

# Overcrowding and Under-Occupation

## April 2023

### Key Points

- The 2021 Census <sup>(1)</sup> revealed that 4,033 households (2.9% of all households) in Shropshire lived in accommodation that was overcrowded, based on an occupancy rating of -1 or below. This is significantly below a national estimate of 6.4% and a West Midlands estimate of 5.4%.
- Since 2011, the percentage of households living in overcrowded homes has reduced in Shropshire by -1,189 households or -29.5%. This positive trend is also reflected nationally with a -21.7% fall and regionally with a -16.3% fall.
- The percentage of households living in under-occupied accommodation in Shropshire has fallen slightly, from 83.6% of households in 2011<sup>(3)</sup> to 82.1% in 2021. This may reflect developers building more smaller 1–3-bedroom properties since 2011.
- The 2021 Census showed 9,428 households or 6.8% of all households in Shropshire were accommodated in 1-2-room homes. These households were most prevalent in urban areas, with 24.3% of households (532) in Quarry and Coton Hill electoral division living in 1-2-room homes.

### Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish data on occupancy (by rooms and bedrooms) and number of rooms and bedrooms. Data based on number of bedrooms has been published since 2011 to reflect the 'bedroom standard' used by local authorities to assess the housing requirements of households applying / registered on the housing waiting list. A definition is included at the end of this bulletin. ONS have adopted a different method for collecting data on number of rooms which means it is not possible to compare with historic censuses.

### Overcrowding

Overcrowding is measured by assessing the number of people in a household against a 'room' or 'bedroom standard' of how many rooms they need based on age, sex, and relationship status of household members. This bulletin reviews both occupancy ratings based on rooms and then bedrooms. An occupancy rating of -1 or less implies that a household's accommodation has fewer rooms / bedrooms than required (overcrowded).

Households with lower incomes are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation and more likely to experience worse health outcomes. These households are also more likely to contain multi-generational households with older relatives with health needs or concealed households unable to afford suitable accommodation in the right location. When planning to meet current and future housing needs, local authorities must consider overcrowding as this can indicator of unmet housing need.



## Under-Occupation

Understanding the level of under-occupation in Shropshire is equally important. Shropshire's population is ageing and for many their housing needs are changing. Many family homes are now under-occupied as children have grown-up and left home and maintaining larger / older properties can bring both physical and financial pressures. People with health conditions or disabilities may require adaptations to their homes or need to move to other suitable accommodation (as adaptations would be unfeasible) in order to remain independent in their home. An occupancy rating of +1 or more implies that a household's accommodation has more rooms / bedrooms than required (under-occupied)

When further details are available from the 2021 Census, it will be possible to gain more insight into the character of households living both in overcrowded and under-occupied accommodation.

## Occupancy based on number of rooms

Table 1 compares change during 2011-2021, in terms of the occupancy rating (based on rooms) of household accommodation in Shropshire, England and the West Midlands. This shows 82.1% of households in Shropshire live in under-occupied accommodation, compared to only 72.0% nationally and 74.4% in the West Midlands region. This in part reflects the 41.0% of households in Shropshire who live in larger detached accommodation, compared to only 23% nationally and the 20.6% of households who live in homes six or more rooms, compared to 14.9% nationally.

The 2021 Census revealed the number of households living in under-occupied homes (114,626) has risen by 5.7% in Shropshire since 2011, compared to 5.3% nationally. In contrast the number of households in Shropshire living in overcrowded accommodation (4,033) has fallen by -29.5%, compared to -21.7% nationally.

**Table 1: Occupancy ratings for rooms; Shropshire Comparison with England and the West Midlands: Change 2011-2021** <sup>(1,3)</sup>

Area		Over-occupied (-1 rooms) (Households)		Standard (0 rooms) (Households)		Under-occupied (-1 or below rooms) (Households)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Shropshire	Census 2021	4,033	2.9	20,920	15.0	114,626	82.1
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>5,222</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>16,009</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>108,443</i>	<i>83.6</i>
	Change Number	-1,189		4,911		6,183	
	Percentage Change	-29.5		30.7		5.7	
West Midlands	Census 2021	130,876	5.4	491,670	20.2	1,806,947	74.4
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>156,344</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>397,611</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>1,740,954</i>	<i>75.9</i>
	Change Number	-25,468		94,059		65,993	
	Percentage Change	-16.3		23.7		3.7	
England	Census 2021	1,510,250	6.4	5,050,108	21.5	16,875,727	72.0
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>1,928,596</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>4,106,919</i>	<i>18.6</i>	<i>16,027,853</i>	<i>72.6</i>
	Change Number	-418,346		943,189		847,874	
	Percentage Change	-21.7		23.0		5.3	



## Occupancy based on number of bedrooms

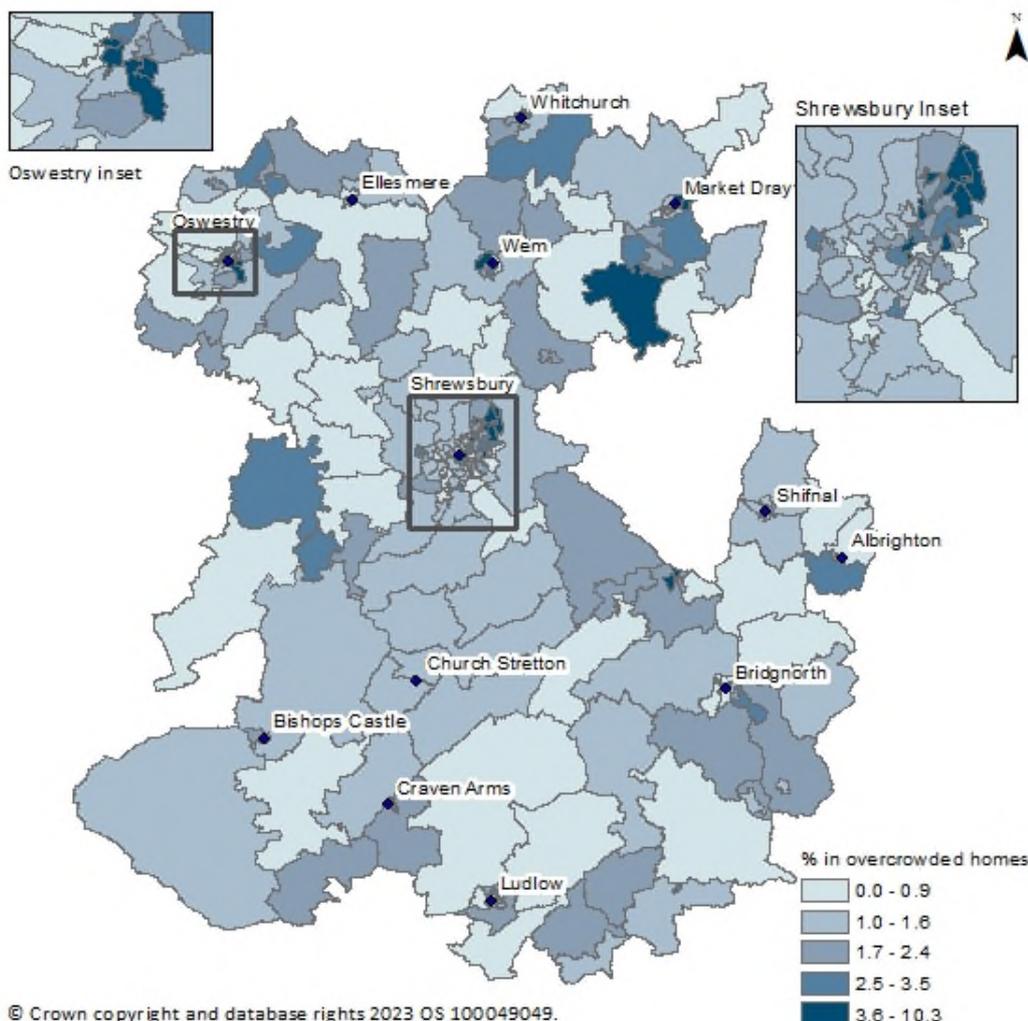
Table 2 compares levels of occupancy based on the 'bedroom standard.' This shows households living on over-crowded accommodation in Shropshire has decreased by -16% since 2011 and households living in under-occupied accommodation has risen by 9.8%. Based on the 'bedroom standard', fewer households (2,463 or 1.8%) are identified as living in overcrowded homes, compared to 4,033 or 2.9% in terms of rooms.

**Table 2: Occupancy ratings based on number of bedrooms; Shropshire Comparison with England and the West Midlands: Change 2011-2021** <sup>(1,3)</sup>

Area		Over-occupied (-1 bedrooms) (Households)		Standard (0 bedrooms) (Households)		Under-occupied (-1 or below bedrooms) (Households)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Shropshire	Census 2021	2,463	1.8	25,599	18.3	111,517	79.9
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>2,932</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>25,205</i>	<i>19.4</i>	<i>101,537</i>	<i>78.3</i>
	Change Number	-469		394		9,980	
	Percentage Change	-16.0		1.6		9.8	
West Midlands	Census 2021	104,181	4.3	1,708,691	25.4	616,621	70.3
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>102,548</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>1,616,811</i>	<i>25.1</i>	<i>575,550</i>	<i>70.5</i>
	Change Number	1,633		91,880		41,071	
	Percentage Change	1.6		5.7		7.1	
England	Census 2021	1,024,691	4.4	6,278,647	26.8	16,132,747	68.8
	<i>Census 2011</i>	<i>1,024,473</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>5,885,951</i>	<i>26.7</i>	<i>15,152,944</i>	<i>68.7</i>
	Change Number	218		392,696		979,803	
	Percentage Change	0.02		6.7		6.5	



## Map 1: Percentage of households living in overcrowded accommodation using the 'bedroom standard' by LSOA



Illustrated in map 1, the more urban LSOAs in Shrewsbury, Wem, Ludlow and Broseley present the areas with the highest percentage of households living in overcrowded housing. Some of these LSOAs are characterised by high levels of social housing.

LSOA E01028957 in Harlescott ward has 10.3% of households living in overcrowded accommodation.

LSOA E01028873 located in Market Drayton East ward has the second highest number of households (41) living in overcrowded housing.

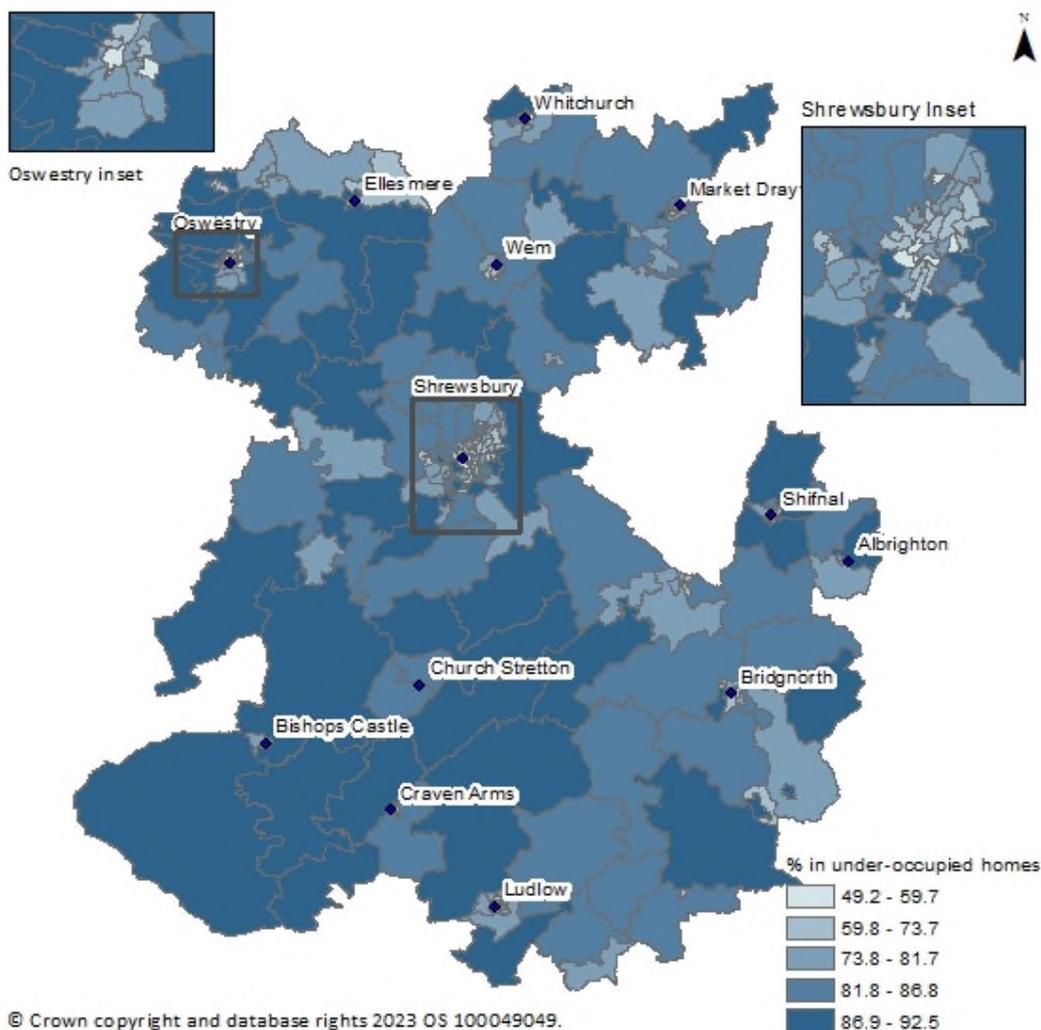
**Table 3: Highest ranking LSOAs in Shropshire, based on overcrowded accommodation**

Area	LSOA	Households living in overcrowded accommodation		
		Number	%	Rank (%)
Harlescott ward (York Rd, off Lancaster Rd), Shrewsbury	E01028957	68	10.33	1
Battlefield ward, Shrewsbury	E01035059	39	5.70	2
West of B5476, north / west of Thomas Adams school, Wem ward	E01028889	34	5.18	3
Ludlow East ward (including Sandpits Rd / Rock Lane)	E01029007	25	5.18	4
East of Much Wenlock ward and west of Broseley ward	E01028840	28	5.04	5

*Please note. ward = electoral division*



## Map 2: Percentage of households living in under-occupied accommodation using the 'bedroom standard' by LSOA



Illustrated in map 2, the more rural LSOAs adjoining Shrewsbury, Market Drayton, Albrighton, Bridgnorth, Prees and Ellesmere, present the areas with the highest percentage of households living in under-occupied housing.

LSOA E01028855 to the south of Shifnal, has the highest number of households (1,020) living in under-occupied accommodation.

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**Table 4: Highest ranking LSOAs in Shropshire, based on under-occupied accommodation**

Area	LSOA	Households living in under-occupied accommodation		
		Number	%	Rank (%)
Overlapping Longden ward / Rea Valley ward and Loton ward (incl. Yockleton, Asterley, Cruckmeole)	E01028976	687	92.46	1
East of Abbey ward / north-east of Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton ward	E01028947	719	92.30	2
The Meres ward / north Ruyton and Baschurch ward	E01028872	554	92.18	3
Prees ward	E01028881	534	91.91	4
Copthorne ward (north/east of RS Hospital), Shrewsbury	E01028953	592	91.36	5
Bridgnorth West and Tasley ward	E01028831	582	91.22	6
East of Shifnal South and Cosford ward and north-east of Albrighton ward	E01028845	816	91.07	7
Market Drayton East ward	E01028899	738	91.00	8

Please note. ward = electoral division

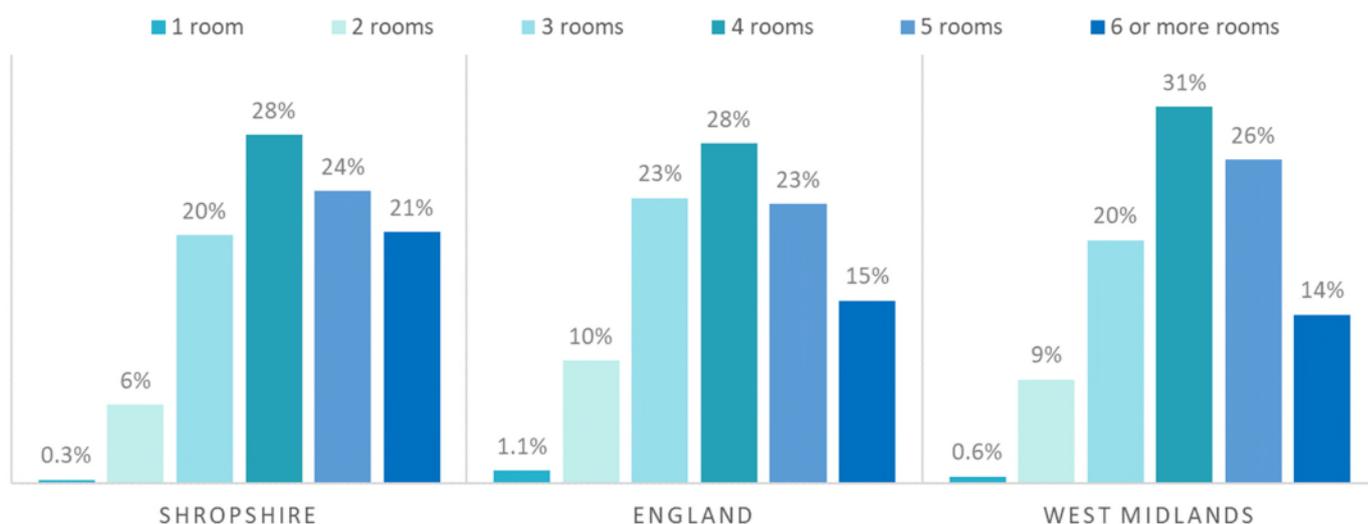


## Number of Rooms

The 2021 Census revealed the largest proportion of households (28.5% or 39,744) in Shropshire live in accommodation with four rooms. This is similar to England (27.8%), but below a regional level of 30.8%. Shropshire has a substantially higher proportion of homes with six or more bedrooms (20.6%), compared to only 14.9% nationally and 13.8% regionally.

In Shropshire, 6.8% of households (9,428) lived in accommodation with only 1-2 rooms, significantly below England (11.1%) and the West Midlands (9.1%).

**Figure 1: Percentage breakdown of household accommodation by number of rooms**



**Table 5: Household accommodation in Shropshire by number of rooms**

Shropshire	1 room	2 rooms	3 rooms	4 rooms	5 rooms	6 rooms	7 rooms	8 rooms	9 rooms and over
Number	464	8,964	28,367	39,744	33,340	15,315	7,693	3,032	2,660
Percentage	0.3	6.4	20.3	28.5	23.9	11.0	5.5	2.2	1.9

## Number of Bedrooms

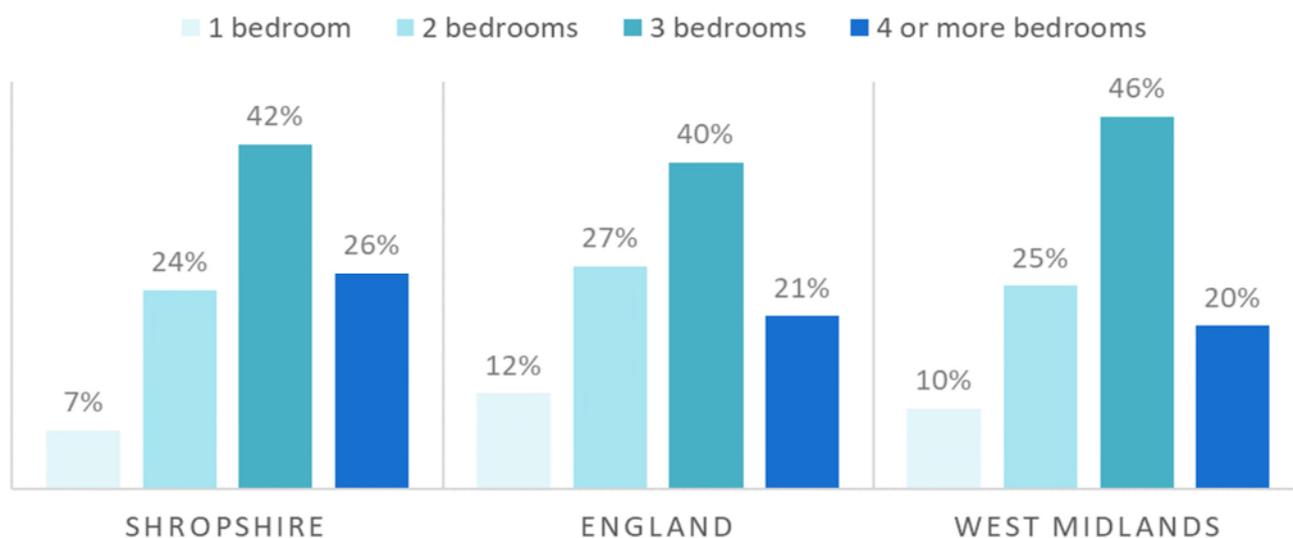
A question about number of bedrooms was first included in the 2011 census. The 2021 Census showed the largest percentage of households (42.3%) in Shropshire, live in accommodation with three bedrooms. This compares with the 40% nationally and 45.6% in the West Midlands.

Only 7.1% of households (9,970) in Shropshire live in one bedroom accommodation, significantly below 11.6% nationally and 9.7% in the West Midlands. This partly reflects only 8.9% of accommodation in Shropshire being flats / maisonettes or apartments, compared to 15.9% in the West Midlands and 22.2% nationally.

Household accommodation in Shropshire is characterised by a higher proportion of larger homes (36,682 or 26.3%), with four or more bedrooms. This compares with only 21.1% nationally and 19.9% regionally.



**Figure 2: National and Regional Comparison: Percentage of household accommodation by number of bedrooms**



**Table 6: Household accommodation in Shropshire by number of bedrooms**

	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms	All Households
Number	9,970	33,863	59,067	36,682	139,582
Percentage	7.1	24.3	42.3	26.3	100.0

### Notes

Data based on occupancy and rooms is available back to the 1921 Census on [Nomisweb](#). However, for the 2021 Census, ONS have used administrative data from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) together with the 2021 Census results to estimate occupancy and number of rooms / bedrooms. The VOA apply differing definitions of what is considered a 'room' or 'bedroom' compared to historic censuses. This means it is not possible to compare the 2021 Census published data with historical censuses. More information is available on the ONS methodology from the [ONS website](#).

### Definitions

The 2021 Census considers whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded, ideally occupied or under-occupied. This is calculated by comparing the number of bedrooms the household requires to the number of available bedrooms.

The number of bedrooms the household requires is calculated according to the Bedroom Standard, where the following should have their own bedroom:



- *adult couple*
- *any remaining adult (aged 21 years or over)*
- *two males (aged 10 to 20 years)*
- *one male (aged 10 to 20 years) and one male (aged 9 years or under), if there are an odd number of males aged 10-20*
- *one male aged 10-20 if there are no males aged 0-9 to pair with him.*
- *repeat steps 3-5 for females*
- *two children (aged 9 years or under) regardless of sex*
- *any remaining child (aged 9 years or under)*

*An occupancy rating of:*

*-1 or less implies that a household's accommodation has fewer bedrooms than required (overcrowded)*

*+1 or more implies that a household's accommodation has more bedrooms than required (under-occupied)*

*0 suggests that a household's accommodation has an ideal number of bedrooms*

*Results are available for the following classification*

*Code Name*

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| <i>1</i> | <i>Occupancy rating of bedrooms: +2 or more</i> |
| <i>2</i> | <i>Occupancy rating of bedrooms: +1</i>         |
| <i>3</i> | <i>Occupancy rating of bedrooms: 0</i>          |
| <i>4</i> | <i>Occupancy rating of bedrooms: -1 or less</i> |

The data in this bulletin is sourced from the:

1. [Office for National Statistics 2021 Census table TS053 - Occupancy rating \(rooms\)](#)
2. [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) 2021 Census table TS052 – Occupancy rating \(bedrooms\)](#)
3. [ONS 2011 Census table QS408EW - Occupancy rating \(rooms\)](#)
4. [ONS 2011 Census table QS412EW - Occupancy rating \(bedrooms\)](#)

For more information please contact: [BusinessIntelligence@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:BusinessIntelligence@shropshire.gov.uk)

Or refer to ONS website to useful articles:

- [2021 Census Map: Occupancy \(bedrooms\)](#)
- [2021 Census Map: Occupancy \(rooms\)](#)

