

200 years of the Census in...

ESSEX

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.

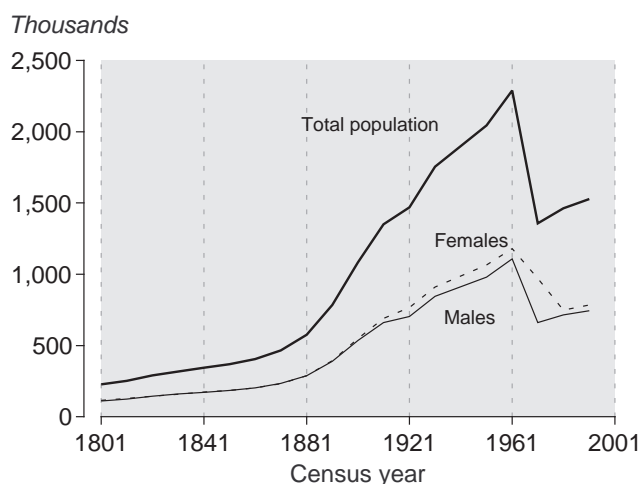
The Census is not only useful for planning. Two centuries of census taking have produced a record of remarkable changes in British society. For example, 90% of the population lived in urban areas in 1991 compared with just 16% in 1831. The average size of households has fallen by half in the past 100 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 ESSEX

This table and chart show the various increases and decreases in area size and population, and numbers of males and females. There have been several changes in the boundaries and size of Essex over the years. For example, the apparent decrease in the population of Essex between 1961 and 1971 was predominantly caused by a boundary change, when boroughs including East and West Ham, Wanstead, Barking, Leyton, Dagenham and Ilford became part of Greater London.



| Year | Area Size (Acres) | Total Population | Males | Females |
|------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1801 | na | 226,437 | 111,356 | 115,081 |
| 1811 | na | 252,473 | 124,839 | 127,634 |
| 1821 | na | 289,424 | 144,909 | 144,515 |
| 1831 | 979,000 | 317,507 | 159,015 | 158,492 |
| 1841 | 979,000 | 344,979 | 172,348 | 172,631 |
| 1851 | 1,060,549 | 369,318 | 185,399 | 183,919 |
| 1861 | 1,060,549 | 404,851 | 203,143 | 201,708 |
| 1871 | 1,055,133 | 466,436 | 233,903 | 232,533 |
| 1881 | 987,032 | 576,434 | 288,180 | 288,254 |
| 1891 | 985,545 | 784,258 | 389,949 | 394,309 |
| 1901 | 979,532 | 1,083,998 | 535,602 | 548,396 |
| 1911 | 979,532 | 1,350,881 | 660,662 | 690,219 |
| 1921 | 979,532 | 1,470,257 | 703,042 | 767,215 |
| 1931 | 977,764 | 1,755,459 | 844,625 | 910,834 |
| 1951 | 977,830 | 2,044,964 | 980,313 | 1,064,651 |
| 1961 | 978,056 | 2,288,058 | 1,108,402 | 1,179,656 |
| 1971 | 907,806 | 1,358,028 | 661,065 | 696,963 |
| 1981 | 907,331 | 1,461,890 | 713,793 | 748,097 |
| 1991 | 907,707 | 1,528,577 | 743,719 | 784,858 |

na = not available

Households and Amenities

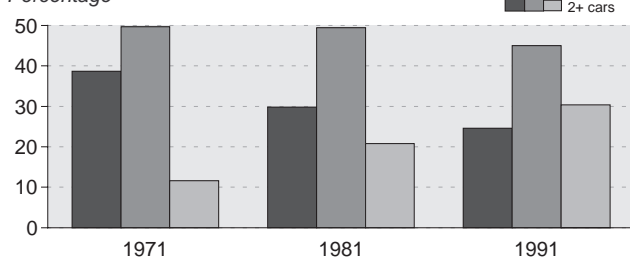
At the end of the Second World War (1939-45) it was vital to assess the overall housing situation in Great Britain. Consequently the 1951 Census had a number of questions on housing needs. These were met in the post-war housing programmes, and significant improvements were evident in subsequent Censuses. In 1971 only 6,800 households in Essex were without a WC, compared to 43,462 households in 1951. By 1981, only 6,834 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 | 22,719 | 3.7 |
| H/Holds without WC | 43,462 | 7.0 |
| H/Holds without fixed bath | 188,726 | 30.5 |
| H/Holds without kitchen sink | 24,029 | 3.9 |
| H/Holds without cooking stove | 5,224 | 0.8 |
| H/Holds with all five of the above | 345,007 | 55.7 |

(Total Households in 1951 = 691.311)

Percentage



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 Essex 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

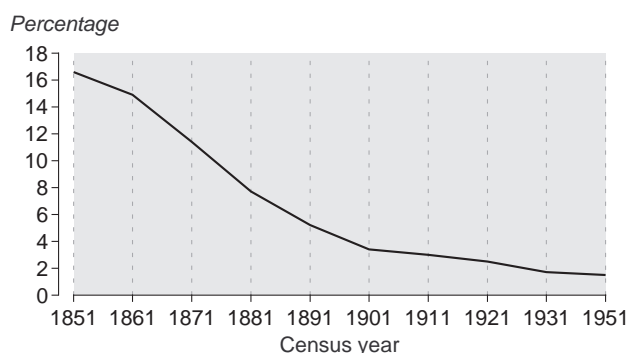
Agriculture

A general decline in the number of people employed in agriculture is common to many counties. In Essex the number of agricultural labourers fell from 48,016 in 1861 to 21,199 in 1931, a decrease of 56%.

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

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..

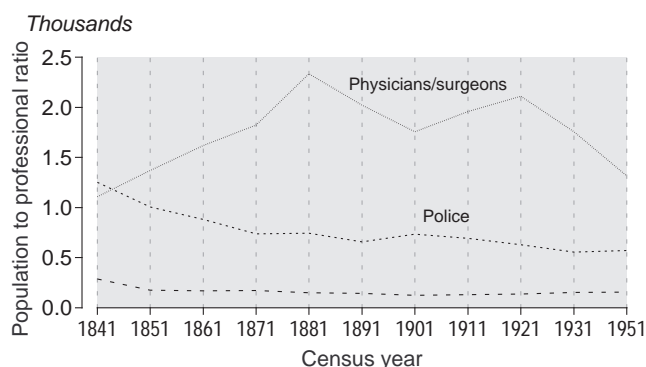
Percentage of people employed in agriculture in Essex



Professionals

This chart is based on a comparison between three professional occupations (physicians/surgeons, teachers and the police), and the total population of Essex, 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 are also 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 1,000 people in 1851, dropping to 570 people in 1951.

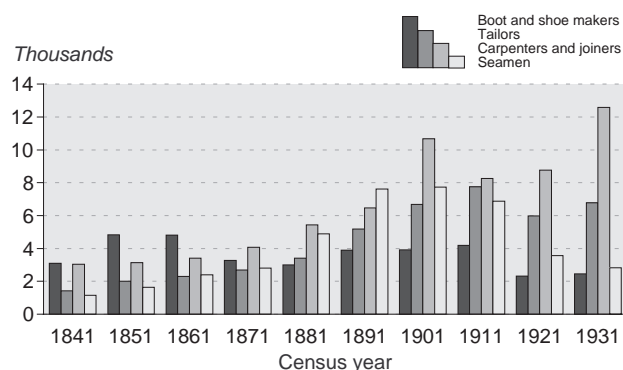
By 1991, there was one teacher per 73 people, one physician/surgeon per 831 people and one police officer per 306 people.

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 Essex, past and present, and trends over the years.

The number of Seamen in Essex rose and fell over the period, being almost 8,000 in 1901, but down to under 3,000 in 1931. The general rise in the number of carpenters and joiners reflected the increased need for accommodation and furniture as the number of households grew. The number of boot and shoemakers and tailors grew during later Victorian times and were still significant occupations in Essex in 1931.



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

Did you know?

- The population of Essex increased seven-fold between 1801 to 1991. The rise before significant boundary changes (i.e. between 1801 and 1961) was more than ten-fold.
- In 1991, one in ten households in Essex 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 Essex (excluding construction) increased thirty-fold – from 408 people to 10,958 people.
- In 1881, 12% of the female population in Essex were employed as indoor domestic servants. Over 25 times as many females were domestic servants as males.
- In 1851, there were 1,349 fishermen/women and 3,058 people employed in straw plait manufacture in Essex.
- There was a rise in the population density of Essex 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 Essex contained 6 people, compared to 2.5 in 1991. This was consistent with the 1991 GB average.

The Census reports also contain interesting explanatory notes:

1831 – “Around 30 men were employed in the manufacture of gunpowder at Waltham Abbey”.

1851 – “The Infant Orphan Asylum, containing 404 persons has been erected in Wanstead Parish (West Ham) since 1841.”

1861 – “Romford, East Ham parish, Woodford parish and various parishes comprising Chigwell sub-district increased in population due to association with the railway and subsequent construction of houses.”

1871 – “In Plaistow and Church Street wards, the addition to the population is attributed to an increase in employment at Victoria Docks, to the introduction of a number of important manufactures (gutta percha, telegraph wire, gas etc.) and to the opening of an industrial school (that of St. George, Hanover Square).”

1911 – “The civil parish of Upminster increased in population due to its development as a ‘Garden City’”

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.

Census Customer Services
Office for National Statistics
Room 4300S
Segensworth Road, Titchfield
Hampshire, PO15 5RR

Phone: 01329 813800
Fax: 01329 813587
e-mail: census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk

ONS London Library
1 Drummond Gate
Pimlico
London
SW1V 2QQ

