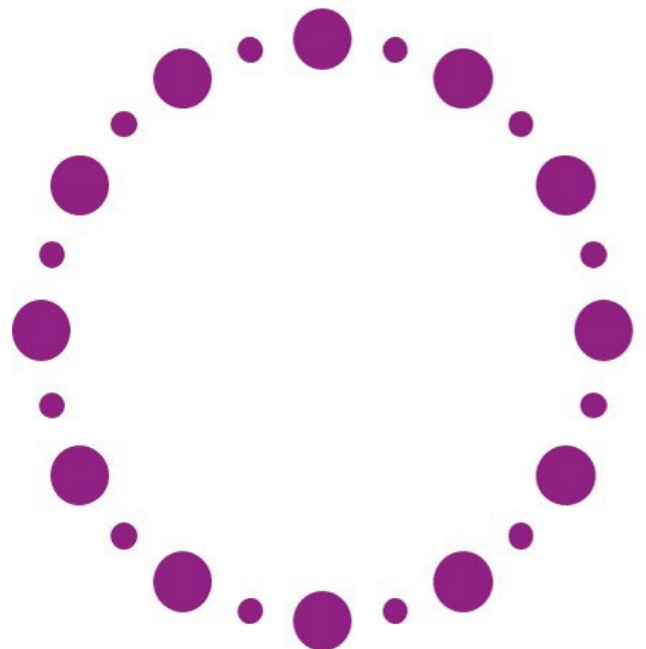


**census**  
2021



**Main statistics for Northern Ireland**  
**Statistical bulletin**  
**Migration**

**21 March 2023**



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## 1. Introduction

On 21 March 2023, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) released further results from Census 2021, which was held on 21 March 2021. The statistics released provide a profile of the Northern Ireland population covering:

- **household relationships:** household composition, living arrangements, marital and civil partnership status
- **sexual orientation**
- **labour market:** economic status (e.g. in employment, unemployed, economically inactive), hours worked, industry and occupation
- **qualifications:** highest level of qualifications gained
- **place of work or study:** distance to place of work or study and method of travel
- **communal establishments:** establishments providing supervision of residential accommodation (e.g. student halls of residence, hospitals, care homes)
- **migration:** address one year before the census, and year of arrival for those born outside Northern Ireland

The information covers Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs).

This report relates to **migration** and covers the topics:

- **address one year ago** before the census; and
- **year of arrival** for those born outside Northern Ireland.

For display purposes, figures are appropriately rounded but full figures are available in the [Census 2021 tables](#) on the NISRA website.

It is important to note that migration related statistics from Census 2021 will have been impacted by the travel restrictions put in place as a result of the coronavirus

(COVID-19) pandemic. It has not been possible to quantify the effects of such restrictions, but the statistics are still considered useful in the context of measuring migration patterns between March 2020 and March 2021.

## 2. Key points

The key points relating to the **address one year ago** topic are as follows:

- The vast majority of people aged 1 and over in Census 2021 lived at the same address in March 2021 as they did in March 2020 (1,725,300, or 91.7%). The remaining 156,700 people aged 1 and over (8.3%) lived at a different address one year before the census.
- Of those aged 1 and over, 91,400 (4.9%) lived at a different address one year ago that was within the same Local Government District (LGD), 38,100 (2.0%) lived at a different address in Northern Ireland that was outside the current LGD, and 27,200 (1.4%) lived outside Northern Ireland.
- The percentage of the population in Northern Ireland who lived at a different address one year before the census varies throughout Northern Ireland, ranging from 6.5% (9,700) in Mid Ulster LGD to 12.5% (42,700) in Belfast LGD.
- Belfast LGD is notable, with the percentage of people aged 1 and over, who lived at a different address one year before the census, being 4.1% higher than the next highest LGD, Ards & North Down (12.5% and 8.4%, respectively).
- Interestingly, despite the travel restrictions in place relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2021, the percentages of the populations in each 'address one year ago' category were broadly the same in each of the 2011 and 2021 censuses at the national level.
- There were some variations across the LGDs. For example, Belfast had an increase in the percentage of people aged 1 and over who had an address one year prior to the census that was outside Northern Ireland, rising from 1.8% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021.

The key points relating to the **year of arrival** topic are as follows:

- On Census Day 2021, 13.5% of the population (256,900) were born outside Northern Ireland. Of these, just over two-fifths (40.9%, or 105,000) arrived to live here in the decade to 2021, with just over one-quarter (25.8%, or 66,300) arriving between 2001 and 2010. In total, one-third (33.3%, or 85,600) arrived before 2001.
- People living in Belfast LGD who were born outside Northern Ireland were more likely to have arrived to live in Northern Ireland in the decade to 2021 (54.0%), with less than one-quarter (23.7%) arriving before 2001.
- Conversely, people living in Derry City & Strabane LGD who were born outside Northern Ireland were more likely to have arrived before 2001 (51.7%), with 28.5% arriving in the decade to 2021.

### 3. Address one year ago

#### 3.1. Questions asked

The Census 2021 questionnaire included a question asking people to indicate their address one year before census day (21 March 2021). This is presented in Figure 1 (online) and Figure 2 (paper). The statistics gathered are used to report migration patterns for people currently living in Northern Ireland and are referred to in this bulletin as ‘Address one year ago’ statistics. The address one year ago could be the current address of residence, somewhere else in Northern Ireland, or an address outside Northern Ireland (see Table 1).

**Figure 1: Census 2021 online questionnaire – address one year ago**

**One year ago, what was your usual address?**

If you had no usual address one year ago, state the address where you were staying

5 Stranmillis Court, Belfast

Student term-time address in the UK

Another address in the UK

An address outside the UK

**Enter details of your address one year ago.**

Enter address or postcode and select from results

**Figure 2: Census 2021 paper questionnaire – address one year ago**

**9 One year ago, what was your usual address?**

**9** If you had no usual address one year ago, state the address where you were staying.

- The address on the front of this questionnaire
- Student term-time/boarding school address in the UK, write in term-time address below
- Another address in the UK, write in below

Postcode

- Outside the UK, write in country

### 3.2. Address one year ago – Census 2021

Table 1 shows that in Census 2021, the vast majority of people aged 1 and over lived at the same address in March 2021 as they did in March 2020 (1,725,300, or 91.7%). The remaining 156,700 people aged 1 and over (8.3%) lived at a different address one year before the census.

**Table 1: Address one year ago (Census 2021)**

<b>Address one year ago</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Lived at the same address one year ago</b>	1,725,300	91.7%
<b>Lived at a different address one year ago:</b>	156,700	8.3%
Within the same Local Government District	91,400	4.9%
Outside the current Local Government District but within Northern Ireland	38,100	2.0%
Outside Northern Ireland	27,200	1.4%
<b>All people aged 1 and over</b>	1,882,000	100.0%

Of those aged 1 and over, 91,400 (4.9%) lived at a different address one year ago that was within the same Local Government District (LGD), 38,100 (2.0%) lived at a different address in Northern Ireland that was outside the current LGD, and 27,200 (1.4%) lived outside Northern Ireland.

### 3.3. Address one year ago by Local Government District – Census 2021

As stated previously, overall 8.3% (156,700) of the population in Northern Ireland lived at a different address one year before the census. Table 2 and Figure 3 show how this statistic varied throughout Northern Ireland, ranging from 6.5% (9,700) in Mid Ulster Local Government District (LGD) to 12.5% (42,700) in Belfast LGD.

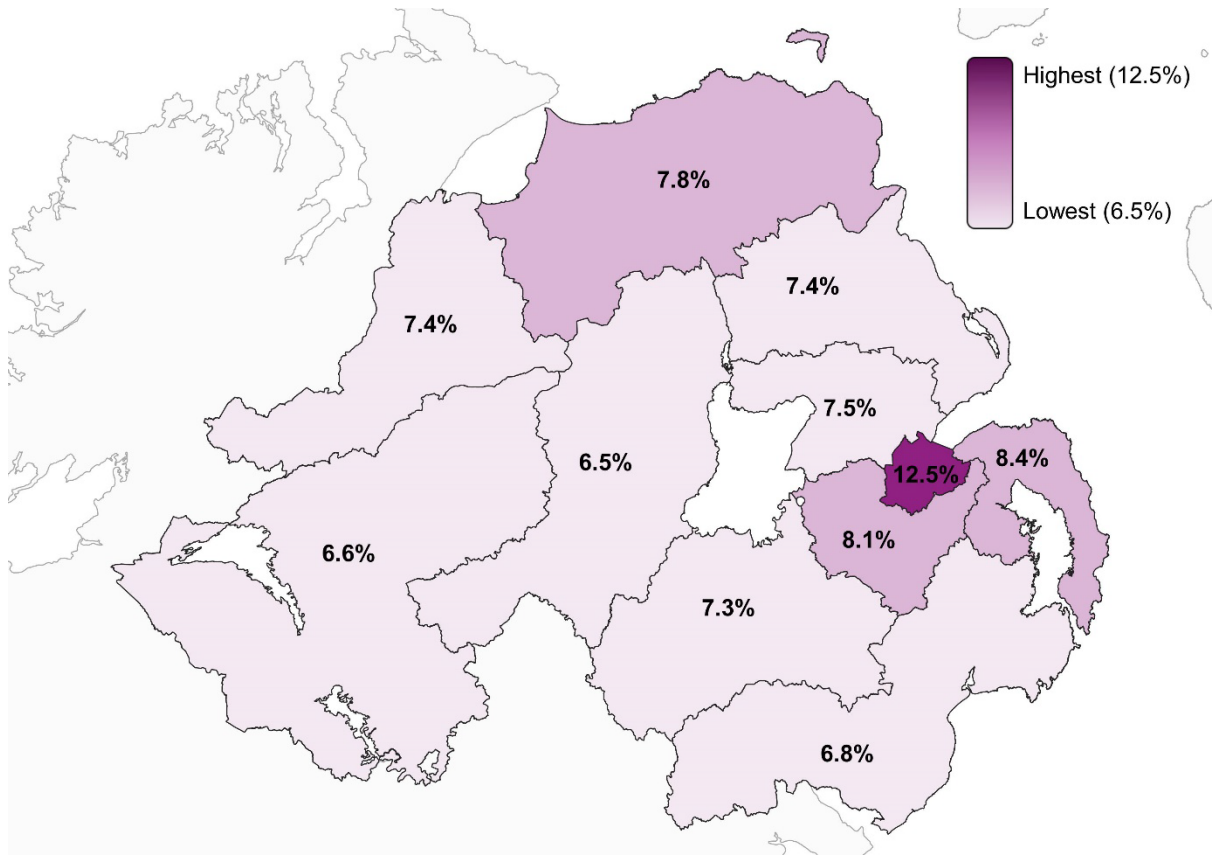
Belfast LGD is notable, with the percentage of people aged 1 and over who lived at a different address one year before the census being 4.1% higher than the next highest LGD, Ards & North Down (12.5% and 8.4%, respectively).

**Table 2: Population aged 1 and over that lived at a different address one year before Census 2021 by LGD**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	10,800	7.5%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	15,900	7.3%
Belfast	42,700	12.5%
Causeway Coast & Glens	11,000	7.8%
Derry City & Strabane	11,000	7.4%
Fermanagh & Omagh	7,600	6.6%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	11,900	8.1%
Mid & East Antrim	10,200	7.4%
Mid Ulster	9,700	6.5%
Newry, Mourne & Down	12,300	6.8%
Ards & North Down	13,600	8.4%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>156,700</b>	<b>8.3%</b>



**Figure 3: Percentage of the population aged 1 and over that lived at a different address one year before Census 2021 by LGD**



### 3.4. Address one year ago – Change over time

The ‘address one year ago’ question was also asked in the 2011 Census and was broadly the same as that asked in Census 2021. Therefore the statistics are considered directly comparable.

Table 3 shows that interestingly, despite the travel restrictions in place relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2021, the percentage of the populations in each ‘address one year ago’ category were broadly the same in each census.

**Table 3: Address one year ago (2011 & 2021 Censuses)**

<b>Address one year ago</b>	<b>Census 2011</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Census 2021</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Lived at the same address one year ago</b>	1,635,100	91.6%	1,725,300	91.7%
<b>Lived at a different address one year ago</b>	150,500	8.4%	156,700	8.3%
Within Northern Ireland	125,700	7.0%	129,400	6.9%
Outside Northern Ireland	24,800	1.4%	27,200	1.4%
<b>All people aged 1 and over</b>	<b>1,785,600</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,882,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Focussing on those that had an ‘address one year ago’ that was outside Northern Ireland in both Census 2011 and Census 2021 reveals interesting variations across the Local Government Districts (LGDs) in Northern Ireland.

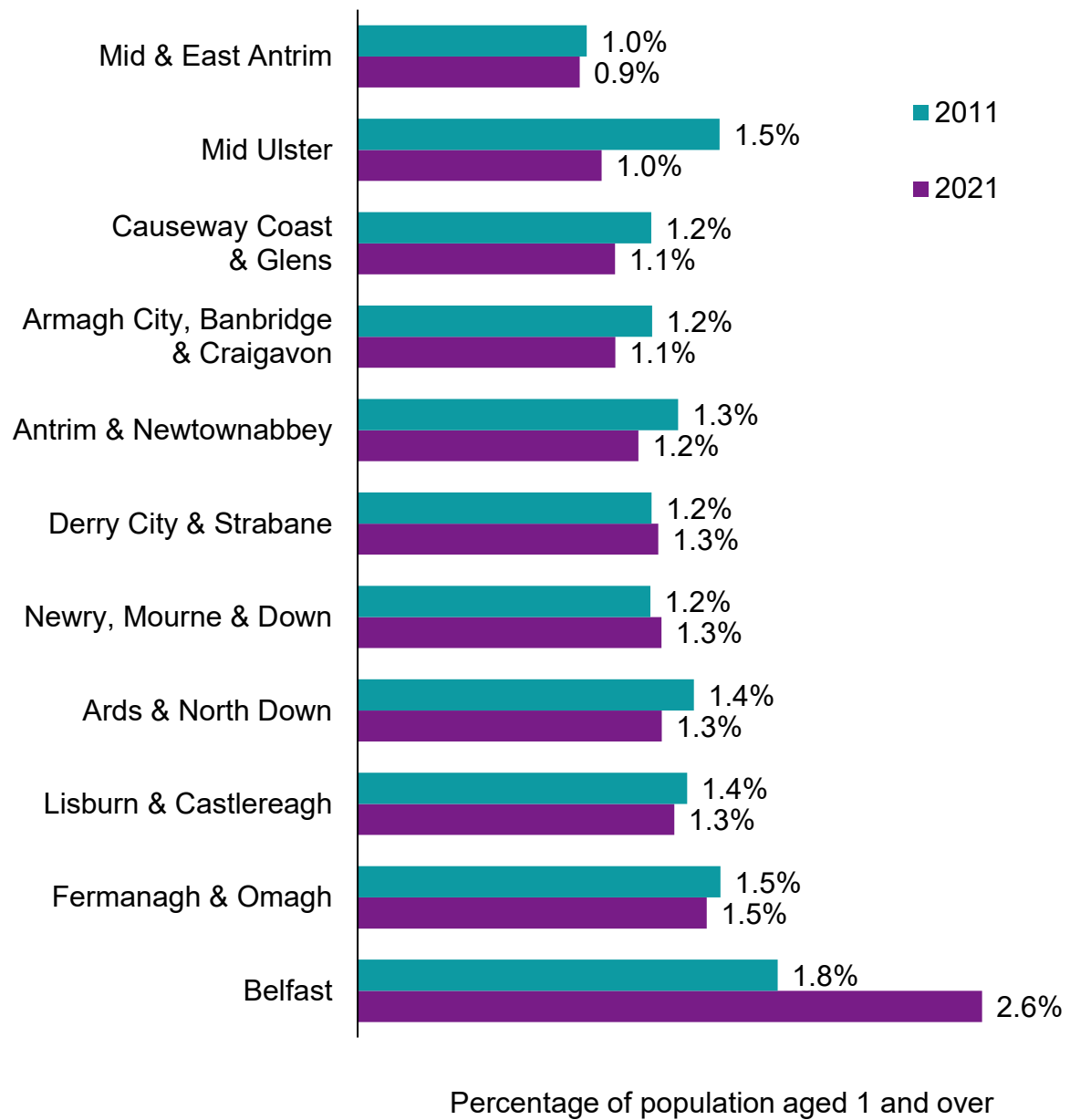
Table 4 shows that 1.4% of people in both Census 2011 and Census 2021 had an address one year prior to the census which was outside Northern Ireland – indicating little to no change in this statistic.

However, Figure 4 shows that eight of the 11 LGDs had falls in this statistic between the censuses, with three having a rise (Belfast, Derry City & Strabane and Newry, Mourne & Down). Belfast LGD is notable again, where the percentage of people aged 1 and over who had an address one year prior to the census that was outside Northern Ireland rose from 1.8% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021.

**Table 4: Population aged 1 and over that lived at an address outside Northern Ireland one year before the Census by LGD (2011 and 2021 Censuses)**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Census 2011</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Census 2021</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,800	1.3%	1,700	1.2%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	2,400	1.2%	2,300	1.1%
Belfast	5,800	1.8%	9,000	2.6%
Causeway Coast & Glens	1,700	1.2%	1,500	1.1%
Derry City & Strabane	1,800	1.2%	1,900	1.3%
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,700	1.5%	1,700	1.5%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1,800	1.4%	2,000	1.3%
Mid & East Antrim	1,300	1.0%	1,300	0.9%
Mid Ulster	2,100	1.5%	1,500	1.0%
Newry, Mourne & Down	2,100	1.2%	2,300	1.3%
Ards & North Down	2,200	1.4%	2,100	1.3%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>24,800</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>27,200</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

**Figure 4: Percentage of the population aged 1 and over that lived at an address outside Northern Ireland one year before the Census by LGD (2011 and 2021 Censuses)**



## 4. Year of arrival

### 4.1. Question asked

The Census 2021 questionnaire included a question on 'year of arrival', asked only of those born outside Northern Ireland. This is presented in Figure 5 (online) and Figure 6 (paper).

The year of arrival question asked in Census 2021 was different to that asked in Census 2011. Census 2021 asked people who were **born outside Northern Ireland** to state the year they came to live in Northern Ireland. Census 2011 asked people who **had lived outside Northern Ireland for a continuous period of one year or more**, irrespective of country of birth, to state when they most recently arrived to live in Northern Ireland.

As such, no comparisons can be made between Census 2021 and Census 2011.

**Figure 5: Census 2021 online questionnaire – year of arrival**

**What year did you come to live in Northern Ireland?**

Year

**Figure 6: Census 2021 paper questionnaire – year of arrival**

**8 What year did you come to live in Northern Ireland?**

Year

## 4.2. Year of arrival – Census 2021

On Census Day 2021, 13.5% of the population (256,900) were born outside Northern Ireland. Figure 7 shows that of these, just over two-fifths (40.9%, or 105,000) arrived to live in Northern Ireland in the decade to 2021, with just over one-quarter (25.8%, or 66,300) arriving between 2001 and 2010. In total one-third (33.3%, or 85,600) arrived before 2001.

**Figure 7: Year of arrival by decade (Census 2021)**

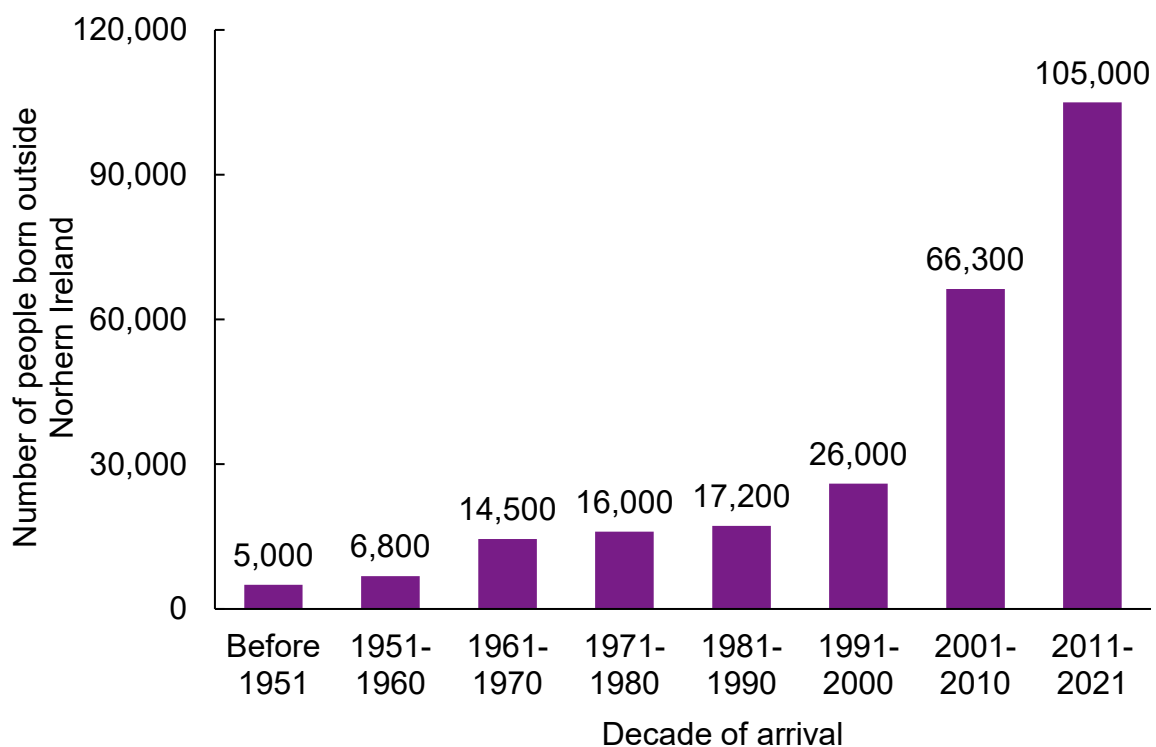


Figure 8 charts the number of people in Census 2021 who were born outside Northern Ireland and arrived in each year between 2001 to 2020.

It shows that 3,600 of those born outside Northern Ireland had a year of arrival of 2001 (1.4%). This number increased sharply, peaking at 9,600 (3.7%) in 2006 (largely as a result of the expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004), before dropping off to a low of 5,600 in 2009.

**Figure 8: Year of arrival (Census 2021)**

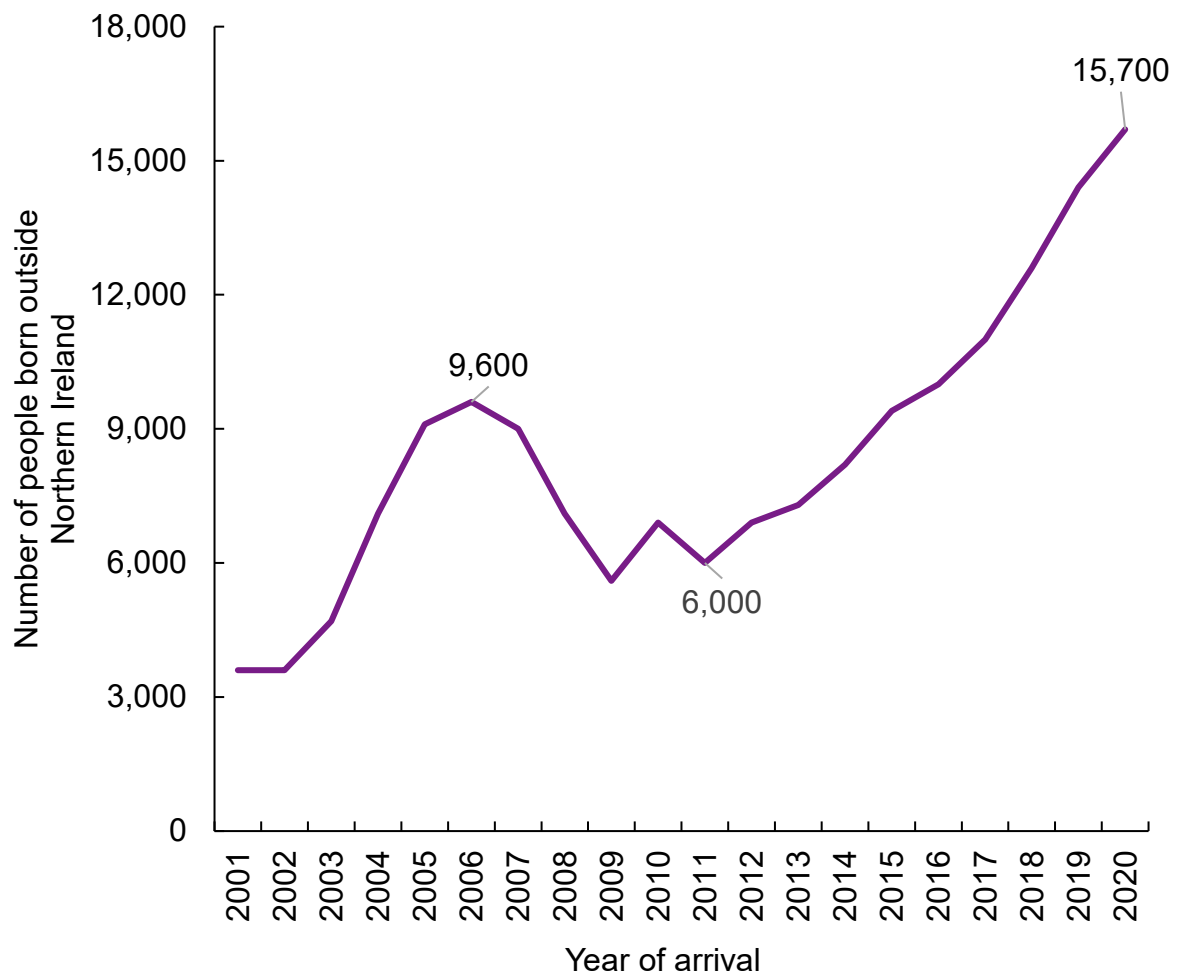


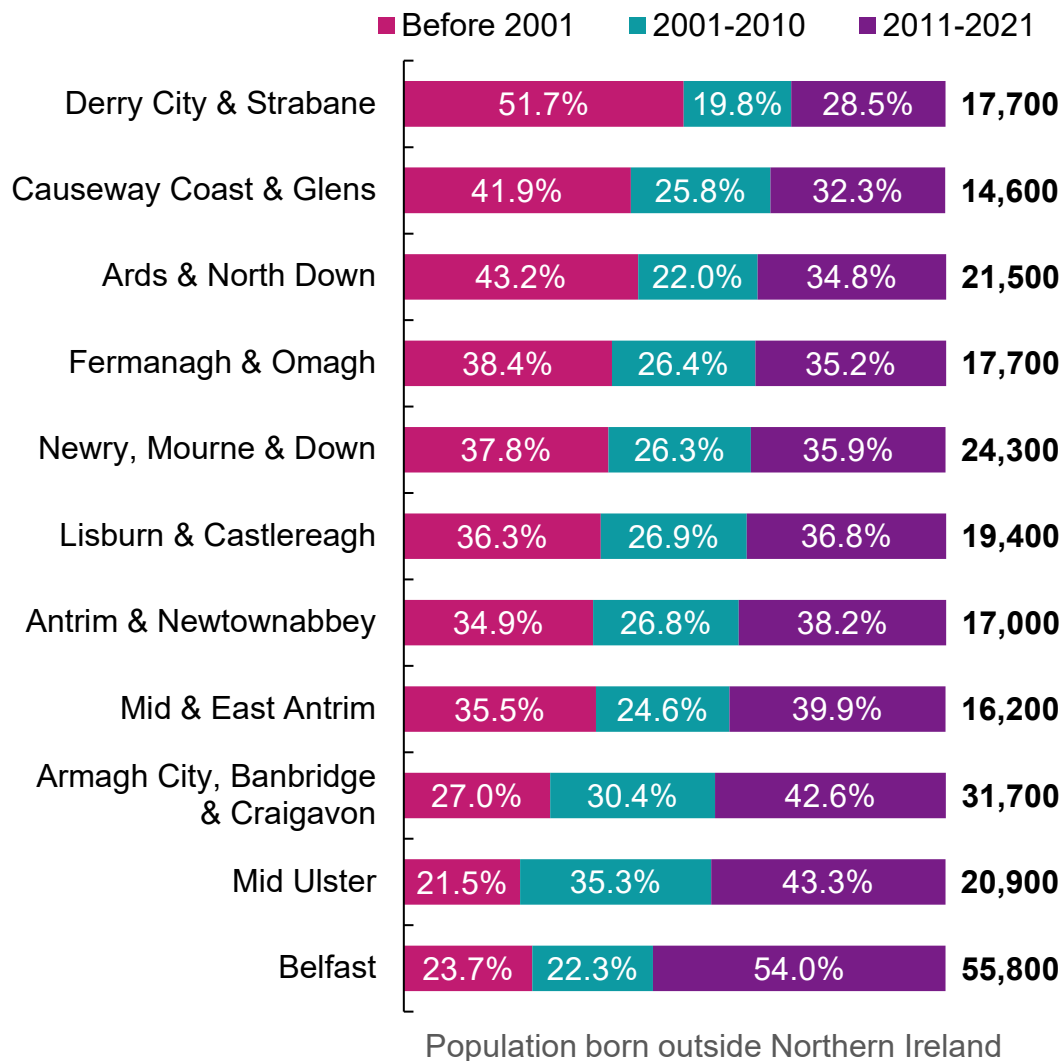
Figure 8 also shows that of the 105,000 people that had a year of arrival which was in the last ten years, the number who arrived steadily increased by year from 6,000 in 2011 (2.3%) to a peak of 15,700 in 2020 (6.1%).

A further 3,500 people reported they arrived in Northern Ireland in the first three months of 2021.

### 4.3. Year of arrival by Local Government District – Census 2021

Figure 9 shows the percentage of those born outside Northern Ireland by broad year of arrival for each Local Government District (LGD).

**Figure 9: Year of arrival by LGD (Census 2021)**



It shows that people living in Belfast LGD who were born outside Northern Ireland were more likely to have arrived to live in Northern Ireland in the decade to 2021 (54.0%), with less than one-quarter (23.7%) arriving before 2001. Conversely, people living in Derry City & Strabane LGD who were born outside Northern Ireland were more likely to have arrived before 2001 (51.7%), with 28.5% arriving in the decade to 2021.



## 5. Associated outputs

[Census 2021 outputs on migration](#) are available to download from the NISRA website, they include:

- MS-K01 Address one year ago; and
- MS-K02 Year of arrival to live in Northern Ireland.

## 6. Further information

Census statistics are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence. In May 2022, following a full assessment, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) and the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). National Statistics status means that the statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The census plays a fundamental role in the provision of official statistics – census data are used to inform key policies, plan key services and allocate public funds.

### 6.1. Quality of the results

The census data collection operation was supported by an independent [coverage survey](#). The coverage survey along with administrative data and information from the field operation were combined to allow statistical estimates to be made of the small percentage of people who did not make a return. The statistical estimates discussed here, as with all Census 2021 outputs, reflect the full population of Northern Ireland.

Further information on accuracy, coverage and imputation is provided on the NISRA website in the [Census 2021 quality assurance report \(PDF 275 KB\)](#).

It is important to note that migration related statistics from Census 2021 will have been impacted by the travel restrictions put in place as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It has not been possible to quantify the effects of such restrictions, but the statistics are still considered useful in the context of measuring migration patterns between March 2020 and March 2021.

## 6.2. Confidentiality

Census Office has taken steps to ensure that the confidentiality of respondents is fully protected. All published results from the census have been subject to statistical processes to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. For more information, please refer to the [statistical disclosure control methodology](#). These processes may result in very marginally different results between tables for the same statistic.

## 6.3. Comparability with previous censuses

The census is designed to provide the most accurate possible picture of the population on the day the census is taken. Whilst this report contains a small number of historical tables that give comparisons at the Northern Ireland level of some key demographic statistics, users should be aware that comparisons may be affected by other differences, in particular, between the census questionnaires, impacts of issues of the day, etc.

As the last three censuses (2001, 2011 and 2021) were all adjusted for under-enumeration and reflect the Northern Ireland population on census day, this supports comparisons between those censuses.

## 6.4. Supporting material

A number of [supporting documents](#) are available on the census pages of the NISRA website. These documents describe the census methodology in more detail, the quality assurance processes applied, the paper questionnaire used in the census, and a full list of definitions and output classifications.

## 6.5. More details

Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from Census Customer Services at:

Telephone:	028 9025 5156
Email:	<a href="mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk">census@nisra.gov.uk</a>
Responsible Statistician:	Dr David Marshall

This report was made possible by the co-operation of the public in responding to the census, the commitment of the census field and headquarters staff, and the assistance of many other people and organisations throughout all aspects of the census. The Registrar General for Northern Ireland, who is responsible for the planning, conduct and reporting of the census, would like to thank all of those who contributed to the census.

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