

Statistical bulletin

Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland: mid-2022

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 at mid-year 2022 was estimated to be 67.6 million, an increase of 6.8% since 2011.
- In the year to mid-2022, the median age of the population was 40.7 years, up from 39.6 years in 2011.
- The population density for the UK was 279 people per square kilometre at mid-2022.
- The mid-2022 population estimates are rolled forward from the 2021 censuses for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and from the 2022 Census for Scotland; this means that we use the population estimates from the censuses as the starting points for estimating the current population.

2 . Population of UK at mid-2022

We estimate the UK population at mid-2022 as 67.6 million (67,596,281). This is an aggregate of the estimates for the four constituent countries.

All four countries of the UK saw population increases in the period between mid-2011 and mid-2022. Table 1 shows the populations and summary statistics for each country of the UK. The highest percentage increase was in England where the population increased by 4.0 million, a rise of 7.5% between 2011 and 2022. Northern Ireland saw the next highest percentage increase of 5.3%, followed by Scotland at 2.8% and Wales at 2.2%.

Table 1: Population of the UK and its constituent countries, mid-2022 and mid-2011

	Population mid-2011	Population mid-2022	Median age mid-2011	Median age mid-2022	Population density (pop per sq. km) mid-2011	Population density (pop per sq. km) mid-2022
UK	63,285,000	67,596,000	39.6	40.7	261	279
England	53,107,000	57,106,000	39.4	40.5	408	438
Wales	3,064,000	3,132,000	41.5	42.9	148	151
Northern Ireland	1,814,000	1,911,000	37.4	40.0	134	141
Scotland	5,300,000	5,448,000	41.3	43.0	68	70

Source: Population estimates from the Office for National Statistics, the National Records of Scotland, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Overall, England had the highest population density of the four countries of the UK at mid-2022. However, this includes a wide variation within England, where the population density in London was 5,640 people per square kilometre (km), and for the South West it was 242 people per square km.

The median age of the population in the UK was 40.7 years in mid-2022, 1.1 years higher than in mid-2011. The increase in median age over this eleven-year period was highest in Northern Ireland, though at 40.0 years, this was still the lowest of the countries in the UK. Scotland had the highest median age at 43 years.

At mid-2022, there were 34,492,000 females and 33,105,000 males in the population of the UK. This is an increase of 7.2% in the number of females and 6.5% in the number of males since mid-2011.

For England, Wales, and Northern Ireland the population estimates are rolled forward from the 2021 censuses for these countries. For Scotland, these estimates are the first mid-year population estimates based on Scotland's 2022 census, which took place on 20 March 2022, a year later than the rest of the UK because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Mid-year estimates for 2012 to 2020 have been revised for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to align with the results from the 2021 Censuses. Mid-2022 estimates for these countries are comparable with previous years.

Population estimates for Scotland for previous years have yet to be revised to account for the 2022 Census, therefore mid-2022 estimates for both Scotland and the UK are not currently comparable with estimates for the period 2012 to 2021.

3 . Local area populations

The age composition of the population is determined by the patterns of births, deaths and migration that have taken place in previous years. The interactive population pyramid in Figure 1 shows how the age distribution within the population can change over time and varies between local areas, regions, and countries of the UK.

Figure 1: Interactive population pyramid, mid-2011 and mid-2022

Download the data

Figure 1 shows that the age structure of different parts of the UK can vary considerably. For example, Northern Ireland had the highest proportion of children aged under 16 years of any country of the UK in mid-2022 (20.4%), whereas Scotland had the lowest proportion of people of this age group (16.4%). At a local authority level, there is even wider variation with an example being the proportion of those aged 65 years and over ranging from 33.8% of the population in North Norfolk to 5.6% in Tower Hamlets.

Figure 2 is an interactive map that shows the proportion of the population in different age groups for each local authority in the UK.

In general, this shows higher proportions of younger people in more urban areas and higher proportions of older populations in more rural areas. In mid-2022:

- 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
- the areas with the greatest proportions of people aged 65 years or over were predominantly located in the South West, around the south and east coasts of England, around the west coast of Scotland or in central and western areas of Wales

Figure 2: Interactive map comparing local authority age structure in UK: mid-2022

Download the data

Figure 3 is an interactive map that shows the median age and population density of each area.

Figure 3: Interactive map comparing local authority median age and population density in UK: mid-2022

Download the data

Population density gives the population per square kilometre. The interactive map in Figure 3 shows that areas in and around major cities, particularly London and Birmingham, are the most densely populated.

London boroughs account for the 20 most densely populated areas in the UK. The highest population density in the UK, of 16,500 people per square kilometre, is found in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This is followed by Islington with 14,800 people per square kilometre.

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 15 local authorities in the UK with population densities of less than 50 people per square kilometre, 11 were in Scotland, 3 in Wales, and 1 in Northern Ireland.

4 . Upcoming population estimates

Mid-2023 population estimates

We plan to publish population estimates for England and Wales in Summer 2024. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) also plan to release mid-2023 population estimates for Northern Ireland in Summer 2024.

Mid-2023 population estimates for the UK will be released to coincide with the release of estimates for Scotland. The schedule for these is yet to be announced.

Rebased UK population estimates

A full UK revised series will be published after Scotland has undertaken rebasing to revise its annual mid-year population estimates for 2012 to 2021 using the 2022 census.

A revised back series of population estimates for the period 2012 to 2021 was released in November 2023 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These estimates were based on the 2021 censuses.

Future developments

We are continuously looking to improve the statistics on population and migration so that they reflect changes in society and technology and better meet user needs (for more information, see our [Overview of statistics transformation web page](#)). As we look to make greater use of administrative data we are:

- considering how to use new data sources and methods to support more timely, inclusive, and relevant estimates
- seeking to continuously improve the quality of our outputs in line with our [Statistical Quality Improvement Strategy](#) and our [Data Strategy](#)
- undertaking further work to help users understand statistical uncertainty associated with the estimates

In December, we published our latest admin-based population estimates (ABPEs) using our dynamic population model (DPM) (see our [DPM, improvements to data sources methodology](#)). This approach uses a range of data sources, such as administrative and survey data. These estimates are official statistics in development. The responses to our [Consultation on the future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales](#) will inform our longer-term transformation plans. Over the coming months, we will be reviewing the responses we have received and sharing more details on how this will shape the future of population and migration statistics.

5 . Population estimates data

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

Dataset | Released 26 March 2024

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

Usually resident population

These data estimate the usually resident population. The standard United Nations definition is used, including 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.

Rolled forward

Rolling forward refers to the practice of using the population estimate from the previous reference date as the starting point for estimating the population at the current reference date. The previous population estimate is made one year older, and data on births, deaths and migration are used to reflect population change during the reference period.

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).

7 . Measuring the data

Quality

The mid-year estimates for England and Wales are produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), for Scotland by [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#) and for [Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#).

Estimates are produced by updating a census base using a standard demographic method, known as the cohort component method, and cover the usually resident population.

The previous year's resident population, by single year of age, is aged by one year, and then flows are applied to cover births, deaths, immigration, emigration, and people entering and leaving "special populations", such as people in prisons or the armed forces.

Detailed information on the methods and data sources used can be found in the following methodology guides:

- our [Population estimates for the UK, mid-2021: methods guide](#)
- our [Population estimates for England and Wales, mid-2022: methods guide](#)
- NISRA's [Population estimates for Northern Ireland, mid-2022 - methodology paper PDF \(249 KB\)](#)
- the NRS's [Population estimates for Scotland, mid-2022: methods guide](#)
- our [Consistency of methods used for population statistics across UK countries article](#)

For further information on how the estimates were created, quality assurance, their appropriate usage, and strengths and limitations, see our [Mid-year population estimates Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) for the UK](#).

We also provide quality indicators in our [Population estimates: quality information dataset](#), which show the percentage of a local authority population that consists of difficult-to-estimate population groups. In future, we will provide a set of uncertainty measures that reflect the statistical uncertainty relating to the estimation of the 2021 census base, internal and international migration.

8 . Strengths and limitations

Strengths

- The estimates form the official population estimates of the UK, providing timely data between censuses.
- Information from administrative registers, such as the numbers of births and deaths, is considered to be very reliable.
- Estimates include data on moves between local authorities, and between countries of the UK (internal migration).
- Estimates are coherent with the latest available estimates of international migration based on administrative data.
- These estimates form the basis of coherent small-area population estimates, as published in our [Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, England and Wales statistical bulletins](#).
- These estimates will form the basis of our official [population projections](#) to be released in 2024.

Limitations

- The data are not counts, rather they are estimates created by combining many different data sources.
- The data sources used are the best 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.
- Errors can accumulate over time, therefore population estimates for the years immediately following a census year tend to be more accurate than for those immediately prior to a census year.
- International migration methods and data sources are still being developed and may lead to revisions to population estimates.
- This set of mid-2022 population estimates for the UK are provided without components of change data as these are unavailable on a consistent basis for the whole of the UK.

Accredited Official Statistics status for population estimates

Population estimates for the UK are Accredited Official Statistics (previously National Statistics). The last assessment was 24 November 2020, as shown on the Office for Statistics Regulation's [Population estimates and projections web page](#).

9 . Related links

[Mid-year population estimates for England and Wales: 2022](#)

Report | Released 23 November 2023

National and subnational mid-year population estimates for England and Wales by administrative area, age and sex, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

[Mid-year population estimates for Scotland: 2022](#)

Report | Released 26 March 2024

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 Northern Ireland: 2022](#)

Report | Released 31 August 2023

The latest annual mid-year population estimates for Northern Ireland, produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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