

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

## **WILTSHIRE**

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.

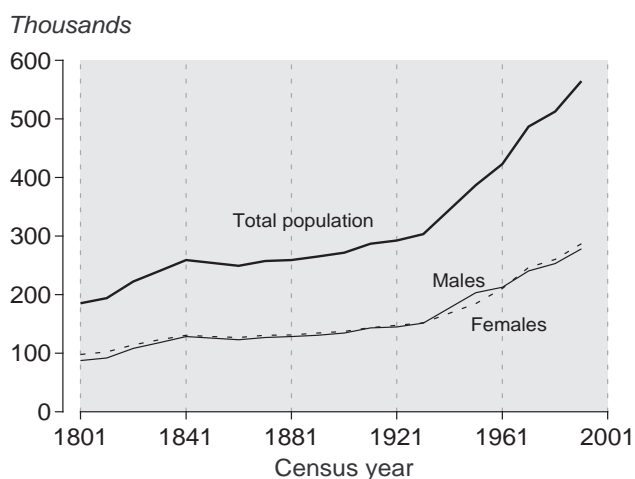
The Census is not only useful for planning. Two centuries of census taking have produced a record of remarkable changes in British society. For example, 90% of the population lived in urban areas in 1991 compared with just 16% in 1831. The average size of households has fallen by half in the past 100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

This table and chart show the various increases and decreases in area size and population, and numbers of males and females. Despite a number of small changes in the boundaries and size of Wiltshire over the years, the population has been more or less unaffected and has continued to increase steadily.



Year	Area Size (Acres)	Total Population	Males	Females
1801	na	185,107	87,380	97,727
1811	na	193,828	91,560	102,268
1821	na	222,157	108,213	113,944
1831	869,620	240,156	117,622	122,534
1841	868,060	258,733	128,240	130,493
1851	865,092	254,221	125,728	128,493
1861	865,092	249,311	122,592	126,719
1871	859,303	257,177	126,828	130,349
1881	866,677	258,965	128,114	130,851
1891	880,248	264,997	130,662	134,335
1901	864,105	271,394	134,540	136,854
1911	864,101	286,822	143,137	143,685
1921	864,101	292,208	144,917	147,291
1931	860,829	303,373	151,377	151,996
1951	860,611	386,692	203,237	184,455
1961	860,611	422,985	212,570	210,415
1971	860,088	486,747	240,162	246,585
1981	860,080	512,635	252,696	259,939
1991	858,931	564,471	277,814	286,657

na = not available

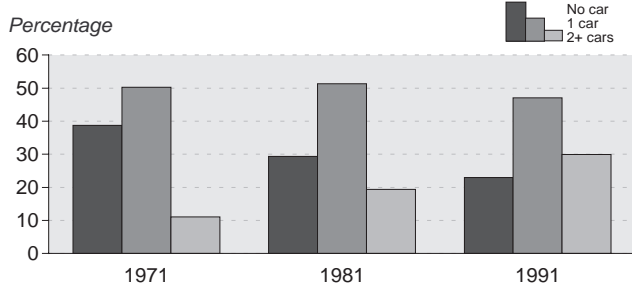
### Households and Amenities

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 2,980 households in Wiltshire were without a WC, compared to 24,200 households in 1951. By 1981, only 2,777 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	15,642	15.2
H/Holds without WC	24,200	23.5
H/Holds without fixed bath	44,542	43.3
H/Holds without kitchen sink	15,529	15.1
H/Holds without cooking stove	2,658	2.6
H/Holds with all five of the above	48,539	47.1

(Total Households in 1951 = 102,949)



### 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 Wiltshire already had a car. At the time of the 1991 Census this had increased by a further 17 percentage points to over three-quarters of households (77 %). There has also been a big increase in households with two or more cars since 1971.

# OCCUPATIONS

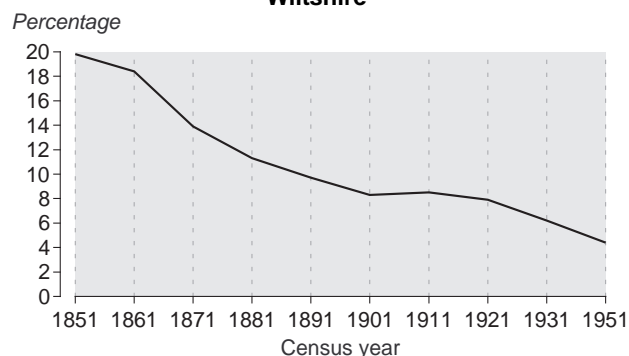
## Agriculture

A general decline in the number of people employed in agriculture is common to many counties. In Wiltshire the number of agricultural labourers fell from 34,128 in 1861 to 12,335 in 1931, a decrease of 64%.

By 1991, the number of farmers and agricultural labourers accounted for less than 1% of Wiltshire'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..*

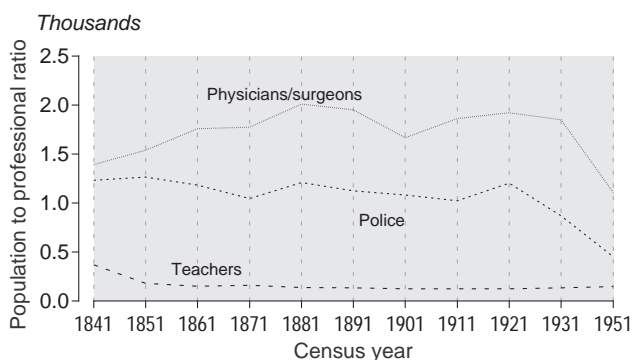
**Percentage of people employed in agriculture in Wiltshire**



## Professionals

This chart is based on a comparison between three professional occupations (physicians/surgeons, teachers and the police), and the total population of Wiltshire, 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 1,265 people in 1851, dropping to 451 people in 1951.

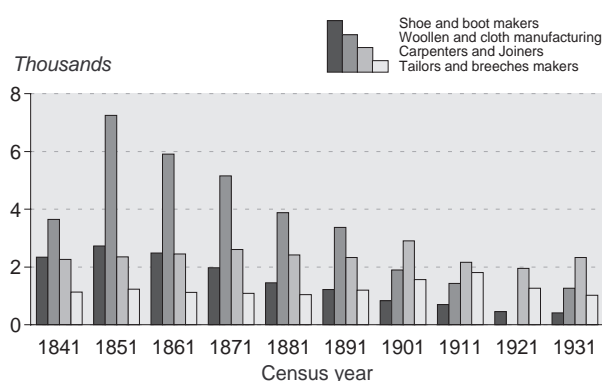
By 1991, there was one teacher per 68 people, one physician/surgeon per 585 people and one police officer per 401 people.

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

The number of people employed in the manufacture of wool and woollen cloth rose sharply from 1841 to 1851 at which time 7,244 people were employed in this occupation. Numbers then declined until 1931 when there were only 1,200 people in Wiltshire employed in this way (figures for 1921 were not available). Numbers of boot and shoemakers fell slowly across the period, whilst numbers of carpenters and joiners stayed fairly consistent. The number of tailors remained fairly steady, although numbers did rise and fall towards the end of 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 Wiltshire increased three-fold between 1801 and 1991.
- In 1991, about one in seven households in Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire (excluding construction) increased over twelve-fold – from 232 people to 2,951 people.
- In 1881, 9% of Wiltshire’s female population were employed as indoor domestic servants. Over twenty times as many females were domestic servants as males.
- In 1851, there were 14 chimney sweeps aged under 15 in Wiltshire.
- In 1891 there were 1,720 blacksmiths in Wiltshire, 2,817 milliners and 1,363 people employed in the carpet and rug making industry.
- There was a rise in the population density of Wiltshire from 0.3 people per acre in 1831, to 0.7 people per acre in 1991. This was below the GB average of almost 1 person per acre in 1991.
- The number of people per household has decreased over the last 200 years. In 1801 the average household in Wiltshire contained 6 people, compared to 2.6 in 1991, which was just above the 1991 GB average of 2.5 people per household.

## The Census reports also contain interesting explanatory notes:

1831 - *“The Parish of Westwood has decreased in population attributed to the absence of a large family and the great scarcity of employment.”*

1841 - *“The increase of the population in Easton is ascribed to the temporary presence of a number of persons at an annual fair.”*

1851 - *“Salisbury - St Thomas’s Parish “the decrease in population is attributed chiefly to unusual mortality from cholera in 1849, and the cessation of works at an iron foundry.”*

1851 - *“A great depression in the woollen trade, upon which the majority of inhabitants depend for employment, has produced emigration from Bradford and the surrounding villages.”*

## 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.

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](mailto:census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk)

ONS London Library  
1 Drummond Gate  
Pimlico  
London  
SW1V 2QQ

