

# Characteristics of National Parks, 2011

Coverage: **England and Wales**

Date: **19 February 2013**

Geographical Area: **Other**

Theme: **Population**

Theme: **People and Places**

Theme: **Children, Education and Skills**

Theme: **Labour Market**

Theme: **Health and Social Care**

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## Foreword

The 2011 Census provides an insight into the characteristics of the 13 national parks in England and Wales. Information is presented looking at change over time from 2001 to 2011, comparing the individual national parks and making comparisons with England and Wales as a whole, across a variety of census topics from the published data.

The 13 national parks of England and Wales have a special designation<sup>1</sup> and are protected areas of countryside with noted scenic landscapes.

## Notes

1. They are designated under the [National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#)

## Key points

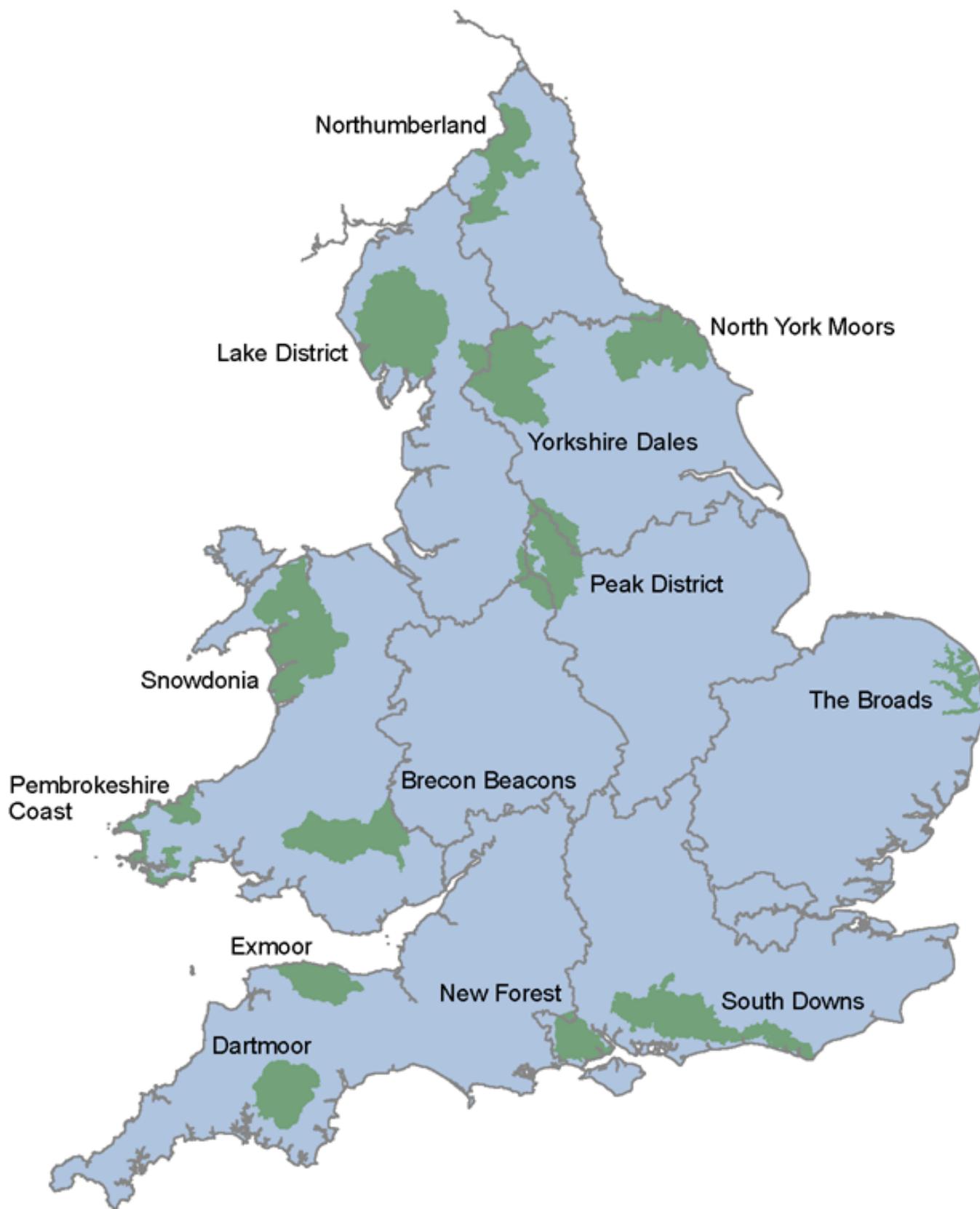
- The population within national parks has risen by 1.9 per cent from 2001 to 2011, though this rise is well below the national increase of 7.1 per cent.
- The national park that had the largest population growth from 2001 to 2011 was the South Downs (7,200 people, a 6.8 per cent rise), whilst Exmoor experienced the largest percentage decrease in population (5.5 per cent).
- National parks have a much older age structure than the rest of the population, one-third of the population was aged 60 and over; in the Broads 40 per cent were aged 60 and over.
- More than one in eight household spaces across all national parks had no usual residents; this included vacant dwellings, holiday residences and second residences.
- Home ownership is widespread within national parks, 71 per cent of households owned their home (either outright or with a mortgage/loan), compared with 64 per cent nationally.
- Car ownership has been on the increase, 88 per cent of households had access to one or more vehicles, a rise of two percentage points from 2001, and car ownership is higher than nationally.

- Levels of self-employment amongst national park residents (at over one in four of the economically active population) were almost double the level nationally, whilst unemployment levels were also noticeably lower.

## Introduction

The 13 national parks in England and Wales (see Map 1) cover 10.8 per cent of the land area (over 16,000 sq kilometres), but contain just 0.7 per cent of the total population (402,900); and there is considerable variation between the characteristics of some of the parks. For illustration, Northumberland was the most sparsely populated, with 1.9 persons per sq kilometre, whilst the South Downs was the most densely populated with 68.1 persons per sq kilometre.

Map 1: National parks in England and Wales



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**Table 1: National park populations and areas**

England and Wales national parks, 2001 and 2011, Usual residents

Number, per cent

National Park	Year of designation	2001 Population Number	2011 Population Number	Population change <sup>1</sup> Number	Population change <sup>1</sup> Per cent	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	2011 Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> )
Brecon Beacons	1957	32,600	33,300	700	2.3	1,350	24.8
Dartmoor	1951	33,600	33,600	0	0.1	960	35.1
Exmoor	1954	10,900	10,300	-600	-5.5	690	15.0
Lake District	1951	41,800	40,800	-1,100	-2.5	2,220	18.4
New Forest <sup>2</sup>	2005	34,000	34,900	900	2.6	560	62.5
North York Moors	1952	23,900	23,400	-600	-2.3	1,440	16.3
Northumberland	1956	1,900	2,000	100	2.9	1,050	1.9
Peak District	1951	37,900	37,900	0	-0.1	1,440	26.4
Pembrokeshire Coast	1952	22,500	22,600	100	0.5	590	38.7
Snowdonia	1951	25,500	25,700	200	0.9	2,110	12.2
South Downs <sup>2</sup>	2010	105,200	112,300	7,200	6.8	1,650	68.1
The Broads Authority	1989	5,900	6,300	400	6.7	290	21.7
Yorkshire Dales	1954	19,700	19,800	100	0.5	1,770	11.2
<b>Total <sup>3</sup></b>		<b>395,500</b>	<b>402,900</b>	<b>7,400</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>16,090</b>	<b>25.0</b>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

**Table notes:**

1. Population change has been calculated using unrounded figures.
2. The 2001 population estimates for New Forest and South Downs were generated using the National Park to 2001 Census Output Areas Best Fit Lookup and were calculated using the breakdown of the population by sex as these areas were not designated as national parks in 2001.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

## Download table

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## Animated YouTube video

There is a short [video about the characteristics of National Parks in England and Wales](#) which accompanies this release.

## Age profile

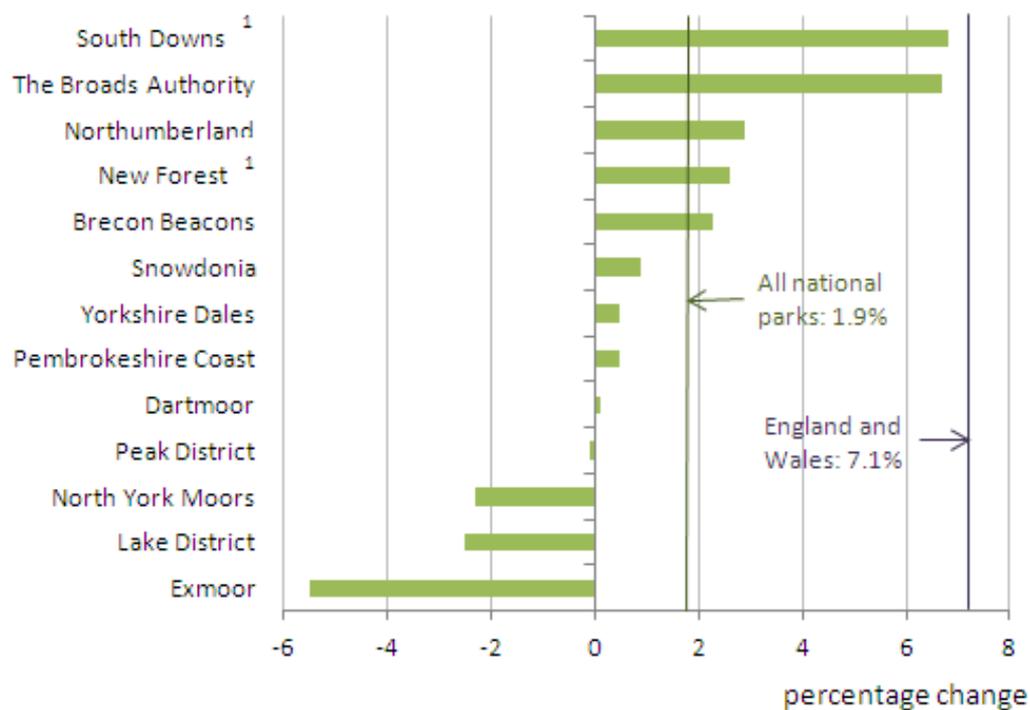
Table 1 shows that since 2001, the usually resident population of the national parks<sup>1</sup> has grown by 7,400 people (1.9 per cent), which is considerably less than the percentage increase in the England and Wales population (at 7.1 per cent<sup>2</sup>).

Nine of the 13 national parks increased in population from 2001 to 2011 (Figure 1), the largest increase was in the South Downs (7,200), which also represented the largest percentage increase (at 6.8 per cent), followed by the Broads (6.7 per cent).

Whilst most national parks have seen an increase in population over this period, four national parks have declined in population – Exmoor (5.5 per cent), Lake District (2.5 per cent), North York Moors (2.3 per cent) and Peak District (0.1 per cent); in absolute terms, the largest decrease was in the Lake District (1,100).

## Figure 1: Population change

England and Wales national parks, 2001 to 2011, Usual residents



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

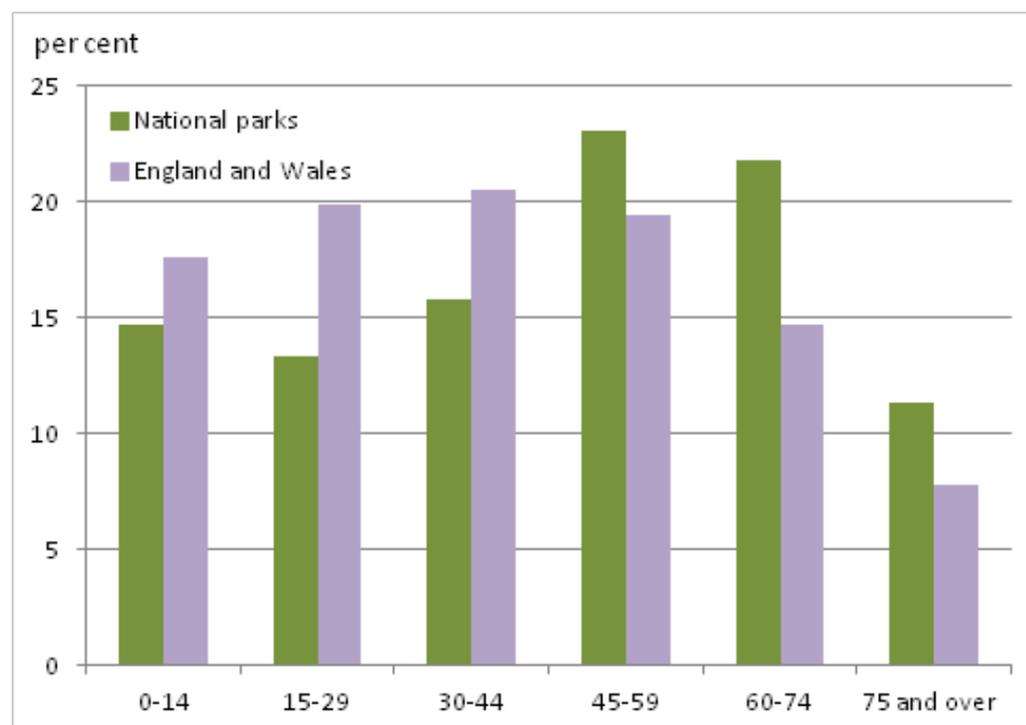
1. The 2001 population estimates for New Forest and South Downs were generated using the National Park to 2001 Census Output Areas Best Fit Lookup and were calculated using the breakdown of the population by sex as these areas were not designated as national parks in 2001.

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## Figure 2: Age of usual residents

National parks, England and Wales, 2011, Usual residents



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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Figure 2 shows that in 2011 the national parks had a smaller proportion of their total population in all the under 45 year age groups, and a greater proportion in all the over 45 year age groups than for England and Wales. These figures are indicating an older population age structure for the resident population in national parks than nationally.

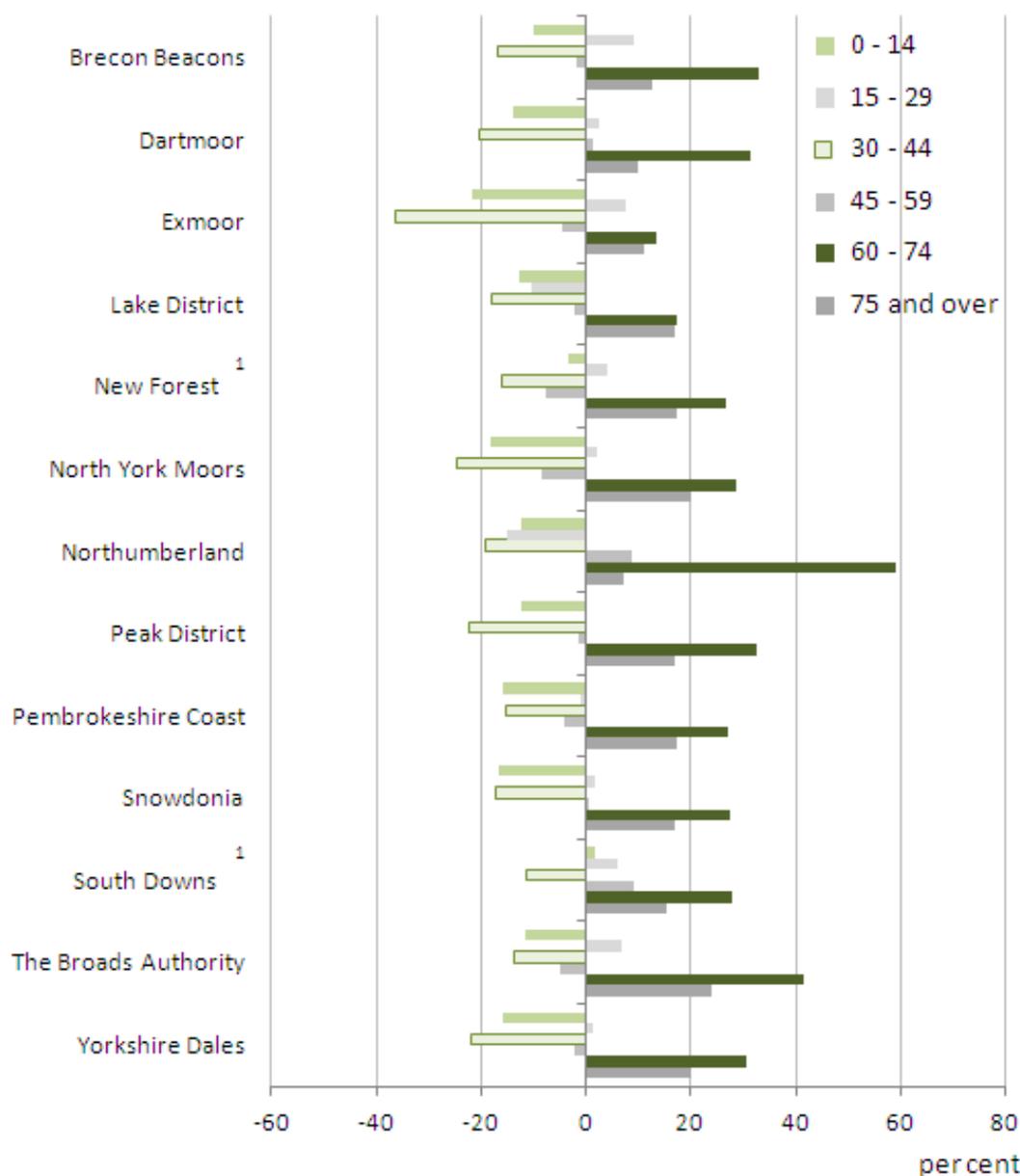
Looking at change over time, Figure 3 shows that over the period 2001 to 2011, only the South Downs had an increase in the 0 to 14 year age group (at 1.6 per cent), whilst Exmoor had a decrease of 22 per cent. This was itself a reflection of a large decrease (36 per cent) of 30 to 44 year-olds and who ordinarily would comprise the majority of parents for 0 to 14 year-olds. Brecon Beacons had the largest percentage increase of 15 to 29 year-olds (at 9.0 per cent).

All national parks had a decrease of 30 to 44 year-olds, most noticeably in Exmoor at 36 per cent. Changes in the 45 to 59 age group were relatively small, and all within  $\pm 10$  per cent. All national parks had population increases in the 60 to 74 and 75+ age groups. The largest increases in the 60 to 74 age group were in Northumberland (59 per cent) and the Broads (42 per cent). Percentage increases in the 75+ age group were in all cases smaller than the percentage increases in the 60 to 74 age group. Within the 75+ age group, the Broads had the largest percentage increase (24 per cent) and Northumberland the smallest increase at 7 per cent.

A common picture appearing across all national parks is an ageing population, with a median age of 50 years, 11 years higher than the national median age (at 39). Across the national parks, the Broads and Exmoor had the highest median ages (both at 53), whilst the South Downs had the lowest median age (at 46).

### Figure 3: Percentage change in size of usual resident population by age

England and Wales national parks, 2001 to 2011, Usual residents



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

#### Notes:

1. The 2001 population estimates for New Forest and South Downs were generated using the National Park to 2001 Census Output Areas Best Fit Lookup and were calculated using the breakdown of the population by sex as these areas were not designated as national parks in 2001.

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## Notes

1. Whilst neither the New Forest nor South Downs were designated national parks in 2001, references are made to 2001 Census figures for these areas. These figures were generated using a national park to 2001 Census output area lookup file.
2. Comparison with 2001 for England and Wales is based on the mid-year population estimate for this year.

## Health

Usual residents were asked to assess their general state of health on a five point scale: very good, good, fair, bad or very bad.

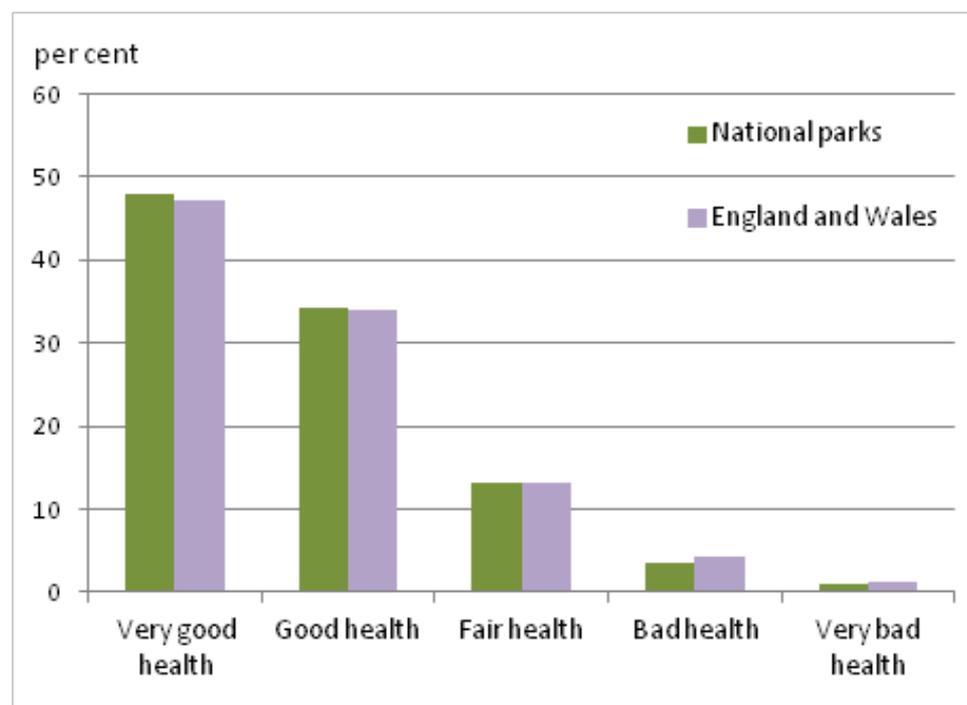
The majority of national park residents, 82 per cent (331,300), described themselves as being in good, or very good health, as shown in Figure 4. This percentage is slightly higher than for England and Wales overall. Given that the national parks have an older age structure than nationally, and that generally, health deteriorates with age, this is an indication that people residing in national parks tend to have better health than those living in the rest of the country.

Within the individual national parks, the South Downs had the highest percentage of usual residents describing their health as very good; 51 per cent (57,200). The Broads had the lowest figure at 40 per cent (2,500).

The Pembrokeshire Coast had the highest percentage of usual residents reporting bad or very bad health; 6.4 per cent (1,400). Northumberland had the smallest percentage of residents reporting to be in either bad or very bad health, at 3.1 per cent (60).

## Figure 4: General health

National parks, England and Wales, 2001 and 2011, Usual residents



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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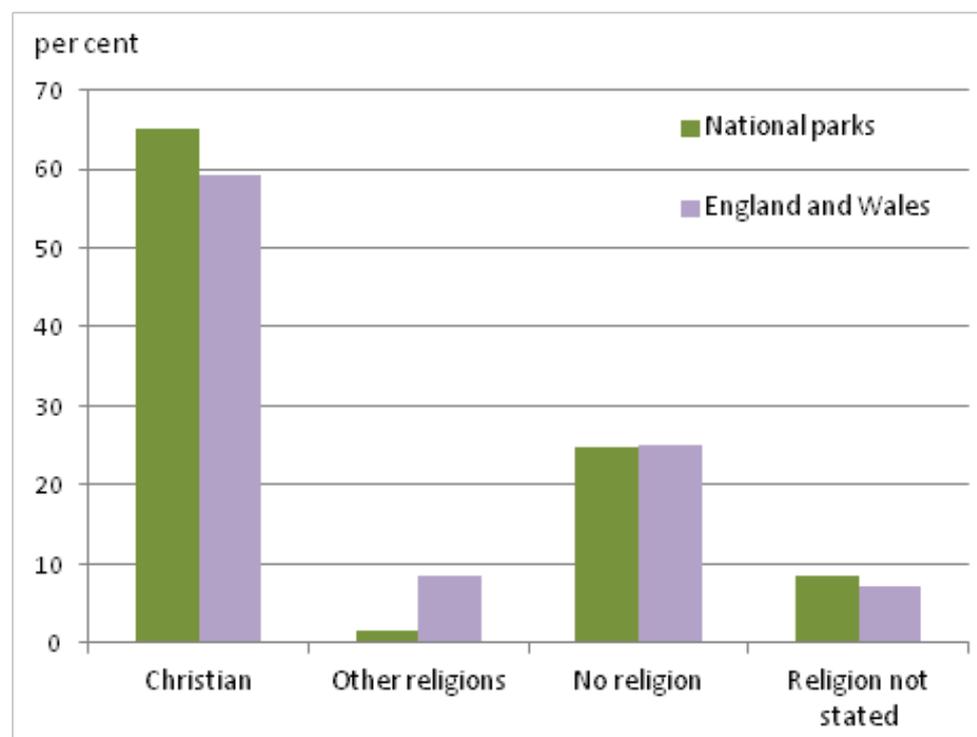
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## Religion

The question on religious affiliation in the census was voluntary. Those affiliated with the Christian religion remained by far the largest group across the national parks at 65 per cent of the population (262,600), compared with 59 per cent for England and Wales (Figure 5).

## Figure 5: Religion

National parks, England and Wales, 2011, Usual residents



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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Only 1.5 per cent of national park residents (6,100 people) identified themselves as belonging to 'other' religious groups such as Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus; whilst 25 per cent of national park residents (100,400) had no religion, and 8 per cent (33,800) did not state a religion.

Within the individual national parks, the highest Christian affiliation was in the North York Moors (72 per cent of the population); the lowest Christian affiliation was in Dartmoor (60 per cent). Of the other stated religions, the highest affiliation in percentage terms was for the Hindu religion in the Brecon Beacons (0.8 per cent of the population, 260 persons).

## Ethnic group

The ethnic group composition of national parks is very different to England and Wales as a whole. Ninety eight per cent of the total national park population were classified as White, compared with 86 per cent for England and Wales. Within this ethnic group, White British was the largest, with 95 per cent of people (382,700).

None of the non-White ethnic groups is very prevalent in any of the national parks, and in total comprised just 2.1 per cent of all residents (8,400 people), of whom around 41 per cent lived in the

South Downs. The biggest non-White Ethnic Group was Asian/Asian British comprising just under 1 per cent of the population (3,800).

## Usual residents born outside the UK

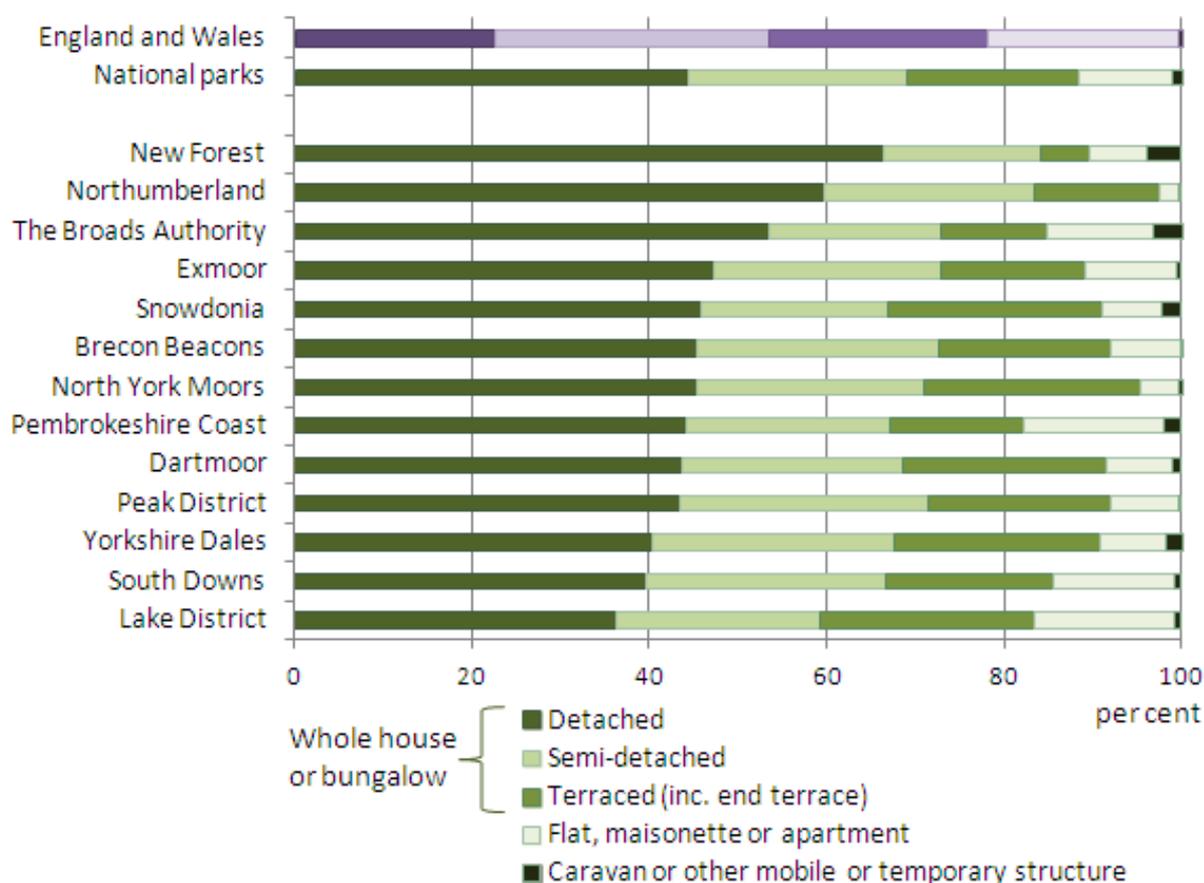
Whilst 87 per cent of the population of England and Wales was UK born, for national park residents, 94 per cent (379,000) were UK born, a very small decrease from 2001 (95 per cent). Of the 23,900 residents born outside of the UK, 40 per cent were born in EU member or accession countries.

The highest UK born population in percentage terms was in Snowdonia (97 per cent); the lowest was in the South Downs (91 per cent).

## Accommodation

### Figure 6: Accommodation type

National parks in England and Wales, England and Wales, 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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The national parks showed broadly similar percentages of households residing in the different types of accommodation, though there were noticeable differences between the national parks and England and Wales (Figure 6). In England and Wales 23 per cent of households lived in a detached house or bungalow, the figure for national parks was almost double this at 44 per cent, and highest in the New Forest at 66 per cent.

Nationally the percentage of households living in semi-detached houses/bungalows and terraced houses/bungalows at 31 per cent and 25 per cent respectively was higher than the corresponding figures for each of the 13 national parks. Across all national parks the percentage of households residing in these accommodation types (at 25 per cent for semi-detached houses/bungalows, and 19 per cent for terraced houses/bungalows) was six percentage points lower than the equivalent figures for England and Wales.

Similarly the proportion of households residing in flats, maisonettes or apartments was lower in each of the 13 national parks (ranging from 2 per cent of households in Northumberland to 16 per cent of households in the Lake District and Pembrokeshire Coast) than nationally, at 22 per cent.

Conversely, there was a larger percentage of households residing in caravans or other mobile structures in most of the national parks than nationally, albeit that these percentages are small. Whilst nationally 0.4 per cent of households resided in caravans or other mobile structures, for all national parks this figure was 1.2 per cent, highest in the New Forest (3.7 per cent) and lowest in the Brecon Beacons and Peak District (at 0.2 per cent).

What is apparent from the 2011 Census figures is that the type of accommodation in the national parks reflects the rural nature of these areas, and so it would be expected that the mix of property types differs to England and Wales as a whole.

## Tenure

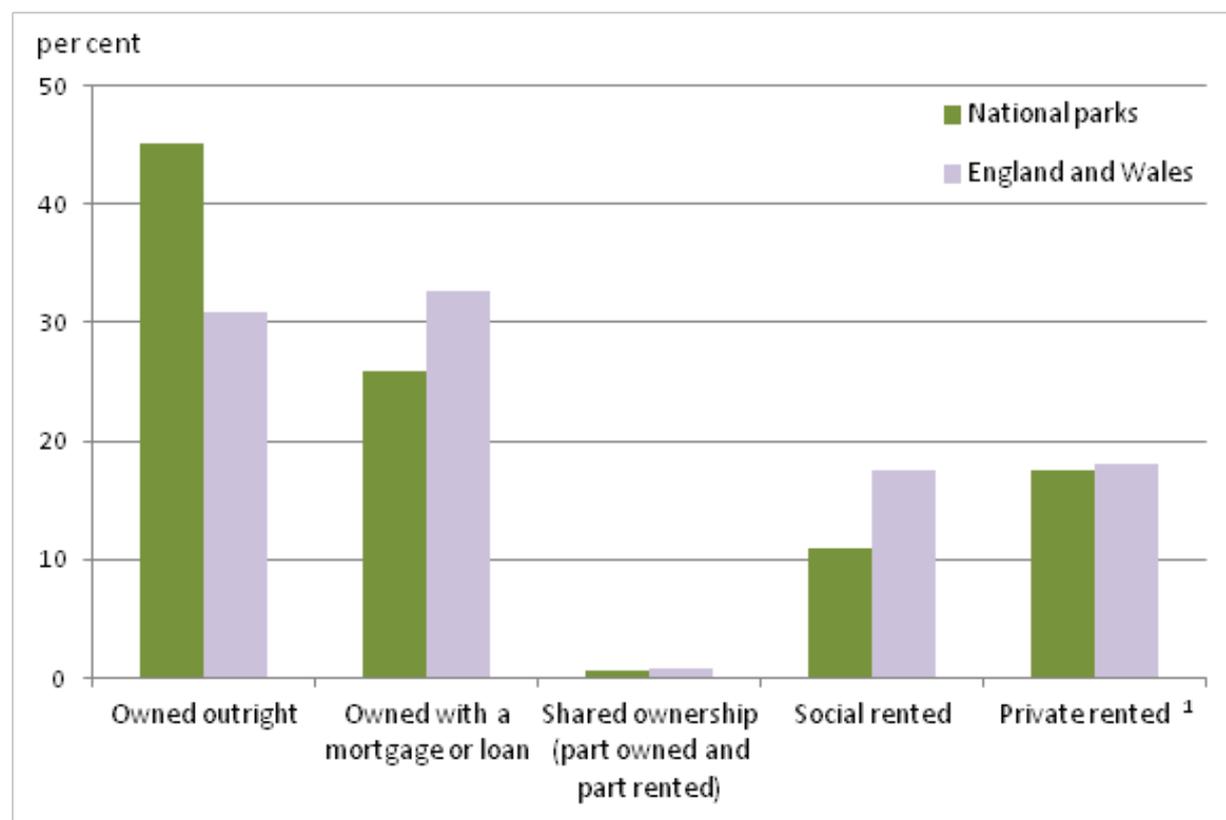
Type of tenure refers to whether households owned or rented their accommodation. Figure 7 compares the percentage of households with different tenure types.

For national parks generally, a higher percentage of households lived in dwellings owned outright (45 per cent) than nationally (31 per cent), though a smaller percentage lived in dwellings owned with a mortgage or loan (26 per cent compared with 33 per cent).

Of the 13 national parks, New Forest had the higher percentage of households owning their accommodation outright at 51 per cent, whilst Northumberland had the smallest percentage (35 per cent). Generally, shared ownership and rented properties were less prevalent within national parks than nationally.

## Figure 7: Tenure

National parks in England and Wales, England and Wales, 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

1. Those 'living rent free' have been added to the 'Private rented' category in this analysis.

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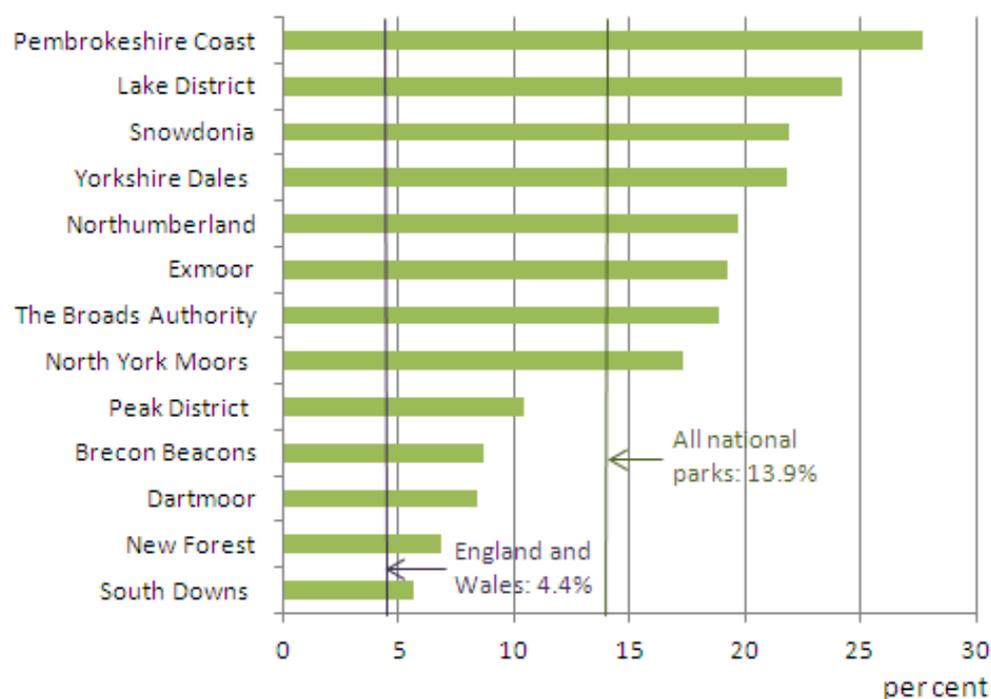
## Household spaces

From the 2011 Census in addition to identifying household spaces with at least one usual resident, the number of household spaces with no usual residents was also recorded – which provides an indication of the number of vacant properties, holiday homes and second residences. Across all national parks, 14 per cent of all household spaces had no usual residents, this compares with 4 per cent nationally.

The picture of household spaces with no usual residents varies within national parks (Figure 8). In Pembrokeshire Coast, over a quarter of all household spaces had no usual residents, compared with just 6 per cent in the South Downs. Across all national parks, one in eight household spaces had no usual residents (28,200), more than treble the percentage nationally.

## Figure 8: Household spaces with no usual residents

National parks in England and Wales, England and Wales, 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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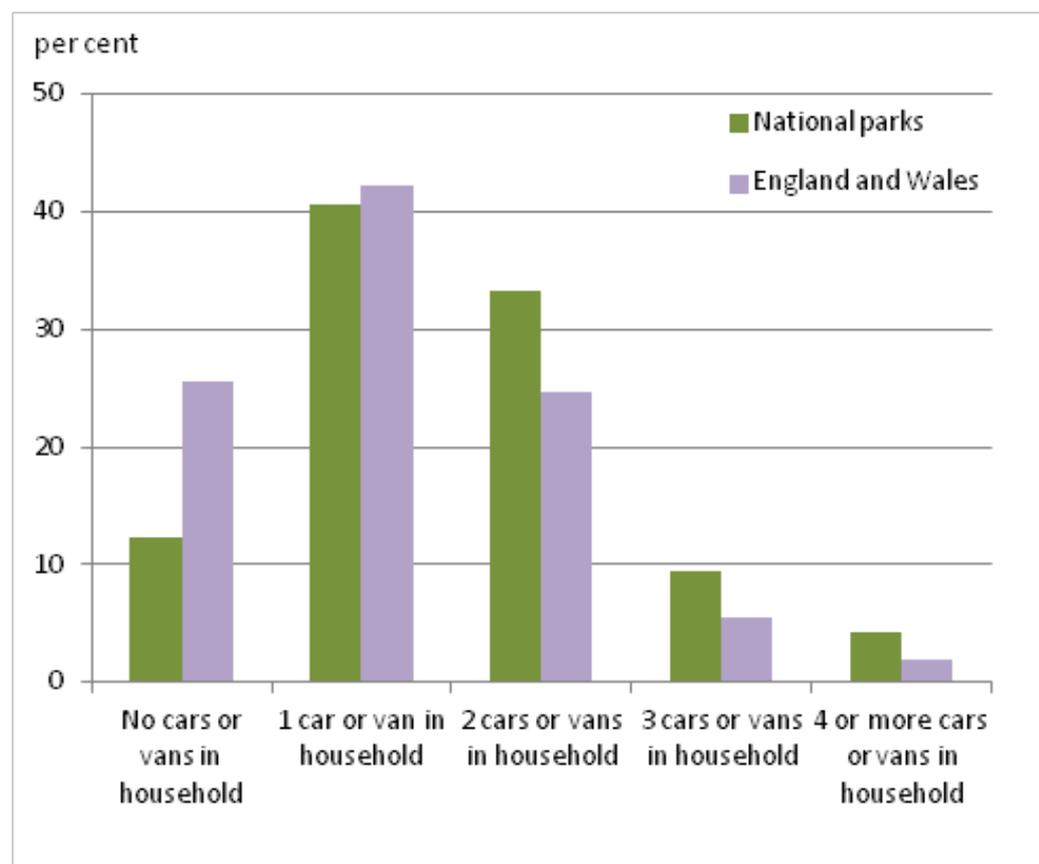
## Car or van availability

From 2001 to 2011 the number of cars and vans available to households in the national parks has risen from 239,000 to 271,000, a rise of 14 per cent and mirroring the national percentage increase.

As would be expected for rural areas, car ownership was much higher in national parks than nationally (Figure 9). In 2011, 88 per cent of households in national parks had access to one or more vehicles, compared with 74 per cent nationally. Within the national parks, vehicle availability was greatest in Northumberland with 94 per cent of households having access to one or more cars, and lowest in Pembrokeshire Coast (at 84 per cent).

## Figure 9: Car and van availability

National parks, England and Wales, 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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## Marital status

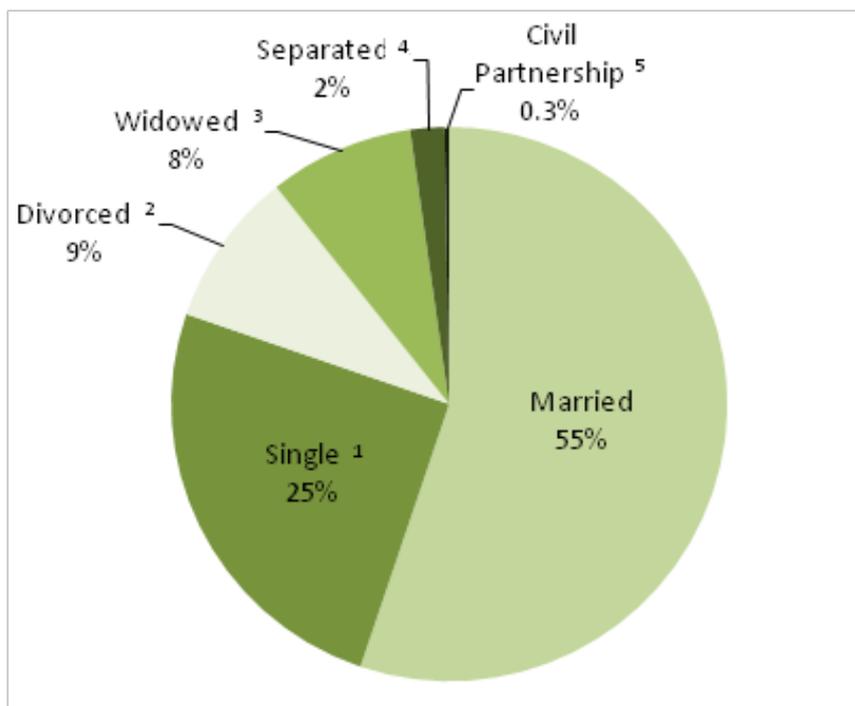
Figure 10 shows that in 2011, as in 2001, the largest marital status group comprised people who were married, at 55 per cent (187,000). This was a decrease of three percentage points from 2001, though some eight percentage points higher in 2011 than the national figure (47 per cent). Northumberland at 63 per cent had the highest proportion of married residents.

From 2001 to 2011 the percentage of single (never married) people across all national parks has increased slightly (from 23 per cent to 25 per cent) as has the proportion of persons separated and divorced, whilst the proportion of persons widowed has decreased slightly. All of these changes reflect the national level pattern of change.

Within the national parks, civil partnerships<sup>1</sup>, as a new legal partnership status comprised a small proportion of the total usual residents aged 16 and over at 0.3 per cent (900).

## Figure 10: Marital and civil partnership status

National parks, 2011, Usual residents aged 16 and over



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

1. 'Single' includes those who have never married or registered a civil partnership.
2. 'Divorced' includes those who legally dissolved a marriage or a civil partnership.
3. 'Widowed' includes the surviving partners of both marriages and civil partnerships.
4. 'Separated' includes those who are separated from their partners but still in a legally married or in a civil partnership.
5. The 2011 Census collected information on civil partnerships for the first time, reflecting the fact that the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into effect in the UK on 5 December 2005.

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### Notes

1. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into effect in the UK on 5 December 2005.

## Household composition

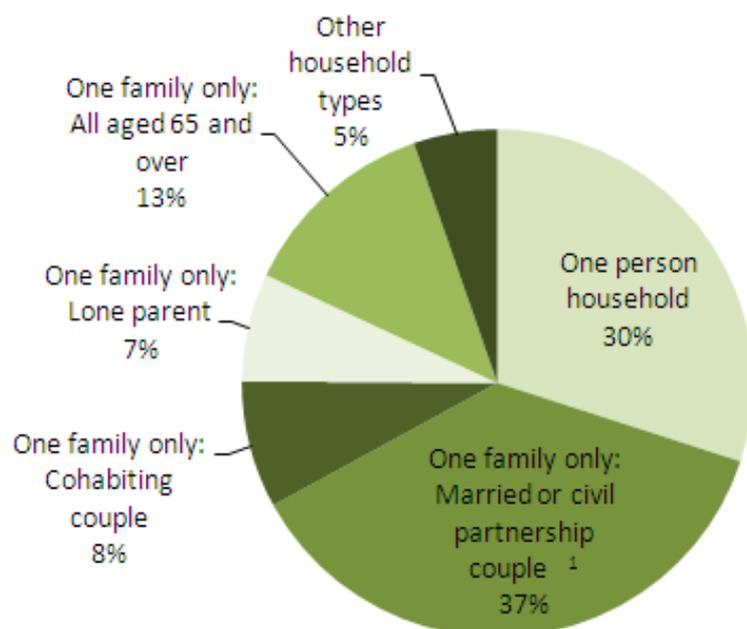
Household composition refers to the usual residents in a household and their relationship to each other. Households may be a family or they may consist of one person living alone or unrelated adults

sharing. A family is a couple (married, civil partners or cohabitating), with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child.

Of the 175,100 households within national parks in 2011, the most reported household type was where there was one family (65 per cent, 113,200 households). Figure 11 provides a breakdown of the household composition.

### Figure 11: Household composition

National parks, 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

#### Notes:

1. The 2011 Census collected information on civil partnerships for the first time, reflecting the fact that the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into effect in the UK on 5 December 2005.

#### Download chart

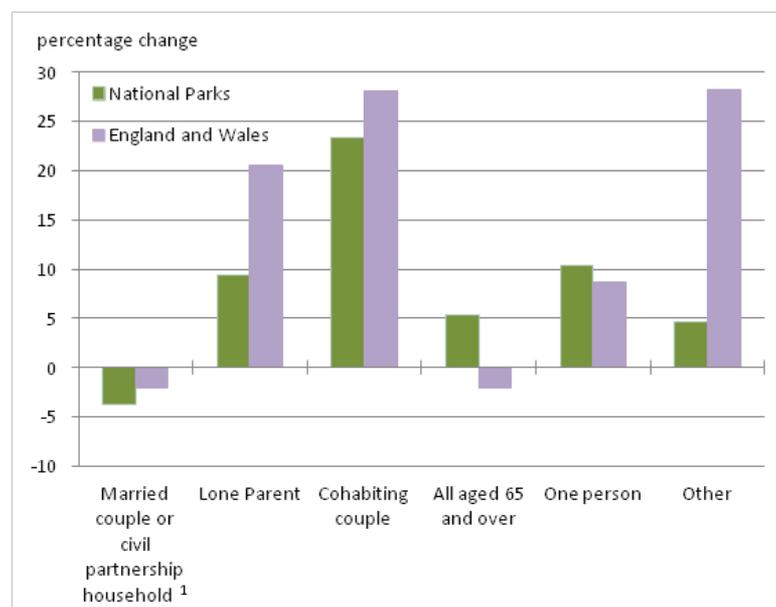
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Comparisons can also be drawn with 2001 Census figures and national figures. Whilst across all national parks, the number of households has increased by 4.6 per cent, nationally the number of households has increased by 7.9 per cent. Figure 12 indicates changes in household composition since 2001. Whilst lone parent households have increased by 9 per cent across all national parks, this was much lower than the national increase (21 per cent). Older couple households (with all persons aged 65 and over) have also increased across all national parks (by 5 per cent), though nationally they have declined by 2 per cent.

## Figure 12: Change in household composition

National parks, England and Wales, 2001 to 2011, Households



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

1. The 2011 Census collected information on civil partnerships for the first time, reflecting the fact that the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into effect in the UK on 5 December 2005.

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## Residents in communal establishments

Of the usual residents living within national parks in 2011, a large majority (97 per cent) lived in households; the remaining population of 11,600 lived in over 2,000 communal establishments. These communal establishments include large hotels, and medical and military establishments. Within the national parks, the largest communal establishment populations were in the South Downs (3,600) and the Lake District (2,000). Typically these communal establishment populations will have a different age structure to the private household population.

## Economic activity

The proportion of the working population (defined here as aged 16 to 74) that is economically active in national parks has increased from 66 per cent in 2001 to 69 per cent in 2011. These figures are very similar to the England and Wales figures.

There are however noticeable differences between the economically active population residing in national parks compared with nationally (Figure 13). Whilst the proportion of part-time employees

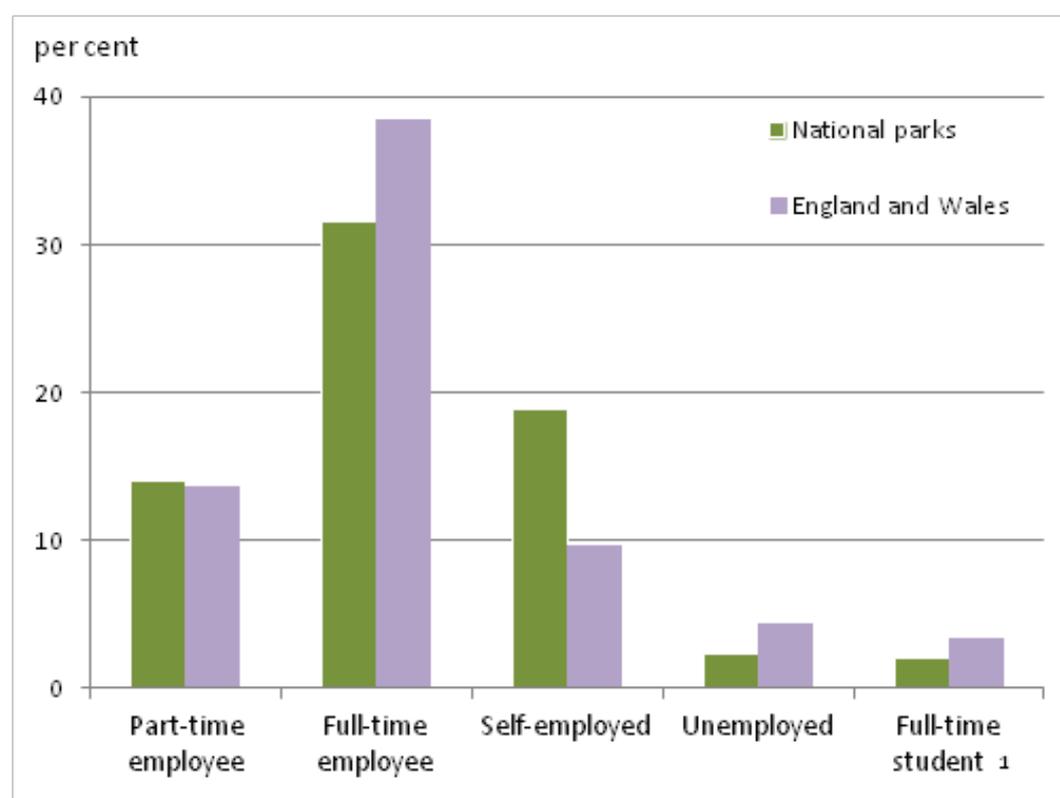
is similar, the proportion of full-time employees in national parks is smaller (by seven percentage points). Conversely the proportion of self-employed workers is greater, comprising 19 per cent of the working age population in national parks compared with 10 per cent nationally. The proportion of the economically active population for both the unemployed and full-time students was also lower in the national parks.

Within the 13 national parks, the highest economic activity rate was in Northumberland (76 per cent) and the lowest in the Broads (65 per cent). The percentage of part-time and full-time workers was highest in the Peak District (15 per cent) and Brecon Beacons (34 per cent) respectively.

Exmoor (at 39 per cent) had the highest proportion of the economically active population who were self-employed, whilst the lowest proportion of unemployed was in the Yorkshire Dales (2.4 per cent) and the lowest proportion of full-time students was in Northumberland (1.4 per cent).

### Figure 13: Type of economic activity

National parks, England and Wales, 2011, Economically active usual residents aged 16 to 74



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

#### Notes:

1. Full-time students may also be in employment or self-employed.

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## Industry and occupation

For the 195,000 residents within national parks who were working in 2011, the most commonly derived industries from respondents are shown in Table 2. Within the national parks, the largest industries of employment as a percentage of all employed usual residents were recorded in Lake District: Accommodation and Food Service Activities (22.0 per cent), and Northumberland: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (21.8 per cent).

**Table 2: Industry**

National parks, 2011, Employed usual residents aged 16 to 74

Industry	Number, per cent	
	Number	Per cent
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	25,400	13.0
Human health and social work activities	22,400	11.5
Education	21,000	10.8
Accommodation and food service activities	19,200	9.9
Construction	16,000	8.2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	14,000	7.2
Manufacturing	13,400	6.9
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	10,500	5.4
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	10,000	5.1
Administrative and support service activities	8,400	4.3
Other <sup>1</sup>	34,500	17.7
Total <sup>2</sup>	194,900	100.0

**Table source:** Office for National Statistics

**Table notes:**

1. 'Other' includes all other industry categories.
2. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

## Download table

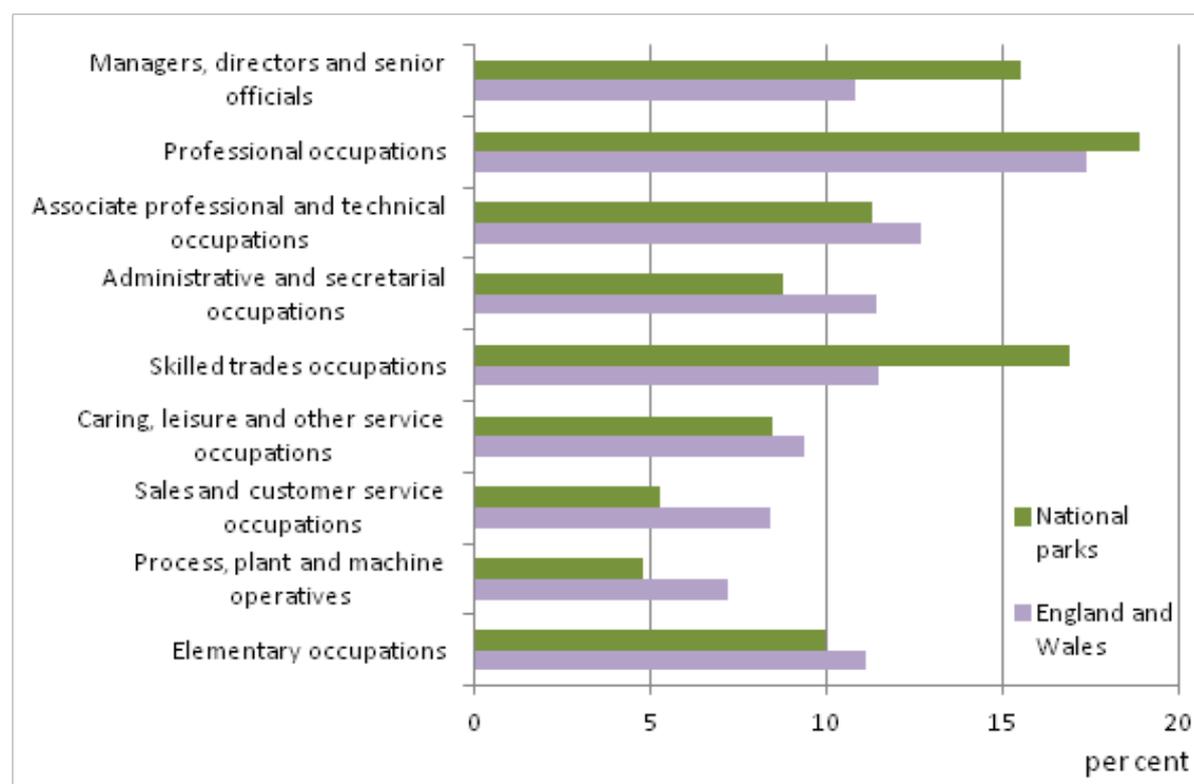
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As would be expected, the patterns of employment by industry do differ noticeably to the national picture, for example the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing category nationally included less than 1 per cent of the working population, compared with 5.4 per cent across the national parks.

## Figure 14: Occupation

National parks, England and Wales, 2011, Employed usual residents aged 16 to 74



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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Looking at the major occupations of workers residing within the national parks, there are some noticeable differences with the national pattern (Figure 14), most strikingly with the 'Skilled trades occupations' and 'Managers, directors and senior officials' occupations, where the percentage of workers in these occupations was 5.5 and 4.7 percentage points respectively higher than nationally.

Conversely workers residing within national parks in the 'Administrative and secretarial occupations' and 'Process, plant and machine operatives' occupations were under represented within these occupations when compared nationally, by 2.7 and 2.4 percentage points respectively.

## More Census analysis

[Census Analysis landing page](#)

## Background notes

1. This publication follows the [2011 Census Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales](#). The census provides estimates of the characteristics of all people and households in England and Wales on census night. These are produced for a variety of users including government, local and unitary authorities, business and communities. The census provides population statistics from a national to local level. This short story discusses the results for England and Wales.
2. 2001 Census data for national parks (excluding the New Forest and South Downs) are available under the published 2001 Census Key Statistics for individual tables, accessible through the Search option on the [ONS website](#). For example to access an Excel reference table showing ethnic group information, enter in the Search box 'Census 2001 Key Statistics – Local Authorities KS06'. Within the spreadsheet available to download is a worksheet containing data for the national parks. An outline of all the [2001 Census Key Statistics tables \(911 Kb Pdf\)](#) is also available.
3. Future releases from the 2011 Census will include more detail in cross tabulations, and tabulations at other geographies. These include wards, health areas, parliamentary constituencies, postcode sectors and national parks. Further information on future releases is available online in the [2011 Census Prospectus](#).
4. ONS has ensured that the data collected meet users' needs via an extensive [2011 Census outputs consultation](#) process in order to ensure that the 2011 Census outputs will be of increased use in the planning of housing, education, health and transport services in future years.
5. Figures in this publication may not sum due to rounding.
6. ONS is responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales. Simultaneous but separate censuses took place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These were run by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) respectively.
7. A person's place of usual residence is in most cases the address at which they stay the majority of the time. For many people this will be their permanent or family home. If a member of the armed forces did not have a permanent or family address at which they are usually resident, they were recorded as usually resident at their base address.

8. All key terms used in this publication, such as resident and short-term residents are explained in the [2011 Census user guide](#). Information on the [2011 Census Geography Products for England and Wales](#) is also available.
9. Due to definitional differences, and because the census questionnaire is self completed by the population of England and Wales, the census estimates of people in employment may differ from other sources as, for example, some respondents may include voluntary work when asked about employment. The most authoritative and up to date estimates of the labour market status including employment and unemployment are the labour market statistics that ONS publishes monthly. The census is valuable in providing a detailed picture at the time of the census of the characteristics of the economically active population.
10. All census population estimates were extensively quality assured, using other national and local sources of information for comparison and review by a series of quality assurance panels. An extensive range of [quality assurance, evaluation and methodology papers](#) were published alongside the first release in July 2012 and have been updated in this release, including a [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) document \(152.8 Kb Pdf\)](#).
11. The 2011 Census achieved its overall target response rate of 94 per cent of the usually resident population of England and Wales, and over 80 per cent in all local and unitary authorities. The population estimate for England and Wales of 56.1 million is estimated with 95 per cent confidence to be accurate to within +/- 85,000 (0.15 per cent).
12. The Broads, which is considered part of the 'family' of national parks does not have a national park designation. A special purpose authority, known as the Broads Authority, was established and given powers under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 to manage this area. The Act gave the Authority powers similar to that of the other national parks but also gave it a specific function and powers in relation to navigation.
13. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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