

Housing in Brent

2021 Census – topic report

October 2023



Summary

CENSUS 2021

Housing in Brent

As at March 2021

Households by accommodation type

118,612
Households



43%
live in houses



57% flats /
maisonettes

Household size

2.83



Average
household size

▲ 6th
highest in
England &
Wales

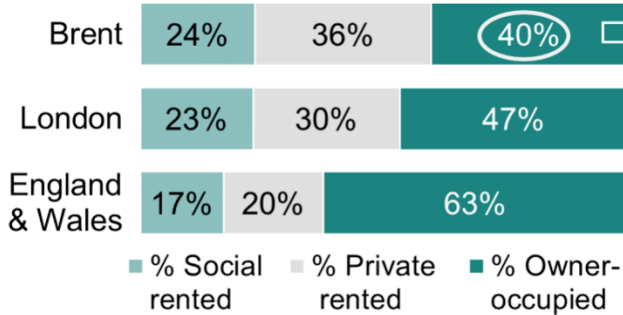
27%
1 person
households



15%
5 or more
people



Households by tenure

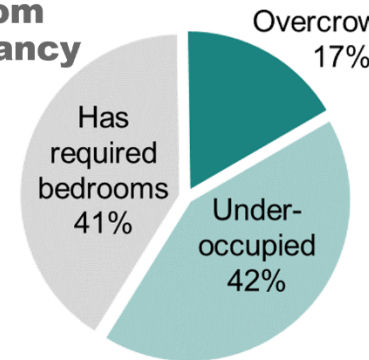


20%
owned outright

18%
with
mortgage/loan

2%
shared
ownership

Bedroom occupancy rating

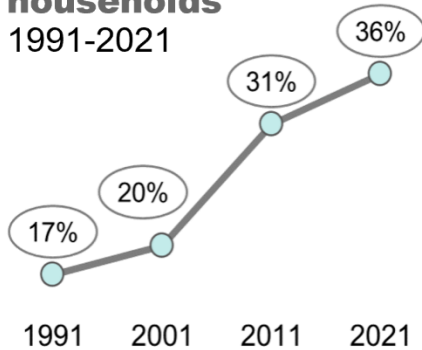


→ **1 in 6**
households
overcrowded

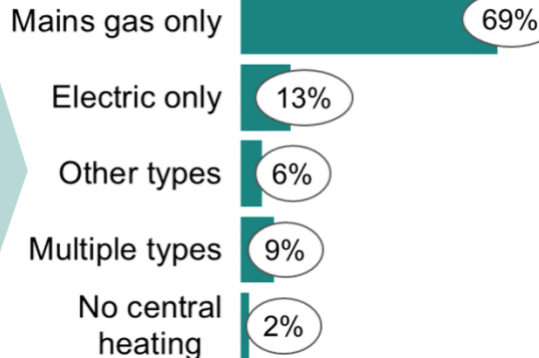


▲ 3rd highest
rate in England
& Wales

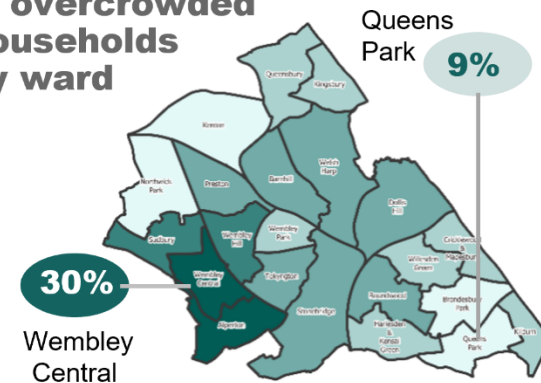
% private rented households 1991-2021



Type of central heating system



% overcrowded households by ward



Headlines (1)

This briefing summarises census data about the housing profile of those living in Brent. Key findings:

- **Dwellings and households:** The 2021 census identified 127,860 dwellings in Brent which were occupied by 118,612 households. A household can be one person living alone or a group of people living together at the same address. Around 7.4% of dwellings were unoccupied at the time of the census, up from 2.6% in 2011. In part, this is likely to reflect the timing of the 2021 census, which took place while pandemic lockdown restrictions were in place, with some residents temporarily away. All figures that follow relate to occupied dwellings only.
- **Housing tenure:** In 2021, 40% of Brent households owned their accommodation: 20% owned their homes outright; 18% owned with a mortgage or loan; and 2% part owned their homes via shared ownership. More than one third (36%) were renting privately, while almost one in four (24%) were living in the social rented sector.
- **Areas compared:** Brent has a higher percentage of private renter households relative to both the London and national averages (30% and 20%). Conversely, Brent has fewer owner-occupiers (40%) compared with both London (47%) and England & Wales (63%). The percentage of social rented households in Brent (24%) is close to the London average (23%), but above the national average (17%).
- **Long-term changes:** The percentage of households living in the private rented sector in Brent has been increasing since the nineties, rising from 17% to 36% between 1991 and 2021. The percentage of owner-occupied households has fallen over the same period from 58% to 40%. The proportion of households in the social rented sector has seen less change remaining around 24%-25% over the period. While similar trends were observed in London, and nationally, the changes in Brent have been more pronounced.
- **Characteristics*:** Younger households (aged 16-34) were the most likely to be private renters (64%), while older households (age 65+) were the most likely to be owner-occupiers (65%). By household type, lone parent households were the least likely to be owner-occupiers (12%), with the majority either living in either social or privately rented housing (48% and 40%). By ethnicity, Asian households were the most likely to be owner-occupiers (56%), while Black households were the most likely to be in social rented accommodation (56%). White Roma households were the most likely to be living in the private rented sector (83%).

Headlines (2)

- **Accommodation type:** Around 43% of Brent households lived in houses: 6% in detached houses, 22% in semi-detached houses and 15% in terraced housing. Around 57% lived in flats or maisonettes: 38% lived in purpose-built blocks and 19% lived in part of a converted house or building. Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage living in flats/maisonettes increased from 52% to 57%. In common with many London boroughs, Brent households are more likely than those in England & Wales to live in flats or maisonettes (57% vs. 22%).
- **Type by tenure:** Those who own their house outright, or with a mortgage, are the most likely to live in a house (70%). Those who part own their homes via shared ownership were the most likely to live in flats or maisonettes (87%) – the majority in purpose-built blocks. Most households in the private, and social rented, sectors lived in flats or maisonettes (72% and 75%).
- **Household size:** The average size of a household in Brent (2.83 people per household) is much higher than both the London (2.54) or national average (2.36) – Brent ranks 6th highest in England & Wales on this measure. The percentage of households containing 5 or more people is 15% in Brent, double the national rate (7%).
- **Occupancy:** The census bedroom occupancy rating determines whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded, ideally occupied or under-occupied, based on the bedroom standard. On this measure, around 1 in 6 households (17%) in Brent were living in overcrowded properties: 13% were short of one bedroom, and 4% were short of two or more bedrooms. Around 42% of Brent households were classed as under-occupied: around 23% had one more bedroom than required, and 19% had 2 or more bedrooms than required. The remaining 41% of Brent households had the required number of bedrooms.
- **Areas compared:** The percentage of overcrowded households in Brent was four times higher than rate across England & Wales (17% vs. 4%), and well above the London average (11%). Brent was ranked 3rd highest in England & Wales on this measure, after Newham (21%) and Barking & Dagenham (18%). Brent's relative position has seen little change since 2011, when it was ranked 2nd highest nationally. At ward level, the percentage of overcrowded households ranged from 9% in Queens Park up to 30% in Wembley Central.

Headlines (3)

- **Overcrowded households:** In Brent, the households most likely to be overcrowded include: multi-generational households (47%); those with dependent children in the household (36%); and those living in privately rented accommodation (25%). By ethnicity, Black African households were the most likely to be overcrowded (29%).
- **Under-occupied households:** Those most likely to be under-occupying their properties include: owner-occupiers (68%); those living in houses (65%); pensioner only households (72%); and those without dependent children in the household (52%). By ethnicity, White Irish, Chinese and White British households were the most likely to be under-occupying their accommodation (56-59%) and the least likely to be overcrowded (5-7%).
- **Central heating:** The census recorded information about the type of central heating systems in homes. Just over two thirds of Brent households said they had mains gas central heating (69%) and 13% said they had an electric central heating system. Around 9% had two or more types of central heating, while 6% used other types (e.g. communal heating systems, bottled gas, oil, solid fuel). In Brent, 2.2% of households had no central heating at all, the same as across London but higher than the percentage across England & Wales (1.5%).
- **Renewable energy:** The 2021 census was the first to record whether households used renewable energy systems such as solar thermal or heat pumps. In Brent, 0.5% of households (542 households) said they did, lower than the proportion nationally (0.9%).
- **Heating by type of housing:** Electric only central heating systems were more common in flats than houses (21% vs. 4%), while those in houses were the most likely to have gas central heating (83% vs. 60%). Those in flats were more likely than those in houses to rely on district or communal heat networks (3.9% vs. 0.2%). Owner-occupied households were more likely to have gas central heating (81%) compared with those in the private or social rented sector (61% and 63%). Households living in the private rented sector were the most likely to have no central heating (3.1%) and owner-occupiers the least likely (1.4%).

About this data

This report summarises headline census data about the housing profile of those living in Brent as at March 2021. This includes data about: housing tenure, accommodation type, household size, occupancy levels and type of central heating.

Accompanying report: Brent Census atlas - Housing

The report focuses on data relating to Brent as a whole. Census housing data at ward and small area level has also been analysed and mapped in a separate 'census atlas' report. The atlas is available on [Brent Open Data](#).

The 2021 census snapshot: pandemic impacts

The figures in this report relate to the housing circumstances of residents in March 2021, when a range of pandemic lockdown measures were in place. As most census data on housing relates to occupied dwellings only, this needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the analysis that follows, because the number of unoccupied homes in Brent was significant at this time. The analysis on page [7](#) provides more detail about this issue.

Rounding

Most percentages in the narrative are rounded to nearest point unless otherwise specified (e.g. unless percentages are relatively small and where more precision is helpful).

Glossary

For a guide to the census definitions used in this report, please refer to the [glossary](#).

Data source and copyright

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Dwellings and households: overview

- The 2021 census identified 127,860 dwellings in Brent, occupied by 118,612 households. A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people living at the same address. A small number of dwellings were shared by more than one household (130 in number).
- Around 7.4% of dwellings were unoccupied in 2021, up from 2.6% in 2011. There was a similar rise across London (3.5% to 8.0%). These were defined as properties that had no 'usual' residents* living in them (e.g. empty homes or those only occupied by short-term residents or visitors).
- In part, this is likely to reflect the timing of the census, in March 2021. Pandemic lockdown restrictions were still in place at this time and some residents may have been temporarily away (e.g. overseas students, private renters who had moved away temporarily). Across regions, London saw the biggest rise in the number of unoccupied dwellings between censuses.
- The rest of this report focuses on occupied dwellings and explores the housing circumstances of those living in them.

(*) A usual resident is anyone who, on 21 March 2021, was in the UK and had stayed, or intended to stay, in the UK for 12 months or more, or someone who has a permanent UK address and is outside the UK and intends to be outside the UK for less than 12 months. This definition excludes short-term residents and visitors.

Dwellings and households in Brent 2021 Census



127,860
Dwellings

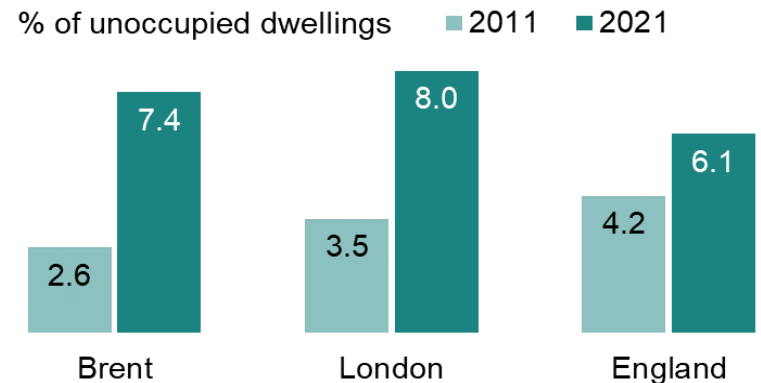
A dwelling is defined as a self-contained unit of accommodation that may be empty or lived in (e.g. houses or flats). Dwellings can be shared by more than one household.



118,612
Households

A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people living at the same address (who share cooking facilities and share a living room or dining area)

Percentage of unoccupied dwellings 2011-21, Brent, London, and England

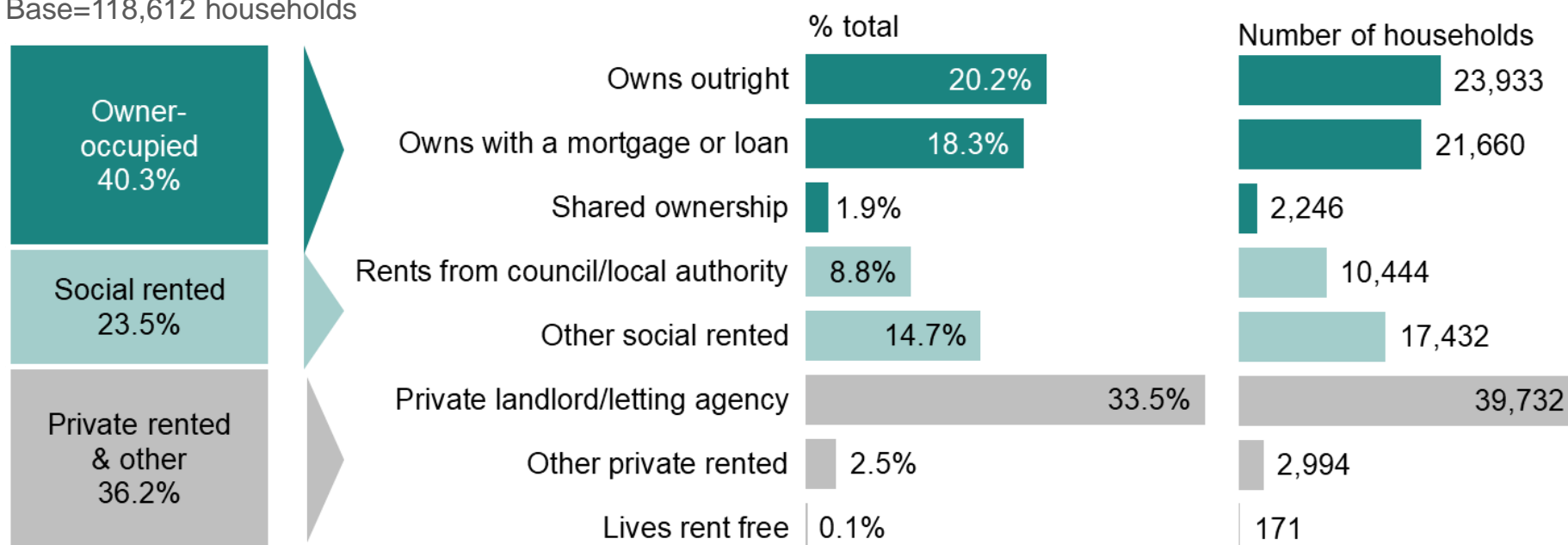


Housing tenure in Brent

- In 2021, around four in ten Brent households owned their accommodation: 20% owned their homes outright; 18% owned with a mortgage or loan; and around 2% part owned their homes via shared ownership.
- Around 36% were renting privately, most through private landlords or letting agencies.
- Almost one in four households (24%) were in the social rented sector. The census recorded around 9% renting from the council and 15% renting from other providers – however, these figures are known to overestimate the number of households renting from the local authority. This is thought to be due to some respondents in other types of housing (e.g. housing association) incorrectly identifying their landlord as the council*. The Office for National Statistics advises that estimates are likely to be more accurate when the two social rent categories are combined together – this is the convention used in the rest of this report.

Households by housing tenure, Brent, 2021

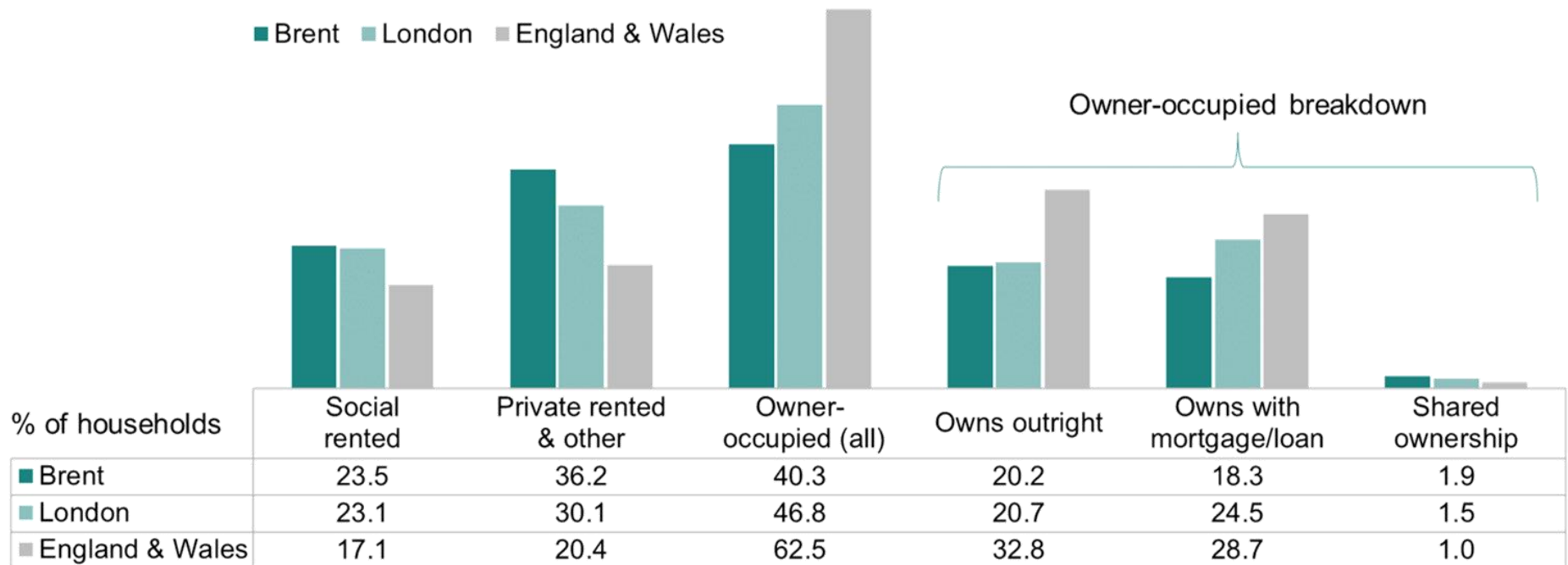
Base=118,612 households



Tenure: area comparisons

- The percentage of households living in the private rented sector is higher in Brent (36%) when compared with both London (30%) and England & Wales (20%).
- Conversely, Brent has fewer owner-occupiers (40%) compared with London (47%), and England & Wales (63%). The percentage of households living in shared ownership properties was 1.9% in Brent, a bit higher than the London average (1.5%) and almost double the rate nationally (1.0%).
- The percentage of social rented households in Brent is close to the London average (24% and 23%), but above the national average (17%).

Households by housing tenure, Brent, London and England & Wales, 2021

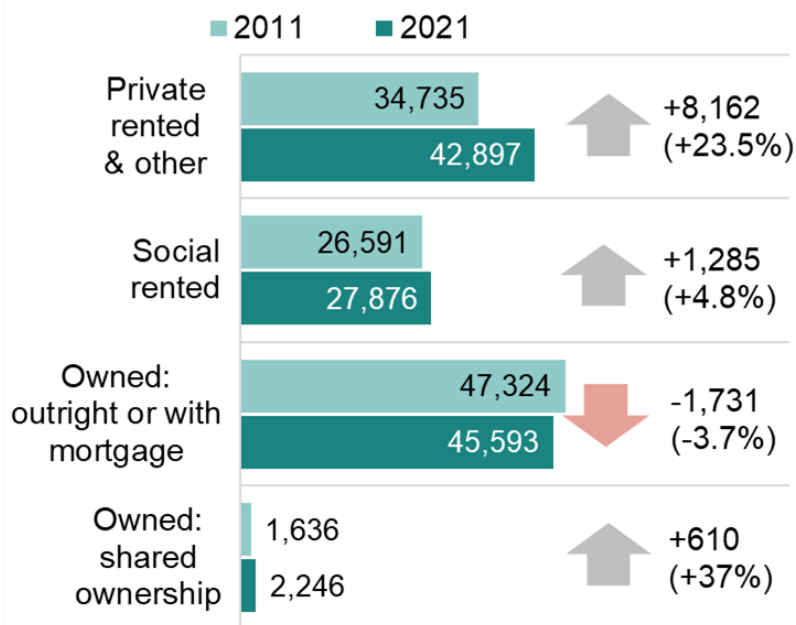


Brent tenure profile: Change 2011-2021

- The number of Brent households living in the private rented sector rose sharply from 31% in 2011 to 36% in 2021, a 23% increase in number. The number of households in the social rented sector saw less change, rising by 4.8%. The percentage of all households living in the social rented sector was 23.5% in 2021, close to the level in 2011 (24.1%).
- The number of households in shared ownership properties rose by 610 over the period (up 37%). By 2021, shared ownership households comprised 1.9% of all households, up from 1.5% in 2011. In contrast, the number of other owner-occupied households (i.e. those owned outright or with a mortgage) fell by 2.3% over the period. These households comprised 38% of all Brent households in 2021, down from 43% in 2011.

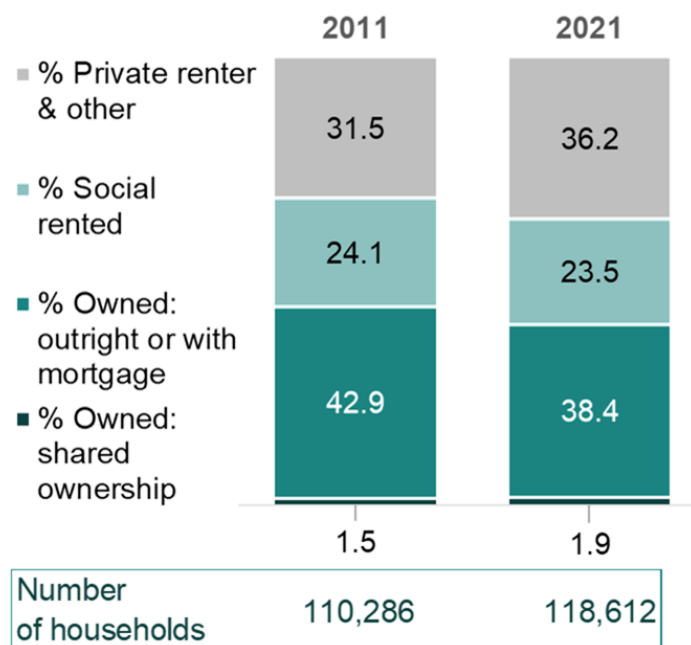
Households by tenure - number

Brent, change 2011-21



Households by tenure - % total

Brent, change 2011-21

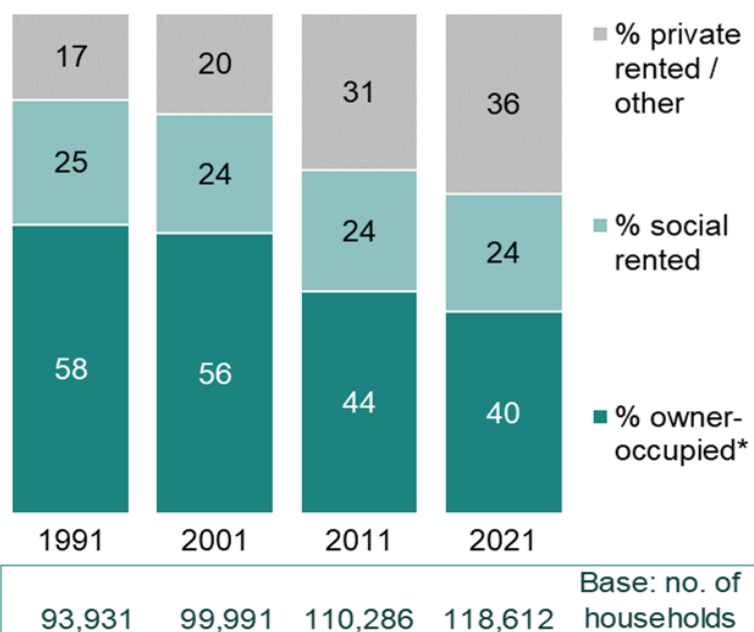


Tenure: Long term changes 1991-2021

- These recent changes are part of a longer-term trend. The percentage of households living in the private rented sector in Brent has been increasing since the nineties, rising from 17% to 36% between 1991 and 2021. The percentage of owner-occupied households has fallen over the same period from 58% to 40%. The proportion of households in the social rented sector has seen less change remaining around one quarter (24%-25%).
- While similar trends were observed in London and nationally, the changes in Brent have been a bit more pronounced: Brent saw a sharper fall in the proportion of owner-occupied households and a bigger rise in the percentage of privately rented households. The percentage of households in the social rented sector has seen little change in Brent, while London and England & Wales both saw a reduction (both decreasing by 6 percentage points).

The changing tenure profile

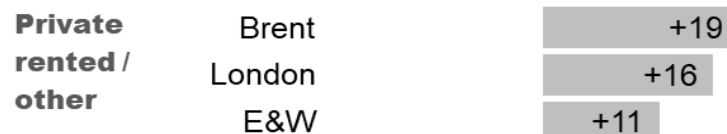
Brent, change 1991-2021



Change 1991-2021

Area comparisons (% point change)

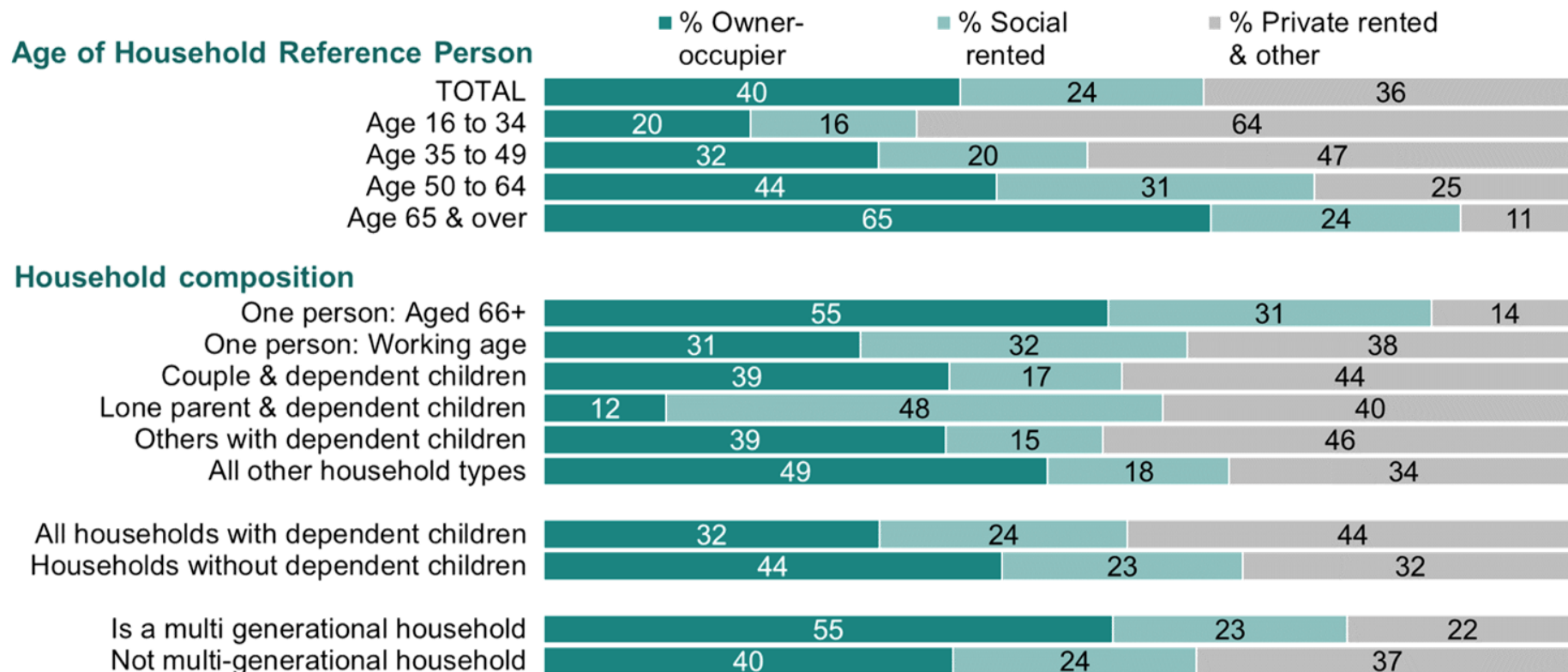
Percentage point change between 1991 and 2021 (% households by tenure)



Tenure by household type

- By age, younger households were the most likely to be private renters: 64% of households with a household reference person (HRP)* aged 16-34 rented privately while just 20% were owner-occupiers. In contrast, around two thirds (65%) of older households, with an HRP aged 65 and over, were owner-occupiers.
- By household type, lone parents were the least likely to be owner-occupiers, with the majority living in the social (48%) or private rented (40%) sectors. Just 12% were owner-occupiers. Around 5% of Brent households were multi-generational households. These households were more likely than average to be owner occupiers (55% vs. 40%).

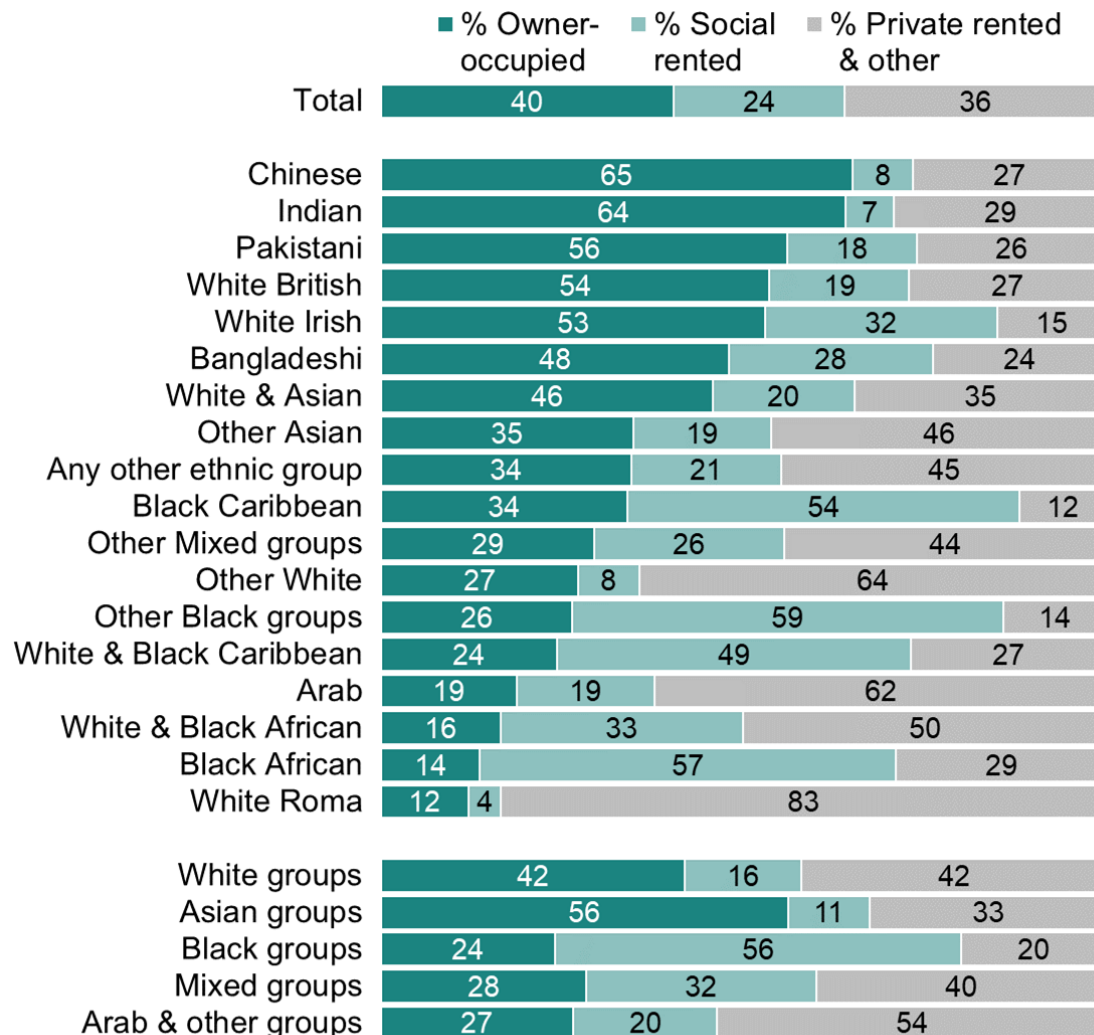
Tenure profile by age and household, Brent, 2021



Tenure by ethnic group

- Chinese and Indian households were the most likely to be owner-occupiers (64%-65%). Overall, 56% of households from Asian ethnic groups were owner-occupiers.
- Black households were the most likely to live in social rented housing (56%). Rates were high across all three Black ethnic groups: Black African (57%); Black Caribbean (54%) and Other Black groups (59%).
- White Roma households were the most likely - by far - to be living in the private rented sector (83%). Households from the 'Other White' and Arab ethnic groups also had high rates of private renting (64% and 62%).
- Ethnic groups with older age structures, such as the Black Caribbean and White Irish populations, were typically less likely to live in the private rented sector (12% and 15%).

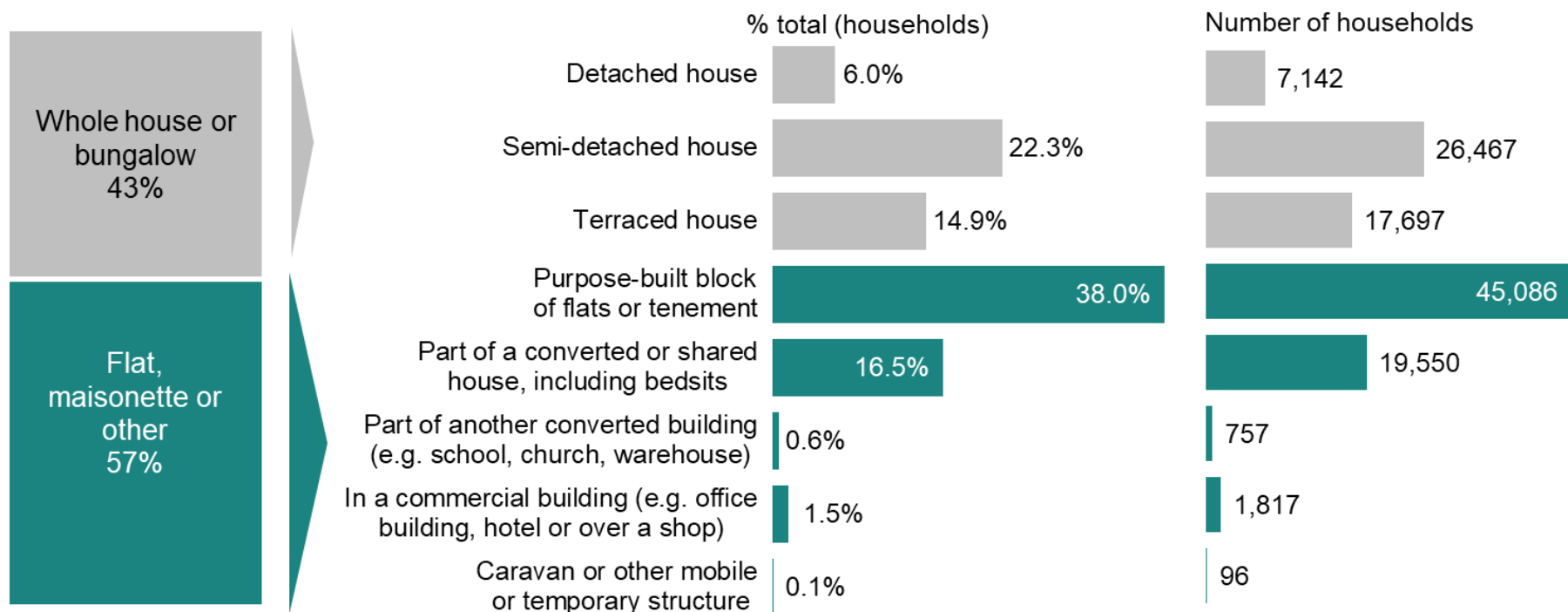
Tenure profile by ethnic group of Household Reference Person, Brent, 2021



Households by type of accommodation

- In 2021, 43% of Brent households lived in houses: 6% lived in detached houses, 22% in semi-detached houses and 15% in terraced houses.
- Around 57% of households lived in flats or maisonettes: this included 38% who lived in purpose-built blocks and 19% who lived in part of a converted house or building (e.g. former school, church, warehouse, or commercial building).
- A small number of households (0.1%; 96 households) indicated they lived in a caravan or some other type of mobile or temporary structure.

Households by accommodation type, Brent 2021

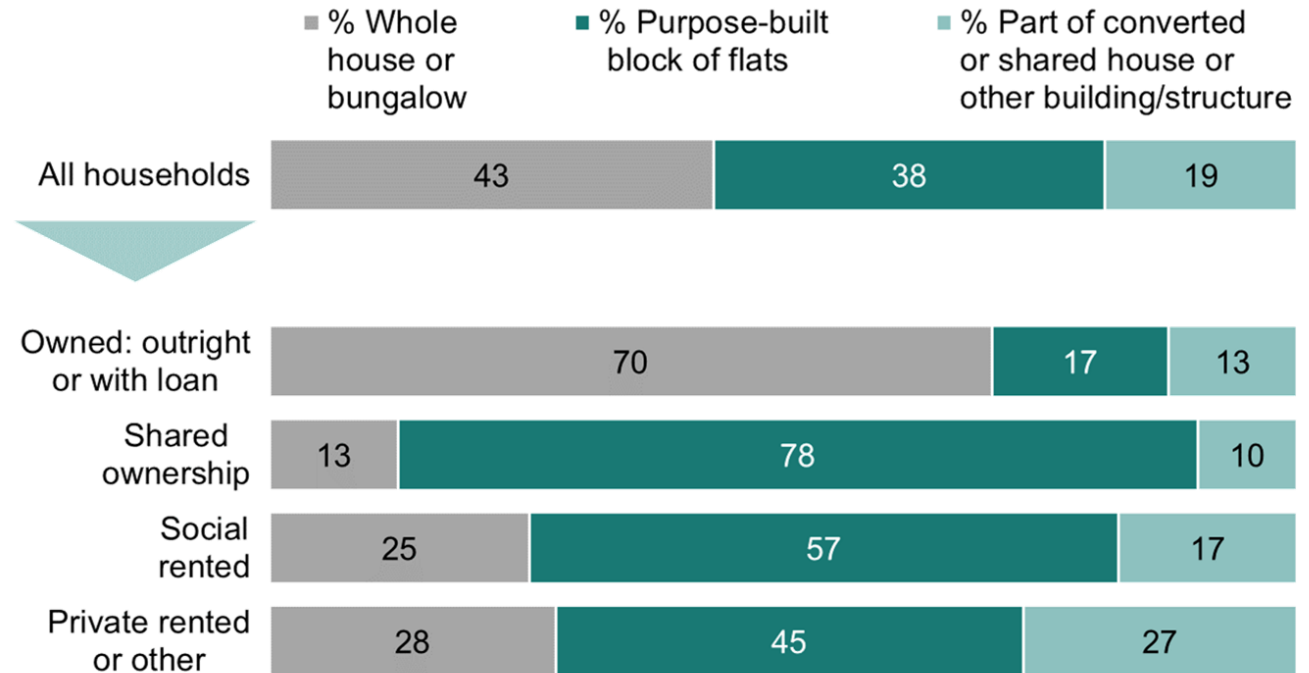


Accommodation type by tenure

- Those who owned their house outright, or with a mortgage, were the most likely to live in whole houses (70%). Those living in shared ownership properties were the most likely to live in flats or maisonettes (87%), with most living in purpose-built blocks (78%).
- The majority of households in the private and social rented sector lived in flats/maisonette type accommodation (72% and 75%), though those in the social rented sector were more likely than private renters to live in purpose-built properties (57% vs. 45%). Households living in the privately rented sector were the most likely to live in non-purpose-built properties (27%). These included living in part of a converted/shared house or in some other type of building (e.g. former school, church or in a commercial building such as an office or hotel).

Households by accommodation type and tenure

Brent 2021

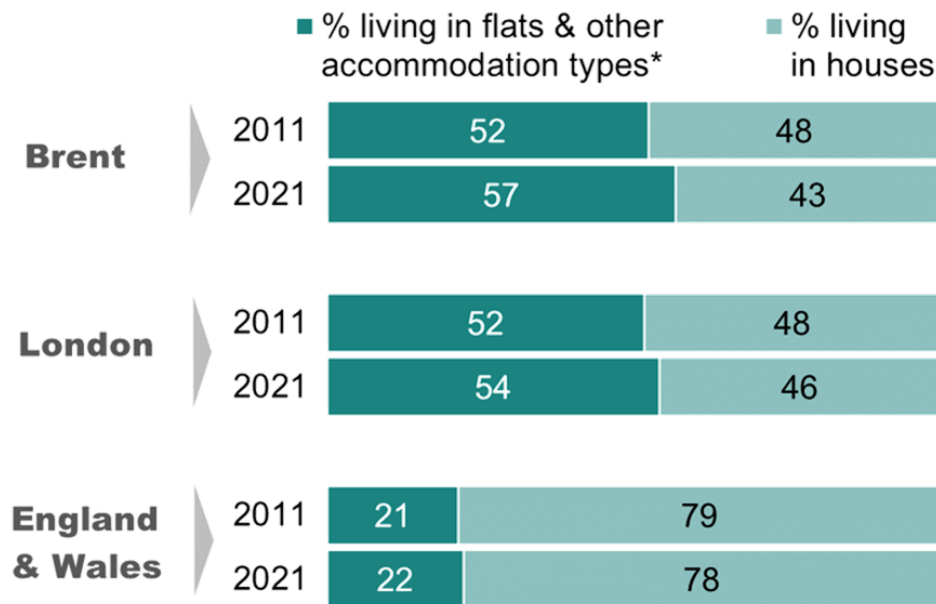


Accommodation type: 2011-2021

- In common with many London boroughs, Brent households are more likely than those nationally to live in flats (57% vs. 22%). Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of Brent households living in flats or maisonettes increased from 52% to 57%. The percentage living in flats also rose across London and England & Wales – though to a lesser extent.
- The total number of households in Brent rose by around 8% between 2011 and 2021. The number living in flats increased by 17%, while the number living in houses fell by around 2%.

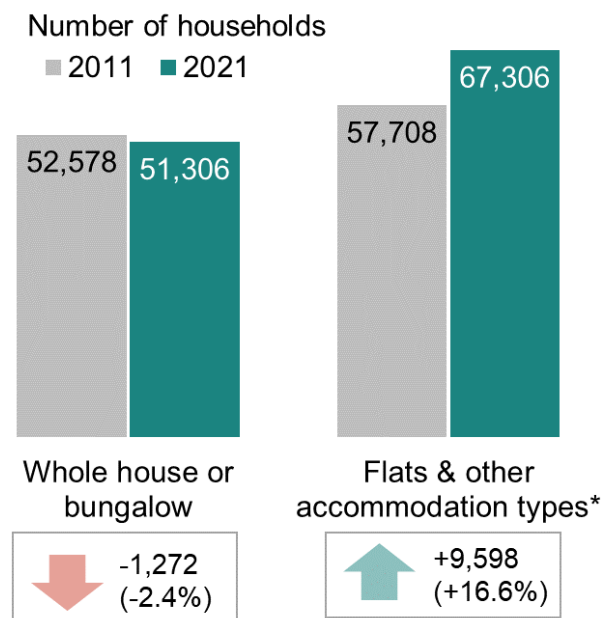
Households by accommodation type

Areas compared, change 2011-2021 (% total)



Households by accommodation type

Brent, change 2011-2021 (number)



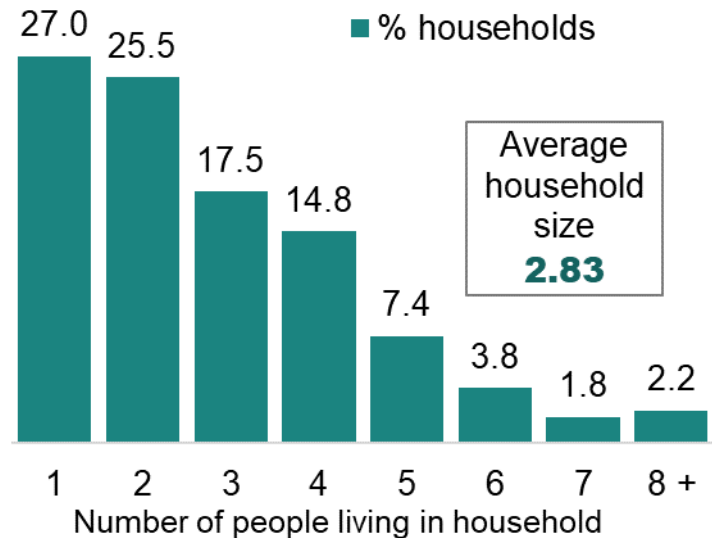
* Includes flats, maisonettes, including those living in converted or commercial buildings, and the small number living in mobile or temporary structures

Household size in Brent

- Around 27% of Brent households are one person households and a further quarter comprise two people (25%). Just under one third (33%) contain 3 or 4 people and the remaining 15% contain 5 or more people. The average household size in Brent is 2.83, similar to the level recorded in the 2011 Census (2.80).
- The average size of a household in Brent (2.83) is much higher than both the London (2.54) and national (2.36) averages. Brent ranks 6th highest nationally on average household size out of 331 local authority areas across England & Wales. The percentage of households containing 5 or more people is 15% in Brent compared with 10% across London, and 7% across England & Wales.

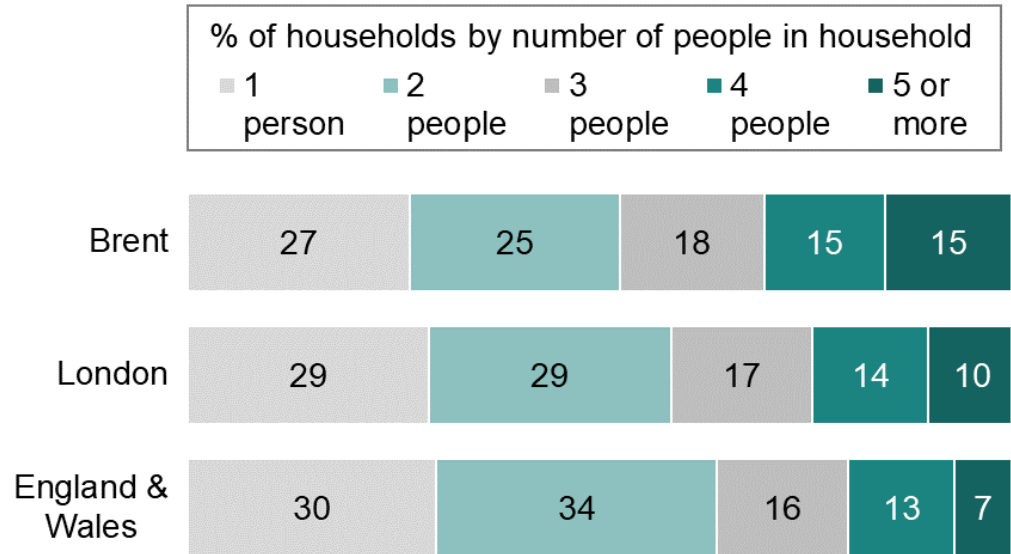
Households by size, Brent, 2021

Base: total households = 118,615



Households by size, 2021

Brent, London and England & Wales (% total)

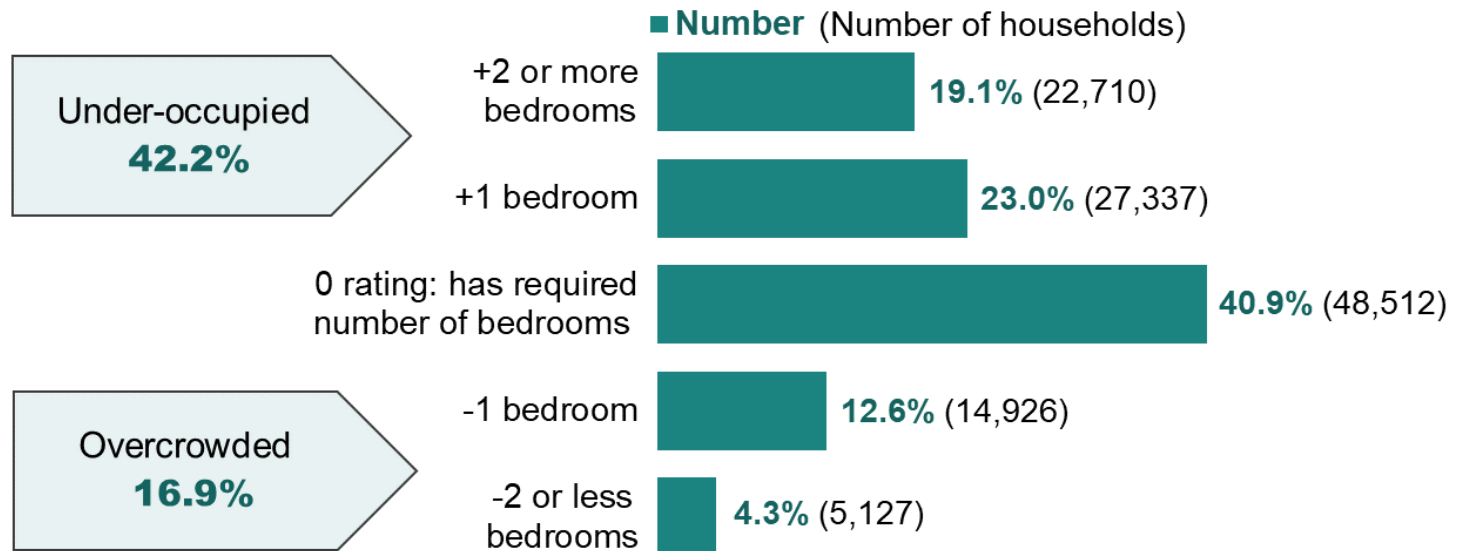


Occupancy rating (bedrooms) - Brent

- The census 'bedroom occupancy rating' determines whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded, ideally occupied or under-occupied, based on the bedroom standard. This is calculated by comparing the number of bedrooms the household requires, given its household composition, to the number of available bedrooms.
- On this measure, around 1 in 6 households (17%) in Brent were living in overcrowded properties: 13% were short of one bedroom, and 4% were short of two or more bedrooms.
- Around 42% of Brent households were classed as under-occupied: around 23% had one more bedroom than required, and 19% had 2 or more bedrooms than required. The remaining 41% of Brent households had the required number of bedrooms (occupancy rating 0).

Bedroom occupancy rating

Brent, 2021

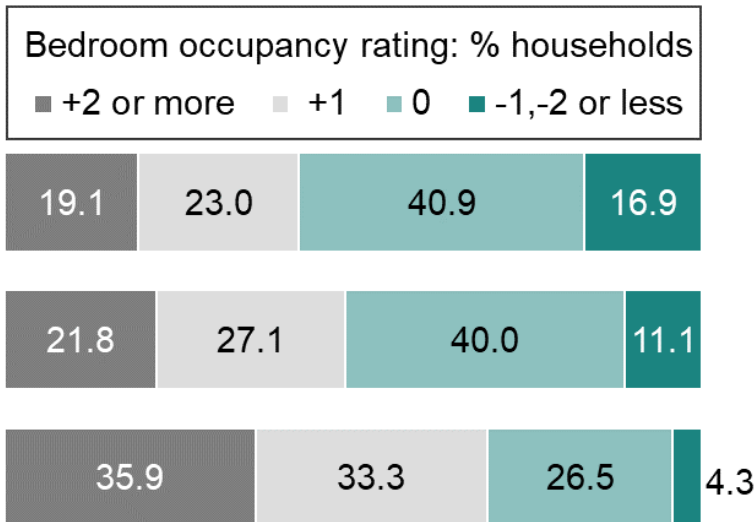


Occupancy: areas compared and change

- The percentage of overcrowded households in Brent was four times higher than rate across England & Wales (17% vs. 4%), and also well above the London average (11%). Brent was ranked 3rd highest in England & Wales on this measure, after Newham (21%) and Barking & Dagenham (18%). Brent's relative position has seen little change since 2011, when it was ranked 2nd highest nationally.
- Around 42% of Brent households were classed as under-occupied, lower than the London average (49%) and well below the national average (69%).
- The occupancy profile of Brent households in 2021 was broadly similar to that recorded in 2011, though there was a slight rise in the percentage of under-occupied households with 2 or more extra bedrooms (17.5% up to 19.1%). The percentage of overcrowded households fell slightly from 17.7% to 16.9%.

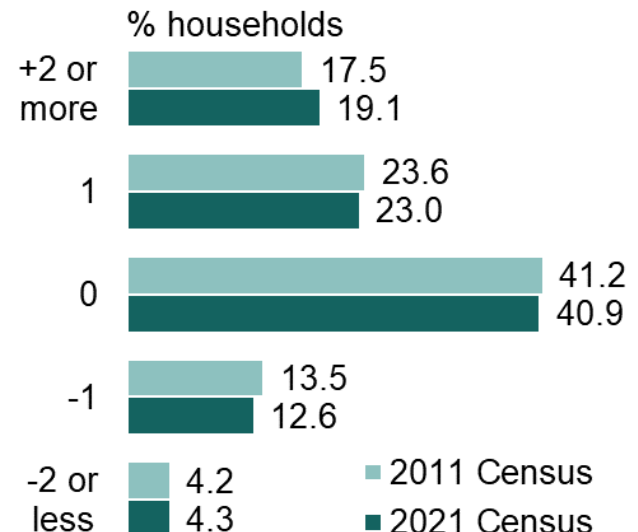
Bedroom occupancy rating

Brent, London and England & Wales, 2021 (% total)



Bedroom occupancy rating 2011-21

Brent (% total)

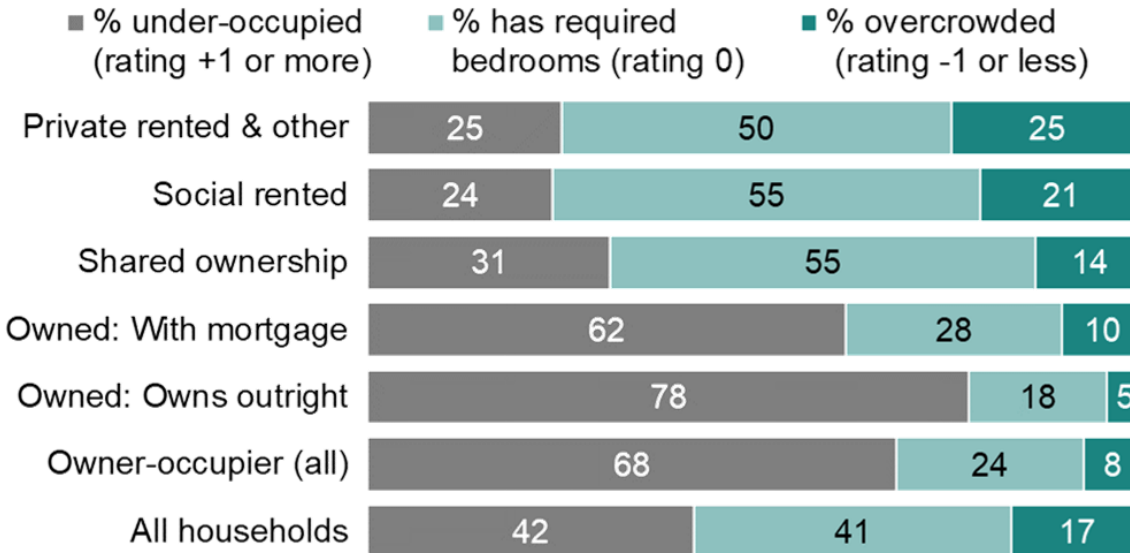


Bedroom occupancy rating by tenure

- Private and social rented households are more likely than owner-occupied households to be overcrowded on the bedroom occupancy measure. Around one quarter of private renter households were overcrowded (25%), treble the rate for owner-occupied households (8%). Private renters made up just over half (53%) of all overcrowded households. Around 21% of social rented households were overcrowded, while 24% were under-occupied.
- Owner-occupiers were the most likely to be under-occupying their accommodation (68%). Within this group, those who owned their households outright had the highest under-occupancy level (at 78%): 47% had two or more bedrooms than they needed and 31% had one more bedroom than needed.
- By accommodation type, those living in houses were far more likely than those in flats to be under-occupying their accommodation (65% vs. 25%).

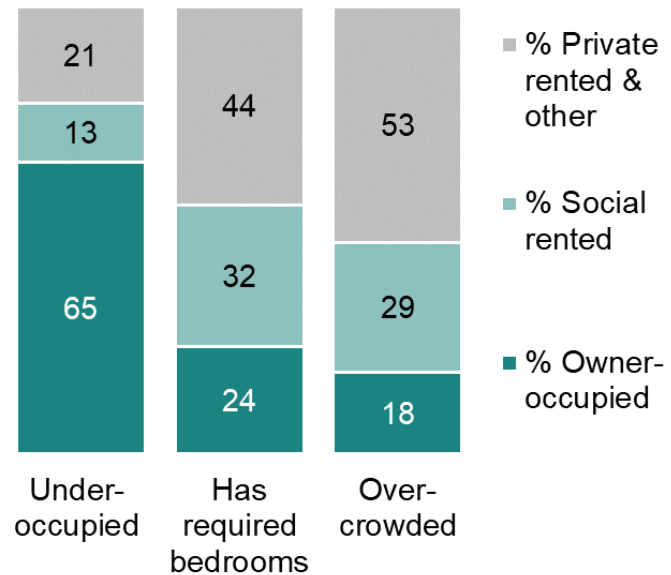
Bedroom occupancy rating by tenure

Brent, 2021 (% households)



Tenure profile by occupancy

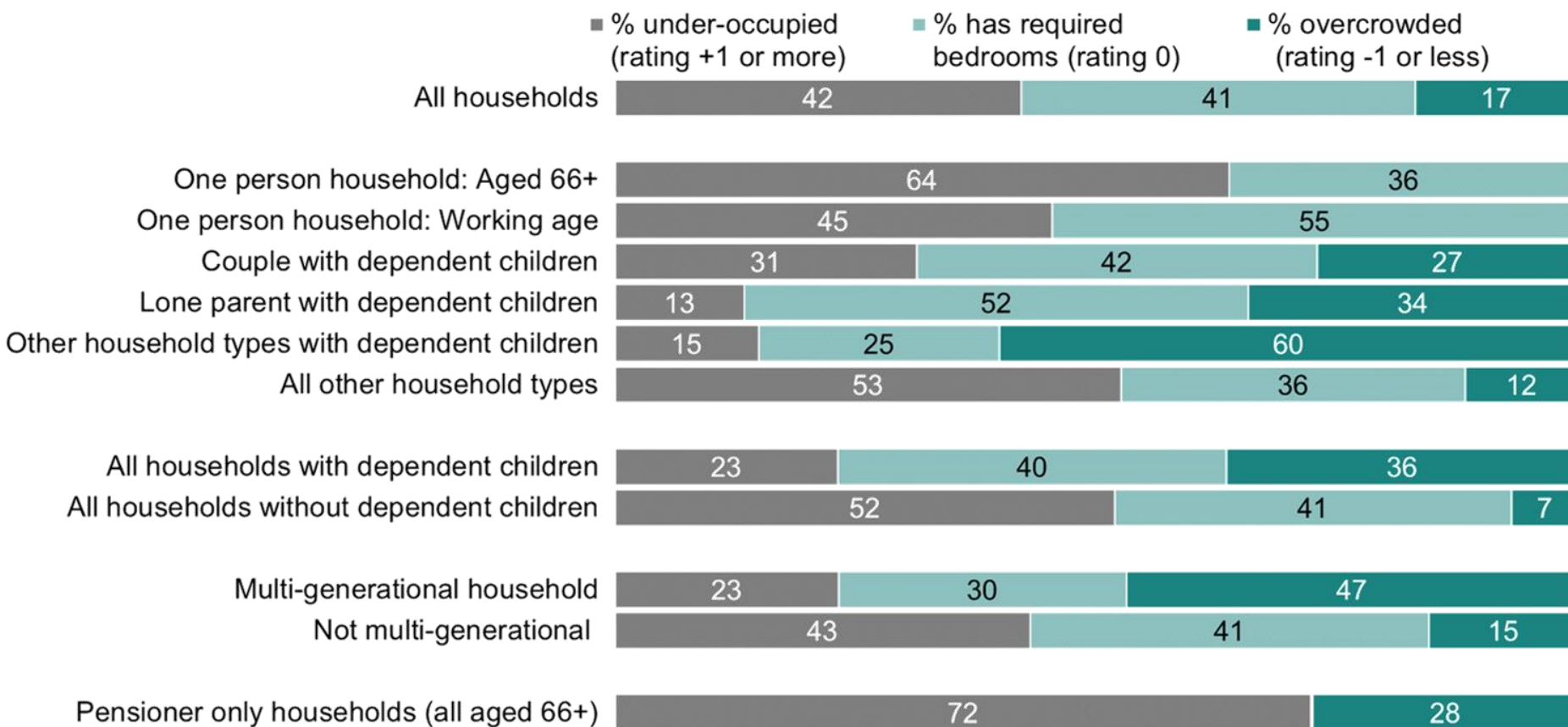
Brent, 2021 (% households)



Occupancy rating by household composition

- Households with dependent children were far more likely than those with no dependent children to live in overcrowded households (36% vs. 7%). Around 5% of Brent households were multi-generational households: almost half of these households lived in over-crowded accommodation (47%).
- Pensioner households (those where all members were aged 66 or over) were the most likely to be under-occupying their accommodation (72%).

Bedroom occupancy rating by household composition, Brent, 2021 (% households)

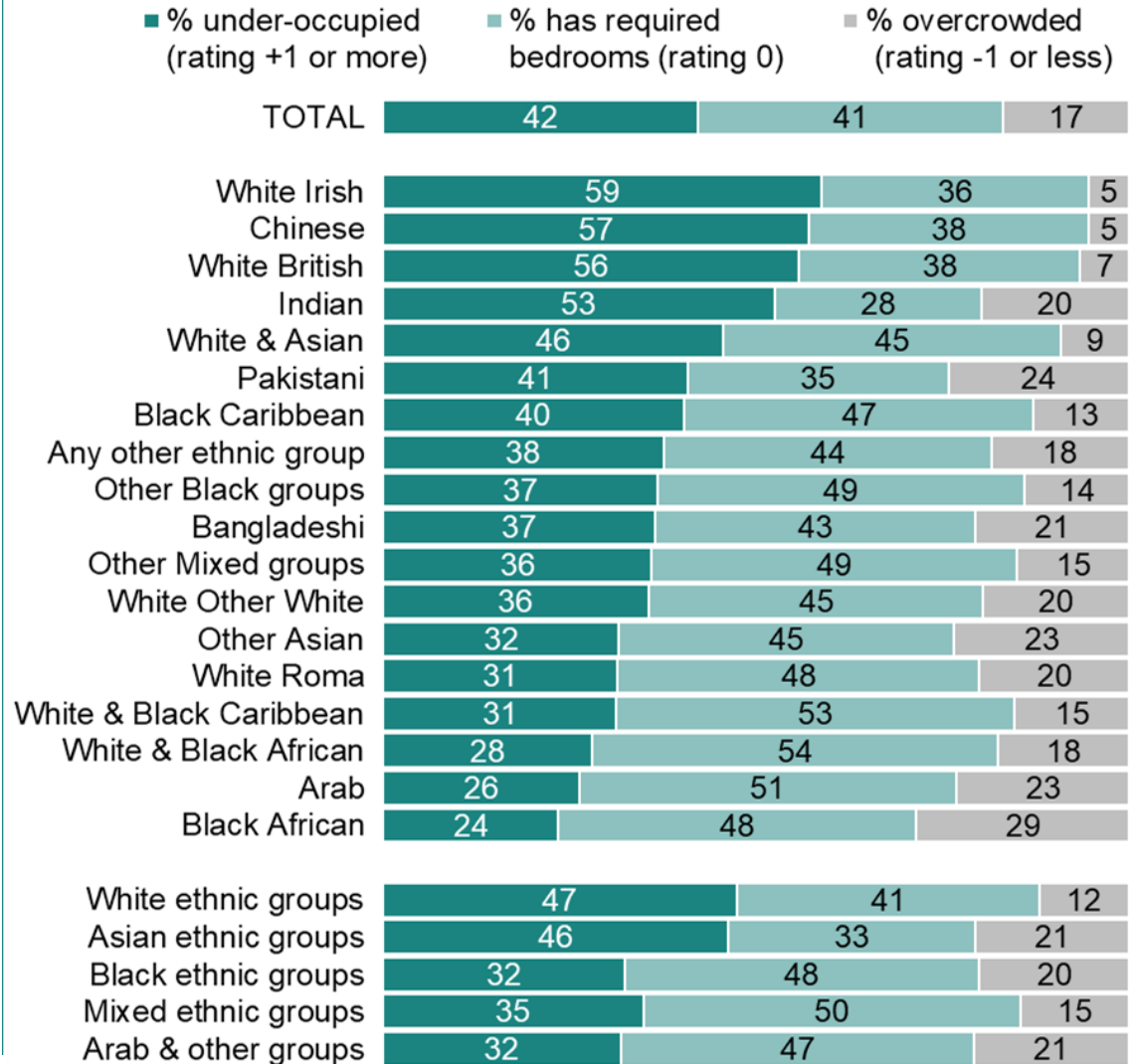


Occupancy rating by ethnicity

- White Irish, Chinese and White British households were the most likely to be under-occupying their accommodation (56-59%) and the least likely to be overcrowded (5-7%).
- Black African households were the most likely to be overcrowded (29%).
- Indian households were the most polarized, with above average rates of both overcrowding (20%) and under-occupation (53%).
- The age profiles of different ethnic group populations should be borne in mind when considering the differentials shown. For example, White Irish households are typically older (and smaller) than average, consistent with the high rates of under-occupancy.

Note: These statistics relate to the ethnicity of the household reference person (HRP). The HRP in the household is determined based on a combination of characteristics, including economic activity and age.

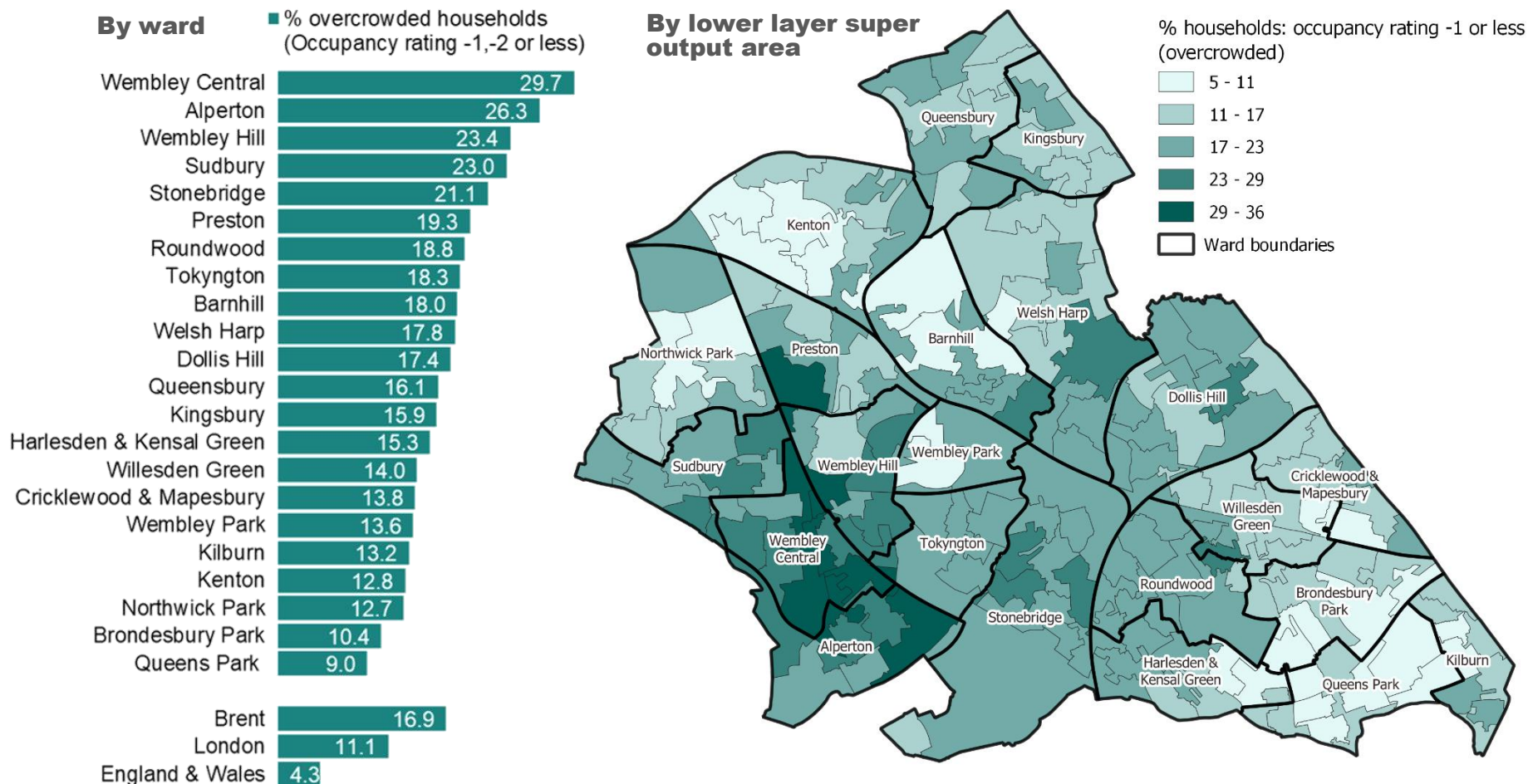
Bedroom occupancy rating by ethnicity of household reference person, Brent, 2021



Overcrowded households by ward

At ward level, the percentage of households that were overcrowded ranged from 9% in Queens Park up to 30% in Wembley Central. The map shows how the rate varies across the borough's 181 Lower Layer Super Output areas. A housing [census atlas](#) has been produced that provides further information on occupancy levels across the borough.

Overcrowded households by ward and LSOA, Brent, 2021



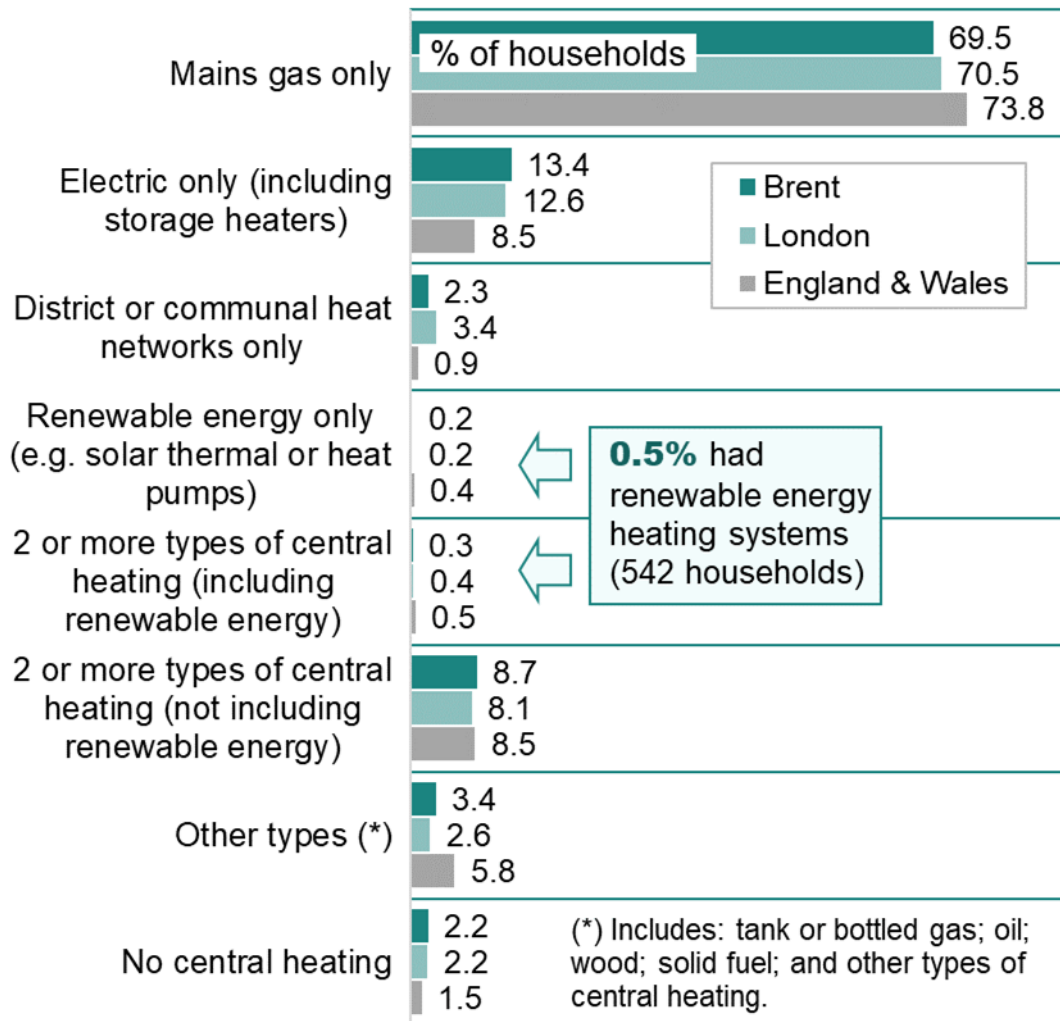
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Central heating: areas compared

- The census recorded information about type of central heating systems in homes. Respondents were advised to tick any options that applied (whether or not they used the system).
- Just over two thirds of Brent households said they had mains gas central heating (69%) and 13% said they had electric central heating.
- The 2021 census was the first to record whether a household's central heating used renewable energy systems such as solar thermal or heat pumps. In Brent, 0.5% of households (542 in number) said they did, lower than the proportion nationally (0.9%) – this included two groups: 0.2% whose system was wholly based on renewable energy and 0.3% who used renewable energy source alongside some other system.
- In Brent, 2.2% had no central heating at all, the same as across London but higher than the percentage across England & Wales (1.5%).

Households by type of central heating

Brent, 2021 (% households)

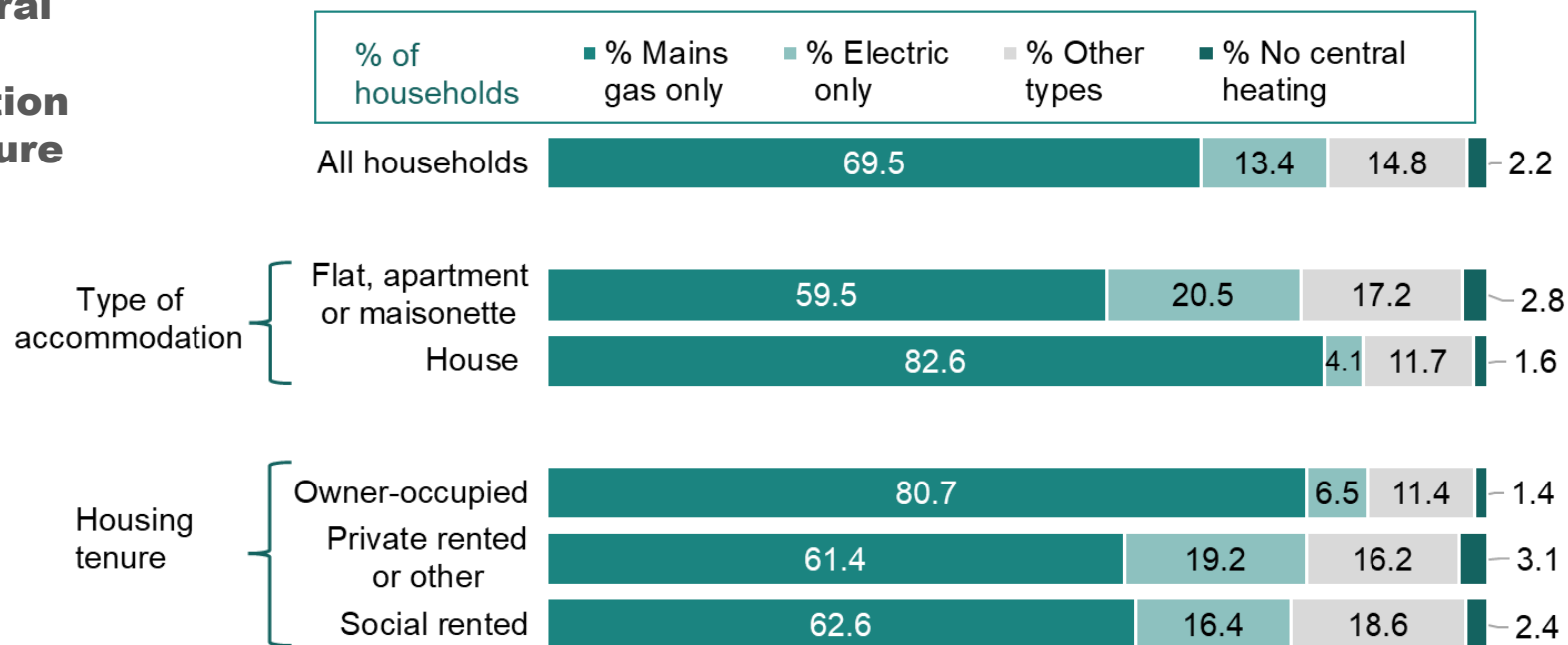


Central heating by housing type

- Electric only central heating systems were more common in flats than houses. In Brent, 21% of households living in flats had electric only heating compared with 4% of those in houses. Those in houses were more likely than those in flats to have gas central heating (83% vs. 60%).
- Those in flats were more likely than those in houses to rely on district or communal heat networks (3.9% vs. 0.2%). Around 2.8% of those living in flats had no central heating system compared with 1.6% of those in houses.
- Owner-occupied households were more likely to have gas central heating (81%) compared with those in the private or social rented sector (61% and 63%). Households living in the private rented sector were the most likely to have no central heating (3.1%) and owner-occupiers the least likely (1.4%).

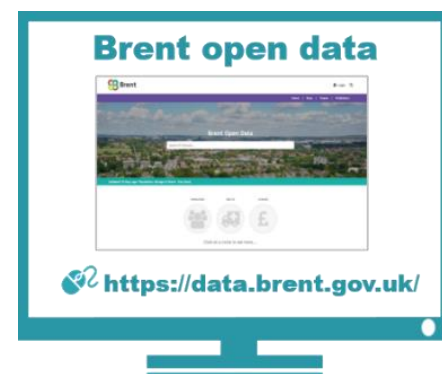
Type of central heating by accommodation type and tenure

Brent, 2021



Further information

- **Data tables:** A set of data tables have been produced to accompany this report. These have been made available in spreadsheet format alongside this topic report, on the council's open data [site](#).
- **2021 Census data:** Census statistics in this report have been produced using a range of different census datasets from the Office for National Statistics. These include: tables extracted from the [NOMIS website](#); bespoke census tables created for Brent using the Office for National Statistics 2021 Census [custom dataset tool](#); and ONS analytical reports and ad hoc data releases on housing.
- **Related reports:** This report provides a borough level overview of census data on housing. An accompanying 'housing census atlas' has also been produced which provides analysis of census data for Brent wards and Lower Super Output Areas – this is available on the council's [open data site](#).
- **ONS mapping tool:** ONS has produced an interactive [mapping tool](#) which allows exploration of census data across all local authority areas, and small areas, in England & Wales.
- **Brent insight:** For more census facts about Brent please see the [Census page](#) on the Council's '[Brent Open Data](#)' website.
- **Contact:** This report was produced by Brent Council's Data and Insight team. For more information please email the team at: open.data@brent.gov.uk



Glossary

Term	Definition
Accommodation type	The type of building or structure used or available for use by one or more household spaces. This could be: the whole house or bungalow, a flat, maisonette or apartment; or a temporary or mobile structure, such as a caravan. There are three types of whole houses or bungalows: detached, semi-detached, or terraced.
Central heating	Central heating is a heating system used to heat multiple rooms in a building by circulating air or heated water through pipes to radiators or vents. Single or multiple fuel sources can fuel these systems. Central heating systems that are unused or not working are still considered.
Dwelling	A dwelling is a self-contained unit of accommodation that may be empty or lived in (e.g. houses or flats). Dwellings can be shared by more than one household and can contain more than one 'household space'.
Household	A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room, or dining area
Household reference person	Within households, the household reference person is determined based on a combination of characteristics, including economic activity and age.
Household size	The number of people living in the household. For this report, average household size figures have been calculated as the number of usual residents living in households (i.e. excluding those in communal establishments) divided by the number of households.
Multi-generational	Households where people from across more than two generations of the same family live together. This includes households with grandparents and grandchildren whether or not the intervening generation also live in the household.
Occupancy rating for bedrooms	This rating determines whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded, ideally occupied or under-occupied, based on the bedroom standard measure. This is calculated by comparing the number of bedrooms the household requires to the number of available bedrooms.
Tenure	Whether a household owns or rents the accommodation that it occupies. Owner-occupied accommodation can be: owned outright, owned with a mortgage or loan, or part owned (via shared ownership). Rented accommodation can be rented through a private landlord or letting agent or social rented through a local council or housing association. 'Living rent free' is where the household does not own the accommodation and does not pay rent to live there (for example, living in a relative or friend's property or live-in carers or nannies). Tenure information is not available for unoccupied dwellings/household spaces.
Unoccupied dwelling	An unoccupied dwelling refers to a unit of accommodation with no usual residents, although they may be used by short-term residents or visitors on Census Day. They can be recorded as either of the following: second residence, holiday home or vacant home only occupied by short-term residents or visitors only.