

200 years of the Census in...

BEDFORDSHIRE

March 10th 2001 marks the bicentenary of the modern Census in Britain.

For 200 years the Census has been the cornerstone of planning in Britain. The first Census in 1801 was taken amidst fears that Britain's growing population might outstrip the country's supply of food. It asked 5 questions and counted 10 million people living in two million households. The 2001 Census, which takes place on the 29th April, will count almost 60 million people who live in approximately twenty four million households. It will ask 40 questions and generate 2 billion pieces of information to allocate more than £50 billion of public spending each year.

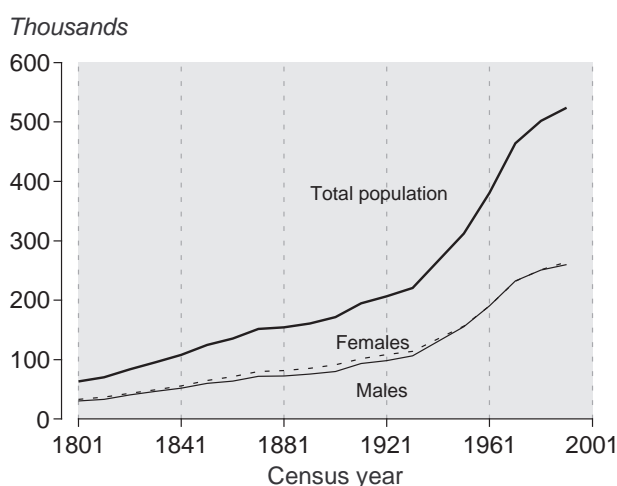
The Census is not only useful for planning. Two centuries of census taking have produced a record of remarkable changes in British society. For example, 90% of the population lived in urban areas in 1991 compared with just 16% in 1831. The average size of households has fallen by half in the past 100 years from 4.6 persons in 1901 to approximately 2.4 persons in 1991. We are also living longer. In 1821 almost half of the population was under 20 years of age compared with just over a quarter under 20 years of age today.

The value of the Census is that it provides detailed information at a local as well as a national level. This pamphlet - one of a series for various areas in England and for Wales - describes the changes in society measured by the Census between 1801 and 1991.

The information from censuses has continued to evolve and grow since the first reports in 1801. The questions and results are on issues relevant to a particular time and change cannot always be tracked exactly over the two centuries. Boundaries of counties also shift over time. The figures and graphs in this pamphlet are the best approximation in the circumstances and are to help paint the picture of change. A full list of the topics covered in the census since 1801 is available in an accompanying document 'Census Topics 1801-2001', and details on how to obtain further information on historical census statistics are given on the back page of this monitor.

THE POPULATION AND AREA SIZE OF BEDFORDSHIRE

This table and chart show the various increases and decreases in area size and population, and numbers of males and females. In terms of analysing the growth in population over the 200 years, Bedfordshire has not been significantly affected by boundary changes



Year	Area Size (Acres)	Total Population	Males	Females
1801	na	63,393	30,523	32,870
1811	na	70,213	33,171	37,042
1821	na	83,716	40,385	43,331
1831	297,632	95,483	46,448	49,033
1841	297,632	107,936	52,190	55,746
1851	295,582	124,478	59,941	64,537
1861	295,582	135,287	63,940	71,347
1871	305,293	151,539	71,544	79,995
1881	307,050	154,259	72,576	81,683
1891	298,494	160,704	75,477	85,227
1901	298,494	171,240	80,192	91,048
1911	302,942	194,588	93,006	101,582
1921	302,942	206,462	98,232	108,230
1931	302,942	220,525	106,449	114,076
1951	302,941	311,937	155,436	156,501
1961	302,940	380,837	190,549	190,288
1971	305,080	464,277	232,414	231,863
1981	305,070	502,164	250,948	251,216
1991	305,309	524,105	259,860	264,245

na = not available

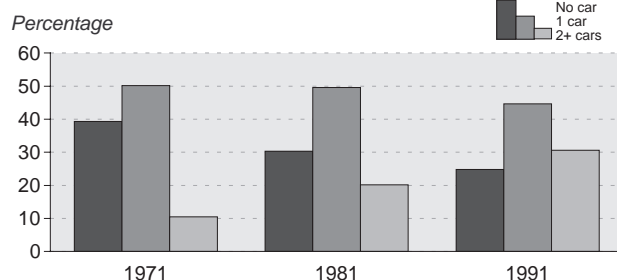
Households and Amenities

At the end of the Second World War (1939-45) it was vital to assess the overall housing situation in Great Britain. Consequently the 1951 Census had a number of questions on housing needs. These were met in the post-war housing programmes, and significant improvements were evident in subsequent Censuses. In 1971 only 1,680 households in Bedfordshire were without a WC, compared to 13,547 households in 1951. By 1981, only 2,787 households were without a fixed bath.

The 2001 Census will ask questions relevant now, such as availability of central heating and the lowest floor level of accommodation.

Amenities	1951	H/Holds %
H/Holds without piped water	8,444	9.2
H/Holds without WC	13,547	14.8
H/Holds without fixed bath	33,552	36.6
H/Holds without kitchen sink	6,127	6.7
H/Holds without cooking stove	959	1.1
H/Holds with all five of the above	49,059	53.5

(Total Households in 1951 = 91,672)



Car Availability 1971 – 1991

A question on car availability was asked for the first time in 1971, by which time over 60 per cent of households in Bedfordshire already had a car. At the time of the 1991 Census this had increased by a further 15 percentage points to three-quarters of households (75%). There has also been a big increase in households with two or more cars since 1971.

OCCUPATIONS

Agriculture

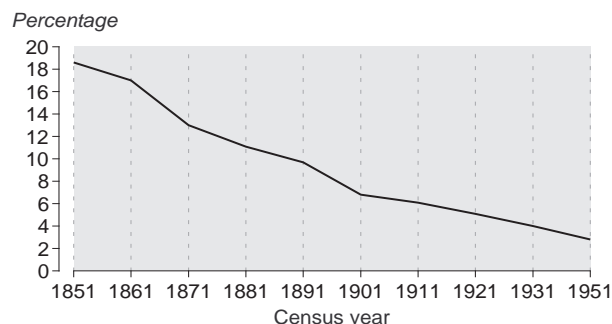
A general decline in the number of people employed in agriculture is common to many counties.

In Bedfordshire the number of agricultural labourers fell from 18,410 in 1861 to 6,434 in 1931, a decrease of 65%.

By 1991, the number of farmers and agricultural labourers accounted for less than 1% of Bedfordshire's population.

N.B. This analysis is based upon the number of people employed in agriculture as a percentage of the total population, not just the working population.

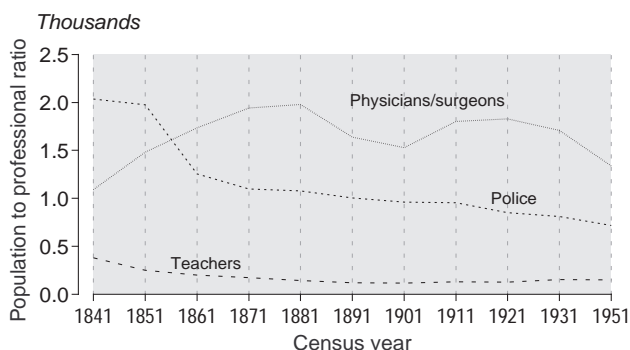
Percentage of people employed in agriculture in Bedfordshire



Professionals

This chart is based on a comparison between three professional occupations (physicians/surgeons, teachers and the police), and the total population of Bedfordshire, 1841-1951.

There have been changes in definition in what is included in each of these professions over the years.



For example, in 1841 'Police' included watchmen who were paid for 'guarding the gates' and patrolling the streets at night. Early figures for physicians and surgeons may also be overstated as they included people employed in 'apothecary' (chemists) and medical students.

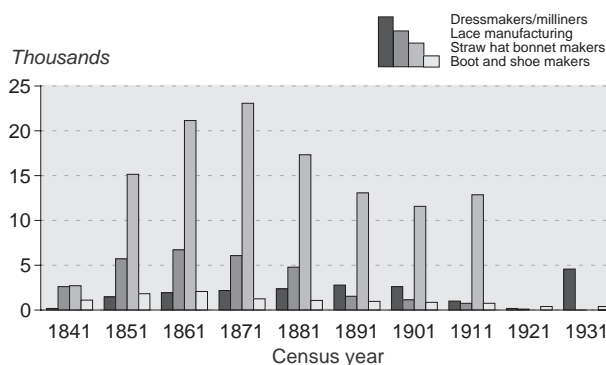
The number of people per physician/surgeon appears to have risen and then fallen, whilst the numbers of people to each policeman/woman and teacher has fallen over the period. For example, there was one police officer per 2,000 people in 1851, dropping 716 people in 1951.

By 1991, there was one teacher per 72 people, one physician/surgeon per 1,070 people and one police officer per 452 people.

N.B. Figures between 1951 and 1991 have not been included due to problems with the availability and comparability of data between these years.

Key Occupations

The chart highlights four of the main occupations in Bedfordshire, past and present, and trends over the years. Straw hat and bonnet making reached a peak during 1871 with 15 per cent of Bedfordshire's population employed in this trade (23,058 people). Figures for this occupation are not available for 1921 and 1931. The number of people employed in lace manufacturing rose between 1841 and 1861 then declined, as did numbers of boot and shoemakers. The numbers of dressmakers and milliners varied across the period.



N.B. Analyses are only shown to 1931 because of difficulties in making comparisons with more recent statistics.

Did you know ?

- The population of Bedfordshire increased eight-fold between 1801 to 1991.
- In 1991, one in ten households in Bedfordshire did not have central heating, which compared to a GB average of one in five.
- Between 1851 and 1901, the number of people employed on the railways in Bedfordshire (excluding construction) increased ten-fold – from 110 people to 1,284 people.
- In 1881, 14% of Bedfordshire’s female population were employed as indoor domestic servants. Over 19 times as many females were domestic servants as males.
- In 1851, there were 22 chimney sweeps aged between 10 and 14 in Bedfordshire.
- In 1881 there were 17,316 milliners or hatters in Bedfordshire. This figure had fallen to 4,350 by 1951.
- There was a rise in the population density of Bedfordshire from 0.3 people per acre in 1831, to 1.7 people per acre in 1991. This was above the GB average of almost 1 person per acre in 1991.
- The numbers of people per household has decreased over the last 200 years. In 1801 the average household in Bedfordshire contained 5 people, compared to 2.6 in 1991. This was slightly higher than the 1991 GB average of 2.5 people per household.

The Census reports also contain interesting explanatory notes:

1851 – *“There was a temporary increase in population of the county due to a feast in Souldrop.”*

1881 – *“Census returns show almost a quarter of the women in Bedfordshire as being employed in the making of straw hats and bonnets.”*

1901 – *“7,767 boys between the ages of 10 and 14 are shown as being in employment. The two main occupations were in agriculture and as messenger boys.”*

1951 – *“The population increase of 41.5 % over the 20 year period between the censuses of 1931 and 1951 represents the highest increase in England.”*

Further information

These monitors have been produced to show county level information. Often, there is more interest in information for lower geographical areas e.g. parishes. Many good reference libraries hold census volumes to enable individuals to carry out their own research. The ONS London library (details below) which is open to the public also contains a full set of census volumes back to 1801. From 10th March 2001 there will be additional information made available on our website www.statistics.gov.uk. Further advice and limited research can be also carried out by Census Customer Services.

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