

Statistical bulletin

# Estimates of the very old, including centenarians, UK: 2002 to 2024

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

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# 1 . Main points

- There were an estimated 625,000 people aged 90 years or over in the UK in 2024; this is an increase of 53.7% since 2004, and an increase of 2.2% since mid-2023.
- Of the people aged 90 years and over, 84.5% were aged 95 years or younger, although growth has been faster at the oldest ages.
- There were 16,600 centenarians (people aged 100 years and over) in the UK in 2024, this has doubled from 8,300 in 2004.
- The number of men at older ages is increasing faster than the number of women; between 2004 and 2024 the number of men aged 90 years or over has more than doubled, while the number of women has increased by around one-third.
- Men made up one-third (33.7%) of people aged 90 years and over in 2024, and nearly one-fifth (18.5%) of centenarians.
- Wales had the highest rate of centenarians (25.9 per 100,000 people) in the UK; the rate of centenarians has increased in all four UK countries.

## 2 . Population growth of those aged 90 years and over in the UK

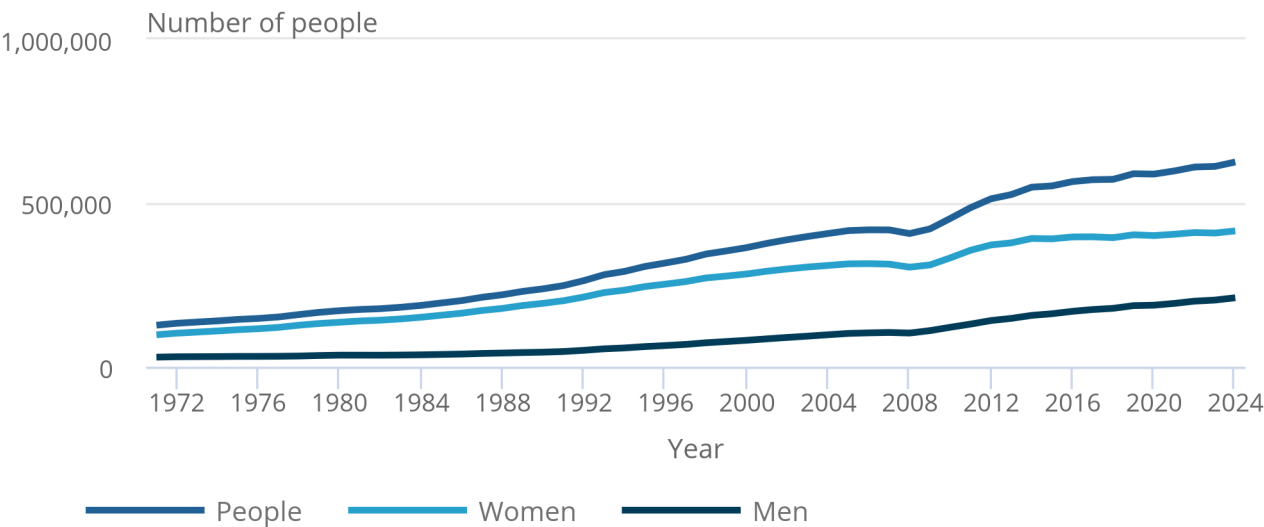
The population of people aged 90 years and over has grown substantially over recent decades. Between 2004 and 2024, it increased by over half (53.7%), from 407,000 to 625,000 people. From mid-2023 to mid-2024, the population of people aged 90 years and over increased by 2.2%, from 612,000 to 625,000 people.

**Figure 1: The number of men aged 90 years and over has grown faster than the number of women in this age group**

Number of men, women and people aged 90 years and over, UK, mid-1971 to mid-2024

Figure 1: The number of men aged 90 years and over has grown faster than the number of women in this age group

Number of men, women and people aged 90 years and over, UK, mid-1971 to mid-2024



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

The line chart in Figure 1 shows that the number of men aged 90 years and over has increased at a faster rate than the number of women. The number of men aged 90 years and over has more than doubled, from 98,000 in 2004, to 211,000 in 2024. The number of women aged 90 years and over increased by around one-third, from 309,000 in 2004, to 415,000 in 2024.

One in three (33.7%) people aged 90 years and over were men in 2024, compared with fewer than one in four people (24.0%) in 2004.

The changes in the older population are largely explained by improvements in life expectancy and historic birth patterns.

Life expectancy is higher for women, but life expectancy for men has increased faster than that for women, so the gap is narrowing. This has led to the number of older men growing faster than the number of older women. Read about changes to life expectancy in our [National life tables bulletin](#).

The slight decrease in the number of people aged 90 years and over in 2007 and 2008 reflects the low number of births 90 years earlier, during World War One. It is followed by a rapid increase in people aged 90 years and over because of an increase in births immediately following the war.

### 3 . Age structure of those aged 90 years and over

Of people aged 90 years and over, the majority are in their early 90s, although this is changing with increasing proportions at older ages.

#### **Figure 2: Most people aged 90 years and over were in their early 90s, but a higher proportion were at older ages in 2024 than in 2004**

Percentage of people aged 90 years and over by single year of age up to age 105 years and over, UK, 2004 and 2024

##### **Notes**

1. Percentages were calculated using unrounded data.

The bar chart in Figure 2 shows how the age distribution of people aged 90 years and over is changing, as more people were at the very oldest ages in 2024 than they were in 2004.

84.5% of people aged 90 years and over in 2024 were 95 or younger. This is a slight decrease from 86.5% in 2004.

Of all people aged 90 years and over, the proportion of people aged 100 years and over has increased from 2.0% in 2004 to 2.7% in 2024.

Improvements in life expectancy have led to changes in the age structure as more people reach very old ages.

### 4 . Age and sex structure of those aged 90 years and over

While most people aged 90 years and over are women in their early 90s, population growth in the last two decades has been fastest among men at older ages.

#### **Figure 3: The 90 years and over population has grown faster for men than women, at every age**

Number of people aged 90 years and over by sex and single year of age up to age 105 years and over, UK, 2004 and 2024

##### **Notes**

1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

The population pyramid in Figure 3 shows large increases in the population of men and women aged 90 years and over between 2004 and 2024. The population grew at every age, although the fastest proportional growth was seen at the oldest ages.

While there were still more women than men at every age, the gap between the number of men and women narrowed because the number of men grew faster. The number of men at least doubled between 2004 and 2024 for every age, apart from age 90 years. Faster increases in the population of men at older ages has led to changes in the sex ratio over time.

#### **Figure 4: There was a higher proportion of men at every age over 90 years in 2024 than in 2004**

**Percentage of people aged 90 years and over by single year of age up to age 100 years and over who were men, UK, 2004 and 2024**

##### **Notes**

1. Percentages were calculated using unrounded data.

The bar chart in Figure 4 shows that the proportion of people aged 90 years and over who were men increased by around 10 percentage points for most years of age. This equates to a much larger proportional increase at the older ages, where a smaller proportion were men.

For people aged 100 years and over, the percentage who were men has increased from 11.0% in 2004 to 18.5% in 2024.

## 5 . Centenarians

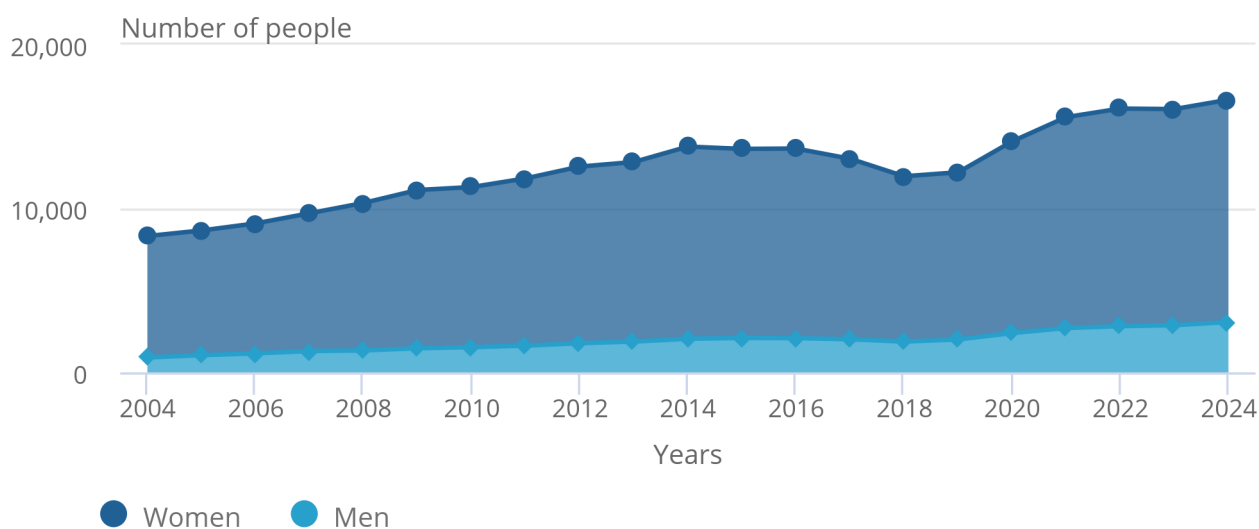
There were 16,600 centenarians (people aged 100 years and over) in the UK in 2024, this has doubled from 8,300 in 2004. The number of male centenarians has increased faster than the number of female centenarians, having trebled between 2004 and 2024 (from 910 to 3,100). The number of female centenarians almost doubled between 2004 and 2024 (from 7,400 to 13,600).

**Figure 5: The number of centenarians has increased, with the number of men growing faster than the number of women**

Number of men and women aged 100 years and over, UK, 2004 to 2024

Figure 5: The number of centenarians has increased, with the number of men growing faster than the number of women

Number of men and women aged 100 years and over, UK, 2004 to 2024



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

**Notes:**

1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

The area chart in Figure 5 shows that the population of centenarians rapidly increased in 2020 and 2021, following a decrease in the population in the years immediately before. This is explained by a decrease in births in England and Wales 100 years earlier, during World War One (WW1), followed by a rapid increase in births after the war.

The number of births declined in the years immediately following the post-WW1 "baby boom" (a period marked by a substantial increase in births). However, we are still seeing growth in the centenarian population. This recent growth in the centenarian population is largely explained by people living longer.

The number of centenarians has grown at a faster rate than the total population. There were 24.0 centenarians per 100,000 in 2024, an increase from 13.9 per 100,000 in 2004. This means that around one in every 4,200 people in the UK were centenarians in 2024.

## 6 . Country comparison

The proportion of the population who were centenarians increased across all four UK constituent countries between mid-2023 to mid-2024.

### Figure 6: Wales and England had higher rates of people aged 100 years and over than Scotland or Northern Ireland

Number of people aged 100 years and over per 100,000 population by constituent country, UK, 2004 and 2024

#### Notes

1. Numbers per 100,000 were calculated using unrounded data.

The bar chart in Figure 6 shows that Wales had the highest rate of centenarians in 2024 (25.9 per 100,000), an increase from 2004 (14.9 per 100,000).

England had the second highest rate (24.7 per 100,000 in 2024 an increase from 14.3 per 100,000 in 2004).

Scotland had 18.4 centenarians per 100,000 in 2024, an increase from 11.0 in 2004.

Northern Ireland had the lowest rate of centenarians in 2024 (15.3 per 100,000), an increase from 8.0 in 2004.

The lower rate in Northern Ireland is explained by higher fertility rates causing a younger population, rather than differences in life expectancy. More information about our fertility rates is available in our [National population projections, fertility assumptions: 2022-based methodology](#). More information about life expectancy is available in our [National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2021 to 2023 bulletin](#).

## 7 . Data on population estimates

### [Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: UK](#)

Dataset | Released 21 October 2025

Annual mid-year population estimates of those aged 90 years and over by sex, broken down by single year of age (90 to 104 years) and the 105 years and over age group.

### [Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: England](#)

Dataset | Released 3 September 2025

Annual mid-year population estimates of those aged 90 years and over by sex, broken down by single year of age (90 to 104 years) and the 105 years and over age group.

### [Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 3 September 2025

Annual mid-year population estimates of those aged 90 years and over by sex, broken down by single year of age (90 to 104 years) and the 105 years and over age group.

### [Mid-year population estimates of the very old, including centenarians: England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 3 September 2025

Annual mid-year population estimates of those aged 90 years and over by sex, broken down by single year of age (90 to 104 years) and the 105 years and over age group.

## 8 . Glossary

### Centenarian

A person aged 100 years or over.

### Life expectancy

Life expectancy is a population-based statistical measure of the average number of years a person has before death. Life expectancies can be calculated for any age and give the further number of years a person can, on average, expect to live given the age they have attained.

## 9 . Data sources and quality

### Data sources

We calculate estimates of the very old from death registration data using the Kannisto-Thatcher (KT) method. The estimates are constrained to the age 90 years and over totals in our [Population estimates of the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2024 bulletin](#).

We produce the estimates of the very old for England, Wales, and the UK. Comparable statistics are produced by [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#) for Scotland and by [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#) for Northern Ireland, and are used in our UK estimates.

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Estimates of the very old, including centenarians, QMI](#).

### Quality

There is more volatility in the deaths data used to estimate centenarians in the smaller UK constituent countries because of their relatively small population sizes.

Mid-year estimates (MYEs) are based on the latest census. They are adjusted for births, deaths, and migration each year following the census. The 2002 to 2024 estimates published in this release take account of the reconciliation and rebasing of the mid-year estimates from 2012 onwards, following the 2021 round of UK censuses.

We have conducted an extra validation data cleaning step on the deaths data used to calculate the estimates since 2022. The data are very accurate in terms of the number of deaths that occur. However, the age of death at very high ages may not always be accurate. This is 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 because evidence was found that those recorded as aged 110 years and over were highly unlikely to be of that age. Estimates of the very old are constrained to the age 90 years and over totals in the MYE, so removing these records did not affect the total number of people estimated, and only very slightly shifted percentage distributions by single year of age.

### 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 and by definition, this includes the very old. Availability of data is essential to delivery of the goals. The data accompanying this release provide an estimate of the very old population in the UK, England and Wales, disaggregated by sex and single year of age from 90 to 104 years and for those aged 105 years and over.

## 10 . Related links

[National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2021 to 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 March 2025

Trends in period life expectancy, a measure of the average number of years people will live beyond their current age, analysed by age and sex for the UK and its constituent countries.

[Life expectancy for local areas of Great Britain: between 2001 to 2003 and 2021 to 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 4 December 2024

Subnational trends in the average number of years people will live beyond their current age measured by "period life expectancy".

[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 and over.

## 11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 21 October 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Estimates of the very old, including centenarians, UK: 2002 to 2024](#)