

## Single Equality Scheme

Mid Devon District Council's Single Equality Scheme sets out how we are working to implement the equality duties that are set out in the Equality Act (2010).

The Equality Act (2010) protects us all from unfair treatment because of a physical or other specific characteristic that is fundamental to our being. It also requires public authorities to observe the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

Through the Equality Act (2010) legislation, we are all legally protected against discrimination on the basis of:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Section 149 of the Act imposes a duty on 'public authorities' and other bodies when exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities; and encourage participation in public life).
- Foster good relations between people (tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

These three parts of the Duty are complementary but must also be considered separately. The protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership only applies in relation to Work.

Underpinning the General Duties are Specific Duties which require public authorities to:

- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually).
- Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).
- Publish the information and objectives in an accessible way, so that the public can see for themselves how the authority is performing.

'Information' includes that relating to the protected characteristics of employees and other people affected by policies and practices:

- Workforce profiles (this can include data about recruitment, training, promotion, flexible working, maternity returners, grievance/issues, dismissal, leavers, service, pay, satisfaction, Members). Only applies where the organisation has more than 150 employees.
- Service user/community profiles (this can include information about outcomes such as health, safety and wellbeing, achievement such as skills and education, access to services, satisfaction, complaints, feedback, demographics).

### 1.0 Our Vision

Mid Devon District Council is committed to providing quality services delivered in a fair and equitable way and to promoting good relations between different groups within the community. We value the positive contribution that all our residents bring to the district, and want to work with individuals and groups to continue to improve our services and to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

## 2.0 How will we achieve this?

In order to achieve our vision we will:

- Seek to understand the needs of our community
- Know our customers and their specific needs
- Involve the community in changes that might affect them
- Develop services that can respond to the requirements of different residents
- Develop an inclusive working environment
- Ensure equality in procurement and commissioning
- Promote equality through working with others
- Recognise the needs of specific equality groups

## 3.0 Understanding our Community

In order to provide services that meet the needs of people who live, work and study in our region, we must first understand our community. The following gives a brief profile of the district. This data is drawn from a range of published sources including from the 2021 Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health England and various Government Departments. Wherever possible, the most recent data has been used.

Mid Devon is a rural district lying equidistant between the north and south coasts. Covering an area of 91,290.07 hectares, Mid Devon has three principle towns – Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. These towns provide services for surrounding rural communities, Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: A map of Mid Devon showing electoral boundaries and major settlements.

### 3.1 Population

In 2021, the population of Mid Devon was 82,852 (51.2% female and 48.8% male, data derived from the 2021 Census). This is a 6.5% increase since the 2011 Census when the population was 77,750. This increase in population is lower than the average for the South West overall (7.8%). Mid Devon ranked 281<sup>st</sup> out of 309 local authority areas in England for total population, an increase of two places in a decade.

The population pyramid for Mid Devon for 2021 indicates that the region has an aging population (Figure 3.2).

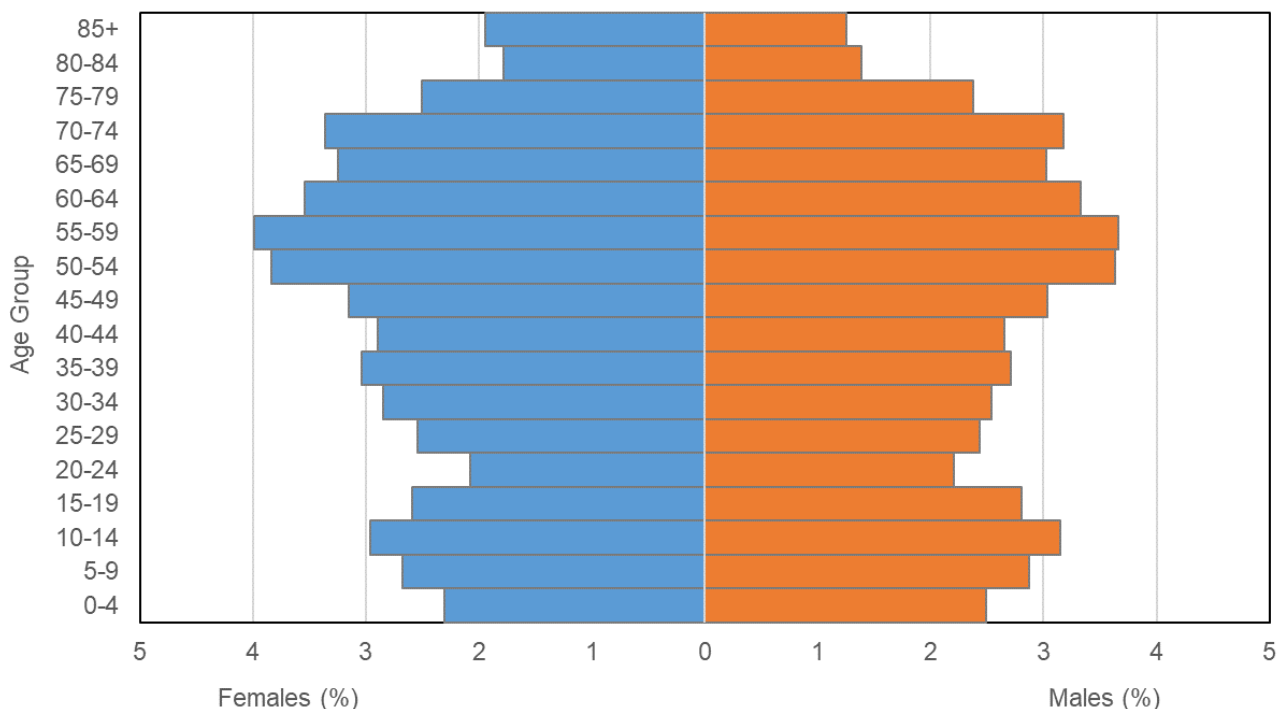


Figure 3.2: Population Pyramid for Mid Devon, 2021. Data from the Office for National Statistics.

The population distribution for Mid Devon shows a number of key differences to the South West (average), Figure 3.3:

- Mid Devon has more people aged 0-14 than the South West
- Mid Devon has fewer people aged 20-34 than the South West
- Mid Devon has slightly more people aged 50-54 than the South West

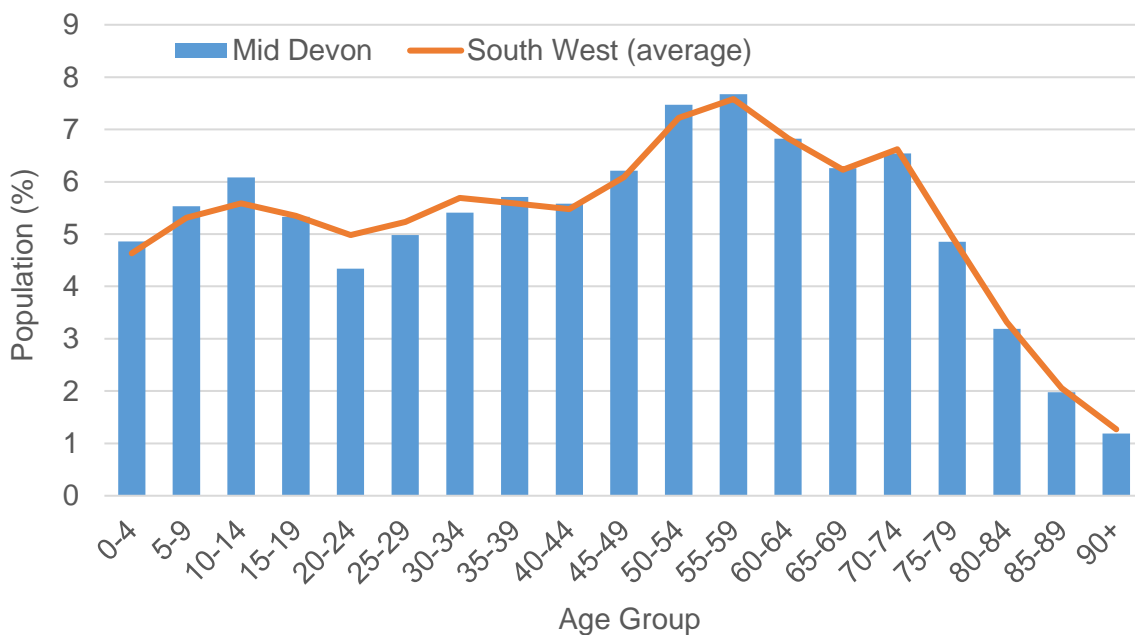


Figure 3.3: Population Distribution by age for Mid Devon and the South West of England, 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

The median age of Mid Devon residents has increased from 44 years old (2011) to 46 years old (2021). The median age in 2021 is higher than the South West (44 years old) and England as a whole (40 years old).

In Mid Devon there has been an increase of 25.4% in people aged 65 years and over in the past ten years, Figure 3.4. There has also been an increase of 1.8% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 1.1% in children aged under 15 years.

When considering five year age bands, there has been a decrease in populations in six groups, most notably those aged 40-44 (-19%), age band 45-49 (-14%), and 0-4 year olds (-11%). The largest increases are for those aged 70-74 (+45%), 75-79 year olds (+39%), and those aged 90 years old and above (+32%).

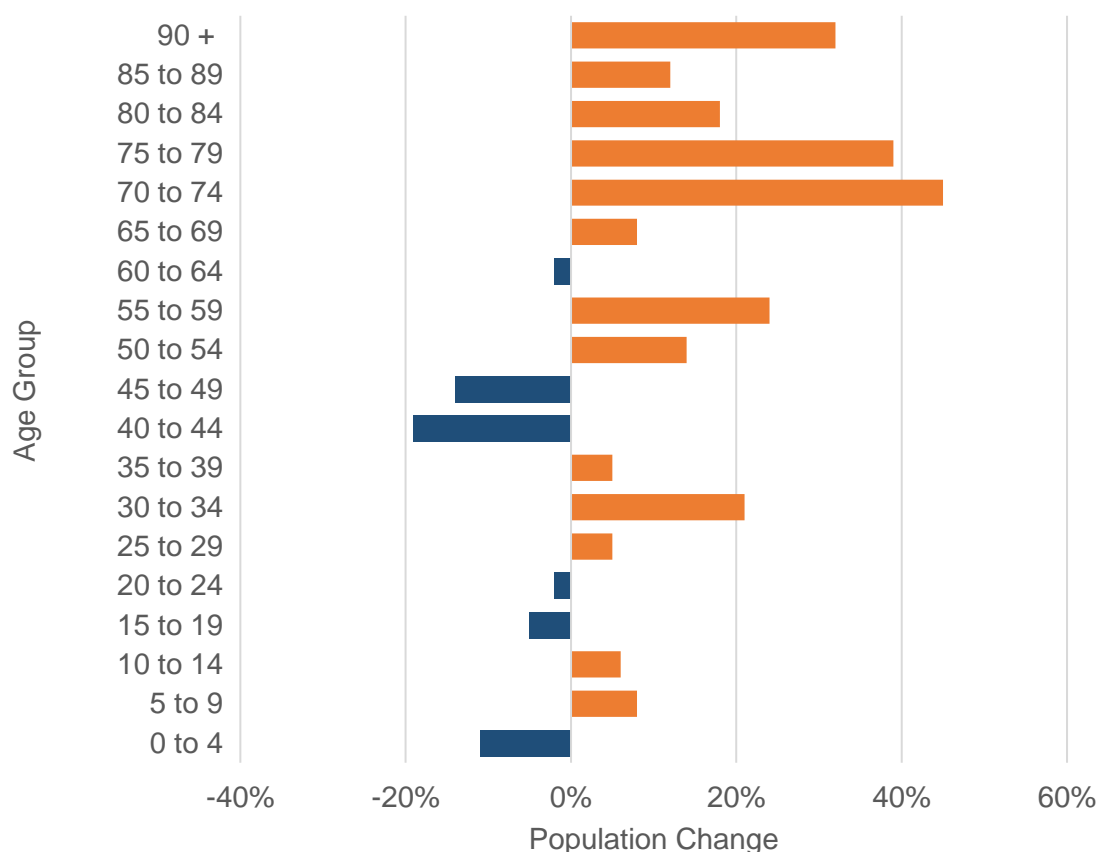


Figure 3.4: Population Change (%) by Age Group in Mid Devon, 2011 to 2021. Data derived from the 2011 and 2021 census.

Mid Devon has a comparatively low population density. As of 2021, Mid Devon is the fourth least densely populated of the 30 local authority areas in the South West, with an area equivalent to two football pitches per resident.

### 3.2 Ethnicity

In the 2021 Census, 81,068 (97.8%) residents in Mid Devon identified as White, with 1.1% identifying as Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups, 0.7% as Asian/ Asian British, 0.3% selecting “Other ethnic group”, and 0.1% identifying as Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, Figure 3.5.

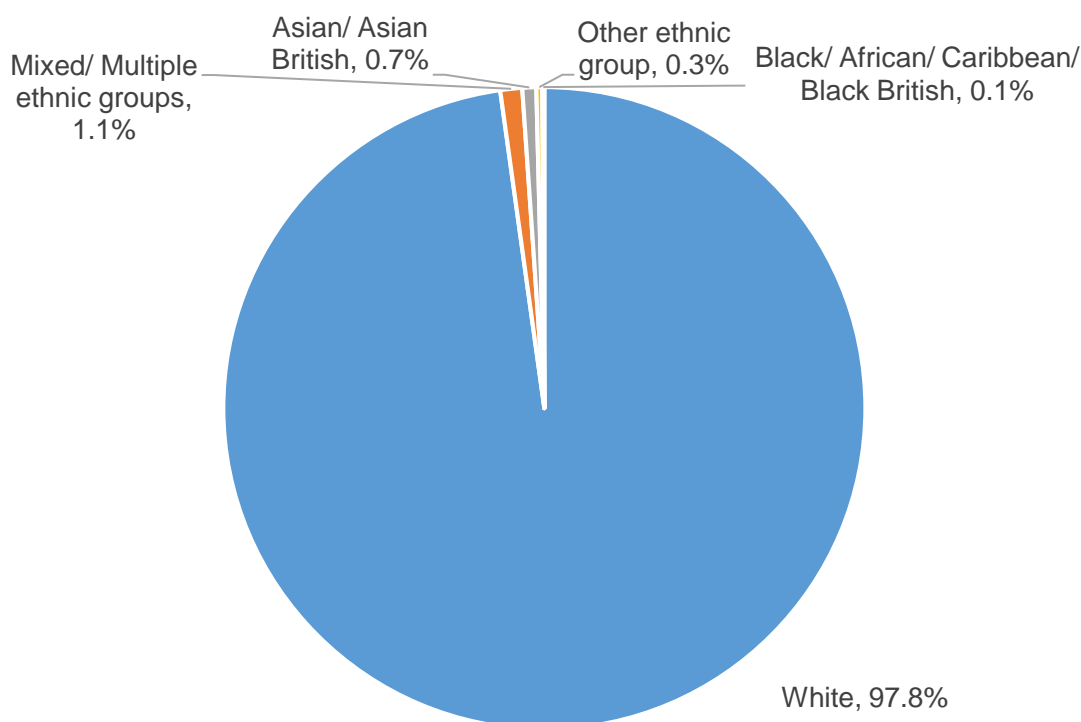


Figure 3.5: The ethnic split of Mid Devon residents in 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

In the 2021 census, around 75,700 Mid Devon residents said they were born in England. This represented 91.4% of the local population. The figure has risen from just under 71,900 in 2011, which at the time represented 92.4% of Mid Devon's population.

Wales was the next most represented country of birth, with just under 1,000 Mid Devon residents reporting this country of birth (1.2%). This figure has remained relatively unchanged from 2011.

The number of Mid Devon residents born in Poland rose from just over 650 in 2011 (0.9% of the local population) to just over 850 in 2021 (1.0%).

### 3.3 Disability

The age-standardised proportion of non-disabled residents decreased in Mid Devon between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, but rose across England. Age-standardised proportions enable comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure. In Mid Devon, the proportion of non-disabled residents fell from 83.3% in 2011 to 82.4% in 2021, while across England it rose from 80.7% to 82.3%.

The percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a lot” in Mid Devon decreased from 7.1% to 6.6%, while the percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a little” increased from 9.6% to 10.9%.

The census in 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived their health status and activity limitations, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

### 3.4 Religion

In the 2021 census, 45.0% of Mid Devon residents reported having "No religion", an increase from 28.5% in 2011, Figure 3.6. This question is voluntary in the census and as such there can be varying response rates between different areas or censuses.

Across the South West, the percentage of residents who described themselves as having "No religion" increased from 29.3% to 44.1%, while across England the percentage increased from 24.8% to 36.7%.

In 2021, 47.3% of people in Mid Devon described themselves as Christian (62.1% in 2011), while 6.3% did not answer this question (8.4% in 2011).

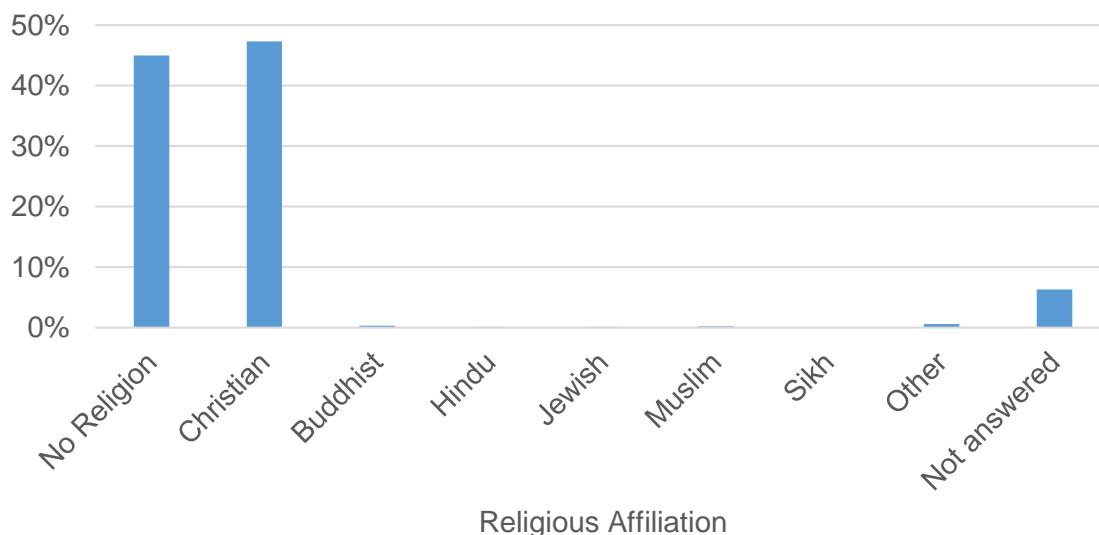


Figure 3.6: Religious Affiliation of residents in Mid Devon, 2021. Data from the 2021 Census.

### 3.5 Economy

Strategically located on South West England's main transport and communication corridor, Mid Devon is mid-way between Taunton and Exeter. New employment sites are being developed in Tiverton and Cullompton and a major new development of up to 5,000 houses planned for the 'Culm Garden Village'. Key employment sectors in Mid Devon include Manufacturing (specialist/light industrial), Agriculture, Food and Drink, and (Green) Tourism.

Of Mid Devon residents aged 16 years and over, 57.9% said they were employed (excluding full-time students) in the 2021 census, down from 59.9% in 2011.

The total number of residents that were "economically active" was 61.1% in 2021, a decrease from 2011 (64.2%), Figure 3.7.

In 2021, 1.7% said they were unemployed, compared with 2.4% in 2011. The percentage of retired Mid Devon residents increased from 25.3% to 26.5%.

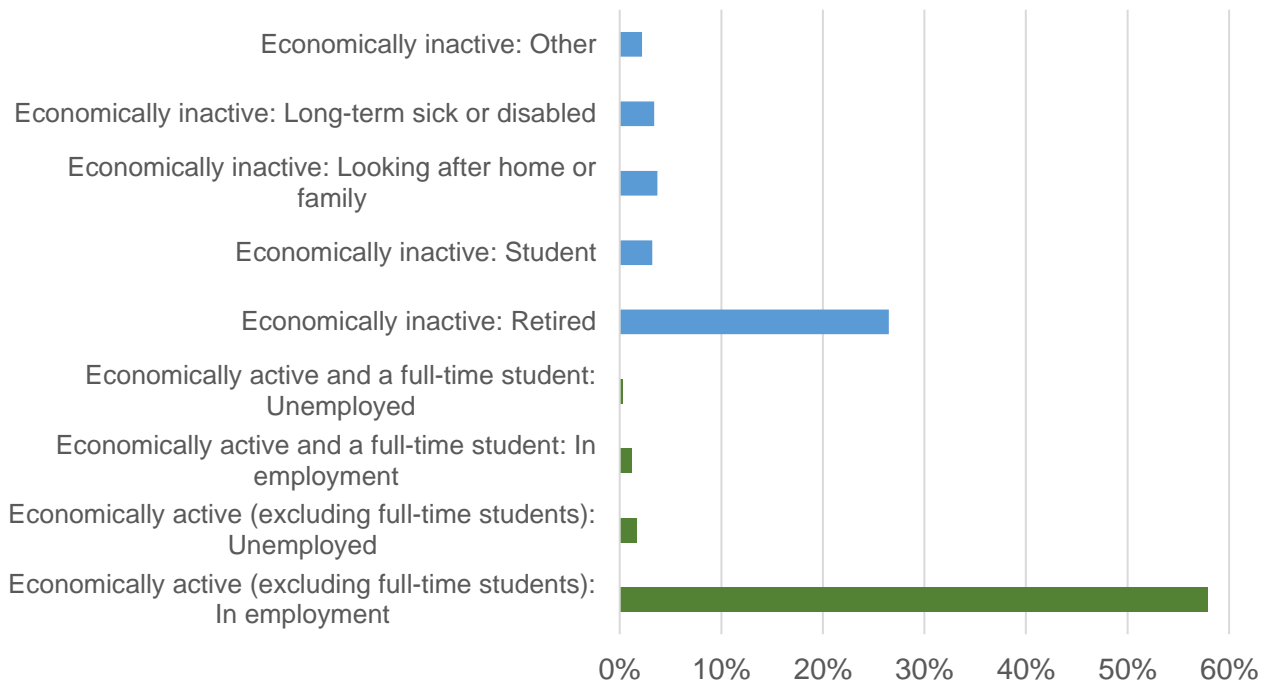


Figure 3.7: Employment status of Mid Devon residents, 2021.

The occupations of Mid Devon residents are shown in Figure 3.8. The most common occupation is classified as “Professional”, with this replacing “skilled trades” as the top profession in the district between 2011 and 2021. There has been the largest increase in the “Managers, directors and senior officials” category (+1,067), with the largest decrease (-533) for “Skilled trades”.

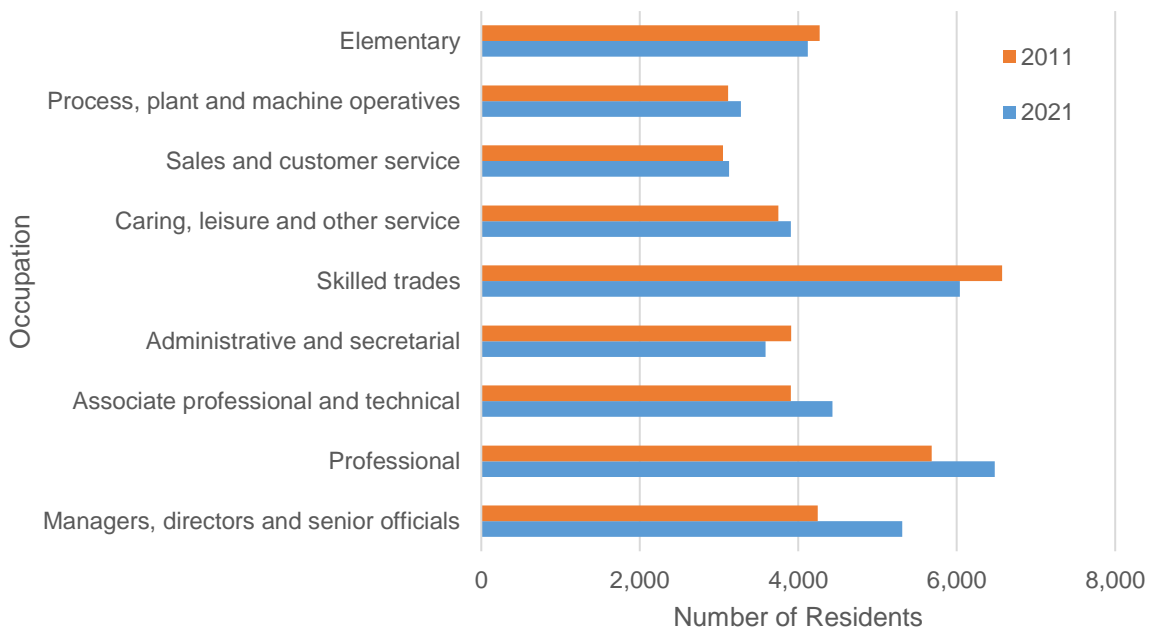


Figure 3.8: Occupations of the residents of Mid Devon, 2011 and 2021. Data from Census 2011 and 2021.

### 3.6 Housing

According to the 2021 Census, there are 35,633 households in Mid Devon. Mid Devon District Council currently has a social housing stock of 2,965 properties. Household tenure in Mid Devon is:

- Owned outright (39.6%)
- Owned with a mortgage or a loan (28.0%)

- Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (16.0%)
- Rented from Council or equivalent (7.9%)
- Rented from other social landlords (4.7%)
- Rented from other private owners, including from relative or employer (2.5%)
- Shared Ownership (1.0%)
- Occupiers living rent free (0.1%)

The largest number of households live in properties owned outright (39.6%). This compares with 42.2% for Devon County and 37.7% for the South West.

The second largest number of households live in properties owned with a mortgage or loan (28.0%). This compares with 26.0% for Devon County and 28.2% for the South West.

In 2020 it was estimated that 11.8% of Mid Devon households were in fuel poverty (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) compared to 13.2% of households in England. It is expected that a much higher number of households will be classified as in fuel poverty in 2022/23 given the increased cost of energy.

### 3.7 Deprivation

When considering multiple deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a useful tool. IMD is a combined measure of deprivation based on 37 indicators that have been grouped into seven domains. Each domain reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by individuals living in an area. Using the IMD produced using 2019 data, Mid Devon is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> (out of 18) districts in the South West, and 174<sup>th</sup> out of 317 authorities in England. When calculating the IMD, England is broken down into 32,844 small geographical areas called LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas). Mid Devon has no LSOAs that are within the 10% most deprived in England. Figure 3.9 shows the distribution of Mid Devon LSOAs according to levels of multiple deprivation.

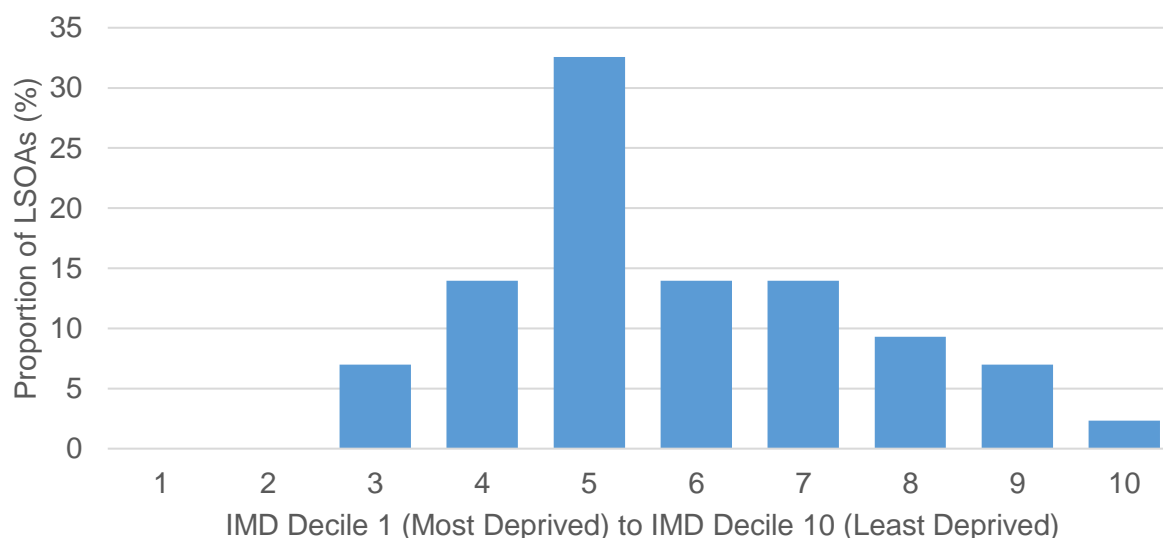


Figure 3.9: Proportion of Mid Devon LSOAs in each IMD decile, data from LG Inform for 2019.

When considering the seven domains which make up the IMD tool, Mid Devon achieves the following rank position in 2019 for each (where rank 1 is the most deprived district in England, and rank 317 is the least deprived):

- Living Environment (24<sup>th</sup>)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (68<sup>th</sup>)
- Education, Skills and Training (147<sup>th</sup>)
- Employment (186<sup>th</sup>)
- Income (198<sup>th</sup>)



- Health and Disability (259<sup>th</sup>)
- Crime (284<sup>th</sup>)

This shows that using the IMD tool, the lowest scoring domain for Mid Devon is “Living Environment” which is calculated based on the quality of housing, air quality, and road traffic accidents.

### 3.8 Education

The Census asks residents about their highest level of educational qualification, Figure 3.10. There has been an increase in residents having higher levels of qualifications in Mid Devon, with the number of residents with a qualification at level 3 or above increasing from 39% (2011) to 49% (2021). The number of residents indicating they have no qualifications has decreased from 23% (2011) to 17% (2021).

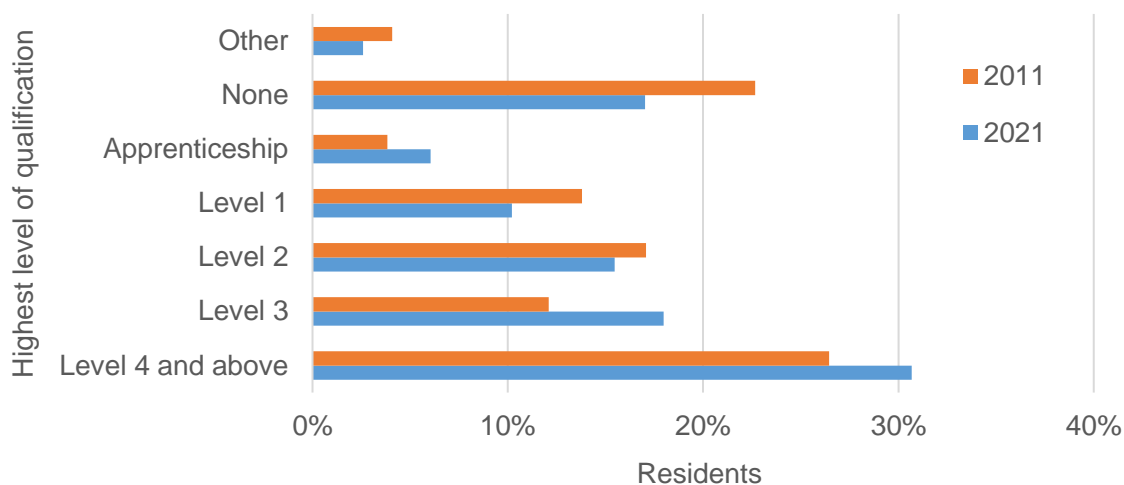


Figure 3.10: Highest level of qualification for residents of Mid Devon for 2011 and 2021, from Census data.

### 3.9 Access

Being a rural district, a large percentage of residents live in rural areas. This brings challenges for residents to access a variety of services, including employment opportunities. The average travel time to access key services by car in Mid Devon is 15.4 minutes (2019, Department for Transport), compared to 10.3 minutes for England. The average travel time to access key services in Mid Devon has increased from 12.8 minutes in 2014. Journey times are likely to be considerably longer when considering alternative forms of transport.

The need to be digitally connected in rural areas is also high. In 2022, 81.3% of homes in Mid Devon have superfast broadband available, ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 18 districts in the South West (data from Connected Nations, Ofcom).

### 3.10 Health

In the 2021 census, 48.9% of Mid Devon residents described their health as "very good", increasing from 47.2% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from 35.5% to 34.5%. These are age-standardised proportions.

The proportion of Mid Devon residents describing their health as "very bad" was 1.0% (similar to 2011), while those describing their health as "bad" remained at 3.4%. This data reflects people's own opinions in describing their overall health on a five point scale, from very good to very bad.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

Life expectancy has increased across the UK over the past 40 years, but has remained fairly stable over the past decade. Life expectancy (at birth) is higher in Mid Devon than the average for the South West and for the UK, Table 3.11. There is some evidence for a slight decline in life expectancies for 2018-20 due to COVID-19 pandemic leading to a greater number of deaths than normal in 2020.

	Female	Male
Mid Devon	84.7 years	80.8 years
South West	84.2 years	80.4 years
UK	82.9 years	79.0 years

Table 3.11: Life Expectancy at Birth, 2018-2020. Data from LG Inform.

Obesity levels are lower in children in Mid Devon than in England when measured at both reception year and in year 6. For the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, the obesity levels were:

- Reception year: Mid Devon (5.4%), England (9.9%)
- Year 6: Mid Devon (15.4%), England (21.6%)

Obesity levels have decreased in Mid Devon when measured at the reception year, from 7.9% (2014/15 and 2015/16) to the current figure (5.4%), despite an increasing national trend.

### 3.11 Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Of Mid Devon residents aged 16 years and over, 30.0% said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 26.4% in 2011 (Data from the 2011 and 2021 censuses).

In 2021, 50.7% said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 53.9% in 2011. The percentage of adults in Mid Devon that had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership increased from 9.7% to 10.0%.

### 3.12 Equality Priorities

Mid Devon District recognises that there are five main equality priorities for the district:

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population
2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation
3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families with complex needs
4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community
5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon (Corporate Plan aim).

### 4.0 Knowing Our Customers – Equality Monitoring

Mid Devon District Council believe that it is important to know who uses our services. By comparing this with what we know about the community as a whole, we can see if there are any groups who are underrepresented, highlighting where there may be barriers to overcome.

Where customers are prepared to share information regarding equality, data is captured to inform and shape services and customer engagement based on customer needs. For example, the Housing service has been undertaking work to better understand its residents, and it holds data on 53% of tenants.

Our [Complaints and Feedback policy](#) was reviewed in October 2021. It details our commitment to encourage and accept customer feedback of all types. This will enable the identification of recurring issues and support us to learn from any mistakes. It also sets standards for all staff in recording and managing feedback received.

As part of the complaints process within the Council, complainants are asked if they believe they have been discriminated against because of protected characteristics. If yes is selected, they are asked to provide details of their reasoning for this. This process enables the Council to identify any equality issues that may contribute to the complaint or problem. The equality information collected can be used to:

- Review service delivery
- Compare our performance over time
- Assist in the development of services in line with people's needs
- Monitor the impact of any service changes

Under current legislation, we will publish relevant equality information this information includes:

- An equality profile of the district
- Workforce information

### **5.0 Involving the community**

As part of our commitment to good consultation, the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan were reviewed and approved during 2018/19. The Council is keen to make sure that people from different equality groups take part in consultation, and will try to find the most appropriate way to consult with them according to their needs.

The communications team uses multiple channels to engage and inform our communities to ensure we reach as many people as possible, with the resources available. We acknowledge that engaging with minority groups can be difficult in Mid Devon, particularly due to the limited diversity within the district. However, the communication team will engage with groups on an issues basis and will ensure all our communications are provided in multiple formats and channels. This is through Language Line, by ensuring our website is (WCAG)2 compliant and through our multiple channels – print, online, in person, social media, sign up notification systems and through our many stakeholders.

Mid Devon District Council will:

- work with groups representing the interests of people from different equality groups to get feedback on proposed service changes particularly relevant to them
- develop and support forms of consultation that are appropriate to the communication needs of different groups within the community
- monitor and assess the consultation methods used and where necessary adapt them to meet the needs of different participants
- publish the results of these consultations and feed them back into our decision-making processes in an open and responsible way.

### **Customer feedback**

Mid Devon District Council positively welcomes feedback. We want to ensure residents' views, whether positive or negative, are noted and their concerns are addressed. We are aware that the Council's formal feedback process may be inaccessible to those sections of the community who have difficulties in accessing services. The Council encourages helper organisations to act as advocates for a complainant if necessary.

### **6.0 Developing responsive services**

A primary factor in making a service accessible is providing information and advice in a usable and convenient format.

We seek to ensure that all users:

- know about the relevant services they might need
- are given support where necessary e.g. with completing forms
- are confident about using and contacting a service and, if necessary, complaining about it

We will do this by:

- communicating clearly both internally and externally
- providing information in plain English
- making as many services as internet accessible as possible
- offering information in different formats on request
- providing interpretation and translation services where possible
- ensuring that buildings that are open to the public, including leisure and community facilities, can be accessed and used by all residents
- making sure that our employees are trained and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service in line with this policy.

### **Accessibility**

Mid Devon District Council will endeavour to make online services compliant with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Website(s) or mobile app(s) will be made accessible by making them 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'.

### **Changing services and policies**

Mid Devon District Council has a responsibility to assess the likely impact on residents and employees of policies or services it is proposing to change or introduce before they are adopted. This is to make sure that any changes do not disproportionately affect any particular group, and any adverse impacts can be reduced as much as possible.

Policies, in particular, are frequently adapted or replaced to reflect changes in the legal, social and political environment. Our objective is to build equality and diversity into the policy making process and to make that process clear, open and inclusive.

The Council undertakes detailed Equality Impact Assessments on those changes most likely to impact on the wellbeing of certain individuals or groups. The impact assessment process asks how the service or policy affects the different groups in the community. Each Equality Impact Assessment includes an action plan for describing what actions can be taken to mitigate any negative impacts identified. The template includes the consideration of rurality which is identified as a specific issue in Mid Devon.

In 2023, we will undertake a review of our Equality Impact Assessment process to ensure it meets current best practice.

## **7.0 Developing an inclusive working environment**

The Council considers equality and diversity in all aspects of employment, from advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development, to reasons for ending employment.

We will promote equality in recruitment by:

- advertising jobs as widely as possible
- providing job details and accepting job applications in alternative formats on request as appropriate to the needs of the applicant
- monitoring recruitment processes and taking action as a result of the findings
- acknowledging that recruitment and selection decisions should be based upon objective, measurable and reasonable selection criteria
- asking only for the skills and qualities actually needed to do the job
- commitment to equality in employment and in service delivery will be reinforced in staff induction programmes for new staff
- training managers on how to recruit in a non-discriminatory way, making sure that all job applicants, whether redeployment candidates, existing employees or people who do not currently work for the District Council, demonstrate that they are qualified, motivated and competent to do the job.

We will promote equality in disciplinary procedures by:

- regularly reviewing our disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure an appropriate mechanism is in place to deal with bullying and harassment at work.

We will promote equality in pay and conditions by:

- using a pay structure that makes sure employees are treated fairly and equitably.

We publish information on our website about our pay policy and gender pay gap.

We will promote equality in training and development by:

- providing training programmes for staff to raise awareness of equality issues and assist them in applying equality principles to their role within the Council
- recognising and supporting the potential of all employees by offering opportunities for training and personal development
- monitoring employee development to make sure that training and development opportunities continue to be open to all employees.

### **8.0 Ensuring equality in procurement and commissioning**

Mid Devon District Council is a major purchaser of services. Every year we spend over £5 million with businesses so that we can deliver our services. We recognise that our spending power gives us the chance to influence how others work and to promote equality. We will:

- require any company or business that wishes to be one of our contractors or suppliers to demonstrate appropriate consideration in their policies on equality in relation to employment and service delivery
- seek to encourage any company, business or individual wishing to provide goods or services to Mid Devon District Council, to contribute to our policy by implementing fair practices in employment and training
- review our own policies and practices and where necessary make changes to them to ensure they do not discriminate or place unfair requirements on small businesses from Mid Devon
- cease issuing contracts to, purchasing from or commissioning any contractor, business or organisation, where we believe they fail to comply with our values in relation to equality and diversity
- follow good practice by having a procurement strategy that gives a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and to tackling discrimination and disadvantage.

### **9.0 Promoting equality through working with others**

The Council recognises that it cannot meet its equality responsibilities without working closely with other public bodies, community groups and individuals. Mid Devon District Council will:

- use our standing in the area to help shape public opinion to promote understanding between different sections of the community
- work with other public, private, voluntary and community groups in Mid Devon to ensure that equality and diversity policies and plans similar to our own are adopted and implemented more widely
- share information, experience and examples of good practice on equality through links with other public, private, voluntary and community organisations in the region
- promote equality and diversity within partnership working and in our dealings with the media
- involve people from different equality groups in influencing our work and progress on equality
- learn from the equality and diversity policies and plans of other local authorities and organisations.

### **10.0 Meeting the needs of specific equality groups**

The Council is aware that certain groups within society are particularly vulnerable to discrimination because of a particular protected characteristic (e.g. age, disability, gender, etc.). In order to

eliminate discrimination and promote equality we recognise the need to work with representatives who can advocate on behalf of particular equality groups in order to develop services that meet their specific requirements. We also recognise that people are individuals, and that although they may be included within a particular equality group they also have individual needs that may differ from the rest of the group. We are committed to dealing with every resident as an individual with their own particular needs.

## **11.0 Monitoring**

### **Monitoring Impact and Acting on Results**

Mid Devon District Council recognises that monitoring is an important way of assessing the effects of policies in practice and is a vital part of any strategy to promote equality.

Monitoring will help us check whether our policies, operations and organisational culture are discriminating against some groups and individuals. This will help us find out why and how discrimination takes place. Where we see that any of our policies or procedures have a negative impact we will investigate the reasons for this and revise them accordingly.

### **Publishing Results**

If Mid Devon District Council is to be successful and keep public confidence, we need not only to promote equality but also to be seen to be doing so. The Council will therefore publish the results of its monitoring, assessment and consultation activities. This includes our Equalities Impact Assessments, an annual report on the Single Equality Scheme, and our pay policy and data on the gender pay gap.

## **12.0 Concerns**

If there are any concerns about any matter regarding equality of opportunity or discrimination is suspected, you are referred to the following related policies:

Whistleblowing Policy  
Dignity at Work and  
Grievance Policy