

# Census 2021 Results: *Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion*

Southwark Public Health Division  
Children's and Adult's Services

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Council  
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# This profile presents key findings on Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion in Southwark

## BACKGROUND

The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives us a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales.

- The last census was conducted on Sunday 21 March 2021, and collected information on a range of themes, including:

Demography & Migration	Ethnicity, Identity, Language & Religion	Health & Disability	Housing
Work & Travel	Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity	Education	UK Armed Forces Veterans

- Results of the census are being released in a phased manner:
  - 28 June 2022: Headline population figures for local authorities
  - Phase 1 - Autumn-Winter 2022/23: Topic profiles for census themes
  - Phase 2 - Date to be confirmed: More detailed data becomes available

This profile focuses on **Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion** in the borough, and forms part of a suite of documents that profile the Southwark results of the 2021 Census. Further profiles will be released later in 2023 as new data becomes available.

### Reference

1. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

# The Census 2021 identified over 280 different ethnicities across our borough

## KEY HEADLINES

- When completing the Census 2021, respondents were asked to record their specific ethnic group. In total, **282 different ethnicities were recorded by Southwark residents.**
- **Just over half (51%)** of the population identified as being from a **White ethnic background**, equivalent to 158,000 residents.
- One-third (36%) identified as 'White: English, British, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish' ethnicity, similar to that seen across London (37%), but substantially lower than the proportion across England (74%).
- **The largest broad ethnic group other than White was 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African'**, with one-quarter (25%) of Southwark residents reporting this as their ethnicity. Almost one-fifth (16%) reported 'African' ethnicity and 6% reported a 'Caribbean' ethnicity.
- **A tenth (10%)** of Southwark residents reported their ethnic group to be **'Asian'**, with the majority of these residents (8,400) identifying with a Chinese ethnic background.
- **22,000 (7%)** of Southwark residents reported their ethnic group to be **'Mixed or multiple ethnicities'**.
- The majority (70%) of Southwark residents recorded their national identity as English, British, or both, equivalent to 215,000 people.
- **The most common reported non-UK identity of Southwark residents was Spanish** (including Canary Islander). This has changed since 2011 when the most common non-UK identity was Nigerian.

### References

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>
2. National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

# One-fifth of Southwark residents have a main language other than English

## KEY HEADLINES

- At the time of Census Day 2021, **244,000 (79%) Southwark residents reported their main language to be English**, similar to figures in 2011.
- This is comparable to London, where 76% of residents recorded English as their main language, but lower than across England (88% of the population).
- **Spanish is the most common main language other than English**, spoken by 13,000 Southwark residents and increasing in number since 2011. This differs to London where the most common spoken main language other than English is Romanian.
- 'All other Chinese' is the most common Asian language, while Somali is the most spoken African language of Southwark residents.
- Of the 53,700 Southwark residents whose main language is not English, **10,200 (19%) cannot speak English well or have no English proficiency**.
- In the 2021 Census, **43% of Southwark residents gave Christian as their religion**, equating to 133,300 people. This is down from 53% in 2011.
- A total of 111,900 Southwark residents reported having 'no religion', equivalent to around one-third (36%) of the population. This has increased substantially from 27% in 2011.

### References

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>
2. National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

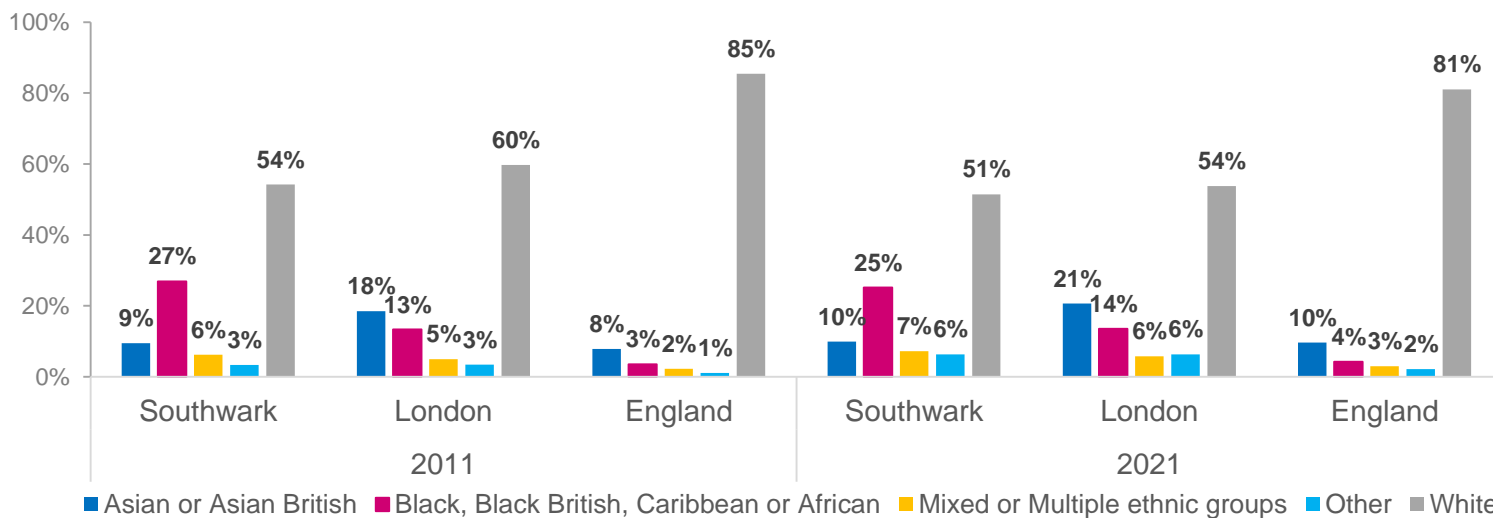
# Broad ethnic group proportions in Southwark have seen little change since 2011

## ETHNICITY: BROAD ETHNIC GROUPS

**Around half (51%) of residents reported their ethnicity to be White, equivalent to 158,000 people in Southwark. This proportion is slightly lower than London and substantially below that for England.**

- Southwark had a higher proportion of residents (25%) reporting their ethnicity as 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African', compared to London (14%) or England (4%).
- The proportion of residents identifying as 'Asian or Asian British' is notably smaller in Southwark (10% of population) than it is across London as a whole (21% of the population).
- 7% of residents reported their ethnicity as 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups', which is slightly higher than the proportion across London and England.
- The proportion of residents in Southwark reporting their ethnicity of 'Other' rose from 3% in 2011 to 6% in 2021, representing an increase of 10,000 people over the period.

Figure 1: Ethnicity in Southwark, London and England, in 2011 and 2021, as a proportion of the population



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 5

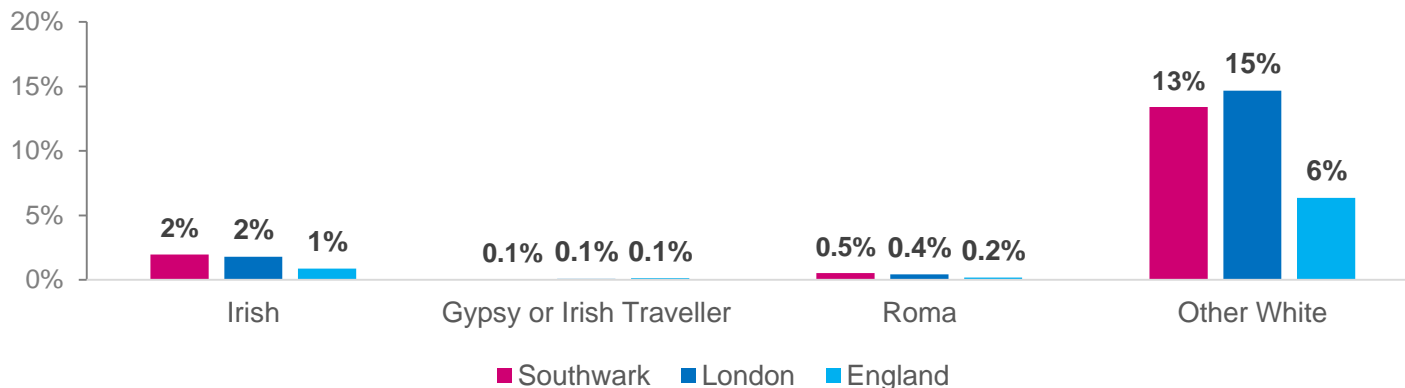
# Since 2011, there has been a decrease in the proportion of residents reporting a White British\* ethnicity

## ETHNICITY: WHITE ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Just over half the population identify as being from a White ethnic background. This includes those who identify as White British\*, White Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, or Other White.

- 158,000 (51%) Southwark residents reported their ethnicity to be under the broad ethnic group 'White'.
- Over one-third (36%) of the population in Southwark recorded their ethnicity as 'White: English, British, Welsh Scottish or Northern Irish', a decrease from 40% in 2011 and representing a drop of 5,200 people in Southwark over the period.
- This proportion is similar to the 37% across London but substantially lower than the 74% across England.
- 'White Roma' was included as a category for the first time in the 2021 Census. Approximately 1,600 people in Southwark recorded their ethnicity as 'White Roma', equivalent to 0.5% of the total population.
- This is comparable to London as a whole, where over 37,600 people (0.4%) recorded their ethnicity as White Roma.

Figure 2: White ethnic groups across Southwark, London and England as a proportion of total population, 2021 (Excludes White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British)



\*White British here refers to White British/English/Welsh/Scottish or Northern Irish

### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

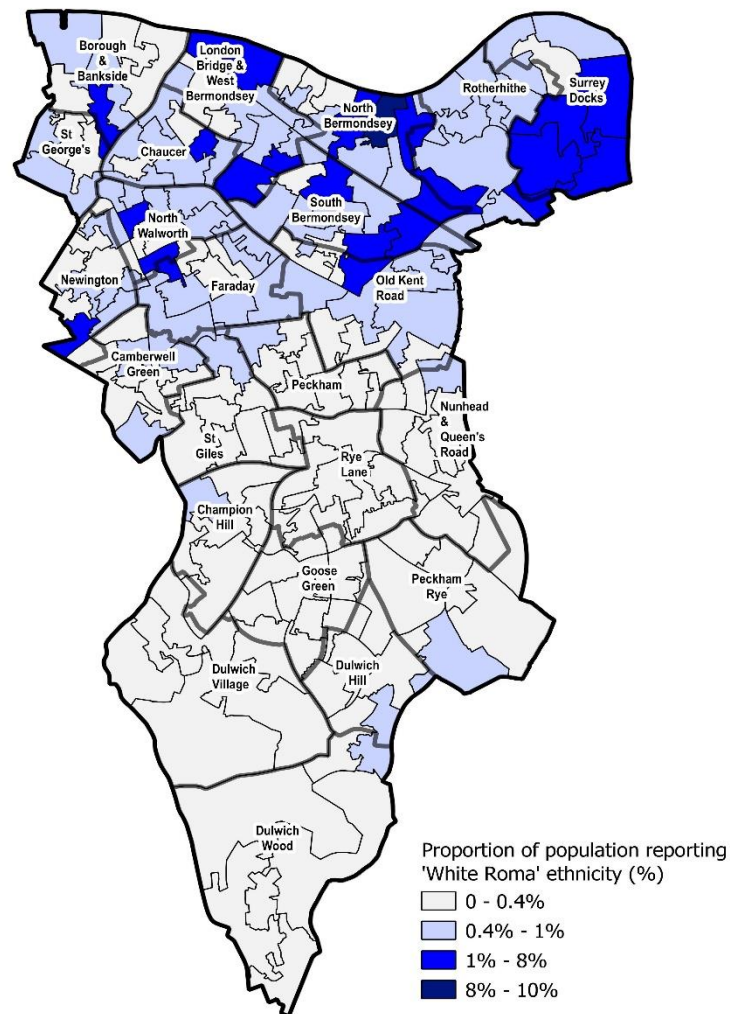
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# Residents reporting White Roma ethnicity tend to live in the north of the borough

## ETHNICITY: WHITE ETHNIC BACKGROUND

**‘White: Roma’ was included as a separate category for the first time in the Census 2021.**

- The number of Southwark residents with White Roma ethnicity is small overall, with populations concentrated in particular areas in the borough.
- The White Roma population is concentrated in small areas in the north of the borough near Surrey Docks and Bermondsey, particularly around North Bermondsey where some areas had around 10% of the population reporting White Roma ethnicity.



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 7

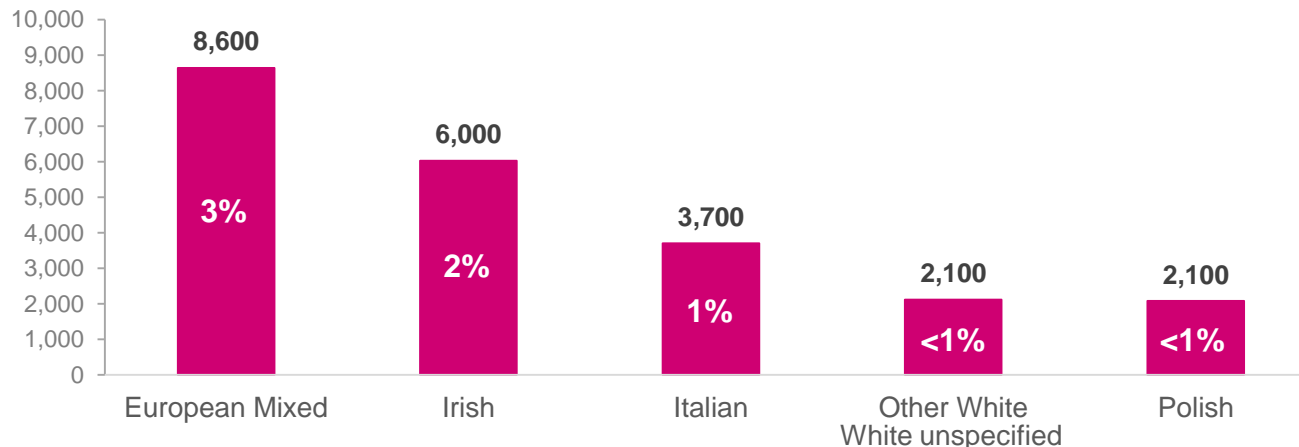
# In Southwark, 'European Mixed' ethnicity was the most common write-in response within the 'White' category

## ETHNICITY: WHITE ETHNIC BACKGROUND

If respondents to the Census felt their ethnicity was not represented exactly by the high-level category options, individuals could provide a write-in option.

- 'White: European Mixed' was a common write-in ethnicity for residents, with 8,600 people recording this as their ethnicity, making up around 3% of Southwark's total population.
- 'Irish only', 'Italian', 'Other White' and 'Polish' were the other most frequently reported write-in 'White' ethnicities.
- This differs from London and England, where a notably higher proportion of the write-in responses under the 'White' category were from people of White Romanian ethnicity, and notably lower proportion made up by those of a White Italian ethnicity than seen in Southwark.

Figure 3: Numbers of Southwark residents reporting the most common 'White' write-in ethnicities, and proportion of the total population



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 8



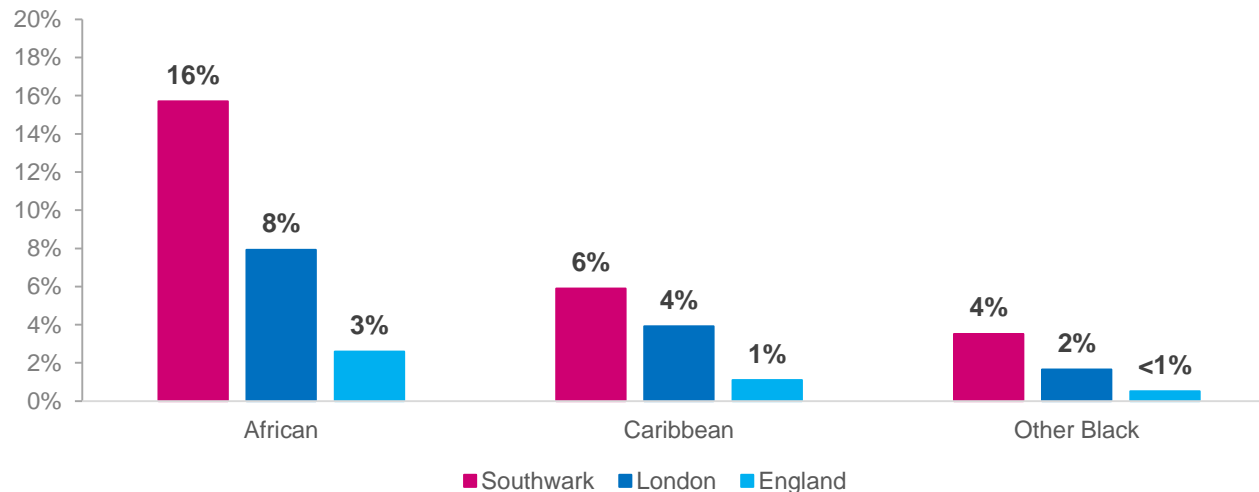
# Southwark has a high proportion of residents with Black, Black British, Caribbean or African ethnicity

## ETHNICITY: BLACK ETHNIC BACKGROUND

**Around 77,300 or one-quarter (25%) of Southwark's residents identified their ethnicity to be Black, Black British, Caribbean or African.**

- Under the broad ethnic group category 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African', 48,300 Southwark residents selected the tick-box option 'African', making up around 16% of Southwark's population.
- This proportion is the same as in 2011, and remains substantially higher than the proportion across both London (8%) and England (3%).
- Almost 18,200 (6%) of Southwark's residents selected the tick-box option 'Caribbean'. The proportion identifying as Caribbean is slightly higher than that seen across London (4%) and England (1%).

Figure 4: Ethnic group proportions within the 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' ethnic group category, across Southwark, London and England in 2021, as a proportion of the total population



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 9

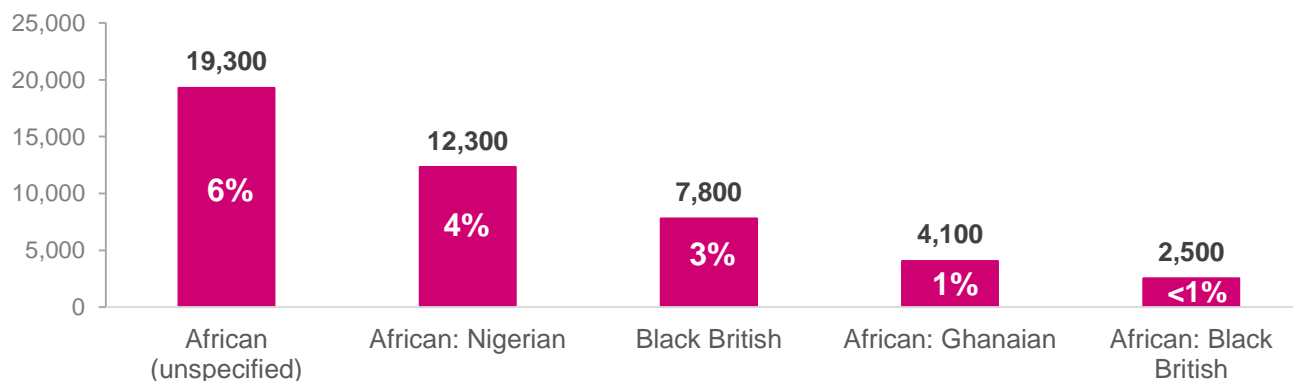
# Over 12,300 residents across Southwark identified with an 'African: Nigerian' ethnic background

## ETHNICITY: BLACK ETHNIC BACKGROUND

If respondents to the Census felt their ethnicity was not represented exactly by the mid-level category options, they could provide a write-in option.

- Respondents selecting 'African background' under the 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' category were asked to specify further by using the write-in option. However, a large number of residents (19,300) chose not to specify their African ethnicity, equivalent to 6% of the total population.
- Substantial numbers of residents specified their African ethnicity to be Nigerian (12,300 residents), or Ghanaian (4,100 residents).
- In addition, 2,500 residents identified with an 'African: Black British' background.
- Those identifying with 'Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean' background were asked to write in their ethnicity, with 7,800 Southwark residents (3%) reporting a 'Black British' ethnicity.
- This differs to London where 'Somali' was a more commonly written in ethnicity, and where 'Ghanaian' makes up a notably lower proportion of the population than is seen in Southwark.

Figure 5: Numbers of Southwark residents reporting the most common write-in ethnicities under the 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African broad ethnic group, and proportion of the population



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

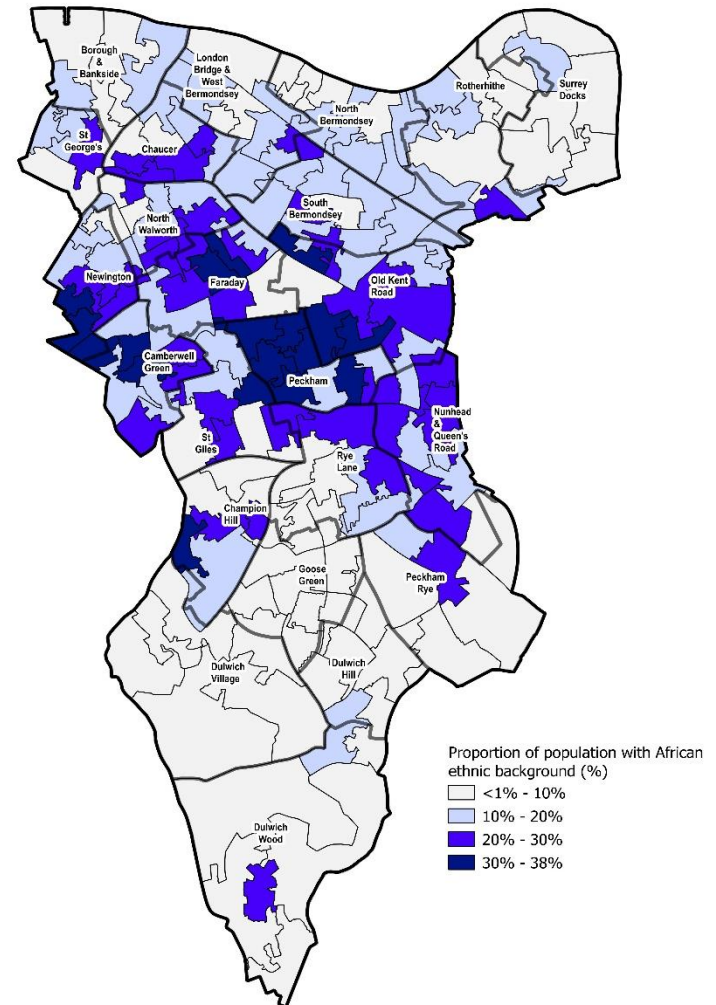
Slide 10

# Areas in the centre of Southwark have more than a third of their population identifying with an African ethnicity

## ETHNICITY: BLACK ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Almost one-fifth (16%) of Southwark's residents reported their ethnicity as African, but this proportion varies significantly across the borough.

- Most residents reporting African ethnicity tend to live in areas across the centre of the borough, particularly in Peckham, Camberwell and Faraday.
- In these areas, as much as 38% of the population identify with African ethnicity.
- This proportion decreases substantially in many areas in the south and north of the borough, where as little as 1% of the population have African ethnicity.



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

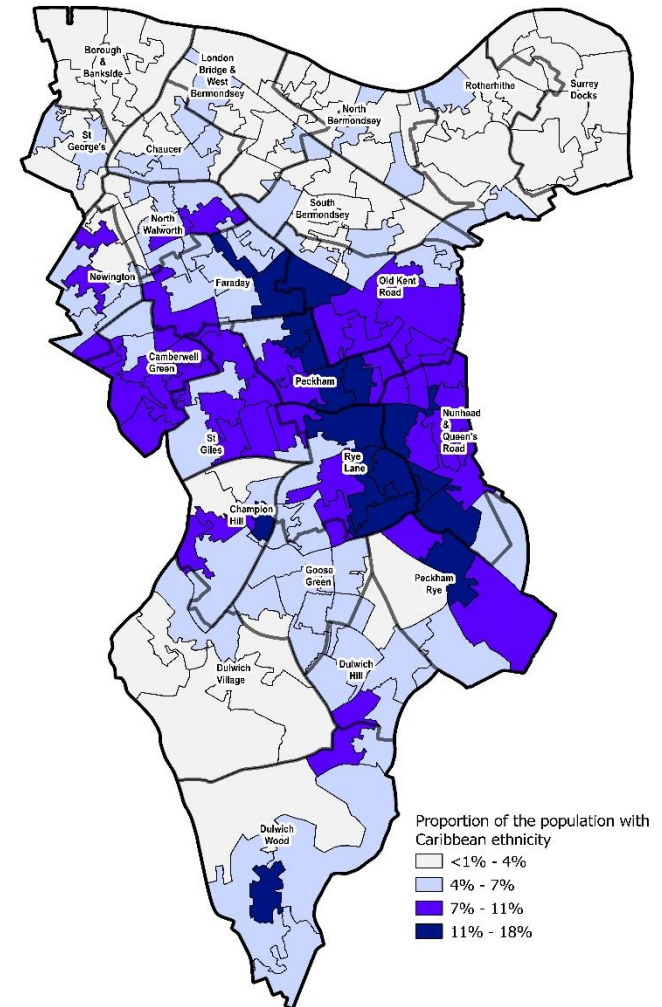
Slide 11

# In areas around Peckham and Rye Lane, as many as one-fifth of residents identify with Caribbean ethnicity

## ETHNICITY: BLACK ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Residents identifying with Caribbean ethnicity account for 6% of Southwark's total population, but this proportion differs substantially across the borough.

- The areas seeing higher proportions of the population with Caribbean ethnicity are similar to that seen for residents with African ethnicity i.e. in the centre of the borough.
- Many areas in the centre of the borough, particularly around Peckham and Rye Lane, have up to one-fifth (18%) of the total population identifying with Caribbean ethnicity.
- Throughout much of the north of Southwark, residents identifying with Caribbean ethnicity make up as little 0.2% of the population.



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

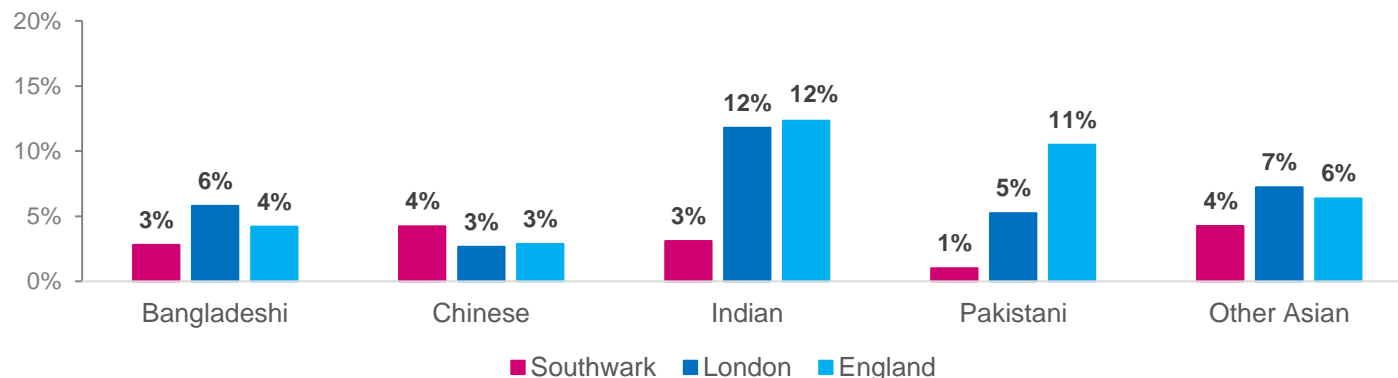
# In Southwark, 'Chinese' was the most commonly reported ethnicity under the 'Asian or Asian British' category

## ETHNICITY: ASIAN ETHNIC BACKGROUND

At the time of the Census 2021, around 30,500 Southwark residents recorded themselves as having an 'Asian or Asian British' ethnicity, equivalent to a tenth (10%) of the total population.

- Within this broad ethnic group category, 'Chinese' and 'Other Asian' were the most commonly selected ethnicities, each equivalent to 8,400 residents or 3% of the total population.
- This differs significantly from London, where there are notably higher proportions of the population made up of residents identifying as 'Indian', 'Pakistani', and 'Bangladeshi'.
- Since 2011, there has been a small increase in the percentage of residents reporting their ethnicity as 'Bangladeshi' across Southwark, London and England; all other broader categories have remained at similar levels.
- In addition, over 2,200 Southwark residents also provided a write-in response reporting their ethnicity to be Filipino, however this makes up less than 1% of the population.

Figure 6: Ethnic group proportions within the 'Asian or Asian British' ethnic group category, across Southwark, London and England in 2021, as a proportion of the total population



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

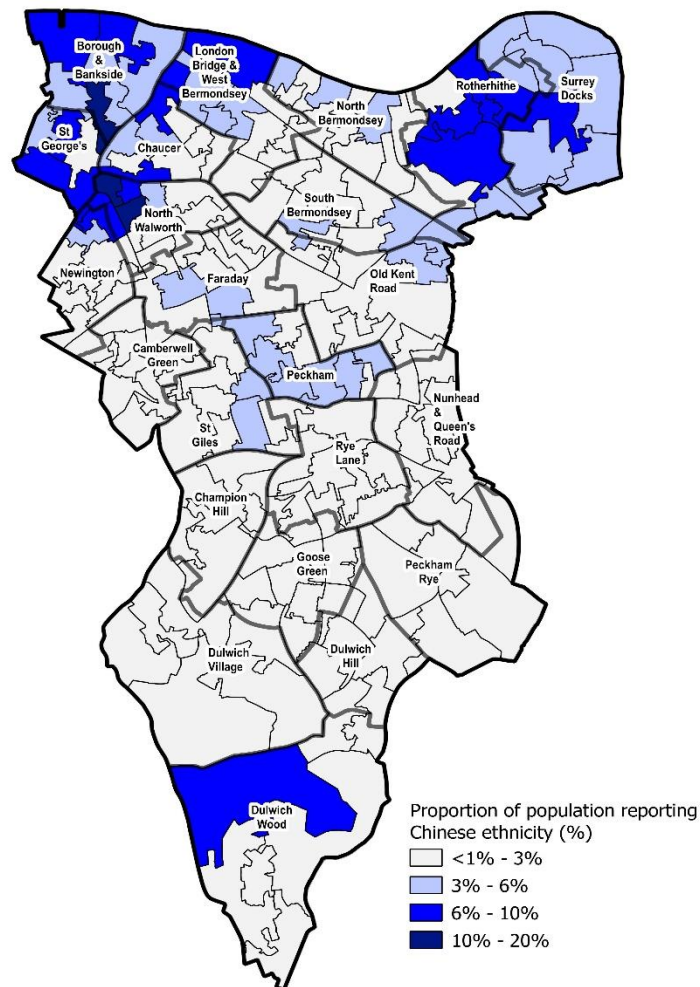
Slide 13

# Residents reporting Chinese ethnicity tend to live in areas in the north of the borough

## ETHNICITY: ASIAN ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Residents with Chinese ethnicity account for a small proportion of the population overall (3%), and tend to live in a small number of communities across the borough.

- In most parts of Southwark, residents identifying with Chinese ethnicity account for as little as 0.4% of the population.
- However, in a small number of neighbourhoods in the north east and north west – such as in Borough & Bankside - those with Chinese ethnicity account for around one-fifth (20%) of the population.



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 14



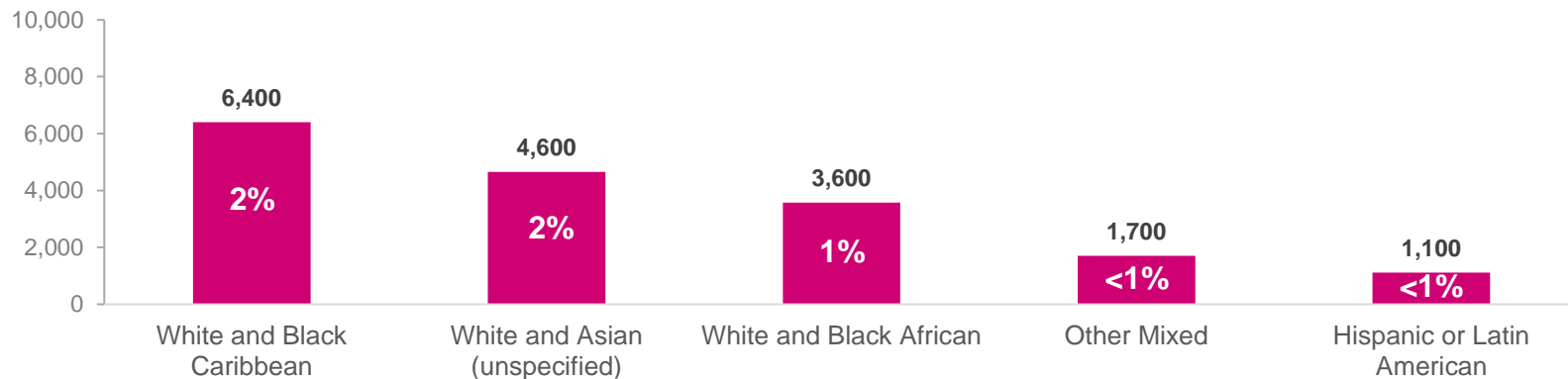
# In Southwark, 'White and Black Caribbean' was the most common ethnicity within 'Mixed or Multiple ethnicities'

## ETHNICITY: MIXED ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

**A total of 22,100 Southwark residents identified with a 'Mixed or multiple ethnicity', representing around 7% of Southwark's population.**

- 'White and Black Caribbean' was the most commonly reported ethnicity under the 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups' category, equivalent to 6,400 residents (2% of the population).
- White and Black Caribbean was also the most common 'Mixed or multiple ethnicities' ethnic group reported across London.
- Notable numbers of residents reported a 'White and Asian' ethnicity (4,600 people), or 'White and Black African' (3,600 people).
- Around 1,100 residents reported their ethnicity to be 'Mixed or multiple ethnicities: Hispanic or Latin American'.

**Figure 7: Number of Southwark residents identifying with the most common ethnicities within the 'Mixed or multiple ethnicities' category, and proportion of the Southwark population**



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

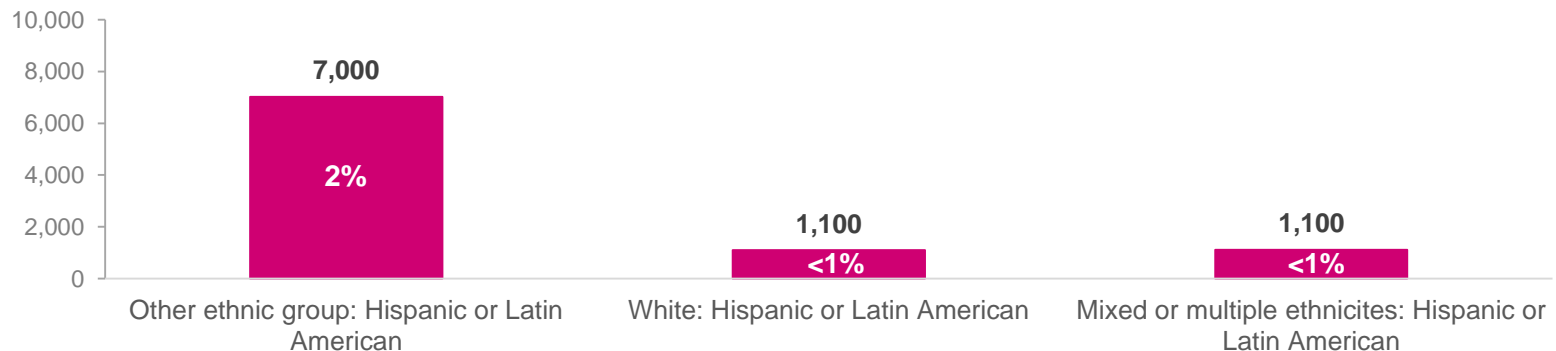
# Southwark has notable numbers of residents identifying with Hispanic or Latin American ethnicity

## ETHNICITY: HISPANIC & LATIN AMERICAN BACKGROUND

**Census 2021 provided respondents with the option to write in their ethnic group, allowing for an estimation of the number of residents identifying with an ‘Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity.**

- On completing the Census, respondents were first asked to select from five broad ethnic groups, then further specify their ethnicity using either pre-defined sub-categories or free text option.
- Across Southwark, an ‘Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity appeared separately under the high-level ethnic categories of ‘White’, ‘Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups’, and ‘Other ethnic group’.
- 7,000 residents reported an ‘Other: Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity, 1,100 reported a ‘White: Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity, and a further 1,100 reported a ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity.
- Though a total of 9,200 residents with ‘Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity have therefore been identified, ONS have advised that these be treated as separate and distinct ethnic groups.

**Figure 8: Number of Southwark residents identifying with ‘Hispanic or Latin American’ ethnicity under the broad ethnic group categories, and proportion of the total population**



### Reference

1. Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

Slide 16



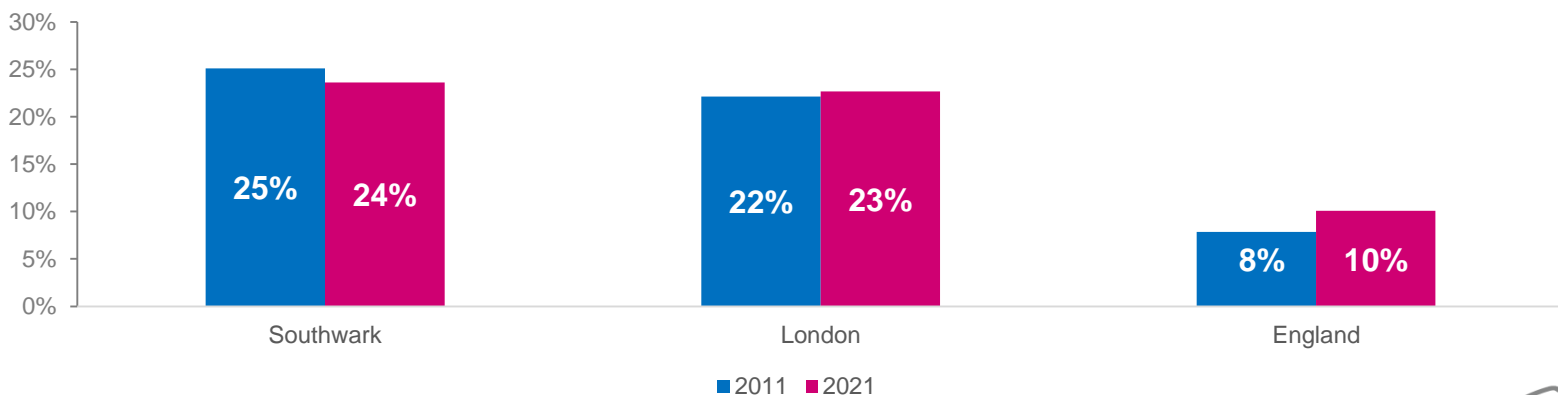
# One-quarter of Southwark's population report a national identity that is not within the UK

## NATIONAL IDENTITY

The national identity question allows respondents to express where they feel they belong, irrespective of ethnic group, citizenship, or country of birth.

- At the time of Census Day 2021, **72,600** residents of Southwark reported their national identity to be something *other than* a UK identity, equivalent to **24%** of the population. This is a slight decrease from 2011, but remains substantially higher than the proportion nationally.
- The most common non-UK national identity in Southwark was **'Spanish (including Canary Islander)'**, with 7,200 residents reporting this as their national identity, equivalent to 2% of the population.
- Across London, the most common non-UK national identity was 'Romanian', equivalent to 2% of the population.
- Across England the most common non-UK national identity was 'Polish', making up 1% of the population nationally.

Figure 9: Percentage of residents identifying with a non-UK national identity in Southwark, London and England, as a proportion of the total population



### Reference

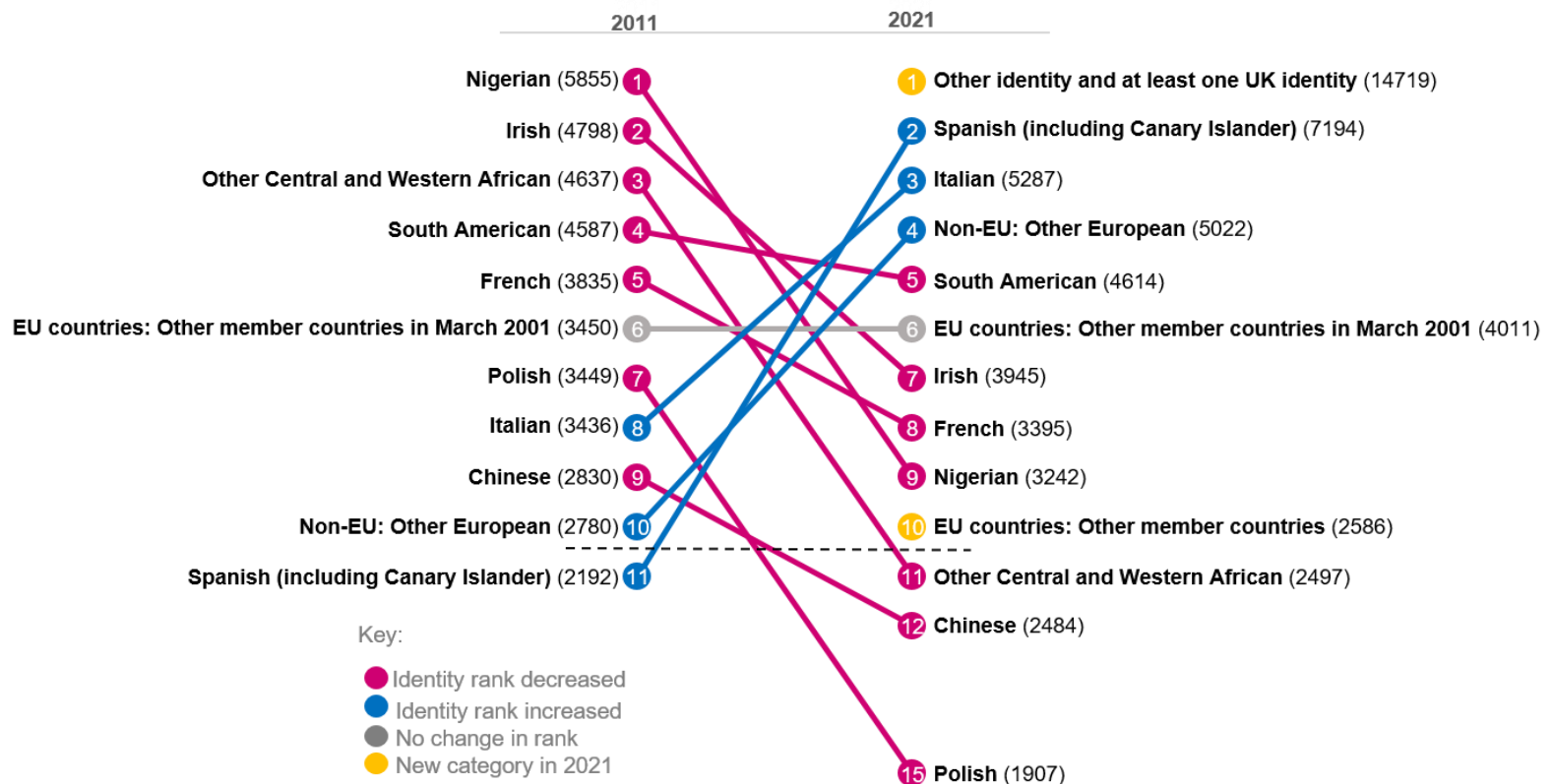
- National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census> Slide 17

# In 2021, the most common non-UK national identity in Southwark was ‘Spanish (including Canary Islander)’

## NATIONAL IDENTITY

In 2021, the most common non-UK national identity in Southwark was ‘Spanish (including Canary Islander)’. This has changed since 2011, when the most common non-UK identity was Nigerian.

Figure 10: The top 10 national identities (other than UK-only identities) in Southwark, 2011-2021 with rankings and resident numbers



\*Other Central and Western African excludes Nigeria and Ghana which both have their own categories

### Reference

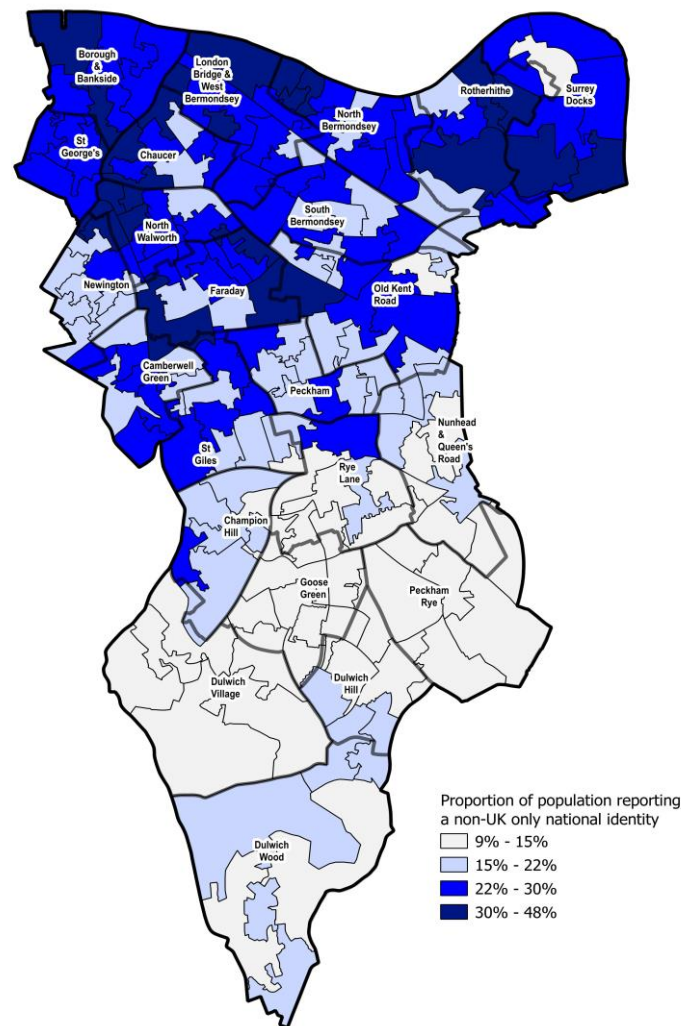
1. National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census> Slide 18

# In some areas in the north of Southwark, up to one-half of residents have a national identity that is not within the UK

## NATIONAL IDENTITY

In total, one-quarter (24%) of Southwark residents have a national identity that is not within the UK.

- Residents reporting a national identity outside the UK tend to live in the north and the centre of the borough, where as much as half (48%) of the population have a non-UK national identity.
- This contrasts with much of the south of Southwark, where the substantial majority of residents have a UK-based national identity.



### References

1. National identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>
2. International migration, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

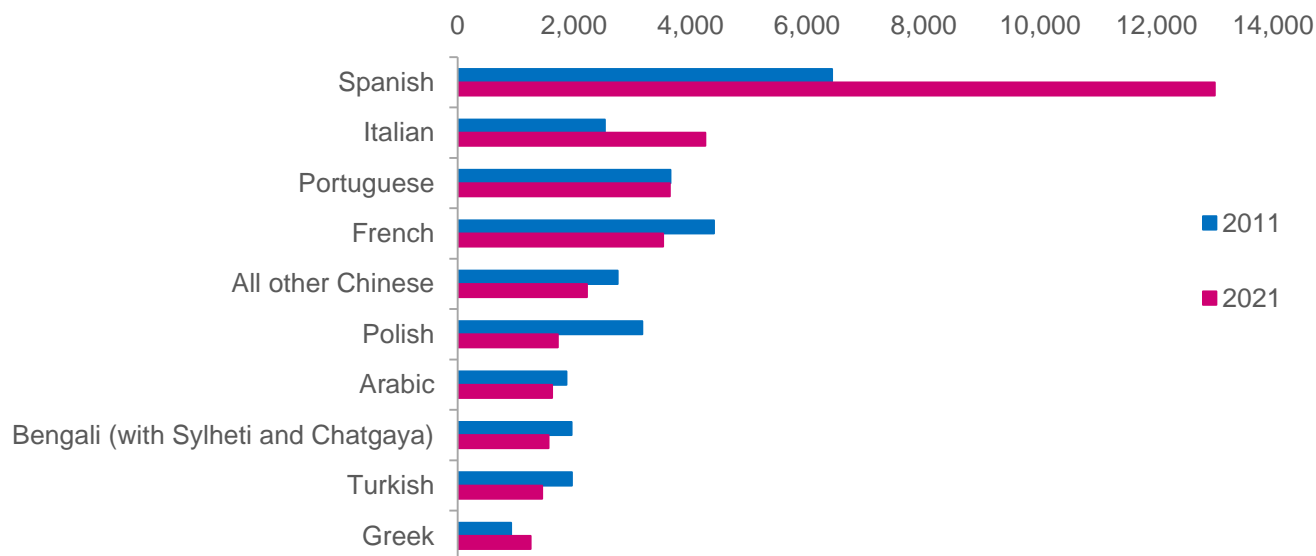
# Since 2011, the number of people in Southwark with Spanish as a main language has doubled

## MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN

**In Southwark, over 80 different main languages are spoken by residents.**

- The majority of Southwark residents (244,000) reported their main language to be English, 79% of the population. This is similar to that seen across London (76%), but lower than the proportion nationally (88%). This has not changed significantly since 2011.
- Around 13,000 people listed Spanish as their main language, a number which has doubled since 2011 and is equivalent to one-fifth (20%) of the population who listed a main language other than English.
- Substantial numbers of people reported Italian or Portuguese or French as their main language.

Figure 11: Top main languages spoken (other than English), Southwark 2011 and 2021, by number



### Reference

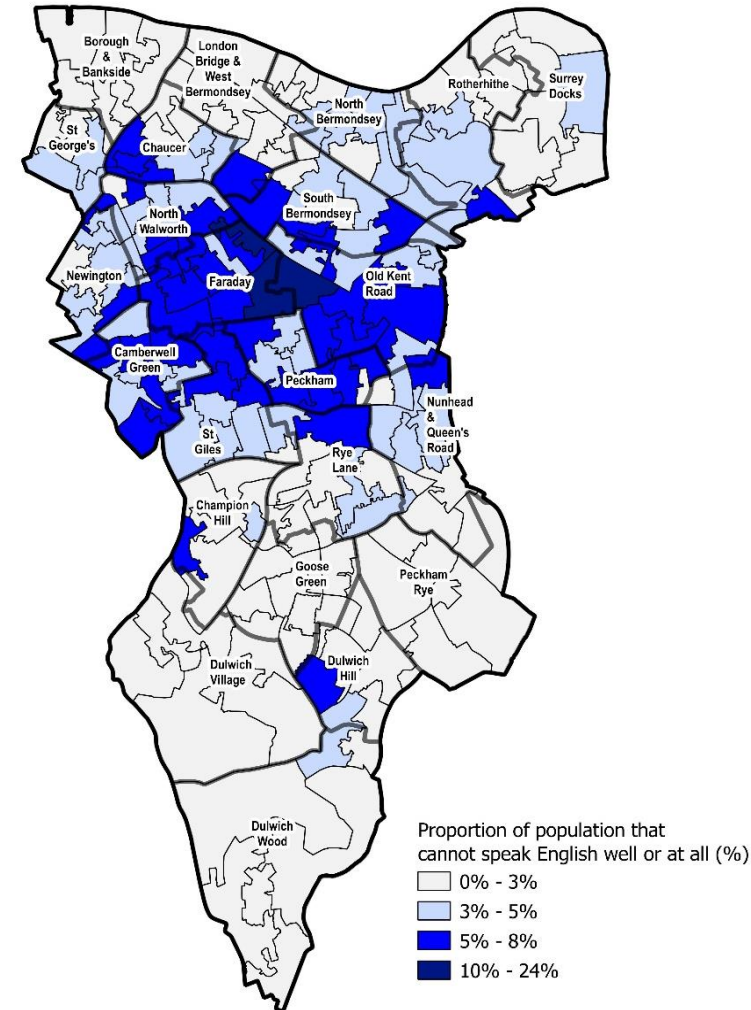
1. Language, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

# In areas in the centre of Southwark, as many as one-quarter of residents report low or no English proficiency

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Of the 53,700 Southwark residents who *did not* report English as their main language, the vast majority (81%) could speak English well or very well.

- However, 10,200 residents reported not being able to speak English well, or speak English at all, accounting for around 3% of Southwark's total population.
- This proportion differs significantly by geographical area in the borough. In the centre of Southwark, particularly around Faraday and Old Kent Road, as many as one-quarter (24%) of all residents have low or no English proficiency.
- This contrasts substantially with most of the north and south of Southwark, where the majority of residents have high English proficiency or have English as their main language.



### Reference

1. Language, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

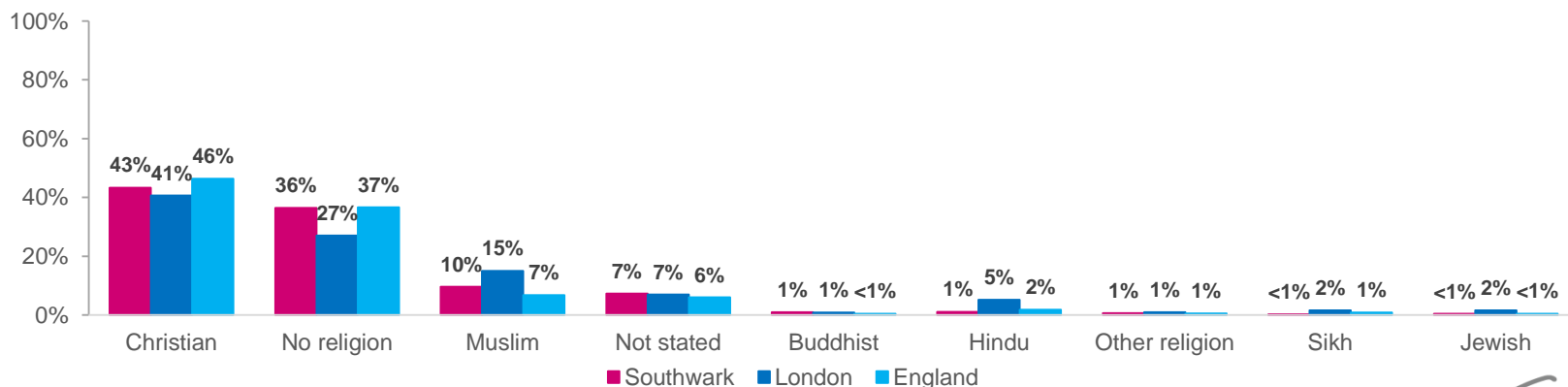
# Southwark has a substantially higher proportion of residents with 'no religion' than is seen across London

## RELIGION

### Over 40 distinct religions were identified among Southwark residents in 2021.

- A total of 133,300 Southwark residents reported their religion to be Christian, equivalent to 43% of the population. This proportion has decreased by ten percentage points over the decade (from 53%), representing a drop of 18,100 residents reporting Christian religion.
- The Census 2021 saw the Christian population proportion fall below half for the first time.
- 'No religion' was the second most common reported among Southwark residents, representing over one-third (36%) of the population, substantially larger than across London (27%), but similar to the proportion nationally (37%).
- Over 29,600 Southwark residents reported their religion to be Muslim, making up a substantial proportion of the population at 10%.
- Those with Muslim or Hindu religion made up a notably smaller proportion of the population in Southwark than was seen across London.

Figure 12: Resident religion across Southwark, London and England, 2021, as a proportion of total population



### Reference

1. Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

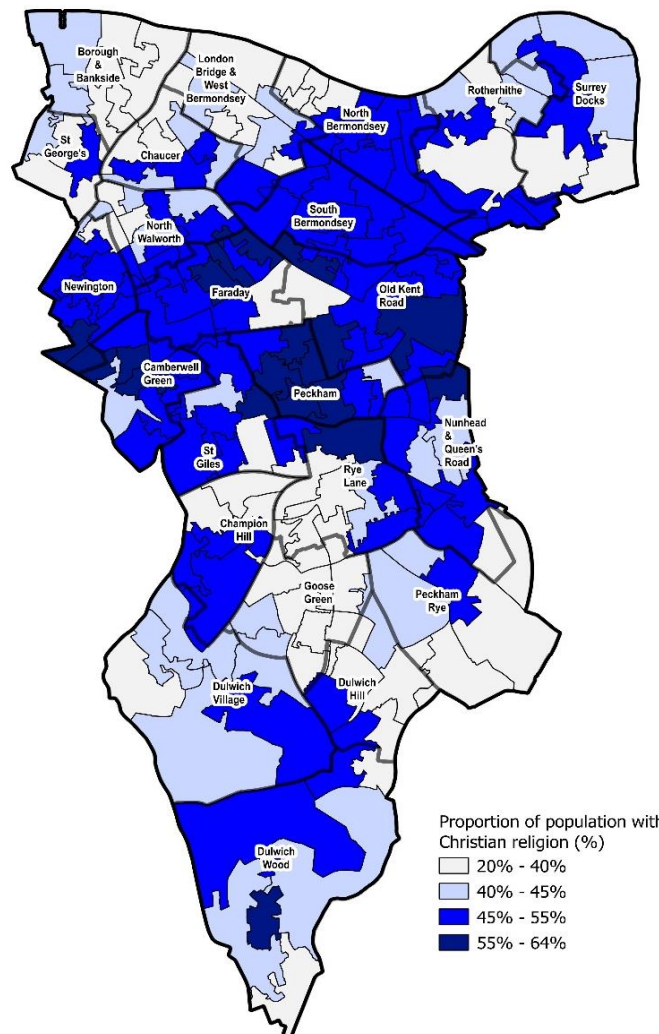


# Around Peckham and Old Kent Road, almost two-thirds of residents report their religion to be Christian

## RELIGION

Around 133,300 residents reported their religion to be Christian, equivalent to 43% of Southwark's population.

- Though significant Christian populations are seen across many areas in the borough, Peckham and Old Kent Road in particular have a large proportion of their residents reporting Christian as their religion.
- In these areas, between half (55%) and two-thirds (64%) of residents have Christian religion.
- This proportion decreases to one-fifth (20%) in other areas throughout the borough, such as in Borough & Bankside.



### Reference

1. Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>

# Results from the 2021 Census need to be considered alongside a number of influencing factors

## CONSIDERATIONS

**The census was taken during the COVID-19 pandemic**, with respondents required to answer questions based on their place of residence on Census Day. At this time many COVID-19 restrictions were still in place.

There is likely to have been **substantial population movement and change in the period since the March 2021 Census**. Notably, students returning to campus' after a time of remote learning, a return of workers in hospitality and entertainment sectors, and a return of people who left London temporarily during the pandemic. This means the population make-up and the respective characteristics may be notably different to what was reported in the Census.

As with all self-completion questionnaires, some will have **contained incomplete, missing or incorrect information** about an individual or household. However, ONS will have taken steps to correct these inconsistencies.

### References

1. Quality and methodology information (QMI) for Census 2021. Office for National Statistics. 2022. <https://census.gov.uk/about-the-census>
2. 2021 Census: First release. Greater London Authority. 2022.



**Find out more at**  
**[southwark.gov.uk/jsna](https://southwark.gov.uk/jsna)**

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