

Statistical bulletin

# Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, provisional: mid-2019

National and subnational mid-year population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries by administrative area, age and sex.



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# 1 . Main points

- The UK population was estimated to be 66,796,807 in mid-2019.
- The growth in the year to mid-2019 was the slowest since mid-2004, at 0.5% (361,000).
- Net international migration of 231,000 people was 44,000 fewer than in the year to mid-2018.
- The year to mid-2019 saw the fewest births since mid-2005, at 722,000.
- In mid-2019, there were 12.4 million people aged 65 years or over (18.5%) and 2.5% were aged 85 years and over.
- Local authorities with the highest proportions of older people in the UK are most commonly found in coastal areas of southern and eastern England.
- The population of the UK is spread unevenly, with the population density ranging from 5,700 people per square kilometre across London to fewer than 50 people per square kilometre in the most rural local authorities of the UK.

## Statistician's comment

"The population grew at the slowest rate for 15 years between mid-2018 and mid-2019. This is due to the lowest number of births for 14 years alongside an increase in emigration and a fall in international immigration.

"The figures we're publishing today highlight the variation in the population across the UK. For example, the population density in London is 24 times higher than that for the South West of England. Also, the proportion of people aged 65 or over ranges from over 30% in coastal areas such as North Norfolk to less than 8% in parts of central London like Tower Hamlets."

Neil Park, Population Estimates Unit, Office for National Statistics

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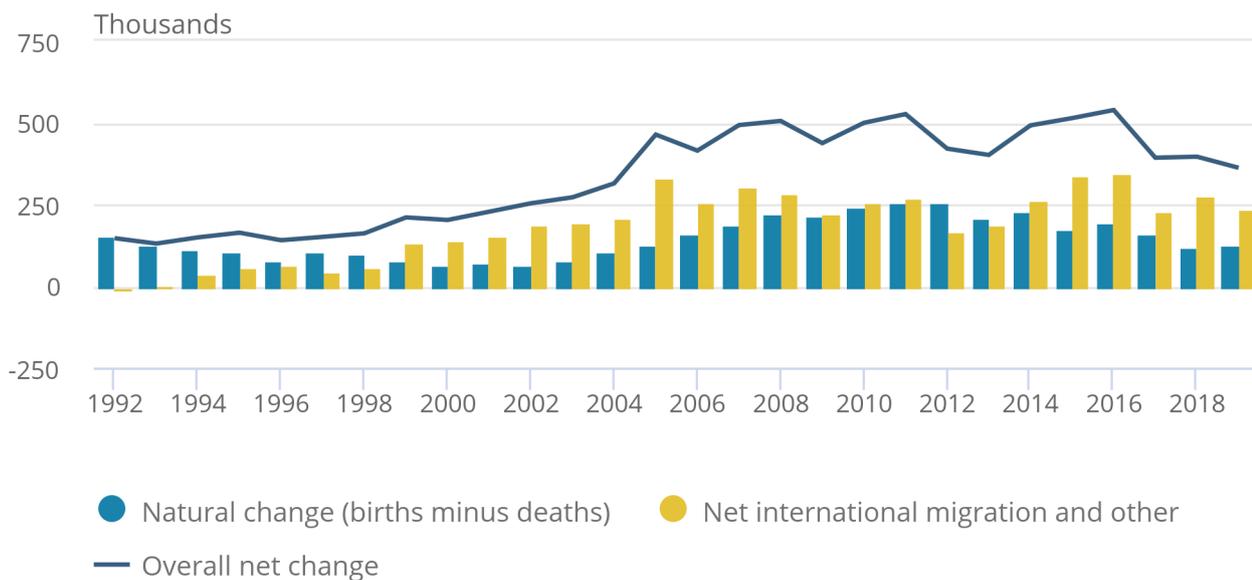
## 2 . Population change for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

## The population of the UK grew by 0.5% in the 12 months to mid-2019, the slowest rate since mid-2004

In the year to mid-2019, a combination of net international migration decreasing by 44,000 since mid-2018 and the fewest births since mid-2005 meant that the UK population grew at its slowest rate and by its lowest amount since mid-2004.

**Figure 1: Main drivers of population change for the UK from mid-1992 onwards**

Figure 1: Main drivers of population change for the UK from mid-1992 onwards



Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency – Population Estimates

**Notes:**

1. Figures may not add exactly because of rounding.
2. Other changes include changes to the size of armed forces stationed in the UK and other special population adjustments. This is combined with net international migration for the purposes of this graph.

Figure 1 shows the last three years of population growth are well below the average levels between mid-2005 and mid-2016. The slower growth in recent years is driven by a combination of both lower natural change (the balance between births and deaths) and lower net international migration.

The number of deaths in the year to mid-2019 was around 5% lower than in the previous year, partly driven by the lowest level of [excess winter mortality](#) since mid-2014.

## Northern Ireland and England continued to grow faster than Scotland and Wales

In the 12 months to mid-2019, the population of Northern Ireland grew by 0.6% while that of the UK as a whole grew by 0.5%. One of the main drivers of the faster population growth in Northern Ireland is the comparatively high level of natural change driven by a younger population (median age of 38.9 years compared with 40.3 years across the UK) leading to a higher number of births and a lower number of deaths.

Across the whole of the UK there were more births than deaths (positive natural change), but in both Wales and Scotland there were a higher number of deaths than births. Once again, this reflects the age structure of Wales and Scotland where the median ages of the population are 42.5 years and 42 years respectively; this is around two years above the UK average.

Table 1: Drivers of population change for UK countries: mid-2019

	United Kingdom	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
<b>Population 2018</b>	66,435,550	55,977,178	3,138,631	5,438,100	1,881,641
<b>Births</b>	721,685	617,939	30,463	50,636	22,647
<b>Deaths</b>	593,410	488,952	32,900	56,209	15,349
<b>International immigration</b>	609,308	537,699	17,518	39,900	14,191
<b>International emigration</b>	378,774	338,890	9,706	19,700	10,478
<b>Other changes</b>	2,448	-18,013	8,873	10,573	1,015
<b>Population 2019</b>	66,796,807	56,286,961	3,152,879	5,463,300	1,893,667
<b>Total change 2018 to 2019</b>	361,257	309,783	14,248	25,200	12,026
<b>% change</b>	0.54%	0.55%	0.45%	0.46%	0.64%

Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency - Population Estimates

### Notes

1. Other changes includes cross border migration between the four countries of the UK and changes in the number of home and foreign armed forces and their dependants. [Back to table](#)

## 3 . Population age structures of UK countries and English regions

## The London population had a lower median age, a lower proportion of people aged 65 years or over and a higher population density than the rest of the UK

The population of London is notably different to the rest of the UK in terms of age structure and density. The population of London has a median age of 35.6 years, nearly five years below the average age in the UK and three years below the average age in Northern Ireland (38.9 years), the next “youngest” country or region of England. Further, London has the highest proportion of those aged 16 to 64 years (67.4%), the second highest proportion of those aged 15 years and under (20.6%), and the lowest proportion of those aged 65 years or over (12.1%).

Table 2: National and regional population summary: mid-2019

	Population	Under 16 years	Working age 16 to 64 years	Pension age	70 years and over	85 years and over	Median age	Population density
<b>United Kingdom</b>	66,796,807	19.0%	62.5%	18.5%	13.5%	2.5%	40.3	275
<b>England</b>	56,286,961	19.2%	62.4%	18.4%	13.4%	2.5%	40.0	432
<b>North East</b>	2,669,941	17.9%	62.2%	19.9%	14.3%	2.5%	41.8	311
<b>North West</b>	7,341,196	19.1%	62.1%	18.7%	13.6%	2.4%	40.3	520
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	5,502,967	19.1%	62.1%	18.8%	13.6%	2.4%	40.1	357
<b>East Midlands</b>	4,835,928	18.6%	61.9%	19.5%	14.1%	2.5%	41.4	310
<b>West Midlands</b>	5,934,037	19.7%	61.7%	18.6%	13.6%	2.5%	39.6	457
<b>East</b>	6,236,072	19.4%	60.7%	19.9%	14.7%	2.8%	41.7	326
<b>London</b>	8,961,989	20.6%	67.4%	12.1%	8.6%	1.7%	35.6	5701
<b>South East</b>	9,180,135	19.3%	61.2%	19.5%	14.5%	2.8%	41.7	481
<b>South West</b>	5,624,696	17.6%	60.1%	22.3%	16.4%	3.1%	44.1	236
<b>Wales</b>	3,152,879	17.9%	61.1%	21.0%	15.2%	2.7%	42.5	152
<b>Scotland</b>	5,463,300	16.9%	64.0%	19.1%	13.6%	2.3%	42.0	70
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	1,893,667	20.9%	62.5%	16.6%	11.9%	2.0%	38.9	137

Source: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency - Population Estimates

### Notes

1. The number of people resident per square kilometre is the population density. [Back to table](#)

The age structure of London results from its specific patterns of international and internal migration. In particular, there is a distinctive age structure to these moves, with international immigrants and emigrants tending to be of traditional student ages or aged between 20 and 40 years old. Additionally, the net internal flow of people into and out of the capital varies greatly by age, with a net inward flow of people in their twenties and net outward flow at all other ages. People are still arriving in the city from across the country at other ages, but more people are leaving than coming into the capital to live.

The regions with the highest proportions of people aged 65 years or over were the South West (22.3%), North East (19.9%) and East of England (19.9%). The local authority areas with the greatest proportions of people aged 65 years or over were predominantly located in the South West, around the south or east coasts of England, or around the west coast of Scotland. Central and western areas of Wales also had relatively high proportions of people aged 65 years or over compared with the Welsh national average (21.0%).

London's population density, at 5,701 people per square kilometre, is more than 10 times higher than that of the next most densely populated region of England (the North West), and it is 24 times more densely populated than the least densely populated region (the South West). Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales all have much lower population densities than England.

## 4 . Population age structure and density for local authority areas

### Local authorities with the oldest populations were predominantly located in the South West or on the southern and eastern coasts of England

The areas of the UK with the lowest median age in mid-2019 were predominantly major cities, with the areas surrounding them often having a higher median age and coastal areas having a higher median age still. This trend is evident across the UK and is likely to reflect a higher concentration of resources for those of working age such as colleges and universities, employment opportunities, and housing.

Figure 2 is an interactive map that illustrates how the populations of each local authority in Great Britain vary. The map can show the proportion of the population in different age groups, dependency ratios, median age and population densities. Please note that the map only includes data for local authority areas in England, Wales and Scotland as [equivalent data for Northern Ireland](#) will not be available until June 2020.

### Figure 2: Interactive map comparing local authority age structures in Great Britain: mid-2019

#### Notes:

1. Precise figures on population density in each part of the country can be found in the accompanying download.

#### Download the data

[.xls](#)

The interactive map shows that the areas with the highest proportion of children aged under 16 years were in and around major cities. For example, areas neighbouring London, Manchester and Birmingham in England, Cardiff in Wales, and Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland had a higher proportion of children aged under 16 years than the national average.

London had the highest proportion of children aged under 16 years of any region or country of the UK (20.6%), with the exception of Northern Ireland (20.9%). This is despite there being a relatively low proportion of children within central London local authorities. Across London, the proportion of those aged under 16 years ranges from less than 16% in inner London Islington and City of London to over 27% in Barking and Dagenham.

Across the UK, around 2.5% of the population in mid-2019 were aged 85 years or over, and the local authorities with the highest proportion were predominantly located along the south and east coasts of England. However, high proportions of people aged 85 years or over can also be found elsewhere: Fylde (3.9%), Craven (3.9%), South Lakeland (4.1%), Malvern Hills (4.1%) and Conwy (4.3%) had relatively high proportions of people aged 85 years and over compared with the national average. The areas with the lowest proportion of people aged 85 years and over were typically concentrated in and around the major cities of the UK.

## Old-age-dependency ratio

As might be expected, the areas with the highest old-age-dependency ratio (OADR) were predominantly located along the south and east coast of England and central Wales; these were the areas with generally older populations.

The local authorities with the lowest OADR tended to be urban and suburban. For example, the OADR tends to be lower in local authorities that are closer to cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Cardiff.

## Population density

Population density gives the population per square kilometre and shows that areas in London and other major cities, particularly around Birmingham, are the most densely populated. In fact, London boroughs account for the 20 most densely populated areas in the UK. The highest population densities in the UK, of over 16,000 people per square kilometre, are found in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Islington.

Most local authorities in Scotland and Wales have lower population densities than is typical of the UK. Exceptions include cities such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen and Cardiff as well as their respective surrounding areas. Of the 19 local authorities in Great Britain with population densities of less than 50 people per square kilometre, 11 were in Scotland, 5 in England and 3 in Wales.

# 5 . Population estimates data

[Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)

Dataset | Released 6 May 2020

National and subnational mid-year population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries by administrative area, age and sex (including median age and population density).

# 6 . Glossary

## Population estimates

Population estimates provide statistics on the current size and age structure of the population in the UK at country, region, county and local authority level. They are the official source of estimated population size in between censuses and inform a wide range of [National Statistics](#).

## Mid-year

Mid-year refers to the 30 June of any given year.

## Usually resident population

Projections estimate the “usually resident population”. This is the standard UN definition and includes only people who reside in a country for 12 months or more, making them usually resident in that country. As such, visitors and short-term migrants are excluded.

## Old-age-dependency ratio

The old-age-dependency ratio (OADR) is the number of people aged 65 years or over for every 1,000 people of working age (those aged 16 to 64 years).

## Dependency ratio

The dependency ratio is the number of people aged 65 years or over or aged under 16 years for every 1,000 people of working age (16 to 64 years).

## Median age

Median age is the age that divides a population into two numerically equal groups (that is, half the people are younger than this age and half are older).

## Population density

The number of people resident per square kilometre is the population density.

## Components of change

Components of change are the factors that contribute to population change. This includes births and deaths (commonly referred to as natural change) and net migration. Migration includes movements of people between England and the various countries of the world (international migration) and between local areas within the UK (internal migration).

# 7 . Measuring the data

## Early release of population estimates

Mid-year population estimates for the UK, England and Wales and Northern Ireland are regularly published at the end of June each year; estimates for Scotland are regularly published in April each year. This means that the latest available population estimates at the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic reflected the population of the UK in mid-2018, around 21 months before.

To help with analysis of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the UK population, we are today publishing a provisional set of population estimates for mid-2019. This release is by necessity a subset of the information we regularly publish in June, focusing primarily on the size, age structure and geography of the UK population. Information of the components (drivers) of population change in each local area will be published in June.

Any changes to the population estimates between now and June are likely to be minor, but it is possible that the [estimates we release in June 2020](#) will differ slightly from those published in this release.

Given the accelerated time frame for publishing this set of population estimates, we have concentrated on making available population estimates that allow users to best understand the current size, age structure and distribution of the UK population.

The mid-year population estimates, to be released in full at the end of June 2020, will include:

- local authority data for the whole of the UK
- detailed components of change for local authorities in England and Wales and summary components for local authorities across the UK
- commentary on drivers of population change at those local levels
- the [Analysis of population estimates tool](#)
- a suite of quality assurance tools
- a parallel release of data on Nomis

## Data sources

The mid-year estimates for England and Wales are produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), for Scotland by [National Records Scotland \(NRS\)](#) and for Northern Ireland by the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#). Estimates for each country are produced using the cohort component method and cover the usually resident population. This is a standard demographic method that uses information on the components of population change to update a population base such as the census estimate. The resident population, by single year of age, on 30 June of the year prior to the reference year is aged by one year, those born during the 12-month period prior to the mid-year point are added on to the population and those who have died during the 12-month period are removed.

Other factors taken into account are the movement of people into and out of the UK (international migration) and movements between areas of the UK (internal migration). Internal migration includes both cross-border moves between the four constituent countries of the UK and moves between local areas within each part of the UK.

Some population sub-groups such as prisoners and armed forces (UK and foreign) are estimated separately from the rest of the population (this is because internal or international migration moves of these groups are not captured using the standard data sources). Figures for the previous year are removed from the population prior to the estimation process, and then figures for the current year are added back in for the final compilation.

The data sources used to produce estimates for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland differ reflecting the availability of different data sources in each country. Detailed information on the methods used in each country can be found in their methodology guides:

- [England and Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)

## Data availability

In compiling the 2019 mid-year estimates for England and Wales, some of the administrative data used to distribute national international immigration and international emigration flows to local authorities were not available. Consequently, international immigrants have been distributed to local authorities using an average of the distributions of the three previous years. An assessment of the impact of this change will be published in due course.

## Transformation of population statistics

It is our mission to provide the best insights on population and migration using a range of new and existing data sources to meet the needs of our users. Our ambition is to deliver a fully transformed system by 2023, making regular improvements to our statistics along the way as more administrative data become available. We will rigorously quality assure new methods and share the impact of any changes made. The [Transformation of the population and migration statistics system: overview](#) gives more information on this work. The resulting improvements will also be incorporated into future sets of population estimates.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Mid-year population estimates QMI](#) and the [Internal migration estimates QMI](#).

## 8 . Strengths and limitations

Mid-year population estimates have a wide variety of uses within central government as well as being used by local authorities and health bodies, other public bodies, commercial companies, and individuals in the private and academic sector. These uses can be categorised into two broad groups:

- uses where the absolute numbers are important – this may be in terms of allocating financial resources from central government, planning services or grossing up survey results; some of the main central government uses are concerned with resource allocation and are carried out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for England and the Welsh Government (WG) for Wales
- uses where the population figures are used as denominators – for example, in the calculation of social and economic indicators or in the calculation of fertility and mortality rates

This release of provisional population estimates for mid-2019 has been published around 10 months after the reference date in response to the increased need for timely and accurate statistics about the size and structure of the UK population. Population estimates for the UK and for England and Wales are normally published annually in June. For a particular mid-year (30 June), they are available about 12 months after the reference date. This time lag reflects the availability of the data sources that measure the components of population change over the year preceding the estimate and the time required to process the data and calculate the estimates.

Given the accelerated publication schedule for these estimates, it has not been possible to produce the full range of outputs. A further release of population estimates will be made at the end of June, and this will include a full set of tables and quality information; minor changes might be made to the population estimates for mid-2019 in the June 2020 publication.

Population estimates are produced using a well-established demographic approach called the cohort component method. This involves combining information from several data sources including the previous census, survey data and administrative registers. The data sources used are the best that are available on a nationally consistent basis down to local authority level, but the estimates are subject to the coverage and error associated with these sources. Information from administrative registers, such as the numbers of births and deaths, is considered to be very reliable. It should be noted that errors can accumulate over time; consequently, population estimates for the years immediately following a census year tend to be more accurate than for those immediately prior to a census year.

The international migration figures in this release are based on the published series of provisional Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates. However, the mid-year estimates use the unadjusted series of LTIM estimates, as the detailed breakdowns needed for the mid-year estimates are not yet available for the adjusted LTIM data. In addition, international migration data for Northern Ireland incorporate additional data sources to take into account the land border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

## 9 . Related links

### [Mid-year population estimates for Scotland: 2019](#)

Report | Released 30 April 2020

The latest annual mid-year population estimates for Scotland and its constituent NHS Board and council areas, produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS).

### [Mid-year population estimates for Wales: 2019](#)

Report | Released 6 May 2020

Additional analysis of the population of Wales, based on population estimates for Wales published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

### [Mid-year population estimates for Northern Ireland: 2019](#)

Report | Released 6 May 2020

The latest annual mid-year population estimates for Northern Ireland, produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). A further release of population estimates including data for areas within Northern Ireland is scheduled for June.

### [Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, England and Wales: mid-2018](#)

Bulletin | Released 25 October 2019

National population estimates for Super Output Areas and experimental statistics for health geographies, electoral wards, Parliamentary constituencies, and National Parks in England and Wales.

### [National population projections: 2018-based](#)

Bulletin | Released 21 October 2019

The potential future population size of the UK and its constituent countries. This is widely used in planning, for example, fiscal projections, health, education and pensions.