). National Statistics status means that the statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The census plays a fundamental role in the provision of official statistics – census data are used to inform key policies, plan key services and allocate public funds.

## 6.1. Quality of the results

The census data collection operation was supported by an independent [coverage survey](#). The coverage survey along with administrative data and information from the field operation were combined to allow statistical estimates to be made of the small percentage of people who did not make a return. The statistical estimates discussed here, as with all Census 2021 outputs, reflect the full population of Northern Ireland.

Further information on accuracy, coverage and imputation is provided on the NISRA website in the [Census 2021 quality assurance report \(PDF 275 KB\)](#).

## 6.2. Confidentiality

Census Office has taken steps to ensure that the confidentiality of respondents is fully protected. All published results from the census have been subject to statistical processes to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. For more information, please refer to the [statistical disclosure control methodology](#). These processes may result in very marginally different results between tables for the same statistic.

## 6.3. Comparability with previous censuses

The census is designed to provide the most accurate possible picture of the population on the day the census is taken. Whilst this report contains a small number of historical tables that give comparisons at the Northern Ireland level of some key statistics, users should be aware that comparisons may be affected by other differences, in particular, between the census questionnaires, impacts of issues of the day, etc.

As the last three censuses (2001, 2011 and 2021) were all adjusted for under-enumeration and reflect the Northern Ireland population on census day, this supports comparisons between those censuses.

## 6.4. Supporting material

A number of [supporting documents](#) are available on the census pages of the NISRA website. These documents describe the census methodology in more detail, the quality assurance processes applied, the paper questionnaire used in the census, and a full list of definitions and output classifications.

## 6.5. More details

Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from Census Customer Services at:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

Email: [census@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk)

Responsible Statistician: Dr David Marshall

This report was made possible by the co-operation of the public in responding to the census, the commitment of the census field and headquarters staff, and the assistance of many other people and organisations throughout all aspects of the census. The Registrar General for Northern Ireland, who is responsible for the planning, conduct and reporting of the census, would like to thank all of those who contributed to the census.

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