

Population statistics and sources guide

A comparison of the different types of population estimates that are published or are planned for future publication.

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1 . Introduction

The official population estimates for England and Wales are available from [mid-1838 to mid-2024](#). When population estimates for mid-2025 onwards are needed then [2022-based population projections](#) should be used.

The official population estimates for the UK are available from [mid-1851 to mid-2023](#). When UK population estimates for mid-2024 onwards are needed then [2022-based population projections](#) should be used.

This guide provides further information on the different types of population estimate that are available.

2 . Mid-2021 to mid-2024 population estimates

Type of estimate

Accredited official estimates of the population.

Release information

- Data sources: Census 2021, births, deaths and migration estimates.
- Latest reference period: mid-2024 (30 June 2024).
- Geographical coverage: England and Wales.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority district.
- Population definition: usual residents of households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

This provides the official annual estimates of the population. They represent the accredited official estimates consistent with previous mid-year estimates produced from the traditional cohort component method of population estimates, underpinned by Census 2021 for England and Wales.

These estimates are used for planning and policy purposes as well as onward analysis, such as for sampling and weighting surveys and use in population and household projections.

Publication

The [Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2024 bulletin](#), published 30 July 2025.

3 . Rebased mid-2012 to mid-2020 population estimates

Type of estimate

Accredited official estimates of the population.

Release information

- Data sources: 2011 Census, Census 2021, births, deaths and migration estimates.
- Latest reference period: mid-2020.
- Geographical coverage: England and Wales.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority district.
- Population definition: usual residents of households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

These are the best population estimates to use for a comparable time-series of estimates with mid-2021 and later estimates.

Publication

The [Rebasing of mid-year population estimates following Census 2021, England and Wales bulletin](#), published 23 November 2023.

4 . Mid-2024 population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries

Type of estimate

Accredited official estimates of the population

Release information

- Data sources: Census 2021 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Census 2022 for Scotland, births, deaths and migration estimates.
- Latest reference period: mid-2024 (30 June 2024).
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority.
- Population definition: usual residents of households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

This provides the official annual estimates of the population for the whole UK and its constituent countries. They represent the accredited official estimates consistent with previous mid-year estimates produced from the traditional cohort component method of population estimates, underpinned by Census 2021 for England and Wales.

These estimates are used for planning and policy purposes as well as for onward analysis, such as for sampling and weighting surveys and use in population and household projections.

Publication

The [Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2024 bulletin](#), published 26 September 2025.

5 . Census 2021

Type of estimate

Accredited official statistics from Census 2021, giving a picture of the population on 21 March 2021.

Release information

- Data sources: Census 2021.
- Latest reference period: 21 March 2021.
- Geographical coverage: England and Wales.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: output area and postcodes.
- Population definition: all resident people on census night - households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

Census 2021 is our best estimate of the population of England and Wales on Census Day (21 March 2021). It underpins subsequent official mid-year population estimates.

Publication

On 28 June 2022 we released the [First results from Census 2021 in England and Wales](#) and two statistical bulletins, one focused on England and Wales and one focused on Wales, to explain these data. We have released further [census data and analysis](#).

6 . Admin-based population estimates

Type of estimate

Official statistics in development for population estimates.

Release information

- Data sources: predominantly administrative data.
- Latest reference period: mid-2024 (30 June 2024).
- Geographical coverage: England and Wales.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority district.
- Population definition: usual residents of households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: official statistics in development.

Uses and guidance

Our mid-year admin-based population estimates (ABPEs) for England and Wales are [official statistics in development](#) while we refine our methods and the data sources used to estimate the usual resident population. They do not currently replace official mid-year population estimates and should not be used for policy or decision making.

We are working to meet the standards expected of [accredited official statistics](#) and we will engage with the Office for Statistics Regulation on the timing for an assessment of the ABPEs. Our article [Understanding mid-year admin-based population estimates for local authorities in England and Wales](#) provides more information on the ABPEs.

Publication

On 30 July 2025, we published [ABPEs for all local authorities in England and Wales, mid-2022 to mid-2024](#). Supporting commentary is provided in our [Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2024 bulletin](#), alongside the latest official estimates. This allows users to compare the ABPEs with official population estimates.

We also published a [Quality and methods guide for ABPEs](#) and information about the data sources used for the ABPEs, is provided in our [Quality overview of data sources used in the mid-2024 ABPEs article](#).

We welcome feedback on our ABPEs to help inform their development. If you would like to contact us, please email us at pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

7 . Population totals from Annual Population Survey

Type of estimate

Annual Population Survey (APS) population estimates, used for official labour market outputs.

Research information

- Data sources: Annual Population Survey.
- Latest reference period: published quarterly.
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority district.
- Population definition: usual residents of households.
- Publication type: official labour market estimates.

Uses and guidance

The main use of populations within the APS data is to provide contextual comparisons of the labour markets for different areas, and for use as a denominator for calculating rates from within the published APS datasets. They are not comparable with the official mid-year population estimates and so, although they feed into the production of other official statistics, they are not an official measure of the population themselves.

Unlike the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the APS has not been reweighted. The APS weighting methodology is based on the older LFS weighting methodology using projected growth rates from Real Time Information data for EU and non-EU populations based on 2021 patterns. Therefore, the APS population totals will be inconsistent with those used on the LFS.

Publication

APS population totals are available on [Nomis](#).

8 . Population totals from Labour Force Survey

Type of estimate

Labour Force Survey (LFS) population estimates, used for official labour market outputs.

Release information

- Data sources: Labour Force Survey.
- Latest reference period: published monthly.
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: regions - International Territorial Level 1.
- Population definition: usual residents of households.
- Publication type: official statistics in development.

Uses and guidance

The main use of populations within the LFS data is to provide contextual comparisons of the labour markets for different areas, and for use as a denominator for calculating rates from within the published LFS datasets. They are not comparable with the official mid-year population estimates.

From our December 2024 labour market release, LFS periods from January to March 2019 onwards have been reweighted to incorporate estimates of the size and composition of the population, based on mid-2022 UK population estimates.

Publication

LFS population totals are available within some of the published tables for [Labour Market statistics](#).

9 . Population by country of birth and nationality

Type of estimate

Discontinued accredited official statistics about the country of birth and nationality of UK residents.

Release information

- Data sources: Annual Population Survey (APS).
- Latest reference period: year ending June 2022.
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: local authority district.
- Population definition: usual residents of households.
- Publication type: official estimate of the population when broken down by country of birth and nationality.

Uses and guidance

The Annual Population Survey (APS) is not designed to measure long-term international migration flows but does give insights into changes and size of the non-UK born and non-UK national population. The population estimates in the statistical bulletin that accompanies the publication are referred to as "stocks", but it is not possible to directly compare stocks from the APS with estimates of migration flows. These estimates are also not comparable with the population totals in the official mid-year population estimates.

Publication

Discontinued. Please see our [Long-term international migration bulletin](#) published on 28 November 2024.

Future developments

We are continuing to investigate how the [Transformed Labour Force Survey](#) (TLFS) can be used to produce interim measures of the non-UK-born population. Historically, we have used APS data for this purpose, and it is intended that the TLFS may be able to replace this. Additional exploration is also taking place to better understand the quality of the APS since we discontinued the series. We plan to update users later in 2025 on our progress.

We are also investigating whether estimates of the non-UK-born population can be produced using an admin-data approach. This work is exploring the suitability of different sources and methods to enable the regular production of estimates that are consistent with our admin-based population estimates. This would ensure a coherent suite of data across population statistics.

10 . Employee population by nationality

Type of estimate

Supporting data and research.

Release information

- Data sources: HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real-Time Information (RTI) and nationality from Migrant Worker Scan (MWS).
- Latest reference period: December 2022.
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: regions - Nomenclature Units for Territorial Statistics Level 1 (NUTS1).
- Population definition: payrolled employees.
- Publication type: research.

Uses and guidance

Provides information on the number of payrolled employees. The different definition to other population estimates means it is not comparable with official estimates of the population. These are not indicative migration or population estimates and should not be used as such.

The estimates published on 23 March 2023 provide an update to the ad-hoc estimates published in March 2021 and 2022.

Publication

The [Employments from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information: Ad hoc estimates of payrolled employees by NUTS1 region and nationality, seasonally adjusted dataset](#), published 23 March 2023.

11 . Gross Domestic Product per head

Type of estimate

Quarterly population estimates used as the denominator to calculate Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head.

Release information

- Data sources: National Accounts, population estimates and population projections.
- Latest reference period: First quarter of 2025.
- Geographical coverage: UK.
- Lowest geographical breakdown: UK.
- Population definition: Usual residents of households and communal establishments.

Uses and guidance

Provides information on GDP per head. The quarterly estimates are created using a linear interpolation of mid-year population estimates for the UK. Population projections for the UK are used when population estimates are unavailable.

We are considering the best way to reflect the latest available demographic statistics in the production of GDP per head and one option being considered is a quarterly time series informed by quarterly population data rather than the linear interpolation currently used.

Publication

[Quarterly UK population estimates](#) are currently published as time series data as part of the [GDP estimates](#) published quarterly.

12 . Related links

[Future of population and migration: a statistical design](#)

Article | Released 15 July 2024

A description of plans to improve population and migration statistics in England and Wales, underpinning our consultation on the proposed new system.

[Understanding admin-based population estimates](#)

Methodology | Updated 30 July 2025

Explainer article about our admin-based population estimates for non-technical audiences.

[International migration research, progress update: February 2025](#)

Methodology | Released 26 February 2025

An update on international migration methods and research.

13 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 30 July 2025, ONS website, methodology, [Population statistics and sources guide](#).