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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Population and Migration

New United Kingdom population projections

The United Kingdom population is projected to increase gradually from an estimated 59.2 million in 2002 to reach 64.8 million by 2031, 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 2002 and replace the previous (interim) 2001-based national projections.

The new figures show that:

- The projected total population increase of 5.6 million to 2031 is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.31 per cent. Longer-term projections suggest the population will peak around 2050 at over 65 million and then gradually start to fall.
- The projected total population of the United Kingdom at 2031 is about 1.2 million (1.9 per cent) higher than in the previous (2001-based) projections. This is mainly a result of a higher assumption of future life expectancy which leads to around 850 thousand (4.7 per cent) fewer deaths in the period to 2031 than in the previous projections. The higher figures also reflect upward revisions to the mid-2001 population of England and Wales on which the previous projections were based and a slight increase in the assumed level of net migration and other changes.
- Of the projected 5.6 million increase between 2002 and 2031, just under half (2.6 million) is due to projected natural increase (more births than deaths) and just over half (3.0 million) to the assumed level of net inward migration and other changes.
- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to fall by 7.4 per cent from 11.8 million in 2002 to just below 11 million in 2014 and then to rise slowly until the late 2020s.

Issued jointly by

Office for National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

and



Finlaison House
15-17 Furnival Street
London EC4A 1AB

Telephone
ONS Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gov.uk
ONS Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034
GAD Public Enquiries 020 7211 2622

Statistician
Chris Shaw (GAD) 020 7211 2662
Email chris.shaw@gad.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk/releases
www.gad.gov.uk

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- 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 3.5 per cent from 36.6 million in 2002 to 37.8 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 39.4 million by 2021 and then gradually start to fall.
- The number of people of state pensionable age is projected to increase by 11.9 per cent from 10.9 million in 2002 to 12.2 million in 2011. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the population of pensionable age will then rise somewhat slower, reaching 12.7 million by 2021. However, a faster increase will then resume with longer-term projections suggesting the number over pensionable age reaching 15 million by 2031, eventually peaking at over 17 million in about sixty years' time.
- In 2002, there were around 850 thousand (8 per cent) 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 2031 is projected to exceed it by about 4 million (36 per cent).
- In 2002 there were 3.35 persons of working age for every person of pensionable age. By 2011, this demographic support ratio will decline to 3.10. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the ratio will then remain fairly stable until 2021 before declining quickly to just over 2.5 by 2031. Longer-term projections suggest the support ratio will decline to below 2.2 in the 2050s before levelling off.
- The population will gradually become older with the average (mean) age expected to rise from 39.3 years in 2002 to 43.6 years in 2031. Longer-term projections suggest the average age will reach 45 years around 2050, but only rise slightly thereafter.



- 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 2002, while the populations of Wales and Northern Ireland are projected to peak around 2030 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.

Tables A to D in this release present summary results from the new projections.

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 2.45 children for women born in the mid 1930s, to level off at 1.74 children for women born after 1985. This assumption is unchanged from the previous 2001-based projections.
- Life expectancy at birth, based on the mortality rates for that year, to rise from 75.9 years in 2002 to 81.0 years in 2031 for men, and from 80.5 years in 2002 to 84.9 years in 2031 for women. The 2031 figures are around 1.5 years higher than assumed in the previous 2001-based projections.
- Net migration and other changes of +103,000 each year from 2003-04 onwards. (This comprises an assumed net inward migration inflow of +130,000 a year partly offset by a downward allowance of 27,000 for other changes - see Background Note 4.) This compares with an assumed net inflow of +100,000 a year in the previous 2001-based 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. However, following the publication on 30 September 2002 of the first results of the 2001 Census, an additional "interim" 2001-based set of projections was produced which took preliminary account of the results of the 2001 Census. These 2002-based projections replace the interim 2001-based projections. The next full set, scheduled for issue in October 2005, will be based on the estimated population at the middle of 2004.
2. The main focus of the projections is on the period to 2031. Longer-term projections to the year 2042 for the individual countries, and to 2072 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 results of the 2002-based national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries are available on the GAD website (<http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/index.asp>). An article on these projections will be published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in *Population Trends 115*, in March 2004. A reference volume will be published later in 2004.
4. Other changes

The first results of the 2001 Census, published in September 2002, showed that previous mid-year population estimates, rolled forward from the 1991 Census, had overestimated the population of the United Kingdom. For the UK as a whole, the Census results indicated an overestimation of about 1.2 million at mid-2001.

About 375,000 of this difference has been attributed to overestimation of the mid-1991 population used as the base for mid-year population estimates made after 1991. Revisions to international migration estimates (published by ONS in June 2003) have accounted for a further 350,000 of the intercensal discrepancy. Finally, upward revisions to the estimated population of England and Wales at mid-2001 (published by ONS in September and November 2003) have effectively reduced the intercensal discrepancy by a further 213,000.

This leaves around 270,000 of the intercensal difference to be explained. ONS research suggests this may be attributable to remaining difficulties in estimating emigration accurately, or to those who spend part of their time in the UK and part abroad and so may not be covered in the population measurement process. To ensure that mid-year estimates are robust and do not continue to overestimate the population, a downward adjustment of 27,000 (i.e. one tenth of the unexplained intercensal difference) for “unattributable population change” was included in the mid-2002 population estimates for England and Wales published in November 2003. A similar annual adjustment has therefore also been introduced for the 2002-based projections.

The need for the adjustment for unattributable population change in population estimates will be reassessed by ONS annually. Further information can be found on the National Statistics website at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/methodology_by_theme/revisions_to_population_estimates/default.asp

5. All figures presented in the tables in this release have been rounded independently, so component figures may not add exactly to totals.
6. Subnational population projections for England are the responsibility of the Office for National Statistics, while those for the other countries are the responsibility of the General Register Office for Scotland, the Welsh Assembly Government Statistical Directorate and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency respectively.
7. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the ONS press office.
8. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2003.

Table A Projected components of population change, United Kingdom, 2002-2031, (annual averages)

	<i>thousands</i>					
	2002	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
	-2006	-2011	-2016	-2021	-2026	-2031
Population at start	59,229	59,995	61,022	62,134	63,239	64,178
Births	682	684	697	709	703	686
Deaths	599	581	578	591	619	657
Natural change	83	102	119	118	85	28
Migration & other changes	108	103	103	103	103	103
Total change	191	205	222	221	188	131
Population at end	59,995	61,022	62,134	63,239	64,178	64,835

Table B Comparison of 2002-based and interim 2001-based projections*thousands*

	Population at mid-2031			
	2002-based projections	2001-based projections	Difference 000s	%
United Kingdom	64,835	63,656	1,179	1.9%
England	55,158	54,140	1,018	1.9%
Wales	3,066	3,012	54	1.8%
Scotland	4,770	4,735	35	0.7%
Northern Ireland	1,840	1,768	72	4.1%

Table C Projected population by age, United Kingdom, 2002-2031*thousands*

Ages	<u>2002</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2031</u>
0-14	10,993	10,582	10,257	10,253	10,411	10,512	10,457
15-29	11,140	11,520	11,892	11,730	11,216	10,896	10,895
30-44	13,476	13,192	12,377	11,927	12,282	12,657	12,501
45-59	11,301	11,736	12,219	12,943	12,738	11,965	11,553
60-74	7,853	8,321	9,346	9,909	10,488	11,030	11,728
75 and over	4,465	4,644	4,930	5,371	6,103	7,119	7,701
All ages	59,229	59,995	61,022	62,134	63,239	64,178	64,835
Mean age (years)	39.3	39.8	40.7	41.5	42.2	43.0	43.6
Under 16	11,759	11,377	10,981	10,916	11,090	11,199	11,160
Working age*	36,565	37,245	37,836	38,767	39,412	39,087	38,449
Pensionable age*	10,905	11,372	12,205	12,450	12,737	13,892	15,227
Elderly support ratio^	3.35	3.27	3.10	3.11	3.09	2.81	2.53

* 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.

^ Population of working age divided by population of pensionable age.

Table D Projected population of the United Kingdom and constituent countries, 2002-2071

thousands

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2021</u>	<i>Longer-term projections</i>				
				<u>2031</u>	<u>2041</u>	<u>2051</u>	<u>2061</u>	<u>2071</u>
United Kingdom	59,229	61,022	63,239	64,835	65,402	65,440	65,117	64,775
England	49,559	51,315	53,478	55,158	56,001	--	--	--
Wales	2,919	2,971	3,038	3,066	3,042	--	--	--
Scotland	5,055	4,984	4,911	4,770	4,532	--	--	--
Northern Ireland	1,697	1,751	1,811	1,840	1,828	--	--	--