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-2025. Users who need population estimates for mid-2026 onwards should use National population projections: 2024-based.

The official population estimates for the UK are available from mid-1851 to mid-2024. Users who need UK population estimates for mid-2025 onwards should generally use National population projections: 2024-based. Some users can use the Provisional population estimate for the UK: mid-2025.

This guide provides further information on the different types of population estimates and projections that are available.

2 . Mid-2021 to mid-2025 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-2025 (30 June 2025).
- 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 (MYEs) 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.

These estimates are subject to statistical uncertainty, particularly for smaller geographic areas and detailed age-sex breakdowns. Statistical uncertainty is lowest immediately following a census, and greatest immediately before the next census. This is because error accumulates over time as estimates are rolled forward onto the following year.

Publication

Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025 bulletin, published 29 July 2026.

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

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

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 statistics consistent with previous mid-year estimates that are produced from the traditional cohort component method of population estimates. These estimates are based on the 2021 censuses of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and on Scotland's 2022 census.

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.

These estimates are subject to statistical uncertainty, particularly for smaller geographic areas and detailed age-sex breakdowns. Statistical uncertainty is lowest immediately following a census, and greatest immediately before the next census. This is because error accumulates over time as estimates are rolled forward onto the following year.

Publication

Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2024 bulletin, published 26 September 2025.

5 . Provisional population estimate for the UK: mid-2025

Type of estimate

Accredited official estimates of the population.

Release information

- Data sources: mid-2024 UK population estimate, births, deaths, provisional long-term international migration estimate for year ending 30 June 2025.
- Latest reference period: mid-2025 (30 June 2025).
- Geographical coverage: UK
- Lowest geographical breakdown: UK
- Population definition: usual residents of households and communal establishments.
- Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

The provisional mid-2025 population estimate provides a timelier and more accurate estimate than is available from population projections for mid-2025. This product does not provide breakdowns geographically or by age and sex.

The estimate can be used when an up-to-date estimate is needed for per capita indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP) per head. However, it should not be used for comparisons with estimates for smaller geographic areas in previous years. Subnational survey weights should continue to use the existing subnational population estimates and projections. Once mid-2025 population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries is published, users should not use this estimate.

Publication

Provisional population estimate for the UK: mid-2025, published 27 November 2025.

6 . 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.

7 . 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 were published as official statistics in development.

We had previously said we were aiming for the ABPEs to become the official estimates of the population in 2026. As discussed in our Assessment of criteria for moving to admin-based population estimates as official estimates of population, England and Wales: 2026 article, this is no longer our aim. Instead, we will make iterative improvements to the data and methods that underpin the components of population change, with a focus on internal migration and disaggregation of long-term international migration (LTIM) estimates to local-authority level.

Publication

Discontinued. 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, which was published alongside the 2024 official estimates. This allows users to compare the ABPEs with official population estimates.

We also published our Mid-year admin-based population estimates for England and Wales quality and methods guide. Information about the data sources used for the ABPEs, is provided in our Quality overview of data sources used in mid-2024 admin-based population estimates for England and Wales article.

8 . 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.

9 . 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.

10 . 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 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. For our latest estimate of the size of the non-UK-born population, please see our Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2025 bulletin, published on 21 May 2026.

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. We are also exploring how to better understand the quality of the APS since we discontinued the series.

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.

11 . Gross domestic product per head (EBAQ)

Type of estimate

The quarterly population estimates used are the denominator to calculate gross domestic product (GDP) per head.

Release information

- Data sources: Population estimates, provisional population estimate for the UK and national population projections.
- Latest reference period: published quarterly.
- 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. One option we are considering is a quarterly time series informed by quarterly population data, rather than the linear interpolation we currently use.

Publication

Quarterly UK population estimates are currently published as time series data as part of the GDP estimates, published quarterly.

12 . National population projections: 2024-based

Type of projection

Accredited official projection of the population on a national-level.

Release information

Data sources: mid-year estimates 2024, births, deaths, long-term international migration and internal migration.

Latest reference period: from mid-2024 (from Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2024 as of 26 September 2025) to mid-2124.

Geographical coverage: UK.

Lowest geographical breakdown: countries of the UK.

Population definition: usual residents.

Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

National population projections (NPPs) are used both within and outside of government as the definitive set of population projections. These are produced on a consistent basis for the constituent countries of the UK using the internationally accepted cohort component methodology. The NPPs help to inform fiscal projections, by identifying future demand for health and education services and estimating the future cost of state pensions.

Projections are not forecasts and will differ from actual future outcomes to a greater or lesser extent. There is a margin of error in the underlying data, for example, estimates of the current population and past migration flows. In addition, the assumptions we have made about the future cannot be certain as patterns of births, death, and migration can change and are influenced by many factors. In most cases, each set of projections is superseded when the next scheduled release is published. A range of variant projections are generally included in each release.

Publication

National population projections: 2024-based, published 28 April 2026.

13 . Subnational population projections: 2022-based

Type of projection

Accredited official projection of the population for English local authorities, counties, regions and health geographies.

Release information

Data sources: mid-year estimates 2022.

Latest reference period: from mid-2022 mid-year population estimates (from Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland: mid-2022 as of 26 March 2024) to mid-2047.

Geographical coverage: England

Lowest geographical breakdown: local authorities in England.

Population definition: usual residents.

Publication type: accredited official statistics.

Uses and guidance

The 2022-based subnational population projections (SNPPs) provide statistics on the potential future size and age structure of the population in England at region, county, local authority, Sub Integrated Care Boards and NHS England region levels. A range of variant projections are generally included in each release.

We will be undertaking analysis of the 2022-based SNPPs against the latest population estimates, including revisions to earlier years of mid-year estimates. We will engage with users on the continued use of the 2022-based SNPPs. We intend to make an alternative population projections product available by the end of 2026, which aligns the latest population estimates for users who have ongoing needs for SNPPs.

Publication

Subnational population projections for England: 2022-based, published 24 June 2025. Equivalent publications are produced for Scotland (by National Records of Scotland), Northern Ireland (by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) and Wales (by Welsh Government).

14 . Related links

Improving population estimates for England andWales
Article | Released 29 July 2026
A description of plans to improve population and migration statistics in England and Wales.

15 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 29 July 2026, ONS website, methodology, Population statistics and sources guide.