

Ethnicity, language, nationality and religion

Census 2021

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Data on ethnicity, language, national identity and religion from the 2021 census was published by the Office for National Statistics on 29 November 2022. This report summarises the main points of the data for Luton.

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Executive summary

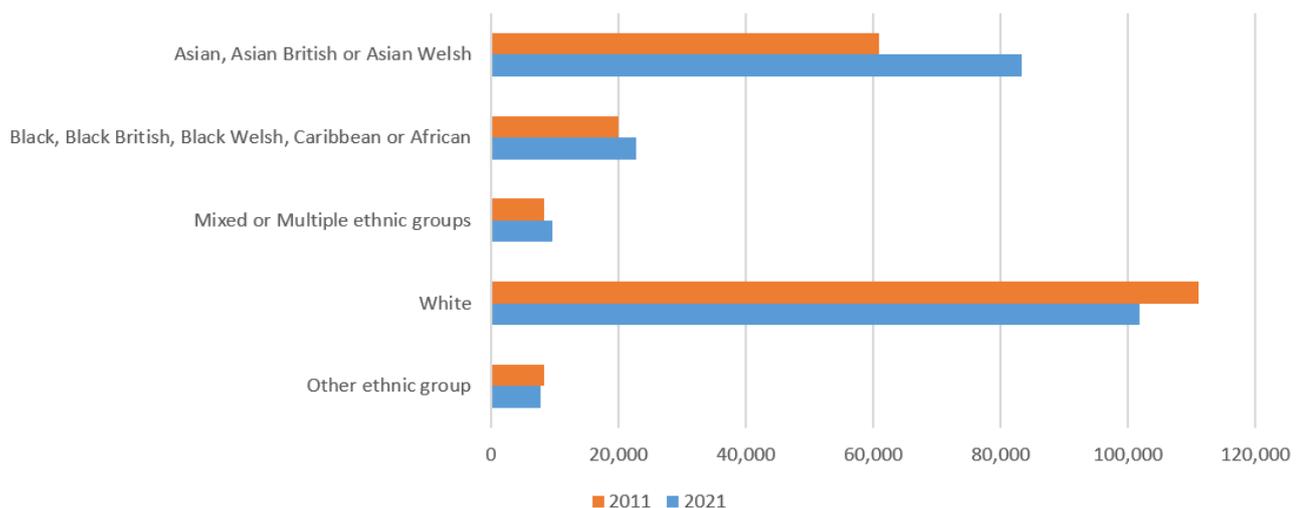
- The overall population of Luton **increased by 22,000** people between 2011 and 2021, a rise of 11 per cent.
- The 2021 census showed that the population of Luton now has a non-white majority with **54.8 per cent** of the population being non-white.
- Luton is one of four authorities outside of London with the majority of the population being from ethnic minority groups. Slough has the largest non-white population at 64.1 per cent with Leicester at 59.1 per cent, Birmingham also having an ethnic minority majority of 51.4 per cent of the population.
- White British make up **31.8 per cent** of the population of Luton compared with 74.4 per cent nationally.
- The percentage of people with English as their first language in Luton is **76.5 per cent** which is one of the smallest proportions in the country.
- Of the population of Luton, **74.9 per cent have a UK identity** compared with 88 per cent nationally.
- The number of people reporting as Christian is still the largest group in Luton but the number of Christians **fell by 11.4 per cent** from 96,271 in 2011 to 85,297 in 2021.
- The numbers of Muslims increased from 49,991 to 74,191 in the last decade, an **increase of 48.4 per cent**.

Ethnicity – Census 2021

The population of Luton now has a non-white majority with 54.8 per cent of the population being non-white. Luton is one of four places outside of London with the majority of the population being from ethnic minority groups.

Slough has the largest non-white population at 64.1 per cent, Leicester is 59.1 per cent with Birmingham also having an ethnic minority majority of 51.4 per cent of the population.

Figure 1: Luton ethnicity in 2021 and 2011



Source: Census 2011 and 2021, Office for National Statistics

White ethnicity (including other than White British) remained the largest high level ethnic group but the numbers have fallen since 2011, from 111,079 to 101,798. The white ethnic group makes up 45.2 per cent of the population of Luton meaning there is a non-white majority in the town.

The next largest ethnic group is Asian which increased from 60,952 in 2011 to 83,325 in 2021. The Asian group makes up 37 per cent of the population of Luton. The Black ethnic group is now

22,735, increasing from 19,909 in 2011. The Black ethnic groups makes up 10.1 per cent of the population of Luton.

Table 1: Luton by ethnicity, 2011 and 2021

	2011	Percentage	2021	Percentage	% change
Total: All usual residents	203,201	100.0	225,261	100.0	10.9
Asian, Asian British: Total	60,952	30.0	83,325	37.0	36.7
Asian, Asian British: Bangladeshi	13,606	6.7	20,630	9.2	51.6
Asian, Asian British: Chinese	1,497	0.7	901	0.4	-39.8
Asian, Asian British: Indian	10,625	5.2	12,096	5.4	13.8
Asian, Asian British: Pakistani	29,353	14.4	41,143	18.3	40.2
Asian, Asian British: Other Asian	13,606	6.7	8,555	3.8	-37.1
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African: Total	19,909	9.8	22,735	10.1	14.2
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African: African	9,169	4.5	11,774	5.2	28.4
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African: Caribbean	8,177	4.0	8,216	3.6	0.5
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African: Other Black	2,563	1.3	2,745	1.2	7.1
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Total	8,281	4.1	9,620	4.3	16.2
White: Total	111,079	54.7	101,798	45.2	-8.4
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	90,530	44.6	71,532	31.8	-21.0
White: Irish	6,126	3.0	4,570	2.0	-25.4
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	198	0.1	238	0.1	20.2
White: Roma	na	na	808	0.4	na
White: Other White	14,225	7.0	24,650	10.9	73.3
Other ethnic groups: Total	2,980	1.5	7,783	3.5	161.2

Source: Census 2011 and 2021, Office for National Statistics

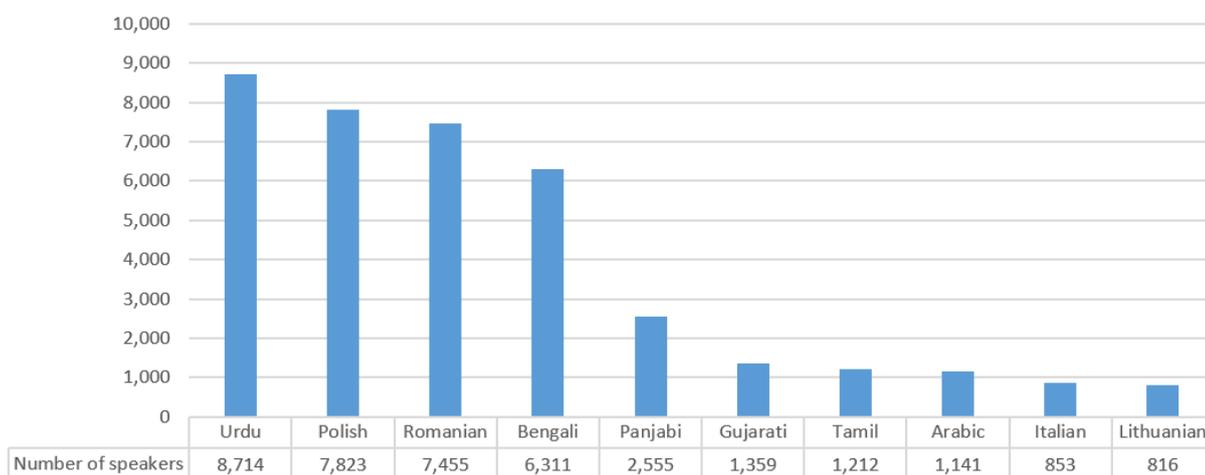
Luton's overall population increased by 22,000 between 2011 and 2021. Table 1 shows that the proportion of White British in Luton is now 31.8 per cent which is 71,532 people. The number of Asian British people at 83,325 is now larger than the number of White British in the town.

The Other White category which includes people from Eastern Europe is now 24,560, the increase being driven by the number of Romanians who have settled in the town over the last decade. Luton is a 'super-diverse' town with numerous ethnic minority groups

Languages

In Luton the percentage of people with English as their first language is 76.5 per cent. This is 165,995 people. The authority with the smallest proportion of people whose first language is Newham with 65.4 per cent. Outside of London only Slough and Leicester have a larger proportion of people whose first language is not English.

Figure 2: Top ten languages other than English spoken in Luton 2021

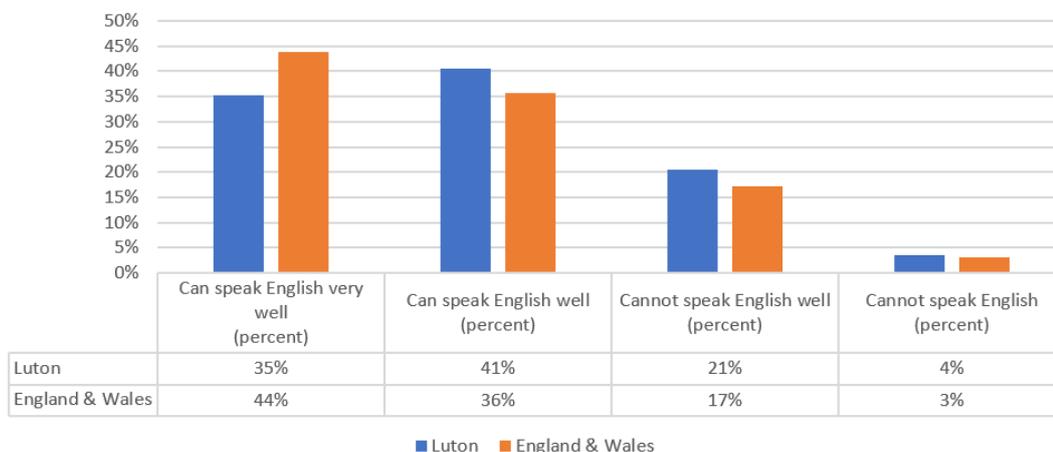


Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

Of Luton's residents:

- 8,714 have Urdu as their first language (3.9 per cent)
- 7,823 have Polish as their first language (3.5 per cent)
- 7,455 have Romanian as their first language (3.3 per cent)
- 6,311 have Bengali as their first language (2.8 per cent)
- Panjabi, Gujarati, Tamil, Arabic, Italian and Lithuanian are also widely spoken in the town.
- The census recorded over 100 different languages other than English as people's main language.

Figure 3: English proficiency in Luton and England and Wales 2021



Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

In Luton 20.5 per cent of the population cannot speak English well and 3.6 per cent of the population cannot speak English. This is larger than the national figure for England and Wales of 17.1 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively.

National identity

The census question on national identity was introduced in 2011 because of increased interest in 'national' consciousness and a demand for people to be able to acknowledge their national identity. The question allows respondents to select all identities that apply. The term 'only' is used throughout the article to refer to respondents classified with a single national identity.

In Luton:

- 74.9 per cent of the population have one or more UK identity compared to 88 per cent nationally.
- 3 per cent have a UK and a non UK identity compared to 2 per cent nationally.
- 22.2 per cent have a non UK identity compared to 10 per cent nationally.

Religion

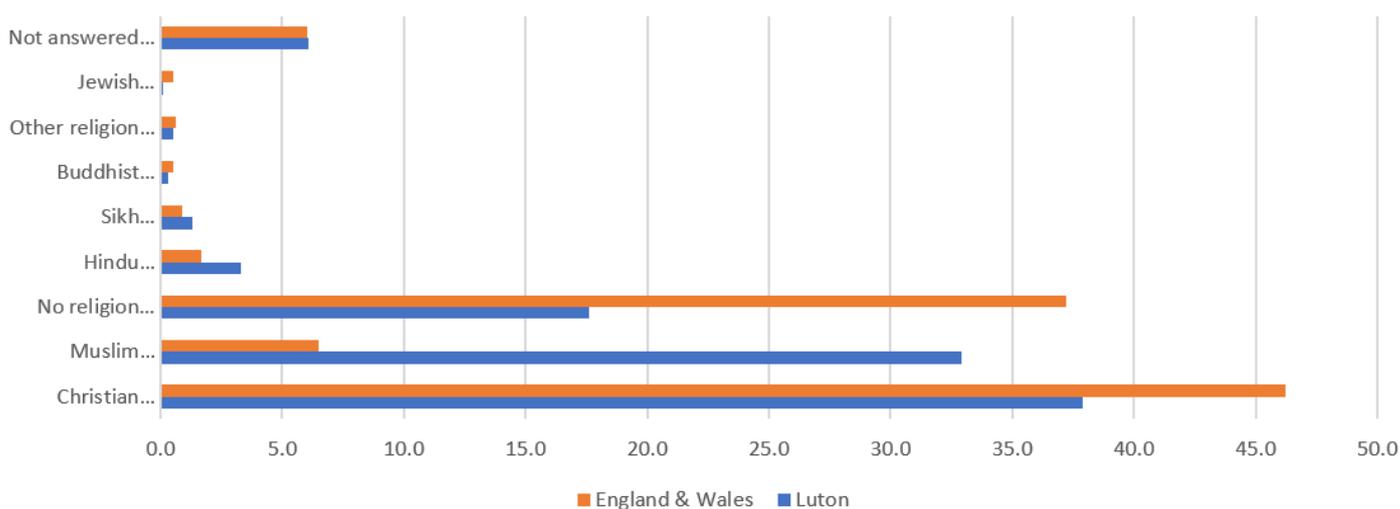
Table 2: Religion, Luton 2011 and 2021

Religion	2011	2021	% change
Christian	96,271	85,297	-11.4%
Muslim (Islam)	49,991	74,191	48.4%
No religion	33,594	39,580	17.8%
Hindu	6,749	7,438	10.2%
Sikh	2,347	3,032	29.2%
Other religion	898	1,115	24.2%
Buddhist	652	664	1.8%
Jewish	326	246	-24.5%

Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

The number of people reporting as Christian is still the largest group in Luton but the number of Christians fell by 11.4 per cent from 96,271 in 2011 to 85,297 in 2021. The numbers of Muslims increased from 49,991 to 74,191 in the last decade, a rise of 48.4 per cent. The number of people with no religion increased from 33,594 to 39,580 in the last decade, a rise of 17.8 per cent.

Figure 4: Percentage of population by religion in Luton and England and Wales 2021



Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics

When compared with England and Wales there is a larger proportion of Muslims in Luton, 32.9 per cent compared with 6.5 per cent. There is a smaller proportion of Christians, 37.9 per cent compared with 46.2 per cent and people with no religion, 17.6 per cent compared with 37.2 per cent.

More census analysis will be added to the [Luton Observatory](#) as data is published. [All 2021 census data can be found here.](#)