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**Coverage**

United Kingdom

**Theme**

Population and Migration

## United Kingdom population set to pass 60 million next year

The United Kingdom population is projected to increase gradually from an estimated 59.6 million in 2003, passing 60 million in 2005, to reach 65.7 million by 2031, according to new figures released today.

The projections for the UK and its constituent countries, made by the Government Actuary, are based on the estimated population at the middle of 2003 and replace the previous 2002-based national projections.

The new figures show that:

- The projected total population increase of 6.1 million to 2031 is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.35 per cent. Longer-term projections suggest the population will peak around 2050 at nearly 67 million and then very gradually start to fall.
- The projected total population of the United Kingdom at 2031 is 865,000 (1.3 per cent) higher than in the previous (2002-based) projections. This is primarily due to the effect of upward revisions to population estimates for England and Wales and the associated removal of a downward adjustment for unattributable population change made in the previous projections (see Background Notes 1 and 3).
- Of the projected 6.1 million increase between 2003 and 2031, some 2.5 million (41 per cent) is projected natural increase (more births than deaths) while the remaining 3.6 million (59 per cent) is the assumed total number of net migrants (see Background Note 7).
- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to fall by 5.9 per cent from 11.7 million in 2003 to 11.0 million in 2015 and then to rise slowly until the late 2020s.

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- The number of people of working age (currently defined as between ages 16 to 64 for men and 16 to 59 for women) is projected to rise by 2.8 per cent from 36.8 million in 2003 to 37.8 million in 2010. Allowing for the planned change in women's state pension age from 60 to 65 between 2010 and 2020, the working age population will increase further to 39.9 million by 2020. It is projected to peak at 40.0 million in 2022.
- The working age population will also become much older. In 2003, there were 2.3 million (13 per cent) more working age adults aged below 40 than above 40. However, by 2010, there will be just 0.5 million (3 per cent) more and, boosted by the change in women's state pension age, by 2020 there will be 1.4 million (7 per cent) more working age people above 40 than below 40.
- The number of people of state pensionable age is projected to increase by 10.4 per cent from 11.0 million in 2003 to 12.2 million in 2010. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the population of pensionable age will then rise more slowly, reaching 12.5 million by 2020. However, a faster increase will then resume with longer-term projections suggesting the number over pensionable age reaching 15 million by 2031 and eventually peaking at nearly 18 million in about sixty years' time.
- In 2003, there were around 700,000 (6 per cent) more children aged under 16, than people of state pensionable age. However, from 2007, the population of state pensionable age is projected to exceed the number of children and by 2031 is projected to exceed it by about 4 million (36 per cent).
- In 2003 there were 3.34 persons of working age for every person of pensionable age. By 2010, this demographic support ratio will decline to 3.11. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the ratio will then rise slightly to 3.19 by 2020 before declining quickly to 2.57 by 2031. Longer-term projections suggest the support ratio will briefly stabilise around 2.30 in the 2040s, declining slightly further to around 2.15 in the 2060s.



- The population will gradually become older with the average (mean) age expected to rise from 39.4 years in 2003 to 43.6 years in 2031. Longer-term projections suggest the average age will reach 45 years around 2050, and continue to rise slightly thereafter.
- Due to differences in demographic patterns, projected trends differ for the four countries of the United Kingdom. The population of Scotland is projected to decline from 2005, while the populations of Wales and Northern Ireland are projected to peak in the early 2030s and then start to fall. The population of England is still projected to be rising in forty years' time, but at a reducing rate of growth.

Tables A to D in this release present summary results from the new projections.

### **Underlying assumptions**

These projections reflect recent upward revisions to the estimated starting population and the removal of a downward adjustment for unattributable population change made in the previous 2002-based projections (see Background Notes 1 and 3). However, the long-term assumptions regarding fertility, mortality and net migration are unchanged from the 2002-based projections. For the United Kingdom as a whole, the assumptions for the future are:

- Average completed family size, which has been falling from a peak of nearly 2.45 children for women born in the mid 1930s, to level off at 1.74 children for women born after 1985.
- Life expectancy at birth, based on the mortality rates for that year, to rise from 76.2 years in 2003 to 81.0 years in 2031 for men, and from 80.6 years in 2003 to 84.9 years in 2031 for women.
- Net migration gain of 130,000 each year from 2003-04 onwards.



## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) produces national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries at the request of the Registrars General for England & Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The assumptions used are agreed in consultation with the statistical offices of the four constituent countries. A new set of projections is normally made every second year, based on a full-scale review of the trends affecting the underlying assumptions about fertility, mortality and migration. The last "full" set of national projections, issued in December 2003, were based on the estimated population at the middle of 2002. The next full set, scheduled for issue in October 2005, will be based on the estimated population at the middle of 2004.

However, following revisions by ONS earlier this month to the estimated population of England & Wales (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/census0704.pdf>), it was decided to produce an additional "interim" set of projections based on the estimated population at the middle of 2003. These replace the previous 2002-based projections issued in December 2003. They are designated as "interim" projections as there has been no change to the underlying long-term assumptions (for fertility, mortality and net migration) from the previous projections.

2. Although the long-term assumptions are unchanged, some revisions have been made to the assumptions for the immediate short-term, particularly regarding fertility and migration between the countries of the United Kingdom.
3. Removal of adjustment for unattributable population change

The 2002-based projections for England & Wales included an annual downward adjustment of 27,000 for unattributable population change. This adjustment was included in the projections after ONS had made a similar adjustment for their mid-2002 population estimates for England & Wales in respect of the unexplained intercensal discrepancy which had accumulated in population estimates between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses.

Following the results of Local Authority Population Studies published in July 2004, the size of the unexplained intercensal discrepancy has reduced. ONS have reviewed the need for the adjustment for unattributable population change made in population estimates in the light of this reduction, ONS' plans to improve the quality of population estimates, and in response to comments made about the adjustment made for the mid-2002 estimates. ONS have concluded from this further research that it is now not possible to demonstrate that such an adjustment will produce more reliable population estimates, either nationally or subnationally. Consequently, the mid-2003 and revised mid-2002 estimates published by ONS on 9 September 2004 do not include any allowance for unattributable population change. See



[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Methodology\\_by\\_theme/downloads/Changes\\_Estimates.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Methodology_by_theme/downloads/Changes_Estimates.pdf) for further details.

In the light of this decision, GAD has decided *not* to include any allowance for unattributable population change in the interim 2003-based national population projections.

4. The recent revisions to population estimates (Note 1 above) and the removal of the adjustment for unattributable population change (Note 3 above) relate to England & Wales only and have no effect on either Scotland or Northern Ireland. However, the revisions to short-term assumptions (Note 2 above) affect all four countries.
5. The main focus of the projections is on the period to 2031. Longer-term projections to 2043 for the individual countries, and to 2073 for the United Kingdom and Great Britain only, are also available. However, the further ahead the projections go, the greater is the degree of uncertainty. Variant UK projections, based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, mortality and net migration, will be published on 21 October 2004.
6. Full results of the 2003-based national population projections for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries are available on the GAD website (<http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/index.asp>). An article on these projections will be published by ONS in *Population Trends 118*, in December 2004.
7. Projected natural change and assumed net migration are not independent of each other. The projected numbers of future births and deaths are themselves partly dependent on the assumed level of net migration. A note considering the overall impact of assumed net migration on future population growth is available from <http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/2003/methodology/mignote.htm>.
8. Figures for life expectancy in 2003 quoted in this release are provisional.
9. All figures presented in the tables in this release have been rounded independently, so component figures may not add exactly to totals.
10. Subnational population projections for England are the responsibility of the Office for National Statistics, while those for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the General Register Office for Scotland, the Welsh Assembly Government Statistical Directorate and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency respectively.
11. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the ONS press office.



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**Table A** **Projected components of population change, United Kingdom, 2003-2031, (annual averages)**

	<i>thousands</i>					
	2003	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
	-2006	-2011	-2016	-2021	-2026	-2031
Population at start	59,554	60,254	61,401	62,618	63,835	64,902
Births	701	682	692	705	702	687
Deaths	597	582	579	591	619	658
Natural change	103	99	113	113	83	30
Net migration	130	130	130	130	130	130
Total change	233	229	243	243	213	160
Population at end	60,254	61,401	62,618	63,835	64,902	65,700

**Table B** **Comparison of 2003-based and 2002-based projections**

	<i>thousands</i>			
	Population at mid-2031			
	2003-based	2002-based	Difference	
	<u>projections</u>	<u>projections</u>	<u>000s</u>	<u>%</u>
United Kingdom	65,700	64,835	865	1.3%
England	55,881	55,158	723	1.3%
Wales	3,153	3,066	87	2.8%
Scotland	4,825	4,770	55	1.1%
Northern Ireland	1,840	1,840	1	0.0%

**Table C Projected population by age, United Kingdom, 2003-2031***thousands*

Ages	<u>2003</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2031</u>
0-14	10,924	10,697	10,385	10,364	10,447	10,553	10,533
15-29	11,234	11,583	11,988	11,873	11,455	11,148	11,130
30-44	13,519	13,253	12,446	12,010	12,405	12,812	12,703
45-59	11,424	11,764	12,325	13,113	12,952	12,186	11,789
60-74	7,948	8,307	9,327	9,900	10,502	11,115	11,871
75 and over	4,505	4,651	4,930	5,357	6,075	7,088	7,675
All ages	59,554	60,254	61,401	62,618	63,835	64,902	65,700
Mean age (years)	39.4	39.8	40.6	41.4	42.2	42.9	43.6
Under 16	11,712	11,496	11,118	11,039	11,149	11,248	11,242
Working age*	36,828	37,392	38,100	39,162	39,983	39,786	39,186
<i>Under 40</i>	19,567	19,371	19,115	19,185	19,289	19,114	18,705
<i>40 &amp; over</i>	17,260	18,022	18,985	19,977	20,694	20,672	20,481
Pensionable age*	11,014	11,366	12,182	12,417	12,703	13,868	15,271
Support ratio* (working age/pensionable age)	3.34	3.29	3.13	3.15	3.15	2.87	2.57

\* Working age and pensionable age populations based on state pension age for given year.

Between 2010 and 2020, state pension age will change from 65 years for men and 60 years for women, to 65 years for both sexes.

**Table D Projected population of population of United Kingdom and constituent countries, 2003-2071***thousands*

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2021</u>	<b>Longer-term projections</b>				
				<u>2031</u>	<u>2041</u>	<u>2051</u>	<u>2061</u>	<u>2071</u>
UK	59,554	61,401	63,835	65,700	66,543	66,787	66,631	66,430
England	49,856	51,595	53,954	55,881	56,979	--	--	--
Wales	2,938	3,020	3,106	3,153	3,145	--	--	--
Scotland	5,057	5,034	4,963	4,825	4,589	--	--	--
Northern Ireland	1,703	1,753	1,811	1,840	1,829	--	--	--