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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Population and Migration

Projected increase of 7.2m in UK population by 2031

The United Kingdom population is projected to increase by 7.2 million over the period 2004 to 2031, according to a new set of UK population projections released today. The increase is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.42 per cent, or 12 per cent over the 27 years. In the longer-term, the projections suggest that the population will continue rising beyond 2031 but at a much lower rate of growth.

The UK population will increase gradually from an estimated 59.8 million in 2004, passing 60 million in 2005 and 65 million in 2023, to reach 67.0 million by 2031.

The projections, by the Government Actuary, for the UK and its constituent countries, are based on the estimated population at the middle of 2004 and replace the previous interim 2003-based national projections.

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The new figures show that:

- The projected total population of the United Kingdom at 2031 is 1.3 million (2.0 per cent) higher than in the previous (2003-based) projections. This is due to a combination of higher assumed levels of net migration, higher short-term birth rate assumptions and slightly higher life expectancy assumptions.
- The population is projected to continue rising until 2074, the end of the projection period. In the previous projections, the population was projected to peak around 2050 and then very gradually start to fall. This change is due primarily to higher migration and higher long-term life expectancy assumptions. However, long-term projections are very uncertain. Variant projections, also published today, show that with lower, but still plausible, alternative assumptions of future fertility, life expectancy or net migration, the UK population could still reach a peak in size by the middle of the century.



- Of the 7.2 million increase between 2004 and 2031 in the principal projection, some 3.1 million (43 per cent) is projected natural increase (more births than deaths) while the remaining 4.1 million (57 per cent) is the assumed total number of net migrants (see Background Note 5).
- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to fall by 4.0 per cent from 11.6 million in 2004 to 11.2 million in 2014 and then to rise slowly until the late 2020s.
- 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 3.1 per cent from 37.1 million in 2004 to 38.2 million in 2010. 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 40.5 million by 2020 and is then projected to remain at around this level.
- The working age population will also become much older. In 2004, there were 2.1 million (12 per cent) more working age adults aged below 40 than were aged 40 and above. By 2010, there will be just 1.0 million (5 per cent) more and, influenced by the change in women's state pension age, by 2020 there will be 0.9 million (4 per cent) fewer working age people below 40 than aged 40 and above.
- The number of people of state pensionable age is projected to increase by 9.3 per cent from 11.1 million in 2004 to 12.2 million in 2010. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the population of pensionable age will then rise more slowly, reaching 12.5 million by 2020. However, a faster increase will then resume with longer-term projections suggesting the number over pensionable age reaching 15.3 million by 2031 and 17.5 million by the middle of the century.
- In 2004, there were just over 0.5 million (5 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 almost 4 million (34 per cent).

- In 2004 there were 3.33 persons of working age for every person of state pensionable age. By 2010, this demographic support ratio will decline to 3.14. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the ratio will then rise slightly to 3.23 by 2020 before declining quickly to 2.62 by 2031. In the longer-term, the projections suggest the support ratio will briefly stabilise at about 2.40 around the year 2040, before declining further.
- The population will gradually become older with the average (mean) age expected to rise from 39.5 years in 2004 to 43.3 years in 2031. In the longer-term, the projections suggest that the average age will continue to rise beyond 2031, reaching 45 years by the middle of the century.
- Due to differences in demographic patterns, projected trends differ for the four countries of the United Kingdom. The population of Scotland is projected to increase slightly until the year 2019 and then start to fall, while the population of Northern Ireland is projected to continue growing until the early 2030s and then start to fall. The population of Wales is projected to continue increasing beyond 2031 but at a very low rate of growth, while the population of England is also projected to continue rising, but more strongly.

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

Underlying assumptions

The long-term assumptions regarding fertility, mortality and net migration have all been reviewed since the last, 2003-based, population projections. For the UK as a whole, the long-term 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 1990. For the first few years, assumed birth rates are a little higher than the 2003-based projections, but the long-term assumption of average family size is unchanged.



- Life expectancy at birth, based on the mortality rates for that year, to rise from 76.7 years in 2004 to 81.4 years in 2031 for men, and from 81.1 years in 2004 to 85.0 years in 2031 for women. The 2031 figures are slightly higher than those assumed in the previous projections. However, beyond 2031, the life expectancy assumptions are increasingly higher than in the previous projections.
- A net migration inflow of +255,000 in 2004-05 reducing to a long-term assumption of +145,000 each year from 2007-08 onwards. This compares with an assumed net inflow of +130,000 a year in the previous 2003-based projections.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Since 1954, the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has produced national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries at the request of the Registrars General for England & Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The assumptions used are agreed in consultation with the statistical offices of the constituent countries.
2. 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 December 2003, were based on the estimated population at the middle of 2002.

However, in the intervening year between full projections, special sets of 'interim' projections may be produced. The new 2004-based projections replace an interim set of 2003-based projections published in September 2004 (see <http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/2003/methodology/background2003.htm>).

3. Full results of the 2004-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 ONS in *Population Trends 123*, in March 2006.
4. The main focus of the projections is on the period to 2031. Longer-term projections to 2074 are also available. However, projections become increasingly uncertain the further they are carried forward. To illustrate this uncertainty, variant projections, based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, mortality and net migration, are also available on the GAD website.



5. Projected natural change and assumed net migration are not independent of each other. The projected numbers of future births and deaths are themselves partly dependent on the assumed level of net migration. A note considering the overall impact of assumed net migration on future population growth is available from:
<http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/2004/methodology/mignote.htm>
6. All figures presented in the tables in this release have been rounded independently, so component figures may not add exactly to totals.
7. Subnational population projections for England are the responsibility of the Office for National Statistics, while those for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 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.
8. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the ONS press office.
9. 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 2005.

Table A **Projected components of population change, United Kingdom, 2004-2031, (annual averages)**

	<i>thousands</i>					
	2004	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
	-2006	-2011	-2016	-2021	-2026	-2031
Population at start	59,835	60,533	61,892	63,304	64,727	66,002
Births	714	701	710	722	720	705
Deaths	590	579	573	583	609	648
Natural change	124	122	137	140	110	57
Net migration	225	150	145	145	145	145
Total change	349	272	282	285	255	202
Population at end	60,533	61,892	63,304	64,727	66,002	67,013

Table B **Comparison of 2004-based and 2003-based projections**

	<i>thousands</i>			
	Population at mid-2031			
	2004-based	2003-based	Difference	
	<u>projections</u>	<u>projections</u>	<u>000s</u>	<u>%</u>
United Kingdom	67,013	65,700	1,313	2.0%
England	56,832	55,881	951	1.7%
Wales	3,256	3,153	103	3.3%
Scotland	5,065	4,825	240	5.0%
Northern Ireland	1,860	1,840	20	1.1%

Table C Projected population by age, United Kingdom, 2004-2031*thousands*

Ages	<u>2004</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2031</u>
0-14	10,867	10,731	10,498	10,552	10,683	10,780	10,760
15-29	11,379	11,793	12,251	12,115	11,700	11,471	11,527
30-44	13,471	13,299	12,587	12,299	12,821	13,265	13,135
45-59	11,517	11,757	12,310	13,090	12,945	12,268	12,017
60-74	8,054	8,298	9,307	9,864	10,448	11,038	11,779
75 and over	4,547	4,656	4,938	5,385	6,129	7,180	7,795
All ages	59,835	60,533	61,892	63,304	64,727	66,002	67,013
Mean age (years)	39.5	39.7	40.4	41.2	41.9	42.7	43.3
Under 16	11,646	11,529	11,231	11,224	11,399	11,487	11,483
Working age*	37,064	37,636	38,479	39,650	40,588	40,593	40,191
<i>Under 40</i>	19,568	19,621	19,513	19,692	19,839	19,723	19,368
<i>40 & over</i>	17,496	18,015	18,966	19,958	20,749	20,870	20,823
Pensionable age*	11,125	11,368	12,182	12,430	12,740	13,922	15,340
Support ratio* (working age/pensionable age)	3.33	3.31	3.16	3.19	3.19	2.92	2.62

* 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 constituent countries, 2004-2031*thousands*

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2031</u>
United Kingdom	59,835	61,892	64,727	67,013
England	50,094	51,967	54,605	56,832
Wales	2,952	3,037	3,165	3,256
Scotland	5,078	5,120	5,127	5,065
Northern Ireland	1,710	1,767	1,830	1,860