Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Estimates of the very old, including centenarians, England and Wales: 2002 to 2023

Annual mid-year population estimates for people aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age to 105 years and over, and comparisons between England and Wales.

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January to February 2025
(provisional)

Table

1 . Main points

- In 2023, the estimated population aged 90 years and over in England and Wales was 551,758; this was a slight increase of 0.2% from 2022, compared with a 2.1% increase in the previous year.
- There were an estimated 14,850 centenarians in England and Wales in 2023; this is more than double the number of centenarians in 2002, but is a 0.5% decrease compared with 2022.
- The large post-First World War birth cohort, aged 103 years in 2023, accounted for 9.7% of those aged 100 years and over; as this cohort ages and decreases in size, the effect on the size of the centenarian population continues to reduce.
- There were just over twice as many females than males aged 90 years and over in 2023; this gap between males and females continues to reduce over time, from more than three times the number of females than males aged 90 years and over in 2002.
- The sex ratio at the oldest ages continued to narrow in 2023, with 4.5 women to every man aged 100 years and over in England and Wales, compared with 4.6 in 2022.
- In 2023, Wales had 26 people aged 100 years and over per 100,000 population; this was a higher proportion of centenarians than in England, which had 24 centenarians per 100,000 population.

These statistics are for England and Wales only. Figures for the UK will be published in spring 2025.

2 . Data on population estimates

Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: England and Wales
Dataset | Released 1 October 2024
Annual mid-year population estimates for those aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age (90 to 104) and the 105 years and over age group, 2002 to 2023, England and Wales.

Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: England
Dataset | Released 1 October 2024
Annual mid-year population estimates for those aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age (90 to 104) and the 105 years and over age group, 2002 to 2023, England.

Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: Wales
Dataset | Released 1 October 2024
Annual mid-year population estimates for those aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age (90 to 104) and the 105 years and over age group, 2002 to 2023, Wales.

3 . Data sources and quality

Data sources

These are annual mid-year population estimates by sex and single year of age for people aged 90 to 104 years and for the 105 years and over age group. The figures for England and Wales 2002 to 2023 supersede the 2002 to 2022 time series published in January 2024. Figures for the United Kingdom (2002 to 2023) will supersede the 2002 to 2020 UK estimates when they are released in spring 2025 and will take account of the rebased mid-year population estimates for the UK time series.

Estimates of the very old are calculated from death registration data using the Kannisto-Thatcher (KT) method and are constrained to the age 90 years and over totals in our mid-year Population estimates for England and Wales bulletins. Further details can be found in our accompanying Calculating population estimates of the very old methodology.

Estimates for the UK, England and for Wales are produced by us, at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), while estimates for Scotland and Northern Ireland are produced by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), respectively. We have also published a paper Comparing methods of producing estimates of those aged 90 and older estimates produced by NRS and NISRA.

Quality

The relatively small size of the populations of the smaller UK constituent countries can produce more volatility in the deaths data used to estimate centenarians in these countries.

To provide users with a consistent set of estimates by single year of age up to age 105 years and over, estimates of the very old (EVOs) are constrained to the 90 years and over totals in our mid-year Estimates of the population datasets, the highest age published in these datasets. Mid-year estimates (MYEs) are based on the latest census and are adjusted for births, deaths and migration each year following the census. The 2002 to 2023 estimates published in this release take account of the reconciliation and rebasing of the mid-year estimates from 2012 onwards, following Census 2021.

Since 2022, the deaths data used to calculate the estimates have been through an extra validation data cleaning step. While the data are very accurate in terms of the number of deaths that occur, the age of death at very high ages may not always be accurate because the date of birth given by the person registering the death is not checked against birth certificates. A very small number of records were removed from the input data where evidence was found to indicate those recorded as aged 110 years and over were highly unlikely to be of that age. As EVOs are constrained to the age 90 years and over totals in the MYE, removing these records did not affect the total number of people estimated in the EVOs and only very slightly shifted percentage distributions by single year of age.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our Population estimates of the very old, including centenarians Quality and Methodology Information (QMI).

Accredited official statistics

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in March 2017. Accredited official statistics were previously known as National Statistics. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled "accredited official statistics".

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The underlying pledge of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is to leave no one behind; by definition, this includes the very old. Availability of data is essential to delivery of the goals. These datasets provide an estimate of the very old population in England, and Wales, aged 90 to 105 years and over disaggregated by single year of age and sex.

4 . Related links

Calculating population estimates of the very old
Methodology | Released 17 September 2021
Methods used to produce the population estimates of the very old (aged 90 years and over) by single year of age and sex, UK, England, and Wales.

The impact of the First World War on the 90 and over population of the UK: 2015
Article | Released 29 September 2016
The impact of birth patterns around the time of the First World War and the influence of the Spanish "flu" pandemic that followed on the size and make up of today's population aged 90 years and over.

5 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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