

Article

Diversity in the labour market, England and Wales: Census 2021

How labour market outcomes differ across various subgroup populations in England and Wales.



Contact: Matthew Mayhew, Simone Lindo 25 September 2023 and Ben Windsor-Shellard census.customerservices@ons. gov.uk

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+44 1329 444972

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1. Main points

Of adults aged 16 years and over as of Census Day 2021:

- Males (61.4%) were more likely to be employed than females (53.2%).
- Non-disabled adults were more than twice as likely to be in employment (64.7%) than disabled adults (27.3%).
- Nearly three in four (74.4%) adults who identified as "White: Other White" were in employment, the largest across all ethnic groups, with the lowest being in the "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller" group (37.4%).
- Just under half (48.6%) of adults who identified as "Muslim" were in employment compared with two in three (66.0%) of those with "No religion" and 64.4% of those who identified as "Hindu".
- A higher percentage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another minority sexual orientation (LGB+) adults were employed (63.8%) than straight or heterosexual adults (57.8%); the higher percentage in LGB+ adults was largely driven by gay or lesbian people, where 7 in 10 (70.3%) were employed.

2. Males were more likely to be in employment than females

On Census Day, 21 March 2021, 27.8 million adults (57.2%) aged 16 years and over were in employment. This figure covered the whole adult population, masking the varied labour market outcomes that different population groups have. We will look at a variety of personal characteristics, including how they interact with each other, and investigate their association with employment percentages. We have focused on the most pertinent findings, with more data available in the accompanying reference tables.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change, and it is possible that this affected the way some people responded to the labour market questions on the census. Estimates from the census will also differ to those collected in our <u>Labour Force Survey</u> because of a range of conceptual differences between the two sources. Please see <u>Section 10: Data sources and quality</u> for further information about interpreting census labour market data.

By sex, females had a lower percentage in employment (53.2%) compared with males (61.4%). Males also had a slightly larger proportion of all those in employment (52.0%) than females (48.0%), despite there being fewer males (48.4%) than females (51.6%) in the adult population overall.

Age was also a factor that affected the likelihood of someone being employed. Younger adults were less likely to be employed, with 24.1% of those aged between 16 and 19 years in employment. The employment percentage increased with age; the highest being for adults aged 40 to 44 years (80.8%). The employment percentage then decreased closer to typical retirement age. These trends reflect the ages where people generally transition in and out of the workforce. For the group aged 16 to 19 years, the majority (61.6%) were in some form of education, and for those aged 75 years and over, almost all were retired (92.6%).

For all ages except for the group aged 16 to 19 years, there was a higher percentage of males in employment than females (Figure 1). The gap between the sexes in employment was smallest among younger adults, with a difference of less than 1 percentage point between the sexes aged between 16 and 24 years. This gap then sharply increased to almost 10 percentage points for those aged 30 to 34 years and stayed around this level until the groups aged 70 years and over. The increase could partially be explained by females leaving the labour market after having children; according to our Birth characteristics in England and Wales article, mothers were 30.9 years old on average compared with 33.7 years for fathers. There were higher levels of unpaid care provided by females than males in these age groups, as shown in our Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021 article, so they could also be leaving the labour market to look after sick or disabled relatives. The impact of age for all the characteristics described in this article is assessed in Section 7.

Figure 1: A lower percentage of females were in employment than males for all age groups after the age of 20 years

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by age and sex, Census 2021

Download the data

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3. Disabled adults were less likely to be in employment than non-disabled adults

Non-disabled adults were over twice as likely to be in employment than disabled adults, at 64.7% and 27.3%, respectively. This varied by the severity of their limitation on carrying out day-to-day activities. Disabled adults who reported that they were "limited a lot", had a much lower percentage in employment (11.0%), compared with disabled adults who reported they were "limited a little" (39.4%). Non-disabled adults with a non-limiting health condition had a slightly smaller percentage in employment (62.2%) than non-disabled adults without a health condition (65.0%).

The percentage of disabled adults varied by age and sex, as shown in our <u>Disability by age, sex and deprivation</u>, <u>England and Wales: Census 2021 article</u>, as did the percentage of adults in employment. There are similar percentages of disabled males (27.7%) as disabled females (26.9%) in employment. While the overall pattern by age was similar for disabled adults in employment as in the general population, there were differences in terms of when peak employment happens. The age band with the highest employment was younger for disabled adults who were "limited a lot" (aged 35 to 39 years), compared with disabled adults who were "limited a little" (aged 45 to 49 years).

Figure 2: Disabled adults who reported that they were "limited a lot" by their disability had the lowest employment percentage regardless of age

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by age and disability, Census 2021

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4. Those who identified their ethnic group as "White: Other White" had the highest employment percentage across all ethnic groups

For most ethnic groups, the percentage in employment was similar to that across all adults (57.2%). The variance was larger for some ethnic groups, with the highest percentage in "White: Other White" (74.4%) and the lowest in "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller" (37.4%).

Age might be a factor when considering the variance by ethnic group. Our previous analysis, published in our Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article, showed that ethnic groups had different age structures. Those who identified as "White: Other White" had the highest percentage in the peak employment age group of 30 to 49 years (53.7%), whereas those who identified as "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller" had 38.6% in this age group. The ethnic group with the smallest percentage of adults aged 30 to 49 years was those who identified as "Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean, African: Caribbean" (30.0%) with nearly half (49.1%) aged over 50 years. This ethnic group had 56.5% in employment.

Figure 3: People who identified as "Chinese" within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" ethnic group had much lower employment percentages in the youngest age bands.

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by age within ethnic group, Census 2021

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Young adults who identified as "Asian, Asian Welsh, Asian British: Chinese" had the smallest in employment percentages across all ethnic groups. Among 16- to 19-year-olds, 7.1% in this ethnic group were employed compared with 24.1% in the whole population, and for 20- to 24-year-olds this was 19.4% compared with 61.0%, respectively. A likely explanation for this is that there were more economically inactive students than in other ethnic groups; nearly 9 in 10 (88.9%) 16- to 19-year-olds who identified as "Asian, Asian Welsh, Asian British: Chinese" were economically inactive students, compared with 6 in 10 (61.6%) in the age group overall. For 20- to 24-year-olds, this was over 7 in 10 (73.0%) compared with 2 in 10 (20.0%) for all adults.

The gap between disabled and non-disabled adults in employment also varied by ethnic group; those who identified as "Asian, Asian Welsh, Asian British: Chinese" had the narrowest gap at 21.9 percentage points, with 53.7% of non-disabled adults in this ethnic group being employed compared with 31.8% of disabled adults in this ethnic group. This gap is smaller than that seen in the population overall (37.4 percentage points) and could be explained by the lower percentage of employment in the "Asian, Asian Welsh, Asian British: Chinese" group generally (52.1%).

Figure 4: The disability employment gap varied by ethnic group

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by ethnic group and disability, Census 2021

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5. Adults who identified as "Muslim" had the lowest employment percentage

Just under half (48.6%) of adults who identified as "Muslim" were in employment. The age profile of the population often affects employment estimates, with younger populations tending to have higher employment levels. Our Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article shows differing age structures between religious groups: the Muslim group had the highest proportion aged between 16 and 29 years (32.1%). By age, however, the Muslim group had consistently lower percentages in employment than the general population. There might be other factors than age driving this, such as this group having the lowest percentage in employment among females (37.0%), whereas the percentage for males (59.9%) was more like that seen in the general population. Levels of economic inactivity because of looking after family or home were higher among Muslim females (27.3%) than across all females (7.8%). Males (12.4%) and females (13.2%) who identified as "Muslim" were twice as likely to be economically inactive because of being a student than all adults (5.7% male, 5.6% female).

Those who reported "No religion" had the highest employment percentage (66.0%), with this group also having the second highest proportion of adults aged between 16 and 29 years (29.4%). Females who reported "No religion" had the highest employment percentage at 63.4%, and males had the second highest at 68.3%.

Those who identified as "Hindu" had the second highest employment percentage (64.4%) with the pattern remaining when looking at females (58.4%), but males (70.4%) had the highest. This group had the most adults aged between 30 and 49 years (47.1%), likely contributing to this.

Adults who identified as "Christian" were mostly in older age groups, with 61.2% aged 50 years or older. As such, they had one of the lowest employment percentages (51.7%). This group had the lowest percentage in employment among males, 55.7%, and the second lowest for females at 48.5%.

Figure 5: The largest sex employment gap was observed in those who identified as "Muslim"

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by religion and sex, Census 2021

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There was a higher percentage of those who identified as "Jewish" working in older ages, with over 4 in 10 (44.0%) of those age 65 to 69 years, 2 in 10 (25.7%) of those aged 70 to 74 years, and 1 in 10 of those aged 75 years and over in employment. While adults who identified as "Christian" had one of the lowest employment percentages overall, those aged under 25 years had some of the highest percentages.

Figure 6: Those who identified as "Muslim" had consistently lower employment percentages across all ages under 65 years

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by religion, Census 2021

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The intersection between ethnic and religious groups was complex, and for some religions there was more variation by ethnic group than for others. Those who reported "No religion" and identified as "White: Other White" had the highest employment percentage at 76.3% compared with 66.0% for all adults who reported "No religion." The lowest was those who identified as "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller" and reported "No Religion" at 39.0%. The age profile of these ethnic groups will likely explain these differences, with 53.7% who identified as "White: Other White" in peak working years (30 to 49 years), compared with 38.6% among those who identified "White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller."

Among those who identified as "Muslim" the percentage of those in employment, varied across the ethnic groups. Within the "Muslim" group, those who identified as "Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British: Indian" had the highest percentage (57.5%), and those who identified as "Other ethnic group: Arab" had the lowest percentage (40.3%), compared with 48.6% of all those who identified as "Muslim" and 57.1% of all adults.

Figure 7: The employment percentage differed by ethnic group within each religion

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by religion and ethnic group, Census 2021

Download the data

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6. Those who identified as being gay or lesbian had the highest percentage in employment

Adults who said they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or another minority sexual orientation (LGB+) had a higher percentage in employment (63.8%) than straight or heterosexual adults (57.8%). The higher percentage in LGB+ adults was largely driven by gay or lesbian people where 7 in 10 (70.3%) were in employment. Around 6 in 10 bisexual adults (58.1%) were in employment. Those with other minority sexual orientations had the lowest employment percentage (56.1%).

Younger age groups were more likely to have identified as LGB+, as shown in our <u>Sexual orientation: age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 article</u>. The census question on sexual orientation was asked of all those aged 16 years and over and, of these, 44.6% of LGB+ respondents were under the age of 30 years, compared with 19.9% of straight or heterosexual respondents. Conversely, 47.6% of straight or heterosexual respondents were aged 50 years and over, compared with 18.1% of LGB+ respondents.

When the findings are disaggregated by age, LGB+ people overall had lower percentages in employment for all age groups between 16 and 64 years. This was largely driven by the lower percentages in employment among bisexual people and those from all other sexual orientations (see Figure 8). Gay or lesbian people continued having the highest percentages in employment, but this was only the case for working-age groups between 25 and 49 years.

The largest difference between the LGB+ population and the straight or heterosexual population was in the group aged 20 to 24 years (54.6% and 63.2% in employment, respectively). For all age groups there were more LGB+ adults out of the labour market because they were studying than for straight or heterosexual adults. Indeed, when looking at 20- to 24-year-olds, 24.5% of LGB+ adults were economically inactive because they were students, compared with 18.0% of straight or heterosexual adults of the same age.

While those who said they were bisexual or other minority sexual orientations had lower percentages in employment than straight or heterosexual adults overall, this was not the case when looking at those aged 65 years and over where this is reversed. This was also the case when looking at the LGB+ group as a whole.

Figure 8: Gay or lesbian people aged between 25 and 49 years had the highest employment percentages

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by sexual orientation and age, Census 2021

Download the data

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While LGB+ females (61.1%) were less likely to be employed than LGB+ males (67.1%), the gap was smaller than among straight or heterosexual adults (53.8% of straight or heterosexual females were employed compared with 62.1% of straight or heterosexual males). Looking within the LGB+ community, there was a bit more equality in employment percentages with similar proportions of bisexual females (57.7%) being employed compared with bisexual males (58.9%). Among the gay or lesbian group, 68.5% of females were employed compared with 71.5% of males.

The variation in employment was more complex when considering sexual orientation and ethnic group. For some ethnic groups the percentage in employment was higher in those who were LGB+ than those who were straight or heterosexual. For example, in those who identified as "White: Irish", 68.7% of LGB+ adults were in employment compared with 53.6% of straight or heterosexual adults. This was the largest difference across the different ethnic groups.

Conversely, for some ethnic groups, the percentage in employment was higher in those who were straight or heterosexual than those who were LGB+. For example, 55.3% of LGB+ adults who identified as "Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean, African: African" were in employment, compared with 60.8% of straight or heterosexual adults.

Within the LGB+ population and for all ethnic groups, those identifying as gay or lesbian had a higher employment percentage than those identifying as straight or heterosexual. The opposite happens for almost all ethnic groups for those identifying as bisexual, with these groups having lower employment percentages than those identifying as straight or heterosexual.

Figure 9: Those identifying as "White: Irish" had the widest gap where those who identified as LGB+ adults had a higher employment percentage than straight or heterosexual adults

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment, by sexual orientation and ethnic group, Census 2021

Download the data

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7. How age is associated with employment in different populations

The different populations described in this article have different age structures; the reasons for this will be complex but we know that age is associated with different percentages in employment. Populations with concentrations outside peak employment years (30 to 49 years) might have lower employment percentages.

One way to control for age is to age-standardise the data. Age-standardised proportions (ASP) account for differences in population size and age structure, so that when groups are compared, we know that differences are unlikely to be caused by age. Methods used, including the use of the European Standard Population (ESP), give more weight to older people, owing to our ageing population. The effect of this is that groups with older age profiles will generally see their percentage in employment increase, when compared with their non-age-standardised figure, and groups with younger age profiles will generally see their percentage in employment decrease. Age-standardisation is most beneficial when comparing geographical areas and for comparisons over time, neither of which are done in this article. In this article we describe non-age-standardised figures, to present the picture as it was on Census Day.

Age-standardisation has a minimal effect on the employment percentage for all adults. The ASP for all adults was 57.0% compared with 57.2% when not standardised.

The effect of age-standardising the percentage in employment is different for each population group. For most groups, there is a change of less than 10 percentage points. For other groups, the change is larger. The greatest impact was seen for groups where most adults were in peak employment years (30 to 49 years), such as the "White: other" and "White: Roma" ethnic groups, where the age-standardised proportions in employment are more than 10 percentage points lower than the non-age-standardised figures. Disabled adults and those who identified as Christian had the largest increases, when comparing their age-standardised with their non-age-standardised figures, owing to the older age profile of these groups. Almost all ethnic groups had a decrease; this suggests that age was likely not an important factor in the variation of employment when comparing these groups.

Figure 10 shows the percentage-point difference for each group, when comparing the age-standardised with the non-age-standardised percentages in employment. Also presented is the difference (Jensen-Shannon distance) in the age structure when comparing each group with the ESP, with larger scores showing greater deviance or distance from the ESP. The associated data download for Figure 10 has an assessment of the largest age group for the population group, if the age distribution is not similar to the ESP.

Figure 10: Large age-standardisation effects are more likely to be associated with groups with more adults in peak employment years

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Notes:

- 1. The distance only shows that there is a difference between the European Standard Population (ESP) and the group's distribution, not the direction of the difference.
- 2. Populations that have a distance of less than 10 are deemed to be similar to the ESP.
- 3. Age bands refer to the part of the distribution where there are more adults.

8. Diversity in the labour market, England and Wales: Data

Diversity in the labour market: Employment

Dataset | Released 25 September 2023

Census 2021 data of the employment status by personal characteristics.

Diversity in the labour market: Occupation

Dataset | Released 25 September 2023

Census 2021 data of the occupation for those employed on census day of their main job by personal characteristics.

Diversity in the labour market: Industry

Dataset | Released 25 September 2023

Census 2021 data of the industry for those employed on census day of their main job by personal characteristics.

9. Glossary

Employment

The number of people aged 16 years and over who did paid work as an employee or self-employed. It also includes those who had a job that they were temporarily away from.

Type of employment

People in employment are split into employment types.

Employees are those doing paid work for an individual or organisation.

Self-employed people are those who own and operate their own business. This can include people who work freelance, which means someone who is self-employed and works, or worked, for different companies on particular pieces of work.

Self-employed people who are not freelance can have employees who work for them.

Unemployment

People without a job, but who were actively looking for work between 22 February and 21 March 2021 and could start within two weeks. They are also people who had found a job and were waiting to start it in the two weeks after Census Day, 21 March 2021.

Economically active

People aged 16 years and over who were active participants in the labour market between 15 and 21 March 2021, as they were:

- in employment as an employee or self-employed
- unemployed, but looking for work and could start within two weeks
- unemployed, but waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted

Economically inactive

People aged 16 years and over who did not have a job between 15 and 21 March 2021 and had not looked for work between 22 February and 21 March 2021 or could not start work within two weeks.

Reasons for inactivity

Economically inactive people could state that, between 15 and 21 March 2021, they were:

- retired
- studying
- looking after home or family
- · long-term sick or disabled
- other

For definitions of labour market variables more generally, see our <u>Guide to labour market statistics</u>.

Usual resident

A usual resident is anyone who on Census Day, 21 March 2021, was in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months.

Disability status

In Census 2021, people who assessed their day-to-day activities as limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses were considered disabled. This definition of a disabled person meets the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard for measuring disability and is in line with the Equality Act (2010). This requires that a person has a physical or mental condition or illness, and that the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Therefore, those reporting conditions that limited their day-to-day activities a little or a lot were classified as disabled. People who had no long-term physical or mental health conditions, or who had conditions that did not limit their day-to-day activities were classified as non-disabled.

Ethnic group

The ethnic group question included two stages. Firstly, a person identified their ethnic group through one of the following five high-level ethnic groups:

- "Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh"
- "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African"
- "Mixed or Multiple"
- "White"
- "Other ethnic group"

Secondly, a person identified their ethnic group through 1 of the 19 available response options, which include categories with write-in response options. There is more information about how write-in responses have been included in the analysis of detailed classification for the ethnic group in our Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021 bulletin.

Religion

The religion people connect or identify with (their religious affiliation), whether or not they practise or have belief in it.

This question was voluntary, and the variable includes people who answered the question, including "No religion", alongside those who chose not to answer this question.

This variable classifies responses into the eight tick-box response options. Write-in responses are classified by their "parent" religion affiliation, including "No religion", where applicable. Percentages have been calculated out of the overall population as opposed to out of the population who answered the religion question. This aids comparison across time and between areas, as the percentage of the population who answer the question varies.

For further information on the religion variable, please see our <u>Religion by age and sex, England and Wales:</u> Census 2021 bulletin.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same. For example, someone in an opposite-sex relationship may also experience same-sex attraction, and the other way around. This means the statistics should be interpreted purely as showing how people responded to the question, rather than being about whom they are attracted to or their actual relationships.

We have not provided glossary entries for individual sexual orientation categories. This is because individual respondents may have differing perspectives on the exact meaning. LGB+ is an abbreviation used to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and other minority sexual orientations (for example, asexual).

10. Data sources and quality

The census provides the most detailed picture of the entire population, with the same core questions asked to everybody across England and Wales. Census results can be more reliable than survey results based on a sample of the population, because the whole population is included. The UK Statistics Authority has assigned National Statistics status to Census 2021 outputs, providing assurance that these statistics are of the highest quality and value to users.

Census 2021 achieved a very high response rate of 97%. We ensure the census results reflect the whole population by using statistical methods to estimate the number and characteristics of people who were not recorded on a census response. This means that the census statistics are estimates rather than simple counts of responses, so they have some statistical uncertainty associated with them. We take numerous steps to minimise possible sources of error.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change, and it is possible that this affected the way some people responded to the labour market questions on the census. Specifically, analysis suggests that there was a tendency for some people who were furloughed to report that they were out of work rather than in employment when completing the census.

Compared with estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the census shows fewer people in employment and more people in unemployment or economic inactivity. Some of the discrepancy will be explained by the issue of recording the labour market status of some furloughed individuals in the census. There are also a range of conceptual differences, between Census 2021 and the LFS, which make comparisons between the two sources difficult.

Users should be aware of these issues when analysing Census 2021 labour market figures. However, overall, most census respondents responded to the labour market questions in the way we expected. Therefore, the census continues to be a valuable tool for understanding the labour market conditions in small geographical areas and for population subgroups. For further information about interpreting census labour market data, please see our Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: 13 March 2021 article.

We apply statistical disclosure control to protect the confidentiality of census respondents. Differences in the methods used for statistical disclosure control may result in minor differences in data totals between census products. As we round all figures individually, table totals may not sum exactly.

Quality considerations along with the strengths and limitations of Census 2021 are more generally provided in our <u>Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) for Census 2021</u>. Read more about specific quality considerations in our:

- Labour market quality information for Census 2021
- Demography and migration quality information for Census 2021,
- Sexual orientation and gender identity quality information for Census 2021,
- Health, disability and unpaid care quality information for Census 2021
- Ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion quality information for Census 2021

Further information on our quality assurance processes is provided in our <u>Maximising the quality of Census 2021</u> <u>population estimates methodology</u>.

Industry employment

People in employment were asked to provide their job title and the main activity of their organisation, business, or freelance work. This information was then used to derive the industry in which they worked. This measure of industry employment differs from the measure used in other business surveys, which may lead to different counts of the population in employment.

"Similar" or "different" population

To work out how similar a population group was to the wider "all employed" group, we used a formula called the "Jensen-Shannon distance".

This method allowed us to compare the whole age profile for a group, rather than only comparing one value, such as median age.

The Jensen-Shannon distance tells us how different two probability distributions are to each other. It takes a value between 0 and 1, with 0 meaning that the distributions are the same, and 1 meaning that they are completely different. If the distance between two distributions was less than 0.1, we said the distributions were "similar".

The formula we used involved the square root so that it is more comparable to traditional distance measures, rather than the standard formula for the method.

The Jensen-Shannon distance between distribution P and Q is:

$$JSD(P||Q)=\sqrt{0.5D(P||M)+0.5D(Q||M)}$$

M is the average of the distributions, and D is defined as:

$$D(P||M) = \sum_x (P(x)log_2(rac{P(x)}{M(x)}))$$

11. Related links

Migration and the labour market, England and Wales: Census 2021

Article | Released 13 March 2023

Differing labour market participation between migrant populations and non-migrants, including a look at the type of occupations and industries they work in.

Employment in local authorities, England and Wales: Census 2021

Article | Released 13 March 2023

Adults living in England and Wales who are in and out of work. Covering employment, unemployment and inactivity. Census 2021 data.

Labour market overview, UK: September 2023

Bulletin | Released 12 September 2023

Estimates of employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics for the UK.

12. Cite this article

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