

Article

Quarterly update on population and migration statistics: August 2026

Improvements to how we estimate UK population and migration, providing an update on our progress and plans.

Contact:
Population Statistics team
MPSD.stakeholders@ons.gov.uk
+44 1329 444230

Release date:
11 August 2026

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Overview of population and migration statistics progress and plans

This update provides information on the recent improvements and plans to deliver high-quality, independent statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public.

Last year, we set out a series of population goals, as part of our [Economic statistics plan](#), and reported progress against them annually. These goals will be reviewed in the autumn and future updates will be provided through this quarterly article.

Building on the knowledge gained from developing admin-based population estimates (ABPEs), and our understanding of the challenges involved, we are applying a continuous improvement approach to developing the population statistics system. Following the recent publication of our plans for the development of mid-year estimates, we will continue to improve our critical outputs in the near term through our Population statistics system plan, which will be published later in 2026.

2 . Population estimates

We published the mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales on 29 July 2026; this included revisions to mid-2022, mid-2023 and mid-2024 estimates to incorporate the improved long-term international migration estimates. Alongside the estimates, we published an improvement plan for mid-year population estimates for England and Wales; progress against this plan will be reported regularly in this quarterly update article. To help users understand the quality of the estimates, the uncertainty associated with them, and how they should be used, we also published our [Keeping pace with population change blog](#) and a suite of supporting information, which includes:

- our [Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025 bulletin](#)
- our [Population estimates for England and Wales quality and methods guide](#)
- our [Population statistics and sources guide](#)
- our [Quality overview of data sources used in mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales methodology](#)
- our [Local authority quality of population estimates for England and Wales article](#)
- our [Effect of the coronavirus pandemic on data and quality of population estimates for England and Wales article](#)
- our [Subnational long-term international migration: July 2026 methodology](#)
- our [Improving population estimates for England and Wales plan](#)
- our [Letter to the Office for Statistics Regulation on mid-year population estimates for England and Wales](#)

We will be hosting our [The population in numbers — what's changing webinar](#) on 2 September, to look at the latest statistics, explain the current methodology and outline our plans for improving population estimates for England and Wales. Mid-2025 population estimates for the UK will be published in the autumn, when data are available for all the UK's constituent countries.

We continue to improve population statistics; we have learned from developing admin-based population estimates (ABPEs) that administrative data and modelling can help improve population estimates, especially at more local levels. We incorporated information about uncertainty in the estimates for the first time in our Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025 bulletin, and our Improving population estimates plan published alongside the bulletin outlines the way forward. In summary, these improvements focus on further developing our approaches to estimating internal and international migration at local levels and improving our ability to validate our estimates between censuses.

We will continue to increase our use of administrative data where viable, continue the implementation of our best practice coding standards, and monitor the four-country agreement that was developed to ensure we understand coherence across UK population statistics.

3 . Population projections

Continuing our planned work on population projections includes:

- investigating reducing lag
- improving modelling for mortality, fertility and migration assumptions
- moving subnational population projections (SNPPs) from legacy systems
- exploring alternative products

The next national and subnational population projections, together with household projections, are planned for publication sequentially in 2028.

We will engage with stakeholders before finalising these plans and confirming publication dates on our [Release calendar](#). Over the coming months, we will also undertake targeted engagement with users of SNPPs for England. This work will help ensure that future releases deliver the quality, value and timeliness that users require. These discussions will cover issues including:

- publication timing
- the potential benefits of unconstrained projections
- data output formats
- the range of variant projections needed

Following the publication of the mid-2025 population estimates, we are comparing these estimates with the 2022-based SNPPs. This includes assessing the impact of revisions to earlier years' estimates that were incorporated into the mid-2025 release. We will engage with users on the continued use of the 2022-based projections, considering these findings. Following this work, we intend to make an alternative population projections product available by the end of 2026 for users who require continuity between population estimates and projections.

If you would like to participate in discussions about the projections, or provide feedback, please contact pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

4 . International migration

We continue to develop migration statistics by implementing new methods. Recent progress includes incorporating improvements to estimates for EU and British nationals and progressing the implementation of our coding best practice standards.

We will publish a strategy for international migration statistics in the autumn. This strategy will set out our short-, medium- and long-term ambitions, drawing on external expertise from the [National Statistician's Advisory Panel on Migration Statistics](#) and conversations with users over the last 12 months. This includes a dual focus on migration flows and migrant population estimates — recognising that understanding who is here is as critical as who arrives and leaves. This user-focused strategy will underpin our improvements to international migration estimates over the coming years.

We will review and update our goals later this year and report progress through future editions of this quarterly update article. We aim to seek accreditation within the next couple of years.

Our next [Long-term international migration \(LTIM\) publication](#) will be on 26 November 2026. This will include provisional estimates up to the end of June 2026. Our [provisional estimates](#) for December 2024, June 2025 and December 2025 will be updated as more data become available.

User engagement on how we progress research on non-UK born estimates is ongoing and we are seeking user feedback via our [Estimates of nationality/non-UK-born populations: understanding your needs feedback form](#) by the end of August. We will provide a full update on our plans based on this feedback in the coming months.

Some research strands have progressed to discussion with our external technical experts on the Methods Advisory Research Panel International Migration Subgroup since we published our [International migration research, progress update: April 2026 article](#). These include research on indefinite leave to remain, an overstayer adjustment, and whether cumulative length of stay (CLOS) methods, which are currently applied to non-visa migration, could be applied to visa-based migration. The CLOS research explores whether migration can be estimated by cumulatively adding up the time people spend in and out of the country. We currently use this method for migrants with EU settled status, and we will be applying it to non-EU+ migrants with indefinite leave to remain, once quality assurance is complete.

We are exploring the use of CLOS methods for international temporary mobility, which covers migration of less than 12 months, and for British national migration. Our current method for British nationals is based on signs of activity in Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data. For migrants with visas, we currently use a different method. Applying CLOS to this group could provide a more consistent approach across migration groups, because it is based on travel data, rather than a combination of CLOS, visas and DWP activity data.

We will inform users in advance of any methodological changes or other improvements before they are implemented. We will also be clear when revisions resulting from methods improvements will be implemented.

You can join us after the next release of LTIM estimates at the [Migration Statistics User Forum](#), which is chaired by the Migration Observatory in collaboration with the Home Office. During the event, you will hear from the producers of official statistics, as well as a response to producers from an expert user. The afternoon session will focus on user discussions around themes chosen by the attendees when signing up.

5 . Births and deaths

We published our annual [Births in England and Wales: 2025 bulletin](#) for 2025 and our annual [Death registration summary statistics, England and Wales: 2025 bulletin](#) on 27 May. We have been asking users for feedback on these statistics via a three-month public consultation, which opened in May. These releases mark the first time we have used population projections to produce provisional mortality and fertility rates at the national level.

Following the release of the mid-2025 population estimates, the annual births and deaths releases will be republished using these new population denominators to produce further mortality and fertility rates. Annual suicides and annual drug deaths estimates will also be published in September or October using the latest population estimates.

We outlined our plans to explore the advantages of moving to occurrence-based mortality reporting to complement the use of date of registration for analysis and statistics in our [economic statistics milestone](#) in March 2026. We have been developing a "nowcasting" model for timely occurrence estimates, following a [consultation on occurrence-based suicide statistics](#) in 2023/2024. We aim to share this model with external stakeholders, and internal and external methodology advisors, in the coming months. We will be providing an update on our research into nowcasting deaths estimates, following feedback from these groups. We plan to publish these statistics for comparison purposes, alongside our death registration time-series.

There are two ongoing streams of work to provide more timely mortality data. We are conducting a pilot study with Liverpool and Wirral Coroners to test whether we can access Interim Death Certificates (IDCs) directly from the coroners, rather than waiting for final certificates. We are also working with Department for Health and Social Care and Public Health Wales to understand the quality of real-time suspected suicide data, which may provide more timely indicators to underpin suicide data. We will provide updates on the outcome of the consultation and the testing of more timely mortality data supplies in future quarterly update articles.

6 . Census

The current focus of the work relating to census remains the [2027 Census Test](#). This will be the first large-scale test of data collection in the census programme and will inform design decisions for Census 2031. Alongside the Test, we are also conducting more tailored research and testing, where qualitative information is needed or where the population or concept of interest is more specific. Building on our experience from Census 2021, we are aiming to make the best use of administrative data, including in processing, estimation and quality assurance.

We have updated the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) on how we are incorporating recommendations from Census 2021 and asked them to assess Census 2031 in our [Letter to the OSR](#).

7 . Recent updates

June 2026

We looked at the changing composition of families over time in our [Fertility for those born in different years, England and Wales: 2024 bulletin](#), published on 10 June. The data compare the fertility of people who are the same age and the number of children they have had. To support understanding of this publication, particularly fertility patterns for men and the new methodology, we have also published our [Introducing new figures on fathers' fertility and families blog](#).

The [Methodological Assurance Review Panel: Dynamic Population Model sub-group](#) met to review research on local area migration estimates and on the breakdown of older population groups.

We published numbers and rates of conceptions by age group, including women aged under 18 years, in our annual [Conceptions in England and Wales dataset](#) on 26 June.

July 2026

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) responded to our update on progress made against the outstanding migration recommendations in their [Letter on the Office for National Statistics's \(ONS's\) long-term international migration estimates](#) on 16 July.

The OSR set out the changes the ONS has put in place over the last few years to improve migration statistics in their accompanying [The long-term progress in migration statistics blog](#) on 17 July.

We outlined how we will continue to monitor progress in our [Update on UK Statistics Assembly Independent Report recommendations](#) that were set out during the [UK Statistics Assembly 2025](#) on 20 July.

We published the [mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales](#), including revisions to mid-2022, mid-2023 and mid-2024 estimates to incorporate the improved long-term international migration estimates, and additional supporting information on 29 July.

We published our [Health state life expectancy estimates for Middle layer Super Output Areas, England and Wales: 2019 to 2023 bulletin](#) on 30 July.

We published the latest [Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2025 bulletin](#) on 31 July.

Throughout July, there were meetings of the Migration Statistics User Group and the National Statistician's Advisory Panel on Migration Statistics to gather feedback on the upcoming migration statistics strategy.

8 . Future developments

Autumn 2026

- We will hold our [The population in numbers - what's changing? webinar](#) on the population estimates, including methods used, latest trends and plans for improvements, on 2 September.
- Research will continue, following the presentation of our [Geospatial machine learning for intercensal small-area population estimates research paper \(PDF, 1.935KB\)](#) to the Methods Assurance and Research Panel (MARP) in June.
- We are holding a [webinar on internal migration estimates](#) that will cover current methods and plans for improvements on 30 September.
- Following the publication of [Admin-based household estimates for local authorities in England and Wales: 2021 article](#), we will publish estimates for more recent years on 8 September; we plan to publish our work to develop a household-size breakdown in late 2026.
- Our next [Long-term international migration, provisional release](#) will be published on 26 November; it will include provisional estimates up to the end of June 2026 and, as usual, our [provisional estimates](#) for December 2024, June 2025 and December 2025 will be updated as more data become available.
- Following on from the mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales, we will publish our [Mid-2025 UK population estimates](#).
- Alongside official death statistics for 2025, we will be publishing [official statistics in development](#) to demonstrate the methods; we will be hosting a [webinar on births and deaths](#), which will include gathering feedback on the new methods.
- We will publish statistics about the [veteran population of England and Wales](#).
- Following [user engagement to gather feedback](#), we will provide an update on our research into using administrative data to produce estimates of the population by country of birth and/or nationality.
- We will publish a long-term strategy for migration statistics; feedback from the [National Statistician's Advisory Panel](#) will shape the medium- and long-term plans for development.
- We will publish the outputs from our Census 2031 topic consultation, including full, topic-level evaluation reports and our updated assessment of the content for Census 2031 in England and Wales.
- We will publish mid-2025 small area population estimates in October; the methods will remain unchanged from our previous [Population estimates by output areas bulletin](#).
- We will present a joint session with colleagues from National Records of Scotland, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Welsh Government on Census 2031 at the British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) conference and the Royal Statistical Society conference; we will also hold a session on "Improving population statistics and insight using admin data" at the BSPS conference.
- Once user engagement on national population projections and subnational population projections has concluded, we will update on our plans for 2026-based projections and updating 2022-based projections, to align with the revised population estimates published on 29 July.

Winter 2026/2027

- We will publish marriages and legal partnership estimates in early 2027.
- We will publish the next update on our [milestones for improving population and migration statistics](#).
- The Migration Statistics User Forum will be held on 10 December and will give users an opportunity to hear from producers of migration statistics and be involved in discussion sessions between users and producers.
- We plan to publish an update on our research to improve our internal migration estimates, which forms an important part of our plan to improve our population estimates.
- We will publish a research update on our progress in producing population estimates by ethnicity.
- We will publish our Sexual orientation in the UK, 2025 bulletin.
- We will publish the results of our analysis of [Census topic consultation responses](#) later in 2026, which will include information on the topics we plan to develop further for Census 2031 in England and Wales.

Spring and summer 2027

- We will publish updates on long-term international migration and population estimates and ensure we communicate any methods improvements before publication.
- We will publish mid-2026 population estimates for England and Wales and will inform users of any improvements to methods in advance.

9 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 11 August 2026, ONS website, article, [Quarterly update on population and migration statistics: August 2026](#)