

Results from the 2021 Census show that the city's population is 812,000 people, an increase of 8.1% from the 2011 figure of 751,500. This is a bigger increase than the average figure for England, which is 6.6%. The city remains the second largest local authority area in terms of population—only Birmingham has more people.

Around 175,000 people are estimated to be living in relative poverty, and the pandemic is likely to have intensified inequalities across the city. In-work poverty has become an increasing problem, with an estimated 68,457 working age adults being from working households and living in poverty.

According to the 2019 Leeds Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), of the 482 Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) that make up the city, 114 of them (10%) are ranked amongst the most deprived 10% nationally, 9 higher than the figure from 2015's IMD. 12 of them have been ranked in the most deprived 1% nationally, though this a reduction from the 16 that were ranked in this group in 2015.

The 2021 census breaks the population down as:

144,600 children and young people aged 0-15, 17.8% of the population
540,600 people of working age (16-64), 66.6% of the population
126,800 older people aged 65 and over, 15.6% of the population

A third of the city's households were one person households according to the census in 2011. Almost half of these were older people. Detailed information from the 2021 survey is expected in autumn 2022 which will show if this figure has changed.

Over the last 20 years, the 50+ population has grown by around 30,000, and the projected future growth is greatest in the 80+ population, reinforcing the importance of this Strategy in looking at housing provision for people as they age.

Most older people live in mainstream housing, rather than specialist housing, and this is likely to continue to be the case, so this Strategy considers how people can be supported to live in suitable accommodation, in supportive communities, as they age.

Around 17% of Leeds residents are disabled or have a long-term health problem, and this strategy outlines a team Leeds approach to encourage people to live independent lives in homes that support their individual needs, in inclusive communities.

The ethnic diversity of Leeds continues to grow. Figures from the 2021 census show that 9.7% of the city's population identify as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh. 5.6% identify as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African and 3.4% as coming from Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups. The percentage identifying as White is 79%. Other ethnic group identification stands at 2.3%.

The economy has proved strong and resilient over the past 20 years. Figures from 2021 show 471,000 people work in Leeds, 322,000 full-time and 148,000 part-time. Around three quarters work in the private sector, making Leeds one of the top cities nationally in terms of its private sector workforce. Strong employment growth, pre-pandemic, has maintained the city's employment rate above national and regional averages. The city's diverse economy has allowed it to weather economic shocks well. The gross average wage in Leeds in 2022 was £621.3 a week, with males averaging £671 and females £557. These are above the Yorkshire and Humberside figures but slightly below the British figures.

Despite this, the number of workless households in 2021 was around 45,700. Around 109,000 were economically inactive, and of those people 18,900 people wanted to work. In July 2023 23,400 people were claiming benefits.

However, the COVID pandemic has had an economic impact – though Leeds is strongly placed to recover well thanks to its strong, diverse and knowledge-rich employment base, the pandemic has highlighted continuing inequalities across the city. The new strategy will be directed at tackling these.