

Article

Quarterly update on population and migration statistics: May 2026

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 approach

Our mission is to deliver trustworthy, independent, high-quality statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public. To support this mission, we are working to deliver Census 2031 (England and Wales), while also seeking to make greater use of administrative data to reduce reliance on data collection and improve the quality, frequency, and range of statistics available.

We have moved to a continuous improvement approach to developing population and migration statistics, which we set out in the last [quarterly update](#). We will draw on the [Census Topic Consultation](#) as well as our ongoing engagement to understand user needs. This will inform iterative improvements, helping ensure we provide high quality statistics that can inform decisions.

We will focus improvement activity on our tier 1 outputs, more details of this tiering approach and the outputs included in tier 1 is set out in our publication [how we will plan and prioritise work](#), released last month.

Through all our work we will be transparent about changes, including [scheduled revisions](#) and be guided by the [code of practice](#) for statistics to ensure standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value are upheld.

Please contact pop.info@ons.gov.uk if you have feedback or suggestions on improvements.

2 . Population estimates

Yesterday, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published a review of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics for the mid-year population estimates for England and Wales. This has reiterated the limitations, especially around our local estimates, which we have acknowledged previously in our [Quality and methodology information for mid-year population estimates report](#). We will review the OSR report in detail and provide an update in the Summer on our plans to address the recommendations.

Mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales will be published in July or August 2026. This will include [revisions](#) for mid-2022, mid-2023, and mid-2024 estimates to incorporate [improved international migration estimates](#).

We will continue improving our estimates for future publications, with an initial focus on population estimates by Local Authority. This work will improve how international migration within the UK is allocated, and strengthen our understanding of internal migration patterns. To support this, we will work with a small number of Local Authorities to gain deeper local insight, particularly in areas with high population turnover and significant student, migrant, and transient populations.

We will continue to undertake our regular engagement with government departments, devolved governments, and our [series of webinars](#), and welcome your feedback and input as we work to provide the best possible population and migration estimates.

3 . International migration

In a [letter to the Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#) in April, Mary Gregory described the progress made to improve Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates in recent years. Our November 2025 publication included a significant development of methods and data sources. In the latest [international migration research article](#) (published in April), we provided an update on progress in a number of workstreams and explained our continuous improvement approach. The updates include work to improve the accuracy of national and Local Authority (LA)-level estimates, the methods for estimating uncertainty, and alternative definitions of migration.

Our next LTIM publication will be on 21 May. This will include provisional estimates up to the end of 2025 and [revised](#) estimates back to September 2024. As usual, our [provisional estimates](#) will be updated as more data become available.

While methods will remain consistent with those used in our [November 2025 publication](#), we have overcome previous data limitations, including the emigration of those whose initial reason for migration was family related, and made improvements to better capture those with 3C Leave.

To support understanding of our changes to methods for estimating migration for British Nationals introduced in November 2025, we will include a time series back to 2022 by age and sex. In an [explainer article](#) alongside the main bulletin, we will provide further insight on British nationals moving abroad and what we know about where they go when they leave the UK.

Our LTIM publication will also include estimates of the non-UK born population using a rolled-forward method based on Census 2021. We have been talking to users about the need for and uses of statistics on country of birth and / or nationality and will be asking for feedback when we publish estimates of the non-UK born population, which will help inform future developments.

As part of the publication of mid-2025 population estimates for England and Wales, we will publish local level international migration data with an updated methodology to align with the revisions introduced in November 2025. This is part of our activity to improve local level population estimates.

We will host a [webinar on 4 June](#) to explain the latest long-term international migration estimates and answer your questions following the release.

4 . Population projections

The [2024-based National Population Projections](#) (NPPs) were released on 28 April and we will hold a [webinar](#) to explain them on 14 May.

We have been working closely with experts to develop new mortality, fertility, and migration assumptions used for these projections and the assumptions take the latest trends in [long-term international migration](#) available at the time of publishing into account. The release includes a range of variant projections that give an idea of alternative plausible outcomes under differing assumptions and a full suite of articles explaining the development of assumptions, data, and methods used.

The next set of NPPs and subnational population projections (SNPPs) for England will be 2026-based and are scheduled to be released in 2028. We are redeveloping our system for producing SNPPs and we will be seeking expert input and advice on the methods and data used for them. If you would like to provide feedback or advise on the development of SNPPs, please contact us at pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

We intend to publish 2026-based household projections for England in 2028, following publication of 2026-based SNPPs.

5 . Census

The [2027 Census Test](#) remains the current focus of the work relating to census. The test will be the first large-scale test of data collection in the census programme and will inform design decisions for the census.

On 27 April we published [Census 2031: consultation on content for England and Wales – update](#) and [The GSS Ethnicity Harmonised Standard Consultation](#).

A full report on the GSS ethnicity consultation will be published in late summer. Full reports on the Census 2031 topic consultation will follow later in 2026.

6 . Recent updates

March

We have established and held the first meeting of an Internal Migration Methods Development working group. This group draws together experts to review and advise on our research to improve how we measure internal migration.

There was a meeting of the Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP), which discussed updates relevant to Local Authorities, including the latest [update on the Transformed Labour Force Survey](#). We welcome more representation at future meetings from those who work with population statistics within Local Authorities. Please email Outreach.Engagement.Comms@ons.gov.uk if you are interested.

The [population statistics system committee](#) met in March, which included discussions around work with Devolved Government on Census and the latest plans on population estimates.

Research began into techniques for nowcasting deaths by date of occurrence. We aim for this to allow us to report all-cause weekly deaths based on date of occurrence (actual date of death), rather than date of registration and will provide an update on progress in future editions of this publication.

April

[Electoral registration statistics](#) were published for the constituencies used for the UK (Westminster) Parliament. We are in the process of resolving data quality issues, with the aim that local authority data will be included in future publications.

Our [2025 estimates of families and households statistical bulletin](#) was released; these estimates are produced using Quarter 2 (Apr to June) of the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The latest international migration [research update](#) was published, explaining how we will continuously improve our estimates. The update covers a number of areas including improving the methods for some groups of migrants, exploring data to improve local authority-level estimates for children and students, the methods for estimating uncertainty, and International Temporary Mobility.

We co-presented with Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland, the [latest research on estimating unauthorised migration](#) using a new model at the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw. The session, titled "Counting Shadows: A Community-Anchored Modelling Framework for Estimating Unauthorised Population Size" was attended by international experts on migration with specific expertise in irregular migration, including those who contributed to the [MIrreM](#) project.

Update reports on the [Census 2031 topic consultation](#) and [GSS harmonisation ethnicity consultation](#) were published on 27 April.

Following our user engagement on plans for reason for migration, an update was taken to the Migration Statistics User Group and we have confirmed that we will produce [analysis on international students](#) annually. This means we will not publish an update on this alongside Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates on 21 May 2026 and will publish the next edition around the end of the year.

2024-based [National Population Projections](#) were published.

May

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) published its findings from the population estimates compliance review. [2024 Child and Infant Mortality statistics](#) for England and Wales have been published.

7 . Future developments

Summer 2026

- Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) statistics up to the end of 2025 will be published on 21 May.
- We will publish our annual births estimates covering England and Wales for 2025 on 27 May.
- [Death registrations for 2025](#) in England and Wales will be published on 27 May.
- Research into improved methodology for [population estimates by output areas](#) will be taken to the [Methodological Assurance Review Panel](#) with a view to implementing in future years; this research does not affect mid-2025 estimates due to be published later this year.
- The next update against the priorities set out during the [UK Statistics Assembly](#) will be published.
- We will publish mid-year population estimates for England and Wales, 2025, and will confirm the timetable for publishing UK estimates.
- We will respond to the OSR compliance review on mid-year population estimates.
- Research into Small Area Population Estimates is continuing and we will be utilising the external MARP group to assure methods.
- Our research into international temporary mobility (migrants who stay in the UK for less than 12 months) is going through [external assurance processes](#); this review will help to develop the proof of concept for publishing initial estimates of international temporary mobility.

Autumn 2026

- Following the publication of [household estimates for 2021](#), we will publish estimates for more recent years and we plan to develop these estimates further and provide a household size breakdown.
- A research update on our progress in producing population estimates by ethnicity will be published.
- Statistics about the [veteran population of England and Wales](#) will be published.
- We will provide an update on our research into using administrative data to produce estimates of the population by country of birth.
- A long-term strategy for migration statistics will be published; 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.
- Mid-2025 Small Area Population Estimates will be published in October; the methods will remain unchanged from our previous [Population estimates by output areas statistical bulletin](#).
- Mid-2025 UK population estimates will be published.
- We will publish our [long-term international migration \(LTIM\) estimates to the end of June 2026](#) on 26 November 2026.
- We will publish a [provisional UK population estimate](#) for mid-2026, which will take into account the latest LTIM estimates.

Winter 2026 to 2027

- The Migration Statistics User Forum will take place on 10 December.
- We will publish the next [Reason for international migration, international students update](#).

Spring 2027

- The Internal Migration Methods Development working group will review the milestone for March 2027 set out as part of the plans for improving population estimates.
- We will publish updates on long-term international migration and population estimates and ensure we communicate any methods improvements ahead of the publications.

8 . Cite this article

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