

Article

Quarterly update on population and migration statistics: July 2025

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

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1 . Overview of population and migration statistics progress and plans

It is an important time for population and migration statistics. On 15 July 2025 His Majesty's Government commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to conduct a mandatory questionnaire-based [whole-population census of England and Wales in 2031](#). This is a critical part of the system of population and migration statistics and will help us combine the power of data collection and administrative data to produce high quality population and migration statistics, which inform decisions and improve lives.

On 26 June 2025, we also saw the publication of the [Devereux Review](#) of the ONS performance and culture. This highlights the importance of our core statistics and the expectation that the ONS should have a greater focus on these outputs. To support this focus, the ONS published two plans; [The plan for ONS economic statistics](#) and [ONS Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan for Economic Statistics](#).

The plan for economic statistics includes details of our [priorities for population statistics](#) in Annex D. Our focus on population and migration statistics reflects the ONS's commitment to restoring confidence and improving quality for our most important outputs. In some cases, this will mean we have to stop or slow down other activities while we look to prioritise the work which will ensure the quality of our core outputs, especially international migration, population and population projections.

We will update on our plans for research into admin-based characteristics in further editions of this quarterly update and a blog later in the year.

2 . Recommendation on the future of population and migration statistics

Following the [Recommendation from the UK Statistics Authority](#), the UK Government has commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to conduct a census of England and Wales in 2031. This will combine the strengths of population-wide data collection with the additional value that administrative data can provide.

We have seen the value of using administrative data to support statistics. However, administrative data are not yet mature enough to replace the need for data collection through a census. We are therefore looking to deliver a questionnaire-based whole population census while also using administrative data to improve the quality, frequency and range of statistics we can provide outside a census.

A Census Taskforce has been set up which has started scoping plans for 2031. The taskforce will focus on delivering a census that builds on the successes of 2021. It will work with devolved governments to support coherent UK outputs and maximise the benefits from our work with administrative data to date, to support a more efficient and high-quality census.

We will launch a public consultation later this autumn. This consultation will gather views on topics that users need from a system of population statistics and inform the development of the census questionnaire.

3 . Population estimates

On 30 July 2025, we will publish official mid-2024 population estimates for England and Wales. These will be based on the [population estimates methodology](#) used in our last publication of mid-year population estimates and will include revisions to mid-2022 and mid-2023. The revisions to previous data points are because of updated international and internal migration estimates becoming available.

Admin-Based Population Estimates (ABPEs) will be published alongside the official estimates to allow comparisons ahead of ABPEs becoming the official population estimates in 2026, subject to meeting [ABPE acceptance criteria](#). ABPEs do not replace the official estimates at this time and should not be used for decision making purposes.

We are also publishing the quality overview of data sources used in mid-year 2024 ABPEs. The report will contain important quality information on all the administrative data sources feeding directly into the ABPEs and provide links to similar information on sources that feed indirectly into them. Our [population statistics and sources guide](#) and [Understanding mid-year admin-based population estimates for local authorities in England and Wales article](#) will be updated to reflect the most up-to-date information. A new quality and methods guide will also be published. Together, these provide a full account of methods and a good level of detail for a broad range of users.

The [Admin-based population estimates for local authorities in England and Wales dataset](#) will include estimates for upper tier local authorities and English regions, as well as England and Wales separately and combined for the first time. We will also publish estimates for population density, median age and components of change for migration disaggregated into internal and international migration for the first time.

Ahead of assessing the criteria for moving to ABPEs again in spring 2026, we will continue to work with users of population statistics as set out in our [Admin-based population estimates: England and Wales engagement plan 2025 to 2026](#).

4 . International migration

On 22 May 2025 we published [Long-term international migration provisional: year ending December 2024 bulletin](#). We also published our latest [student research paper](#), which highlights how migration for study has changed since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It includes more about the behaviours of students from different countries, and we have published new details about where and what people from overseas are studying when they come to the UK. To support these releases the Director of Population Statistics published a blog explaining "[What's driving the fall in net migration](#)".

We are continuing to update our figures when we make improvements to our methods. While we have a consistent methodology for non-EU+ migration, we still need to make improvements to migration for British Nationals and those from the [EU+](#).

On 14 November 2025, we will publish two publications; one on our progress estimating EU+ migration using Home Office (HO) data, and one on our progress estimating British National migration using Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data. This follows our [International migration research, progress update: February 2025](#), which demonstrates our progress towards improved estimates. If a decision has been made to onboard these new methods for the November publication, this output will also include a revised back series based on the new methods.

The new governance structure to support migration statistics is now in place. The [National Statistician's Advisory Panel on Migration Statistics](#) met for the first time in July. The panel discussed their role in helping to shape the future strategy and provided advice on frequency of estimates. Alongside the new [Methodological Assurance Review Panel \(MARF\) sub-group on international migration](#) and Migration Statistics User Group we have improved our external assurance processes for our migration statistics to better reflect where we are in their development.

A new episode of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) podcast, Statistically Speaking, will be published on 23 July, which unpacks what defines a "migrant", and how the ONS estimates migration.

5 . Subnational Population Projections

On 24 June 2025, we published our [2022-based subnational population projections bulletin](#), with an accompanying blog, [The potential future direction of local population change: the power of variant projections](#). These projections support understanding of the potential future size of the population, based on trends. They are not forecasts or predictions.

For both the [subnational projections](#), and the national population projections (NPPs) released in January, the "[migration category variant](#)" is a better fit with the international migration estimates we published in May. We therefore now recommend the "migration category variant" is used in place of the principal projection for England and the UK. We have engaged with a number of users in making this decision.

6 . Our plans for the next 12 months

Summer 2025

- On 30 July 2025 we will publish official mid-2024 population estimates for England and Wales with revisions to mid-2022 and mid-2023; Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPEs) will be published alongside to allow comparisons ahead of ABPEs becoming the official population estimates.
- A research update on producing UK armed forces veteran statistics for England and Wales will be published on 28 August.
- Research will continue into the proof of concept for international temporary mobility and analysis to see if short-term moves within the UK are captured in administrative data sources used for internal migration.
- We are continuing to research data sources and methods for producing estimates of the population by country of birth and nationality, including the [Transformed Labour Force Survey](#) (TLFS).
- We are aiming to make the second version of the admin-based census available in September in a trusted research environment.
- We will write to Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to demonstrate our progress towards the requirements set out in the [assessment of Admin-Based Population Estimates](#) (ABPE) carried out in 2024.
- We will continue to work with our devolved government partners towards the share of admin data to support future population statistics development and the census. We are expecting to share HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data, which has been processed by the ONS for analysis purposes, with Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) in the second half of 2025.

Autumn 2025

- [Household projections: 2022-based](#) for England is planned for publication by the end of September.
- The next meeting of the [National Statistician's Advisory Panel on Migration Statistics](#) will be held in September.
- We will publish small area estimates for 2023 and 2024 using the same method as the previous release; 2022 estimates will also be revised in-line with England and Wales estimates and research is also continuing into new methods
- We plan to publish our research paper on the impact of the pandemic, following on from Census 2021.
- We will publish a research paper on estimating EU+ and British National migration ahead of November's release of long-term international migration statistics in November, following our [International migration research, progress update: February 2025](#), demonstrating our progress.
- We will set out our further [response to the OSR review of migration statistics](#) regarding the progress with international migration statistics via a letter to OSR.
- We will release long-term international migration (LTIM) estimates for year ending (YE) June 2025 in November.
- Mid-2024 population estimates for the UK will be published.
- We aim to communicate our plans for future cycle for national and subnational population projections based on user feedback and input data to give users more clarity.

Winter 2025 to 2026

- We are developing a method with the intention to publish provisional population estimates for mid-2025. These estimates will provide an early indication of population change and will be updated in Summer 2026.
- We aim to publish a research paper including early estimates from the Admin-based household estimates (ABHEs) by the end of 2025.
- The [2025 Migration Statistics User Forum](#) will be held on 11 December, giving users a chance to hear from both producers and users of migration statistics.
- We aim to publish an update on initial scoping on method improvements for internal migration.
- The ONS website will begin to undergo a gradual redesign, resulting in changes to the look and structures of publications; [the ONS website preview](#) is available.

Spring 2026

- We will aim to publish our improved understanding of the quality of the Demographic Index (DI).
- We aim to support our conclusion on the best future approach with developed methods for small area population estimates.
- We are aiming for our LTIM publication in May 2026 to meet the standards for accredited official statistics, this will depend on progress with improving methods and data sources for EU+ and British Nationals.
- We will publish electoral statistics before May 2026, ensuring a coherent set of definitions.
- In spring, we intend to re-assess the criteria with the aim of ABPEs becoming official estimates in summer 2026.
- We will evaluate the potential for the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Registration and Population Interactions Database (RAPID) to improve the quality of the DI and in turn population stock estimates, with respect to coverage and accuracy. The evaluation will deliver a recommendation on whether RAPID should be used in the DI and population statistics estimation in the future.

Summer 2026

- Our intention is to publish ABPEs as the official estimate of the population of England and Wales, replacing the current time-series from 2022 onwards.
- We will continue to develop proof of concept methods for internal migration.

7 . How to find out more

Please [sign up to our monthly newsletter](#) for updates on publications and events, including our planned new programme of webinars on population and migration statistics.

We are committed to sharing an update to this article on a quarterly basis, as development and analysis progresses. In line with best practice in continuous improvement on statistical outputs, this page supports our ongoing commitment to engage with users as we develop our outputs. We will continue to engage with our users in a range of ways, such as bilateral conversations, user engagement groups, and conferences.

User feedback plays an essential part in our ability to improve our statistics. Please email pop.info@ons.gov.uk with any questions or feedback.

8 . Cite this article

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