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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Population and Migration

United Kingdom interim national population projections

The United Kingdom population is projected to increase gradually from an estimated 58.8 million in 2001 to reach 63.2 million by 2026, according to new figures released today.

The projections, by the Government Actuary, for the UK and its constituent countries are based on the estimated population at the middle of 2001 and replace the previous 2000-based national projections.

These projections follow the publication on 30 September 2002 of the first results of the 2001 Census. The estimated population of the United Kingdom at mid-2001, based on these Census results, was 58,837,000. This estimate is 919,000 lower than the estimated population at mid-2000 on which the previous national projections were based, and 1,150,000 lower than the 2000-based projection of the population at mid-2001.

These "interim" 2001-based projections take preliminary account of the results of the 2001 Census which show that the base population used in the previous projections was overestimated. The interim projections also incorporate a revised assumption of net international migration to the United Kingdom, informed by the first results of the 2001 Census and taking account of more recent migration information. Assumed long-term fertility and mortality rates are unchanged from the 2000-based projections.

The next "full" set of national population projections, based on the population at the middle of 2002, are scheduled for release in November 2003. These will be based on a full reassessment of trends in fertility, mortality and migration and will take into account the further Census related data which will become available during 2003.

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In general, projected population numbers are significantly lower than in the 2000-based projections. However, the broad outlook of a projected fall in the number of children and a significant increase in the size of the elderly population is little changed.

The results of the interim 2001-based projections show that:

- The projected total population increase of 4.3 million to 2026 is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.28 per cent. Longer-term projections suggest the population will peak around 2040 at nearly 64 million and then gradually start to fall.
- The projected total population of the United Kingdom in 2026 is about 1.8 million (2.8 per cent) lower than in the previous (2000-based) projections. This is a consequence of the base population in the previous projections having been an overestimate, together with the effect of a reduced assumption of future net inward migration.
- Almost 60 per cent of the projected 4.3 million increase between 2001 and 2026 is attributable to the assumed level of net inward migration. The remainder is due to projected natural increase (more births than deaths).
- The population will gradually become older with the average (mean) age expected to rise from 39.1 years in 2001 to 42.4 years in 2026.
- In 2001, there were just over one million more children aged under 16, than people of state pensionable age. However, from 2007, the population of state pensionable age is projected to exceed the number of children and by 2026 is projected to exceed it by nearly 2 million.
- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to fall by 7.3 per cent from 11.9 million in 2001 to just below 11 million in 2014 and then to rise slowly to 2026.



- The number of people of working age (currently defined as between ages 16 to 64 for men and 16 to 59 for women) is projected to rise by 3.7 per cent from 36.2 million in 2001 to 37.5 million in 2011. Allowing for the planned change in women's state pension age from 60 to 65 between 2010 and 2020, the working age population will increase further to 39.0 million by 2021 and then gradually start to fall.
- The number of people of state pensionable age is projected to increase by 10.5 per cent from 10.8 million in 2001 to 12.0 million in 2011. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the population of pensionable age will rise only slightly further (to 12.2 million) by 2021. However, a faster increase will then resume with longer-term projections suggesting the number over pensionable age will peak at over 15 million around 2040.
- Due to differences in demographic patterns, projected trends differ for the four countries of the United Kingdom. A small decline in the population of Scotland is projected to continue from 2001, while the populations of Wales and Northern Ireland are projected to peak in around 25 years' time and then start to fall. The population of England is still projected to be rising in forty years' time, but at a low rate of growth.

For the United Kingdom as a whole, the key assumptions for the future are:

- Average completed family size, which has been falling from a peak of nearly 2.5 children for women born in the mid 1930s, to level off at 1.74 children for women born in or after 1985 (this assumption is unchanged from the previous 2000-based projections).
- Life expectancy at birth, based on the mortality rates for that year, to rise from 75.6 years in 2001 to 79.0 years in 2026 for men, and from 80.4 years in 2001 to 83.3 years in 2026 for women (the assumptions for 2026 are unchanged from the previous 2000-based projections).
- Net inward migration to the United Kingdom of 100,000 people a year from 2002-03 onwards (compared with a long-term net inward migration assumption of 135,000 a year in the previous projections).



BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) produces national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries at the request of the Registrars General for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The assumptions used are agreed in consultation with the statistical offices of the four constituent countries. A new set of projections is normally made every second year, based on a full-scale review of the trends affecting the underlying assumptions about fertility, mortality and migration. The last "full" set of national projections, issued in November 2001, were based on the estimated population at the middle of 2000 and the next full set, scheduled for issue in November 2003, will be based on the estimated population at the middle of 2002. However, following the publication on 30 September 2002 of the first results of the 2001 Census, it was decided to produce an "interim" 2001-based set of projections taking preliminary account of the results of the 2001 Census. These interim 2001-based projections replace the previous 2000-based projections.
2. The main focus of the projections is on the first 25 years, that is up to 2026. Longer-term projections to the year 2041 for individual countries, and to 2071 for the United Kingdom and Great Britain only, are also available. However, the further ahead the projections go, the greater is the degree of uncertainty.
3. Full details of the interim 2001-based national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries are available on the GAD website (www.gad.gov.uk). An article on these projections will be published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in *Population Trends 111*, in March 2003.
4. All figures presented here have been rounded independently, so component figures may not add exactly to totals.
5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the ONS press office.
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Table A Projected components of population change, United Kingdom, 2001-2026 (annual averages)

	<i>thousands</i>				
	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
	-2006	-2011	-2016	-2021	-2026
Population at start	58,837	59,657	60,524	61,459	62,386
Births	675	683	698	709	705
Deaths	613	609	611	624	651
Natural change	62	73	87	85	54
Net migration	102	100	100	100	100
Total change	164	173	187	185	154
Population at end	59,657	60,524	61,459	62,386	63,156

Table B Comparison of 2000-based and interim 2001-based projections

thousands

	Population at mid-2001				Population at mid-2026			
	<u>mid-2001</u> <u>estimates</u>	<u>2000-based</u> <u>projections</u>	<u>Difference</u>		<u>2001-based</u> <u>projections</u>	<u>2000-based</u> <u>projections</u>	<u>Difference</u>	
			<u>000s</u>	<u>%</u>			<u>000s</u>	<u>%</u>
United Kingdom	58,837	59,987	-1,150	-1.9%	63,156	64,992	-1,836	-2.8%
England	49,181	50,225	-1,044	-2.1%	53,541	55,178	-1,637	-3.0%
Wales	2,903	2,949	-46	-1.6%	3,012	3,088	-76	-2.5%
Scotland	5,064	5,109	-45	-0.9%	4,828	4,911	-83	-1.7%
Northern Ireland	1,689	1,705	-16	-0.9%	1,775	1,814	-39	-2.1%

Table C Projected population by age, United Kingdom, 2001-2026

	<i>thousands</i>					
Ages	<u>2001</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>
0-14	11,091	10,624	10,329	10,341	10,517	10,630
15-29	11,073	11,428	11,800	11,718	11,258	10,967
30-44	13,291	12,996	12,133	11,644	11,997	12,370
45-59	11,144	11,735	12,223	12,868	12,582	11,760
60-74	7,820	8,280	9,266	9,822	10,407	10,954
75 and over	4,418	4,594	4,774	5,066	5,625	6,475
All ages	58,837	59,657	60,524	61,459	62,386	63,156
Mean age (years)	39.1	39.8	40.5	41.2	41.8	42.4
Under 16	11,855	11,422	11,064	11,020	11,210	11,332
Working age*	36,154	36,953	37,492	38,390	38,999	38,651
Pensionable age*	10,828	11,283	11,968	12,049	12,177	13,173

* Working age and pensionable age populations based on state pension age for given year. Between 2010 and 2020, state pension age will change from 65 years for men and 60 years for women, to 65 years for both sexes.

Table D Projected population of the United Kingdom and its constituent countries, 2001-2051

	<i>thousands</i>					
	<u>2001</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2021</u>	<i>Longer-term projections</i>		
				<u>2031</u>	<u>2041</u>	<u>2051</u>
United Kingdom	58,837	60,524	62,386	63,656	63,922	63,672
England	49,181	50,859	52,725	54,140	54,735	--
Wales	2,903	2,947	2,997	3,012	2,980	--
Scotland	5,064	4,983	4,895	4,735	4,484	--
Northern Ireland	1,689	1,735	1,769	1,768	1,723	--