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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Population and Migration

UK population set to increase to 65 million over the next ten years

The United Kingdom population is projected to increase by 4.4 million to 65 million by 2016, according to new population projections released today by the Office for National Statistics. This increase is equivalent to an average annual rate of growth of 0.7 per cent over the period 2006 to 2016.

If past trends continue, the UK population will increase from an estimated 60.6 million in 2006, to 65 million in 2016, passing 70 million in 2028, to reach 71 million by 2031.

The population of England is projected to increase by 8 per cent by 2016, that of Northern Ireland by 7 per cent and Wales by 5 per cent. The projected increase for Scotland, where fertility and life expectancy levels are assumed to remain lower than in the rest of the UK, is 3 per cent.

These projections, for the UK and its constituent countries, are based on the estimated population at the middle of 2006 and a set of demographic trend-based assumptions about the future. They replace the previous 2004-based national projections.

Long-term assumptions of future fertility, life expectancy and migration are all higher than those made in the previous projections (*see page 4 below*). All of these changes act in the same direction: toward a higher future population.

The assumptions underlying national population projections are demographic trend based. They are not forecasts. They do not attempt to predict the impact that future government policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors (whether in the UK or overseas) might have on demographic behaviour. They simply provide the population levels and age structure that would result if the assumptions about fertility, mortality and migration levels were to be realised in practice.

Issued by
National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone
Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gov.uk
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Statistician
Chris Shaw 020 7533 5294
Email chris.shaw@ons.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk/releases

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Uncertainty and variant projections

Projections are uncertain and become increasingly so the further they are carried forward. In addition to the principal (central) projection, variant projections are published today based on alternative, but still plausible, assumptions of future fertility, life expectancy and net migration.

Varying either one of the fertility or migration assumptions to the levels assumed in the high and low variants would increase or decrease the population of the UK by half a million or more by 2016 and by about two million by 2031. With combinations of the higher or lower assumptions for each component, the possible range for total population size is considerably wider (see Background Note 4).

Children, ageing and older people

- The number of children aged under 16 is projected to increase by 4.8 per cent from 11.5 million in 2006 to 12.1 million by 2016 and then to increase further to nearly 13 million by 2031.
- The population will gradually become older with the average (mean) age expected to rise from 39.6 years in 2006 to 40.6 years in 2016 and to 42.6 years by 2031.
- As the population ages, the numbers in the oldest age bands will increase the fastest. In 2006, there were 4.7 million people in the UK aged 75 and over. The number is projected to increase to 5.5 million by 2016 and to 8.2 million by 2031, a rise of 76 per cent over twenty-five years.

People of state pensionable age

- In 2006, there were about 200,000 more children aged under 16 than people of state pensionable age. However, in 2007, for the first time ever, the population of state pensionable age is projected to exceed the number of children. And, despite increases to state pension age, the population of state pensionable age is projected to exceed the number of children under 16 by 400,000 in 2016 and by over 2 million in 2031.

- The number of people of state pensionable age is projected to increase by 7.2 per cent from 11.3 million in 2006 to 12.2 million in 2010. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age between 2010 and 2020, the population of pensionable age will then rise more slowly, reaching 12.7 million by 2020. A faster increase will then resume, tempered by the increase in state pension age for both sexes from 65 to 66 between 2024 and 2026, with the number over pensionable age reaching almost 15 million by 2031.

Working age population

- 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 2.3 per cent from 37.7 million in 2006 to 38.6 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 41.5 million by 2020. And allowing for the further change in state pension age to 66 for both sexes between 2024 and 2026, it will increase further to 43.4 million by 2031.
- The working age population will also become much older. In 2006, there were 1.7 million (10 per cent) more working age adults aged below 40 than were aged 40 and above. However, by 2020, influenced by the change in women's state pension age, there will be more aged 40 and above than below 40. By 2031, when state pension age will have increased to 66, the working age population aged 40 and above will outnumber those below 40 by 1.4 million (7 per cent).
- There were 3.3 persons of working age for every person of state pensionable age in 2006. By 2010, this demographic support ratio will decline to 3.2. Allowing for the change in women's state pension age, the ratio will then return to 3.3 by 2020 before declining again to 2.9 by 2031. Without the change in state pension age from 65 to 66 between 2024 and 2026, it would have declined further, to 2.7 by 2031.

Births, deaths and net migration

- Of the 4.4 million projected increase in the UK population over the next ten years, some 2.3 million (53 per cent) is projected natural increase (more births than deaths) while the remaining 2.1 million (47 per cent) is the assumed total number of net migrants. However, the projected numbers of future births and deaths are themselves partly dependent on the assumed level of net migration (see Background Note 6).

Comparison with previous projections

- The projected total population of the United Kingdom at 2016 is 1.7 million (2.6 per cent) higher than in the previous (2004-based) projections. This is due to a combination of higher birth rate assumptions, higher assumed levels of net migration, and higher life expectancy assumptions.

Underlying assumptions

The long-term assumptions regarding fertility, mortality and net migration have all been reviewed since the last, 2004-based, population projections. For the UK as a whole, the long-term 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 1.84 children for women born after 1990. This compares with a long-term assumption of 1.74 children per woman in the previous projections.
- Life expectancy at birth, based on the mortality rates for that year, to rise from 77.2 years in 2006 to 82.7 years in 2031 for men, and from 81.5 years in 2006 to 86.2 years in 2031 for women. The 2031 assumptions are over a year greater than those used in the previous projections.
- A long-term net migration inflow of +190,000 each year. This compares with an assumed long-term net inflow of +145,000 a year in the previous projections.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. National population projections are prepared by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Registrars General for England & Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The assumptions are agreed in liaison with the devolved administrations, following consultation with key users of projections in each country and advice from an expert academic advisory panel. These are the first set of national population projections to be produced by ONS since responsibility for their production was transferred from the Government Actuary's Department in January 2006. The approach used has remained unaltered since the transfer of the work.
2. 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 set of national projections, issued in October 2005, was based on the estimated population at the middle of 2004.
3. Key results from the 2006-based principal national population projections are available on the National Statistics website at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=8519>. Full details, including key variant projections, are available on the GAD website at http://www.gad.gov.uk/Demography_Data/Population/. It is planned that the full projection results will be added to the National Statistics website during 2008. An article on these projections will be published by ONS in *Population Trends* 131, in March 2008.
4. Further variant projections, including selected combinations of the high and low variants published today, will be published on 27 November 2007.
5. The main focus of the projections is on the period to 2031. Longer-term projections to 2081 are also published. However, projections become increasingly uncertain the further they are carried forward. To illustrate this uncertainty, variant projections, based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, mortality and net migration, are also available.
6. 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 at http://www.gad.gov.uk/Demography_data/Population/2006/methodology/mi_gnote.asp.

7. Under the provisions of the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2007, state pension age will (i) change from 65 years for men and 60 years for women to 65 years for both sexes by 2020 and then (ii) increase in three stages to 68 years for both sexes between 2024 and 2046. Further details are available at:
http://www.gad.gov.uk/Demography_data/Population/2006/methodology/pensionage.asp.
8. All figures presented in the tables in this release have been rounded independently, so component figures may not add exactly to totals.
9. 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.
10. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the ONS press office.
11. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2007.

2006-BASED NATIONAL POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR THE UK AND CONSTITUENT COUNTRIES

Table 1 Projected population of the United Kingdom and constituent countries, 2006-2031

thousands

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2031</u>
United Kingdom	60,587	62,761	64,975	67,191	69,260	71,100
England	50,763	52,706	54,724	56,757	58,682	60,432
Wales	2,966	3,038	3,113	3,186	3,248	3,296
Scotland	5,117	5,206	5,270	5,326	5,363	5,374
Northern Ireland	1,742	1,812	1,868	1,922	1,966	1,999

Table 2 Projected population by age, United Kingdom, 2006-2031

thousands

Ages	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2031</u>
0-14	10,737	10,912	11,428	11,947	12,026	11,974
15-29	11,876	12,614	12,458	12,024	12,191	12,706
30-44	13,302	12,699	12,691	13,492	14,132	13,975
45-59	11,744	12,295	13,094	12,986	12,398	12,420
60-74	8,269	9,265	9,824	10,432	11,035	11,802
75 and over	4,659	4,975	5,480	6,309	7,477	8,223
All ages	60,587	62,761	64,975	67,191	69,260	71,100
Mean age (years)	39.6	40.1	40.6	41.3	42.0	42.6
Under 16	11,537	11,643	12,096	12,687	12,828	12,781
Working age*	37,707	38,934	40,386	41,604	43,000	43,393
<i>Under 40</i>	19,715	19,981	20,393	20,728	20,930	20,988
<i>40 & over</i>	17,991	18,953	19,992	20,876	22,070	22,404
Pensionable age*	11,344	12,184	12,493	12,900	13,431	14,927
Support ratio* (working age/pensionable age)	3.32	3.20	3.23	3.23	3.20	2.91

* 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 for women, to 65 years for both sexes. Between 2024 and 2046, state pension age will increase in three stages from 65 years to 68 years for both sexes.

Table 3 Projected components of population change, United Kingdom, 2006-2031, (annual averages)

	<i>thousands</i>				
	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
	-2011	-2016	-2021	-2026	-2031
Population at start	60,587	62,761	64,975	67,191	69,260
Births	+780	+799	+805	+796	+788
Deaths	-565	-549	-552	-573	-610
Natural change	+215	+250	+253	+224	+178
Net migration	+220	+193	+190	+190	+190
Total change	+435	+443	+443	+414	+368
Population at end	62,761	64,975	67,191	69,260	71,100

Table 4 Comparison of 2006-based and 2004-based projections

	<i>thousands</i>			
	Population at mid-2016			
	2006-based projections	2004-based projections	Difference	
			000s	%
United Kingdom	64,975	63,304	1,672	2.6%
England	54,724	53,276	1,448	2.7%
Wales	3,113	3,102	11	0.4%
Scotland	5,270	5,126	144	2.8%
Northern Ireland	1,868	1,800	68	3.8%

Chart A Population of the United Kingdom according to principal and variant 2006-based projections, 1971-2031

