

# *200 years of the Census in...*

## **SOMERSET**

March 10<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

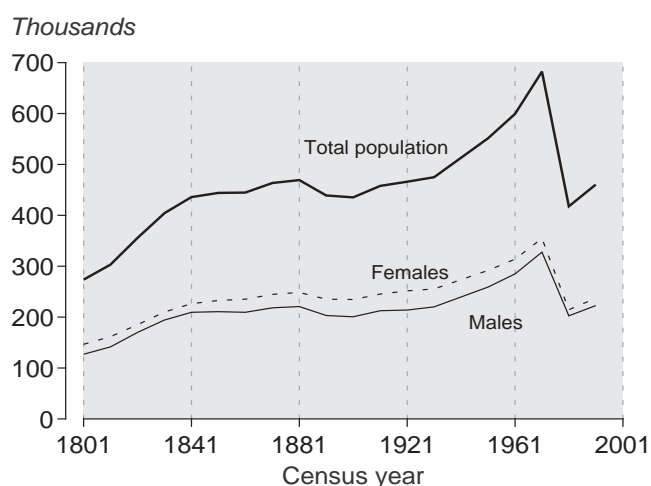
The Census is not only useful for planning. Two centuries of census taking have produced a record of remarkable changes in British society. For example, 90% of the population lived in urban areas in 1991 compared with just 16% in 1831. The average size of households has fallen by half in the past 100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

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 area size of Somerset over the years. For example, the apparent decrease in Somerset's population between 1971 and 1981 was predominantly the effect of boundary changes (with parts of what previously was Somerset becoming Avon) during the re-organisation of Local Government in 1974.



Year	Area Size (Acres)	Total Population	Males	Females
1801	na	273,750	126,927	146,823
1811	na	303,180	141,449	161,731
1821	na	355,314	170,199	185,115
1831	1,028,690	404,200	194,316	209,884
1841	1,028,090	435,982	209,383	226,599
1851	1,047,220	443,916	211,045	232,871
1861	1,047,220	444,873	209,680	235,193
1871	1,049,815	463,483	218,454	245,029
1881	1,049,812	469,109	220,582	248,527
1891	1,042,488	438,710	203,495	235,215
1901	1,037,484	434,950	200,493	234,457
1911	1,037,642	458,025	212,732	245,293
1921	1,037,594	465,710	214,092	251,618
1931	1,036,818	475,142	219,970	255,172
1951	1,032,325	551,453	259,257	292,196
1961	1,032,325	599,046	284,921	314,125
1971	1,032,080	682,664	327,631	355,033
1981	852,727	417,457	202,807	214,650
1991	853,007	460,368	222,945	237,423

na = not available

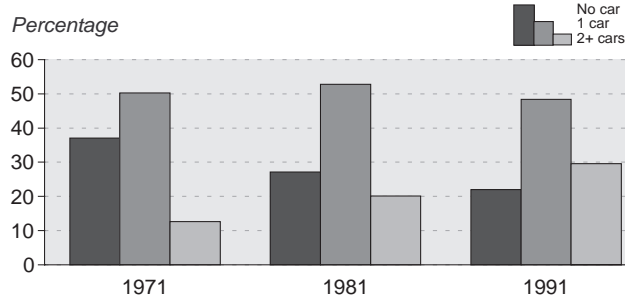
### Households and Amenities

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 2,985 households in Somerset were without a WC, compared to 19,292 households in 1951. By 1981, only 2,616 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	14,448	8.7
H/Holds without WC	19,292	11.7
H/Holds without fixed bath	61,276	37.0
H/Holds without kitchen sink	16,037	9.7
H/Holds without cooking stove	4,556	2.8
H/Holds with all five of the above	86,449	52.2

(Total Households in 1951 = 165,561)



### Car Availability 1971 – 1991

A question on car availability was asked for the first time in 1971, by which time 63 per cent of households in Somerset already had a car. At the time of the 1991 Census this had increased by a further 15 percentage points to over three-quarters of households (78 %). There has also been a big increase in households with two or more cars since 1971.

# OCCUPATIONS

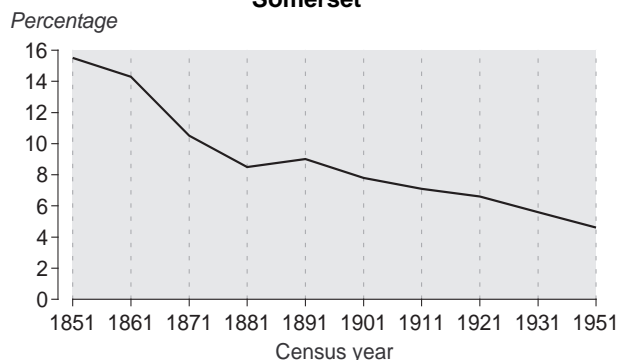
## Agriculture

A general decline in the number of people employed in agriculture is common to many counties. In Somerset the number of agricultural labourers fell from 37,276 in 1861 to 13,722 in 1931, a decrease of 63 %.

By 1991, the number of farmers and agricultural labourers accounted for 2% of Somerset'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.*

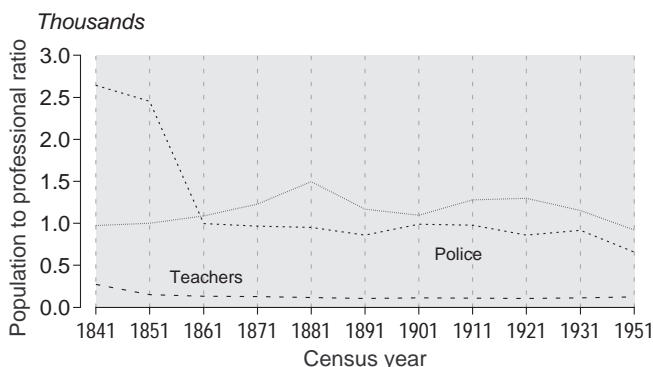
Percentage of people employed in agriculture in Somerset



## Professionals

This chart is based on a comparison between three professional occupations (physicians/surgeons, teachers and the police), and the total population of Somerset, 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 fallen, whilst the numbers of people per policeman/woman and teacher has fallen. For example, there was one police officer per 2,451 people in 1851, dropping to 658 people in 1951.

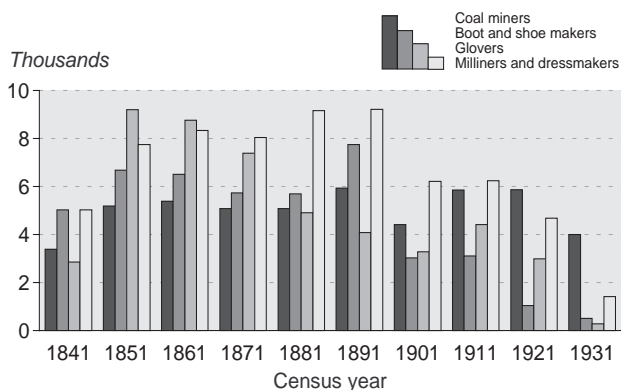
By 1991, there was one teacher per 66 people, one physician/surgeon per 569 people and one police officer per 423 people.

*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 Somerset, past and present, and trends over the years.

Between 1841 and 1931 the only increase in employment came in coal mining, which grew from 3,394 people to almost 4,000 people. The other three occupations all showed a high degree of growth followed by steady decline at the turn of the century. This was particularly evident in boot and shoemakers who fell from 7,749 people in 1891 to 509 people 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 Somerset increased by almost 200,000 people between 1801 to 1991. Before the boundary changes of 1974, the population was close to 700,000 people.
- In 1991, one in five households in Somerset did not have central heating, which was consistent with the 1991 GB average.
- Between 1851 and 1901, the number of people employed on the railways in Somerset (excluding construction) increased almost twelve-fold – from 328 people to 3,684 people.
- In 1881, 8% of Somerset’s female population were employed as indoor domestic servants. Over 29 times as many females were domestic servants as males.
- In 1851, there were 2 chimney sweeps aged between 5 and 9 in Somerset.
- In 1951 there were 17,688 members of the armed forces in Somerset, whilst the highest number of seamen recorded for Somerset was 1,075 in 1871.
- There was a rise in the population density of Somerset from 0.4 people per acre in 1831, to 0.5 people per acre in 1991. This was below 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 Somerset contained 6 people, compared to 2.5 in 1991, which matched the 1991 GB average of people per household.

## The Census reports also contain interesting explanatory notes:

1821 - *“The population of the parish of Elm has been increased by the establishment of extensive iron works”*

1841 - *“The return for the parish of Knapp includes 30 persons in barns and tents”*

1841 - *“ Parish of Porishead..... The increase in population since 1831 (279) is ascribed to the erection of several houses and baths”*

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> March 2001 there will be additional information made available on our website [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk). Further advice and limited research can be also carried out by Census Customer Services.

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