

Census 2021 Population Profile

Religion

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CENSUS 2021 POPULATION PROFILE

RELIGION IN BRISTOL

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RELIGION HEADLINES

NUMBERS

- More than 45 religions represented in Bristol
- More than half (51%) of people state they have no religion - the third highest proportion of all local authorities in England

AGE PROFILE

- Median age by religion ranges from 23 years Muslims to 47 years Christians (Bristol 34 years)

DISABILITY

- More than 1 in 3 people who identified with religions other than the 6 main religions have a health issue or disability, they also have the highest levels of bad/very bad health and the highest proportion of people providing unpaid care

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- More than a third (36%) of all Jewish people of working age were economically inactive students compared to just 12% in the population as a whole
- The proportion of people looking after home or family was more than three times higher for people who identified as Muslim (14%) than the overall population (4%)

QUALIFICATIONS

- Hindus have the highest levels of qualification - 62% with a degree or higher
- More than a quarter (26%) of Muslims have no qualifications (Bristol average 15%)

OCCUPATION

- Occupation varies considerably across religious groups, particularly in 'professional occupations' which employ 45% of Jewish people compared to just 14% of 'Muslim' people

HOUSING

- Half of all Muslims (50%) live in socially rented accommodation - 31 percentage points higher than the overall population (19%)
- Levels of home ownership are low in the Muslim population - just over a quarter (26%) of all Muslims live in homes that are owner occupied compared to more than half (54%) of the Bristol population as a whole
- Overcrowding is four times higher in the Muslim population than in the overall population – 42% of Muslims lived in overcrowded homes compared with 10% of the overall population

1.0 OVERVIEW

In the census data, religion refers to a person's religious affiliation. This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice. The religion question is voluntary and in 2021 93% of the overall population in Bristol chose to answer the question (E&W 94%).

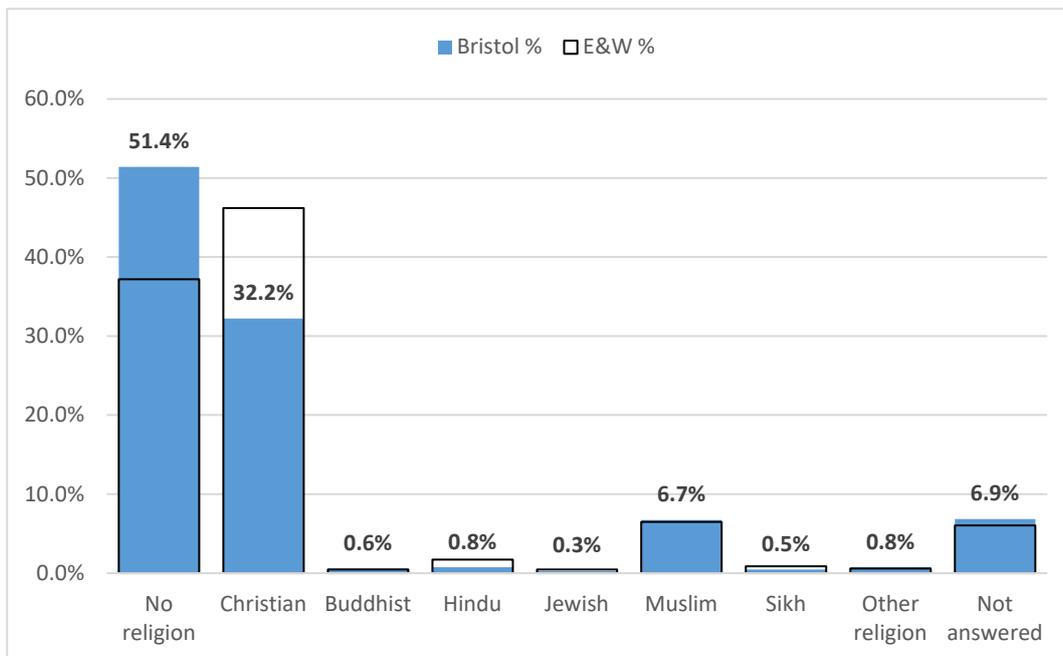
There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing religious composition of England and Wales, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to answer the religion question between censuses.

2.0 RELIGION IN BRISTOL

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the country's population (46.2%) described themselves as 'Christian', a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% in 2011.

In Bristol there are more than 45 religions represented, although 51% of people state they have no religion (Figure 2). This is the third highest proportion of people with no religion of all local authorities in England, with only Brighton and Hove and Norwich having a higher proportion. In England and Wales 37.2% of people have no religion (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Population by religion in Bristol
Source: ONS Census 2021



The second largest group were 'Christian', with a third (32.2%) of people living in Bristol stating they were 'Christian'. This is a lower proportion of the population than in England and Wales as a whole, where 46.2% are 'Christian'. 'Muslims' are the third largest religion group in Bristol and include 31,776 people - this is 6.7% of the population and similar to the England and Wales average of 6.5%.

The remaining 2.8% of the population identify with other religions, including 'Hindu' (3,545 people), 'Buddhist' (2,710 people), 'Sikh' (2,247 people) and 'Jewish' (1,228 people). 'All other religions' identified in the Census total 3,546 people, 0.8% of the total population).

Trend

The 2021 data show that the largest changes since 2011 were for those describing their religion as 'Christian' and those reporting 'No religion'.

In Bristol, the number of people who described themselves as 'Christian' saw a 14.6 percentage point decrease from 46.8% in 2011. This continues the decrease since 2001, when 62.1% of people in Bristol described themselves as 'Christian'.

This coincided with an increase in the number of people reporting 'No religion' to 51.4% in 2021 from 37.4% in 2011. Again, this continues the trend between 2001 and 2011, when the number of people reporting 'No religion' had risen from 24.5%.

Between 2011 and 2021 in Bristol, the other notable increase was in the number of people who described themselves as 'Muslim' from 5.1% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2021. A similar change to that seen nationally.

3.0 RELIGION DIFFERENCES IN AGE, HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & HOUSING

Many of the life outcomes discussed may be influenced by the differing age and sex profiles of religious groups. Different age and sex profiles however, are not the only reason for varied life outcomes. These outcomes often overlap; for example, people in poor health or caring for others may be less able to work or gain education. Income, where people live, and cultural background, will also have an influence on outcomes.

3.1 AGE PROFILE

In 2021, the religious group with the oldest average (median) age was the 'Christian' population with a median age of 47 years. This is compared with a median age of 34 years for population of Bristol as a whole (England and Wales 40 years). The youngest average age was 23 years, for people who identified as 'Muslim', followed by 26 years for those who reported 'Jewish'. The age profile will be affected by the number of students living in Bristol (Figure 3). Figure 4 shows the age profile of each religious group in Bristol.

Figure 3: Religion by median age in Bristol

Source: BCC based on ONS Census 2021

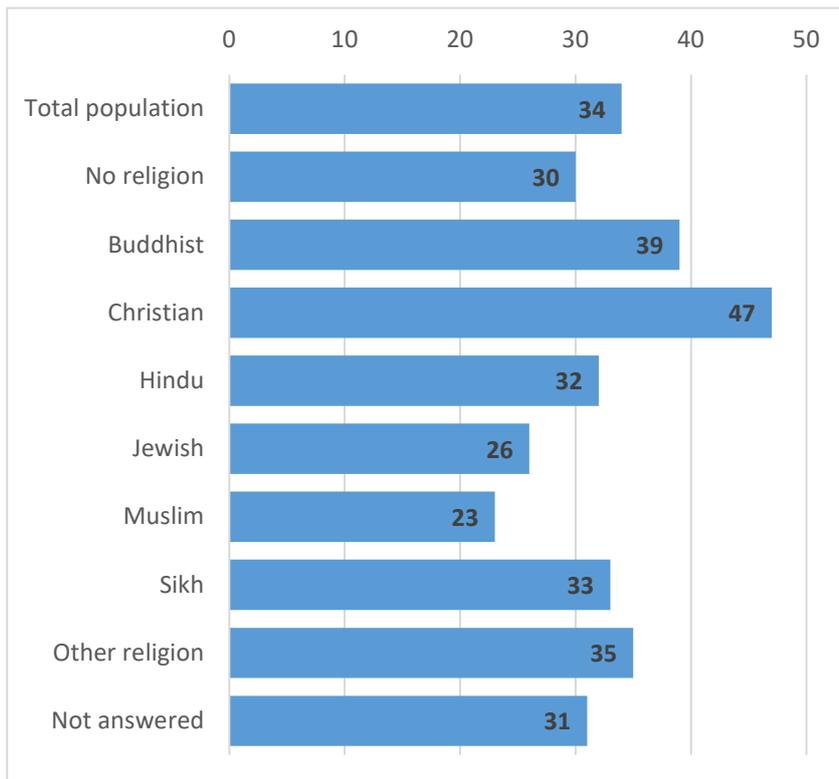
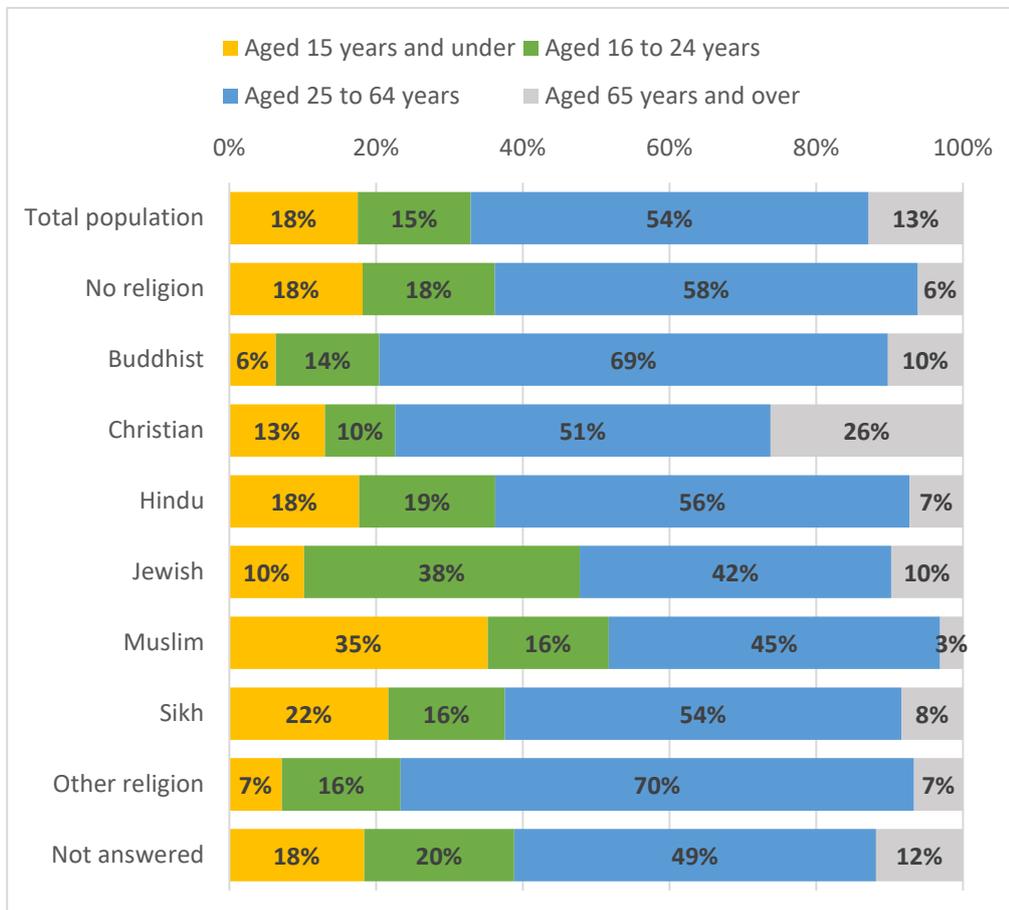


Figure 4: Religion by age in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



3.2 HEALTH

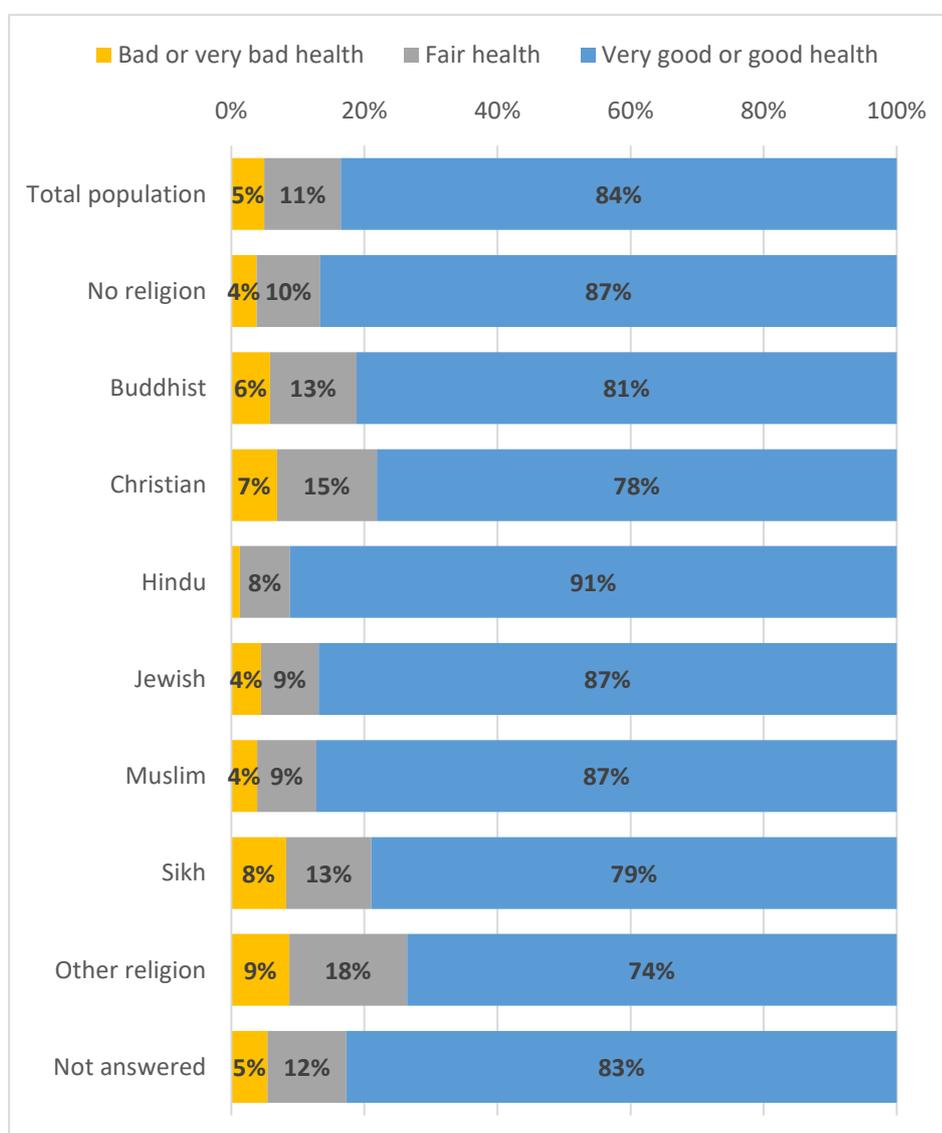
GENERAL HEALTH

In 2021, those who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage of their population reporting either 'very good' or 'good' health - 91% compared with 84% of the overall population (Figure 5).

Older people were more likely to report worse health. Those who identified as 'Christian' had an older age profile and reported poorer health than the overall population. However, age does not explain the health outcomes for all religious groups. Those who reported 'Other religion' had a smaller proportion of people aged 65 years and over (7%) when compared with the overall population (13%). Yet, this group had the highest percentage of people who reported 'bad' or 'very bad' health (9%).

Figure 5: Religion and general health in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



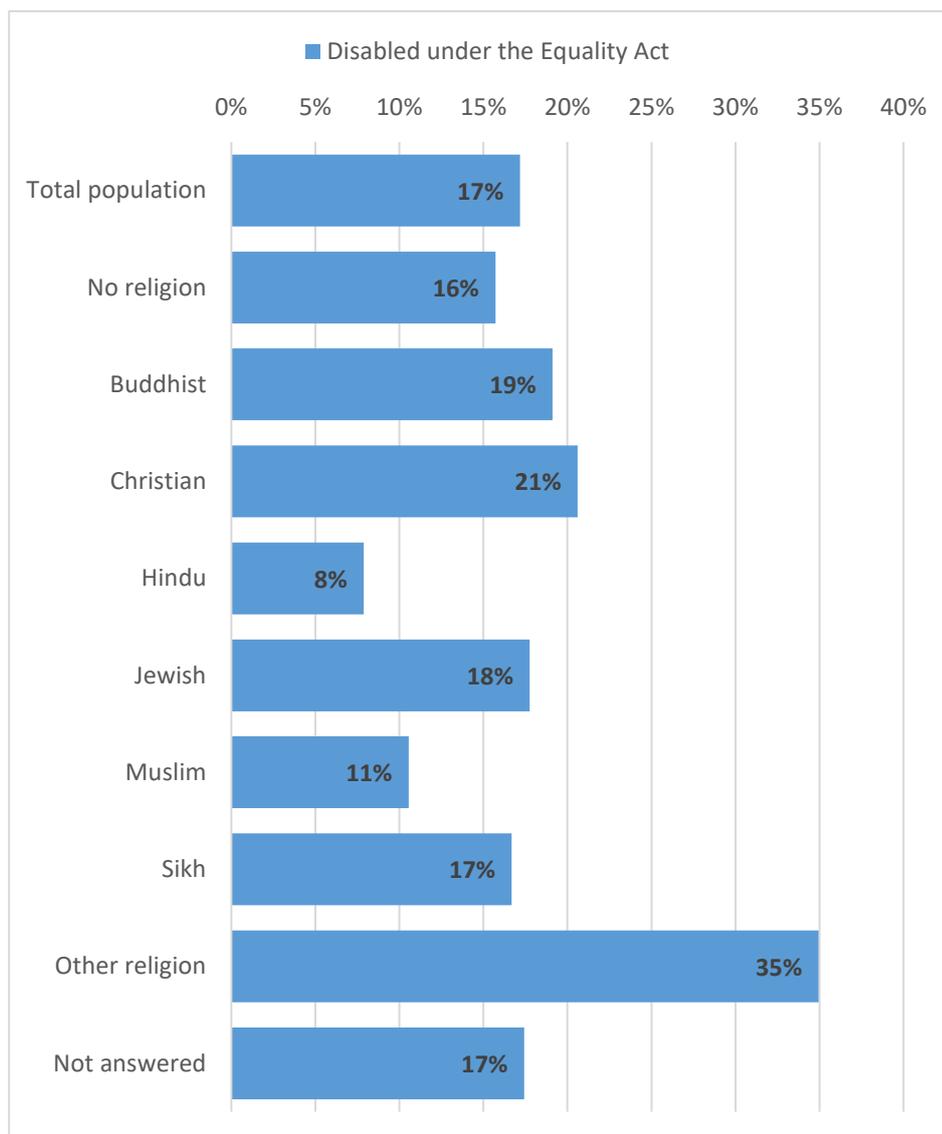
HEALTH ISSUES AND DISABILITY

In Census 2021, people were asked about any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more. People are considered disabled under the Equality Act (2010) if they are limited ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ in their daily activities by a long-term physical or mental health condition.

In 2021, more than one in every three people who selected ‘Other religion’ (35%) had a health issue or disability, compared with 17% of the overall population (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Religion and long-term health issue or disability in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Notably, religious groups reporting higher levels of ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ health also reported a higher prevalence of disability. Conversely, those who identified as ‘Hindu’ had the lowest prevalence of disability (8%) and reported the highest percentages of ‘very good’ and ‘good’ health (91%).

Older people were more likely to be disabled but age is not the only factor influencing these outcomes. Whilst the population who identified as 'Christian' is generally older and this likely influences their higher prevalence of disability, age does not explain the higher rates of disability for those who reported 'Other religion'.

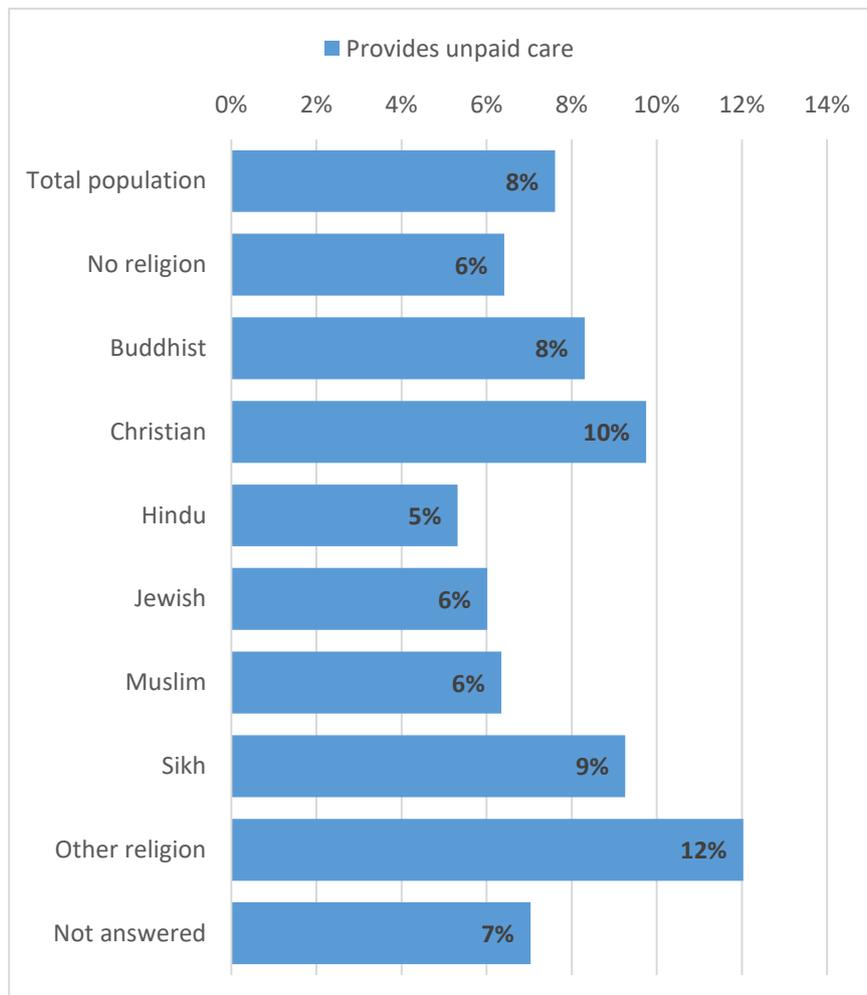
CARERS

In 2021, people who reported 'Other religion' had the highest percentage of unpaid carers (12%), compared with the overall population (8%) (Figure 7).

Like general health and disability, people within older age groups were more likely to provide unpaid care. Those who identified as 'Christian' had an older age profile and had a higher percentage of people providing unpaid care (10%) than the overall population (8%).

Figure 7: Religion and provision of unpaid care in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Note: figures for unpaid care can be affected by perception of the question. Not everyone who provides unpaid care may consider themselves an unpaid carer.

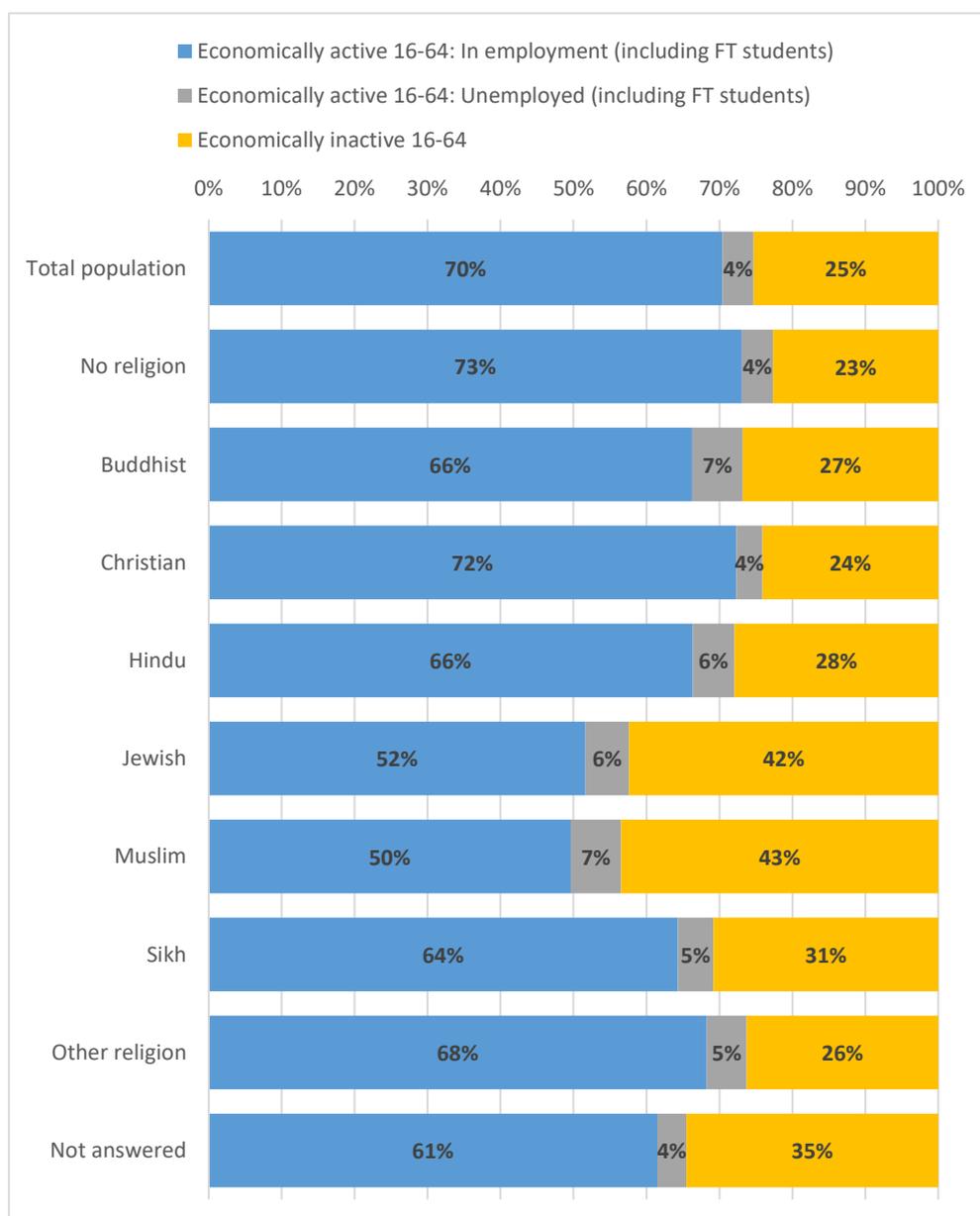
3.3 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Long-term illness, caring for others, where someone lives, and their age can affect whether more or fewer people are employed within a religious group. This section looks at census data for whether people aged 16 to 64 were in employment, unemployed, or not looking for work (ie 'economically inactive') mainly because they were a student, retired, long-term sick or looking after the home or family (Figure 8).

Note: Census 2021 was taken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We asked people on furlough to record themselves as employed, but some people may have said they were out of work instead.

Figure 8: Religion and economic activity status in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



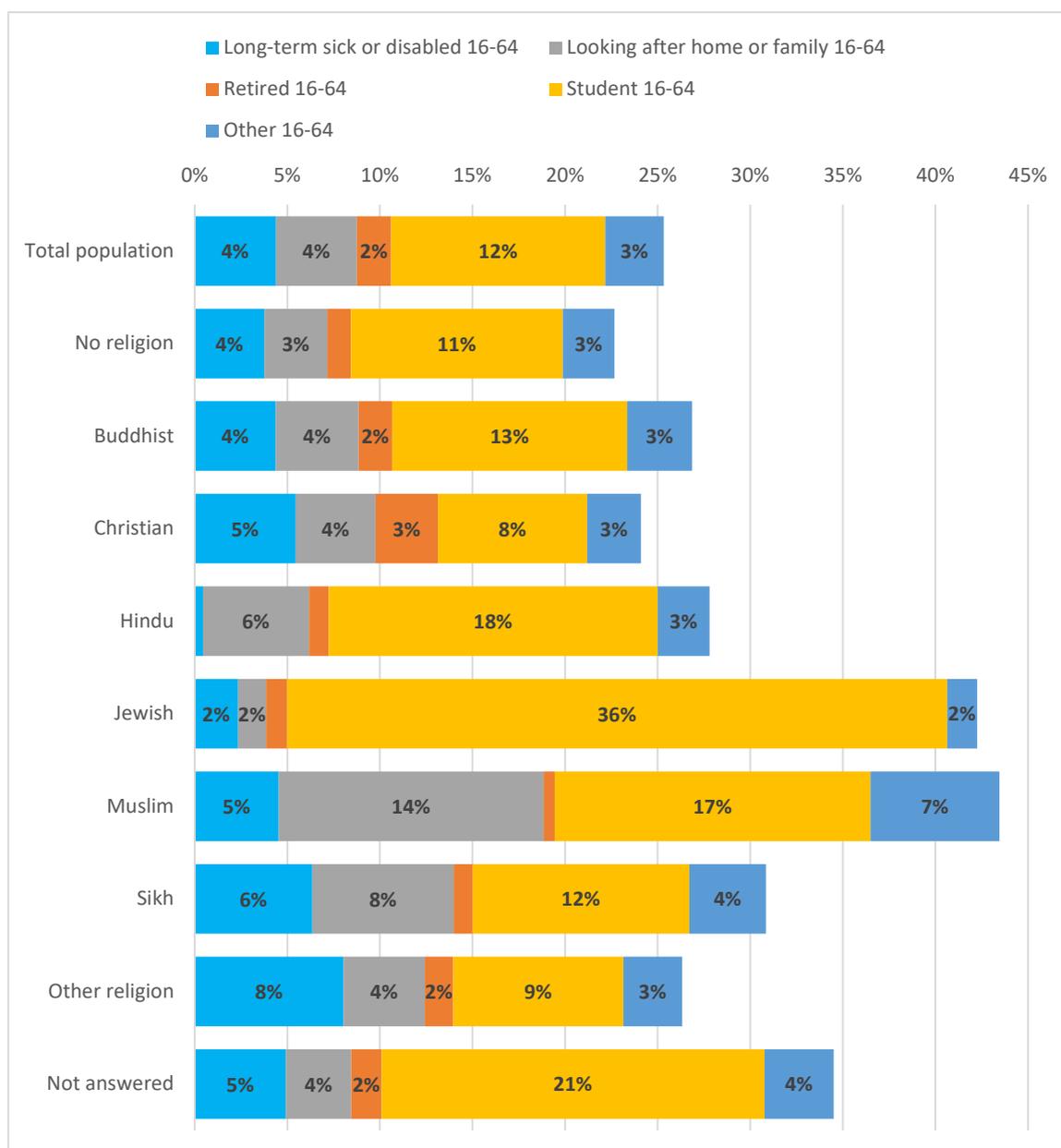
EMPLOYMENT

People identified as ‘Muslim’ had the lowest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years in employment, 50%, compared with 70% of the overall population. The next lowest percentage was in the ‘Jewish’ population with 52% in employment (Figure 8).

These differences were shaped by higher percentages of ‘economically inactive’ people within these religious groups. Those who identified as ‘Muslim’ had the highest percentage of ‘economically inactive’ people at 43%, followed by 42% for the ‘Jewish’ population.

Figure 9: Religion and economic inactivity in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE

Among the 83,300 people of working age in Bristol who were economically inactive, their reasons for not looking for work varied considerably across religious groups (Figure 9).

Among people who identified as 'Muslim' - the group with the highest percentage of 'economic inactivity' - the percentage of people looking after home or family was more than three times higher than the overall population - 14% were looking after home or family (4% in Bristol as a whole) and 17% were students (12% in Bristol as a whole).

Among people who identified as 'Jewish', economic inactivity was mainly due to the high proportion of economically inactive students – 36% of all 'Jewish' people in Bristol aged 16-64 years were students compared to just 12% in the population as a whole.

The younger age profile of these groups is a contributing factor to these differences. People are more likely to study or look after home or family at younger ages.

People who identified as 'Christian', a group with an older age profile, had the lowest percentage of students at 8% and the highest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years who were retired at 3% compared with 2% of the overall population.

Females were more likely than males to be looking after home or family among the overall population (7% and 1%, respectively). This difference was consistent across religious groups but was largest among people who identified as 'Muslim' (26% females and 4% males).

Those who reported 'Other religion' had the highest percentage of people 'economically inactive' because of long-term sickness or disability at 8%, more than twice the percentage among the overall population at 4%. This shaped the high percentage of 'economically inactive' people within this group and was consistent with the higher prevalence of disability and higher levels of 'bad' or 'very bad' health reported.

3.4 OCCUPATION

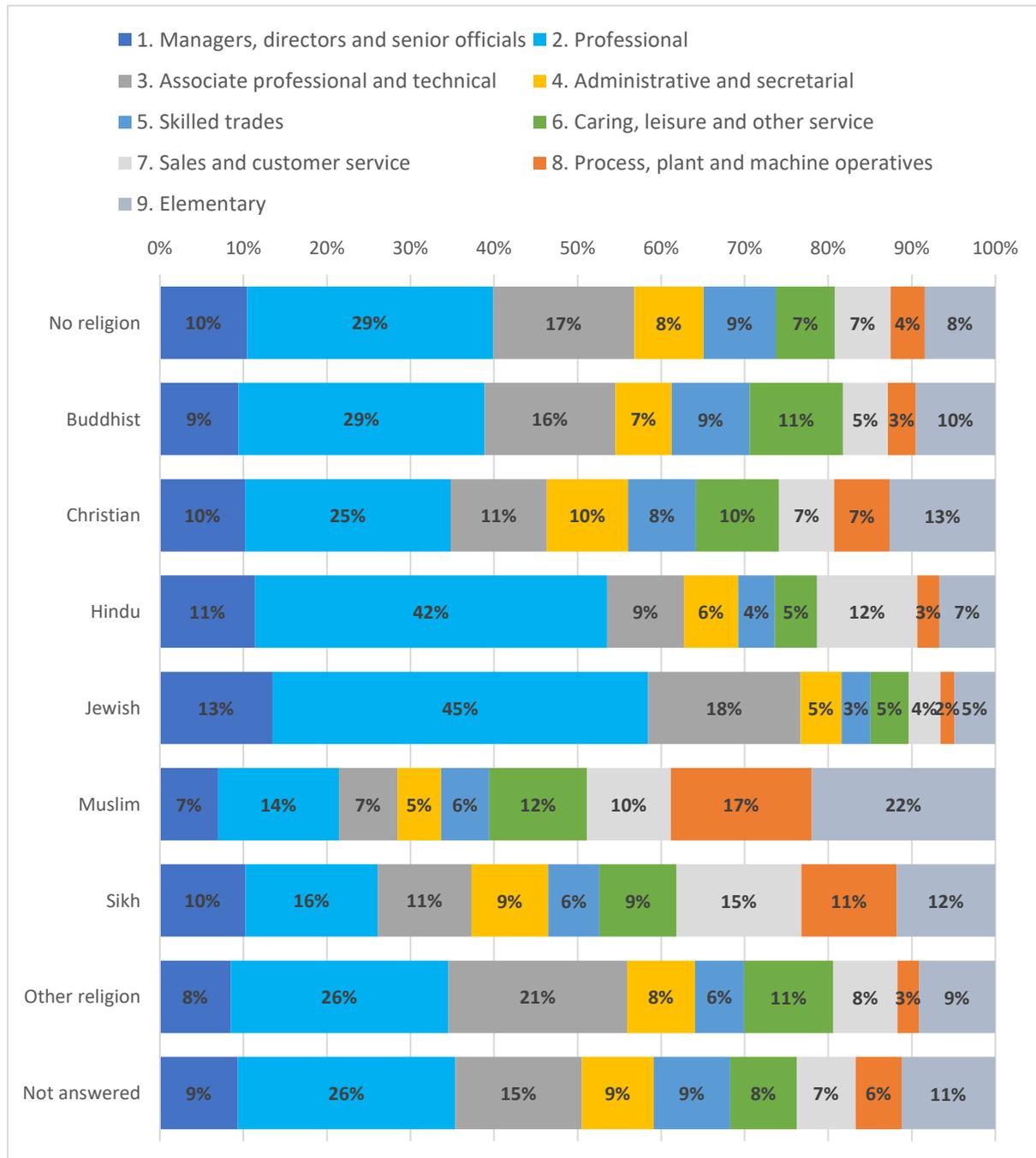
There are nine categories of occupation in the census:

1. Managers, directors or senior officials
2. Professional occupations
3. Associate professional and technical occupations
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations
5. Skilled trades occupations
6. Caring, leisure and other services
7. Sales and customer service
8. Process, plant and machine operation
9. Elementary occupations

Among people in work at the time of Census 2021, the percentage who worked in each of the nine occupation categories varied considerably across the religious groups (Figure 10). This is particularly stark in ‘professional occupations’ which employ 45% of the Jewish population compared to just 14% of the ‘Muslim’ population.

Figure 10: Occupation by religion in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



People who identified as ‘Jewish’ had the highest percentage of people employed as ‘managers, directors or senior officials’ (13%) and also employed in ‘professional occupations’ (such as doctors, solicitors and teachers) (45%). People who identified as ‘Hindu’ had the second highest percentage of people employed as ‘managers, directors or senior officials’ (11%) and in ‘professional occupations’ (42%).

The category for 'associate professional and technical occupations' includes, for example, actors, aircraft pilots, authors, IT technicians and estate agents. People identifying within 'Other religions' are more likely to list this kind of work on the census – 21% compared to the Bristol average of 17%.

'Administrative and secretarial occupations' and 'skilled trade occupations' don't vary significantly across religious groups.

In Bristol, the highest percentages of people working in 'caring, leisure and other service occupations' identified as 'Muslim' (12%).

People who identified as 'Sikh' (15%), 'Hindu' (12%) and 'Muslim' (10%) had the largest proportion of people working in 'sales and customer service'. 'Muslim' and 'Sikh' groups also had a larger proportion of people working as process, plant and machine operatives (17% and 11% respectively).

The percentage of people working in elementary occupations (jobs that require fewer formal qualifications) varies between religions. The highest percentage of people working in elementary occupations in Bristol identified as 'Muslim' (22%). This is borne out by the analysis of education attainment.

3.5 QUALIFICATIONS

Qualification levels in the Census 2021 include the following categories:

- **No qualifications:** No formal qualifications
- **Level 1:** One to four GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications
- **Level 2:** Five or more GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications
- **Apprenticeships**
- **Level 3:** Two or more A Levels or equivalent qualifications
- **Level 4 or above:** Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or postgraduate qualifications
- **Other:** Other qualifications, of unknown level

Among the 390,000 people aged 16 and over in Bristol in 2021, the highest level of qualification ('Level 4 – degree or higher) was the most common highest qualification level for all religious groups (Figure 11).

People who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage with a 'Level 4 or above' qualification (62%), compared with the overall population (42%).

The 'Level 4 or above' category had the largest variation across religious groups, ranging from 20 percentage points higher than the overall population for the 'Hindu' group (62%) to 15 percentage points lower for people who identified as 'Muslim' (27%).

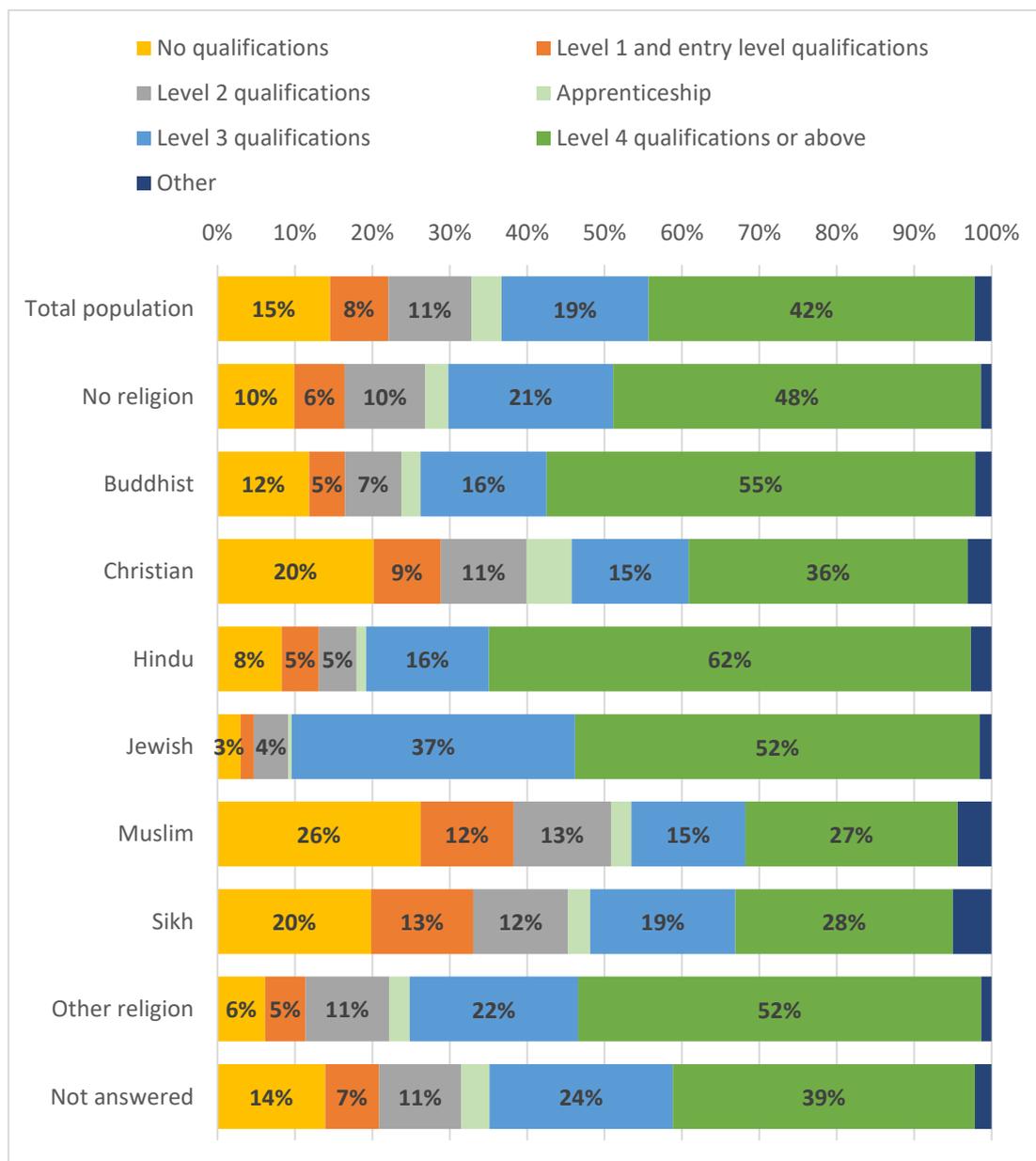
Among the overall population, females were more likely to have 'Level 4 or above' qualifications (43%, compared with 41% of males). This was true for all religious groups except 'Hindu' where 63% males and 62% females had a 'Level 4 or above' qualifications.

Among people who identified as 'Muslim', 26% had no qualifications, 11 percentage points higher than the overall population (15%).

Among the overall population, females were more likely than males to have no qualifications (15% females, 14% males). This was true for most religious groups. Only the 'Other religion' (9% males, 4% females) and 'No religion' (10.2% males, 9.6% females) did not align to this trend.

Figure 11: Religion and highest qualification level in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Many factors contribute to differences in highest level of qualification across religious groups. Qualifications gained in another country (when the equivalent was not known) are included in the 'Other' qualification category. People who identified as 'Sikh' (5%) and 'Muslim' (4%) had the highest percentages of 'Other' qualifications, compared with 2% of the overall population.

Age is likely to be only a contributing factor to differences in educational outcomes. People who identified as 'Muslim' and people who reported 'No religion' both had younger age profiles but contrasting educational outcomes. The 'No religion' group had 10% of people with no qualifications, one of the lowest, compared with 15% of the overall population and 26% of the 'Muslim' group.

3.6 HOUSING

HOUSING TENURE

The census tells us if people lived in a home that is owned outright, owned with a mortgage or loan, or if they lived in a rented home. If rented, the census tells us if that was social rented housing (such as from a council or housing association), private rent, or if they were living rent free (for example, in a home owned by a family member or friend). Religion is individual, so we are looking here at percentages of people, rather than the percentage of rented or owned properties.

Owned

Of the 457,800 people in Bristol who lived in households in 2021, 54% were in households that owned their accommodation (E&W 63%).

Home ownership varied considerably across religious groups (Figure 12). Only a quarter (26%) of people who identified as 'Muslim' lived in households that owned their home, far lower than any other religious group (Bristol 54%). In contrast, 69% of those who identified as 'Sikh' lived in households that owned their home.

An older age profile is one factor affecting levels of home ownership, suggesting that they may have had time to pay off a mortgage or loan. Other factors can contribute to differences across groups, including income, employment, inherited wealth, housing stock, and prices and where people live.

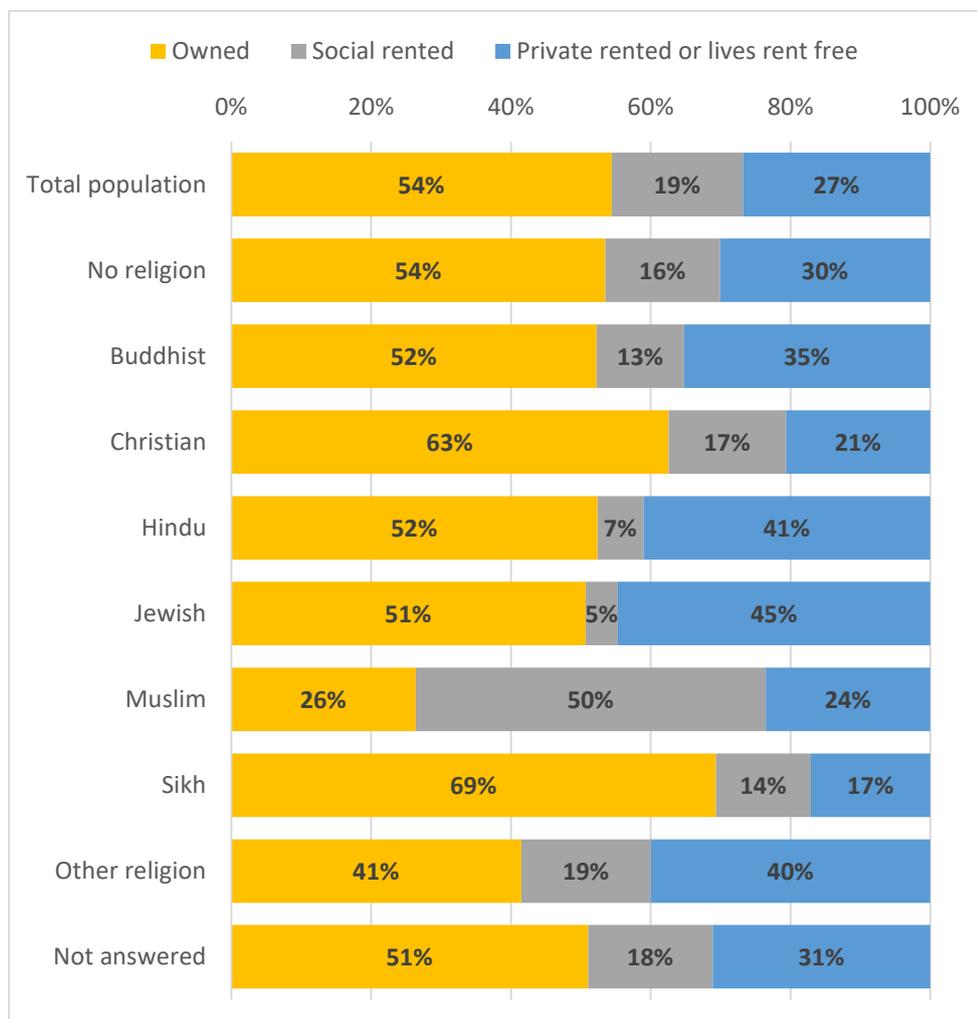
Social rented

There was a large disparity across religious groups in the percentage of people in households in the social rented sector, such as through a local council or housing association (Figure 12). In Bristol, people who identified as 'Muslim' had by far the highest percentage living in 'social rented' housing with half of 'Muslims' (50%) living in socially rented housing, 31 percentage points higher than the overall population (19%).

Religious groups with the highest percentages of people living in ‘social rented’ homes had very different age profiles. Therefore, age cannot explain the differences across all religious groups.

Figure 12: Religion and housing tenure in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Private rented

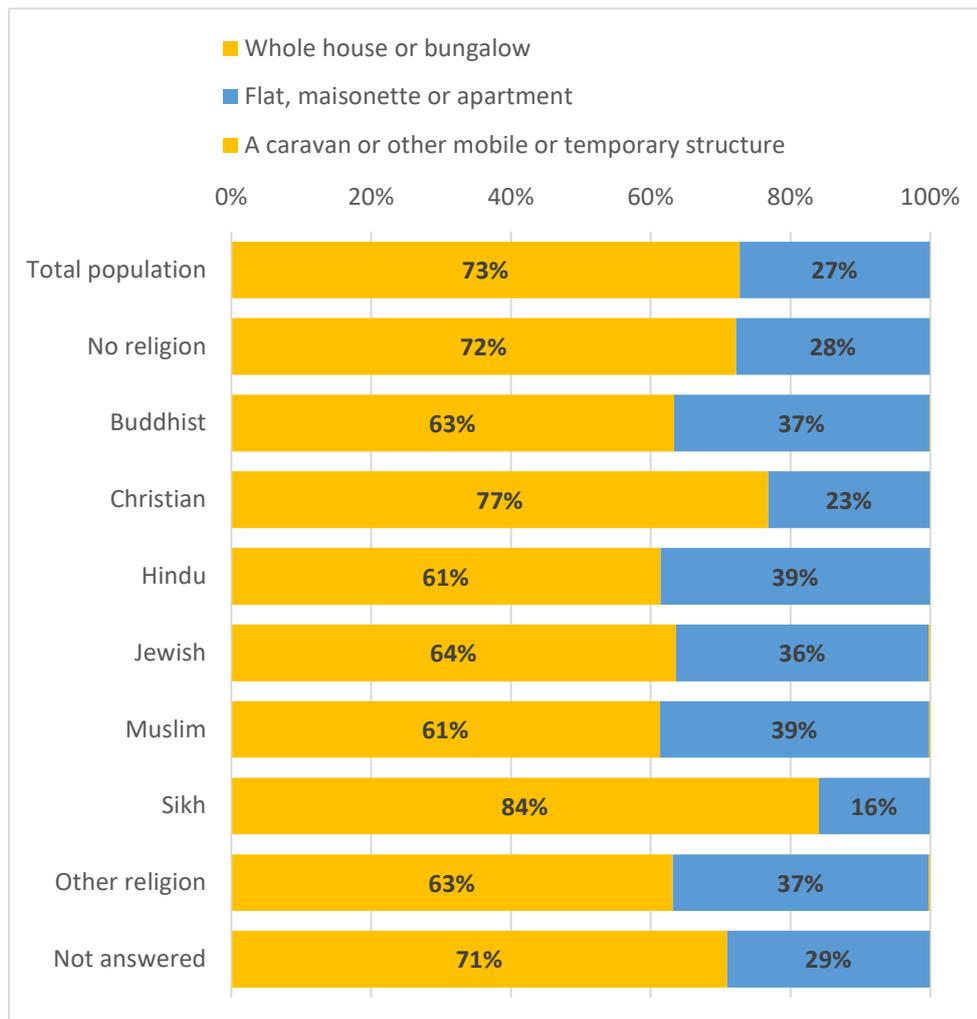
Across the city, 27% of people live in a privately rented property or lived rent free (Figure 12). The highest levels of private renting were people who identified as ‘Jewish’ (45%), ‘Hindu’ (41%) and ‘Other religion’ (40%). Lowest levels of private renting were in the ‘Sikh’ (17%) and ‘Christian’ (21%) populations. These ethnic groups all have average ages of between 26 and 35 years, which may partly explain why they are more likely to live in private rented and rent-free homes.

HOUSING TYPE

The variation amongst different religions is less marked than for other variables (Figure 13). Around 27% of the population in Bristol live in flats (including maisonettes or apartments). This type of housing is more common among people who identified as ‘Muslim’ (39%), ‘Hindu’ (39%), ‘Buddhist’ (37%) and ‘Other religion’ (37%). Around 73% of the population in Bristol live in houses (including bungalows). Groups with higher proportions living in houses than the citywide average include ‘Sikh’ (84%) and ‘Christian’ (77%).

Figure 13: Religion and accommodation type in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



OVERCROWDING

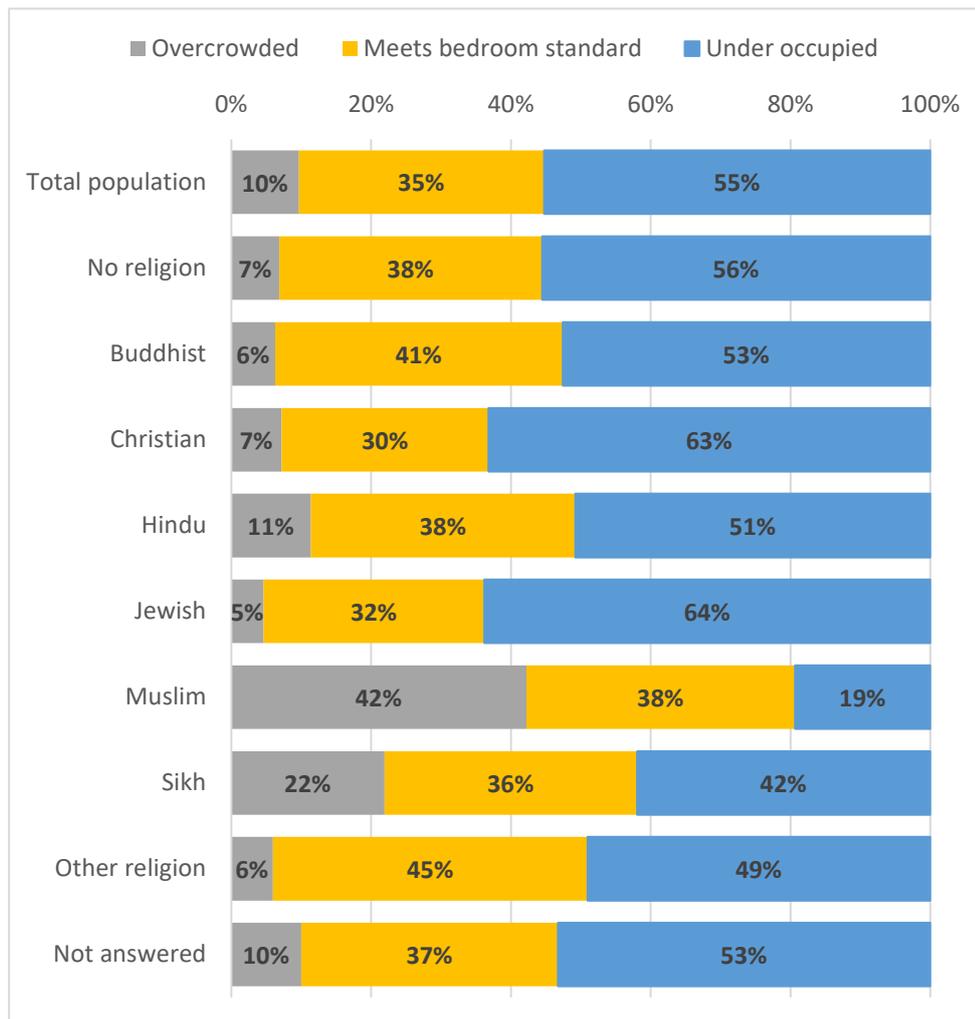
The percentage of people who identified as ‘Muslim’ who experienced overcrowding was four times more than the overall population – 42% of ‘Muslims’ lived in overcrowded homes, compared with 10% of the overall population. This proportion is far higher than any other religious group (Figure 14).

The age profile of religious groups can affect occupancy along with other factors, including multiple generations living together. However, the ‘occupancy rating of bedrooms’ accounts for the different needs of children and adults within households, therefore, the age profile of a group alone should not be seen as the explanatory factor in differing percentages of overcrowding.

For example, people who said they were ‘Muslim’ had the youngest age profile (median age 23 years) and the highest percentage of overcrowding. Those who reported ‘No religion’ also had a younger age profile (median age 30 years) but had a low percentage of people living in overcrowded homes (7%).

Figure 14: Religion and occupancy rating in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Note: Occupancy rating provides a measure of whether a household’s accommodation is overcrowded or underoccupied. An occupancy rating of minus 1 or less implies that a household has fewer bedrooms than the standard requirement, plus 1 implies that they have more bedrooms than required, and 0 implies that they met the standard required.

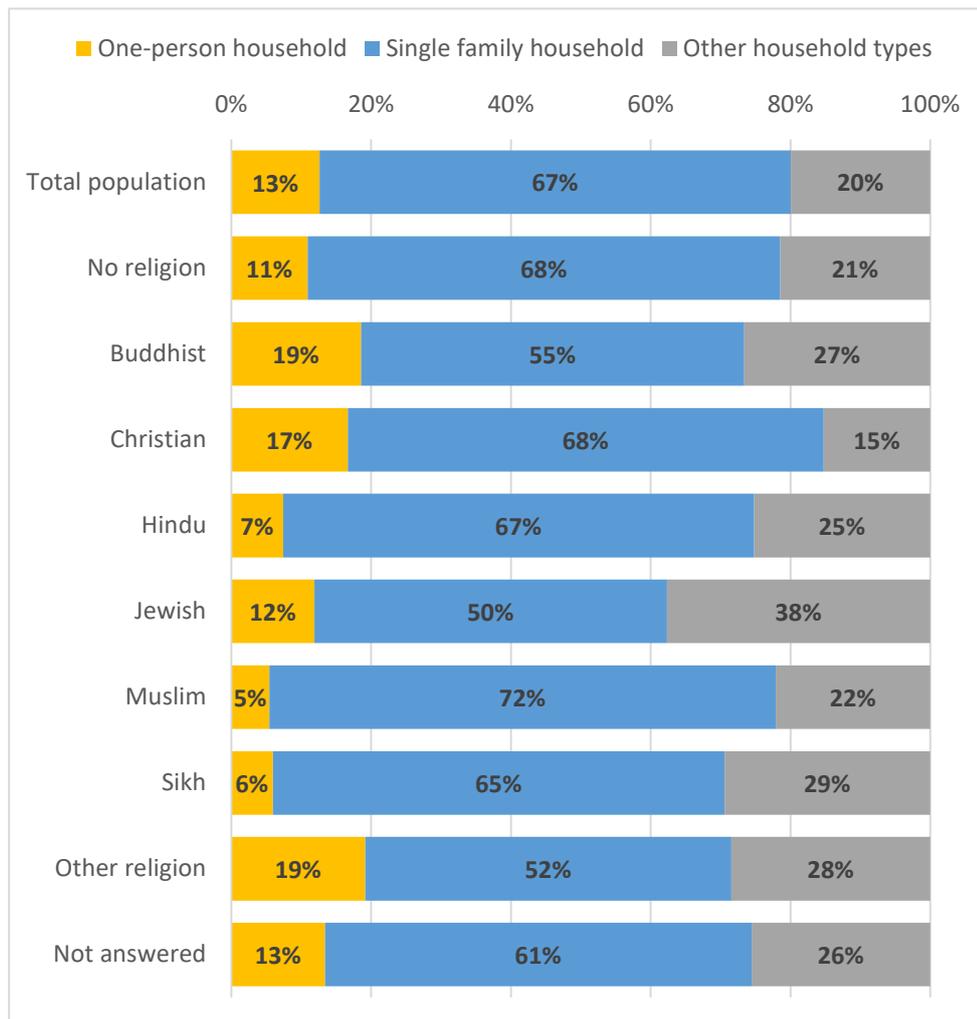
3.7 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

In Bristol, 13% of the population live in one person households (Figure 15). One person households are highest amongst the ‘Buddhist’ (19%), ‘Other religion’ (19%) and ‘Christian’ (17%) populations, where almost 1 in 5 people live in one person households. This can be explained by the older age profile of these groups. One person households are lowest in the ‘Muslim’ (5%), ‘Sikh’ (6%) and ‘Hindu’ (7%) religious groups.

The ‘Jewish’ population are more likely to live in households with more than one family or a mix of generations. 38% of all ‘Jewish’ people live in ‘Other household types’ compared to 20% for the overall population. This reflects the high proportion of students in the Jewish population.

Figure 15: Religion and household composition in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Note: 'Other household types' include households that aren't just one person or one family and include all student households and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

4.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

ONS Census 2021 articles on the population by religion:

[Religion, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Religion by age and sex, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

Alongside this profile, a new interactive [Equalities Dashboard](#) presents more detailed results from Census 2021. Each equalities group is available for a selection of age groups and by ward.

More information about census results for Bristol, including links to our Census 2021 Dashboards, can be found on the [Bristol City Council Census web page](#). Links to a selection of useful ONS Census tools can also be found here.

A guide to equalities statistics and profiles for other population groups, together with wider information about the Bristol population can be found on our [population web page](#).

If you have any questions about this report please contact:
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