

# England Census Records: 1841 – 1911

SOCCGS England SIG – November 8, 2022

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The common advice for doing English research is to start in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – find your people in the Census records and civil registration records and first locate them in the right place – then work back to earlier records knowing you have the correct location.

Census of England and Wales years: (1841-1851-1861-1871-1881-1891-1901-1911)

Census dates: 1841: 6 June; 1851: 30 March; 1861: 7 April; 1871: 2 April; 1881: 3 April; 1891: 5 April; 1901: 31 March; 1911: 2 April

**1841** – first census with useful genealogical information

**1851** – first census to show relationship to head of household, marital status, birthplace and disability; 30% of children lived away from home as servants or apprentices

**1861** – first time recording of people living on boats or working at sea

**1871** – column for infirmity changed to add “imbecile or idiot” and “lunatic”

**1881** – five major employment categories in census report: professional, domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial

**1891** – shows number of rooms occupied by family; whether worker was employer, employee or neither

**1901** – added entry for “working at home”; term “idiot” dropped and “feeble-minded” added

**1911** – original household schedule used as official record; completed and signed by head of household if they were literate

The 1841 Census typically provides the following details: name; age (rounded down to nearest multiple of 5 for all persons aged 15 and older); gender; occupation; indication of birthplace by county or country (specific birthplace not given).

The 1851 through 1891 Censuses typically provide the following details: name; relationship to head of household; marital condition; age; gender; occupation; place of birth.

Increased industrialization of the country since the 1871 resulted in more specialized trades. In 1871 a dictionary of 7,000 trades was compiled by census clerks. That was expanded to over 11,000 separate trades for the 1881.

1911 Census images are the actual household schedules and will likely include your ancestor's signature if they were literate. Questions added about fertility in marriage; married women asked to answer how long married; number of children born in current marriage; number of children still alive and number who died. 1911 is the latest census available to public.

1939 Register – survey of civilian population - Sept. 1939 – [Findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com)

Research the census online at [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) and [Findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com).

The National Archives reference numbers for the census records series:

|             |                           |             |                 |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| <u>1841</u> | HO 107 [pieces 1-1465]    | <u>1881</u> | RG 11           |
| <u>1851</u> | HO 107 [pieces 1466-2531] | <u>1891</u> | RG 12           |
| <u>1861</u> | RG 9                      | <u>1901</u> | RG 13           |
| <u>1871</u> | RG 10                     | <u>1911</u> | RG 14 and RG 78 |

Occupational abbreviations often used in the Census:

## Occupations

F.S. = Female Servant  
M.S. = Male Servant  
Cl. = Clerk  
Ind. = Independent (i.e. of Independent Means)  
M. = Maker (e.g. Boot M. = Boot Maker; Saddle M. = Saddle Maker)  
Ap. = Apprentice  
J. = Journeyman  
Sh. = Shopman  
F.W.K. = Frame Work Knitter (common in Notts. and surrounding counties)  
Straw Pl. = Straw Plaiter (common in Herts. and Beds.)  
Ag. Lab. = Agricultural Laborer

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Blank census forms: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/census-forms>

### Census and Population Highlights

At the time of the 1841 Census England was still a largely rural population. However, the government enacted many new laws to deal with the social effects of the Industrial Revolution: 1835 Municipal Corporations Act; 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act; 1836 Act for Registering Births, Marriages and Deaths. Over 2,000 registration districts had already been established in England and Wales for recording birth, marriages and deaths, so those were subdivided for the Census.

This was also a period of significant changes in population during the Victorian era. Population increased from under 28 million in 1841 to more than 41 million in 1901. During this period Ireland experienced a significant decrease in population due to the potato famine and the resulting large-scale emigration. Excluding Ireland, the increase is even more dramatic, doubling during this period from 18 million to 37 million.

The 1851 showed that 30% of children were living away from home as either servants or apprentices. The population of England and Wales in the 1861 Census increased 12% over 1851. The population of Ireland decreased nearly one million from 1851, mostly due to emigration to the US, England and Scotland.

In the 1871 Census there were 1.2 million women working as servants in England and Wales, and there were 160 people over the age of 100. In 1881 the number of women working in England and Wales increased to 3.4 million.

In 1891 47% of the population was under the age of 21, and there were 42 over the age of 100. By the time of the 1891 Census half the population lived in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants.

The 1901 Census showed that the British population was very homogeneous, with less than one per cent of those enumerated saying they were born outside the U.K. That changed considerably over the next 120 years -- a 2018 population survey estimated 14% were foreign born. This census also showed that women outnumbered men by 1.2 million, and almost one-third of women were in paid employment.

The 1911 showed that 1.3 million women and girls were working in domestic service in England and Wales.

**1921 Census:** Findmypast has announced that the 1921 Census will be released to the public on 6 January 2022. Digital images and transcriptions of individual Census records will be available exclusively on Findmypast.com.

## Links for 1921 Census information

- TNA announcement:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/1921-census-online-publication-date-announced/>

- Findmypast announcement:

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census>

- YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdkpePDervc>

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