

# 2011 Census: Population Estimates for the United Kingdom, 27 March 2011



Coverage: **UK**

Date: **17 December 2012**

Geographical Area: **Region**

Theme: **Population**

## Key points

- On census night, the population of the United Kingdom (UK) was estimated to be 63.2 million.
- There were 31 million men and 32.2 million women in the UK.
- The estimated populations of the four constituent countries of the UK are 53 million people in England, 5.3 million in Scotland, 3.1 million in Wales and 1.8 million in Northern Ireland.
- The population of the UK increased by 4.1 million (nearly 7 per cent) between 2001 and 2011.
- Over the last hundred years the population of the UK (as currently constituted) has increased by 21.1 million (50 per cent).
- The population of the UK aged 65 and over was 10.4 million (16 per cent of the UK population) in 2011, 9.4 million in 2001 (16 per cent) and 2.2 million in 1911 (5 per cent).

## Summary

This bulletin presents the key messages from the first release of 2011 Census data for the UK. It describes the usually resident population of the UK and its constituent countries, by age and sex, and provides information on how the population has changed over time.

Censuses were undertaken by the Office for National Statistics in England and Wales, National Records of Scotland, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The 2011 Census data for the UK are based on the combined results of these individual censuses, which were all held

on 27 March 2011. The 2011 Census outputs for the UK are delivered by the Office for National Statistics.

## Introduction

### First release of 2011 Census statistics for the United Kingdom

The UK population was 63,182,000 in 2011. This is the first population estimate for the UK to be produced from all three 2011 Censuses, which were conducted on 27 March 2011. This release includes estimates of the usually resident population of the UK and its constituent countries, by sex and five-year age band.

This bulletin follows the first release of statistics for [England and Wales](#) and for [Northern Ireland](#) on 16 July 2012 and for [Scotland](#) on 17 December 2012. The availability of 2011 Census population estimates for all four constituent countries now allows for the publication of UK level estimates.

Due to the breadth and depth of census data, results from the 2011 Census are being released in stages. Subsequent releases of UK census data will be available as soon as all constituent country data are available. An outline of the timetable for subsequent UK releases has been published via the [2011 Census prospectus \(754.4 Kb Pdf\)](#).

Statement of Agreement of the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland

The [Statement of Agreement \(65.7 Kb Pdf\)](#) of the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland sets out the principles for ensuring that the independent censuses carried out in each constituent country of the UK will be able to provide consistent and high quality statistics, that meet user requirements for UK level data. In summary, the agreement specified:

- That each census would be held on the same date, 27 March 2011.
- The use of a common main population base for outputs of usual residents.
- A common design for the census questionnaires.
- The use of common definitions and classifications.
- Harmonised final outputs to ensure consistent, coherent and accessible statistics.

Some questions and procedures, for the separate countries, inevitably reflected local issues – for example in Wales the census could be completed in Welsh, either on paper or online, whilst in Scotland it could be completed (online) in Gaelic.

### About the census

The censuses for Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) were taken every ten years back to 1801. Decennial censuses were held in Ireland from 1841 through to 1911. There was no census in Ireland in 1921, and following this, the first Northern Irish census was in 1926, with the second Northern Ireland census in 1937, then every ten years from 1951. There was no census undertaken throughout the UK in 1941 due to the Second World War.

Census statistics describe the characteristics of the population that live in an area, such as how many men and women there are and their ages, religion, ethnic group, education level and occupations. This first release is for population estimates by sex and five-year age band only. Subsequent releases will provide more detailed statistics for other variables.

The census population estimates were extensively quality assured using both national and local sources of information for comparison and review. The 2011 Census provides a high quality estimate of the population that people can use with confidence.

Further information about the methodology and quality assurance processes for the 2011 Censuses in [England and Wales](#), [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) are available from their respective websites.

## **Operational details**

Questionnaires were distributed to all areas of the UK, by either post or hand. Respondents also had the opportunity to respond online. The questionnaires across the four countries of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) were of a consistent design that enables harmonised UK outputs to be produced.

The 2011 Censuses conducted across the UK give an estimate of the total population. A good response was achieved to the 2011 Census but inevitably some people were missed. The issue of under coverage in a census is one that affects census takers everywhere and methods and processes were designed to address this.

Census coverage surveys were carried out to measure under coverage in a sample of areas and based on this, with rigorous estimation methods, the census population counts were adjusted for under and over coverage to produce population estimates that represent 100 per cent of the usually resident population in all areas.

The questionnaires, operational methods, and statistical processes were designed by each census office to best reflect local circumstances and needs. These differences are set within a wider picture of harmonised questions, operations, methods, and outputs, to give UK data. Further details of how the censuses were undertaken can be found on each census office website.

## **The data in context**

Census statistics are used to understand similarities and differences in the characteristics of local, regional and national populations. This information underpins the allocation of billions of pounds of public money around the UK to provide services like education, transport and health, determining, for example, the growing or diminishing demand for education or health services in an area.

The size and make up of the population is also of interest to commercial companies, special interest groups, academia, and the general public. Decisions are taken every day using census statistics. These can be as local as the number of car parking spaces needed at supermarkets, to wider programmes, for example, where to target government training schemes.

Publication of the 2011 UK Census population statistics on a consistent basis facilitates analysis and decision taking across the whole of the UK. This helps users who have a UK wide interest. As

well as financial allocations to the Scottish Government, National Assembly for Wales, and Northern Ireland Assembly, international bodies such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations require statistics for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Within the EU regional funding and contributions, and qualified majority voting allocations are made on the basis of population levels. UK Census population estimates also underpin population projections for the UK, by ONS, Eurostat, and other organisations. Provision of consistent population data is also the first step towards meeting the UK's legal obligations to provide 2011 UK Census data to Eurostat (the statistics arm of the EU).

The statistics in this release are used as a baseline for the 2011 mid-year population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries. The mid-year estimates refer to the population on 30 June of the reference year and are published annually; updating census data with information on births, deaths, and migration. In due course the UK mid-year population estimates for 2002-2010 will be re-based to take into account the additional information that the 2011 Census has provided about how the population of the UK has changed during the decade.

Mid-2011 population estimates based on the 2011 Census, and which take into account population change between 27 March and 30 June, were published on 25 September 2012 for [England and Wales](#). These will be published in due course for the rest of the UK.

## Notes for Introduction

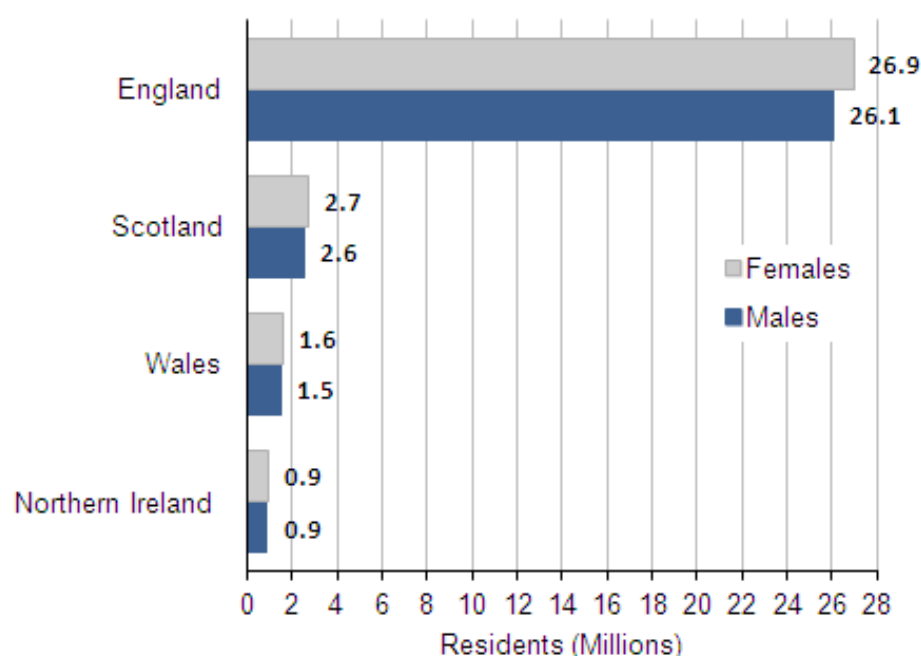
1. For the 2011 Census, a usual resident of the UK is anyone who, on census day 2011, was in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months.

## The population of the United Kingdom

The 2011 Census estimated usual resident population of the UK was 63,182,000, including approximately 31,028,000 males and 32,154,000 females. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of this population between the four constituent countries of the UK.

**Figure 1: Residents (millions) by UK constituent country and sex**

2011



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

**Notes:**

1. Usual resident population data are shown in millions.

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(19 Kb)

In 2011, the usual resident population of England accounted for approximately 84 per cent of the UK usual resident population. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland account for 8 per cent, 5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This distribution of population across the UK remains similar to that seen in 2001.

As females tend to live longer than males, females account for slightly over 50 percent of the population in all four UK constituent countries.

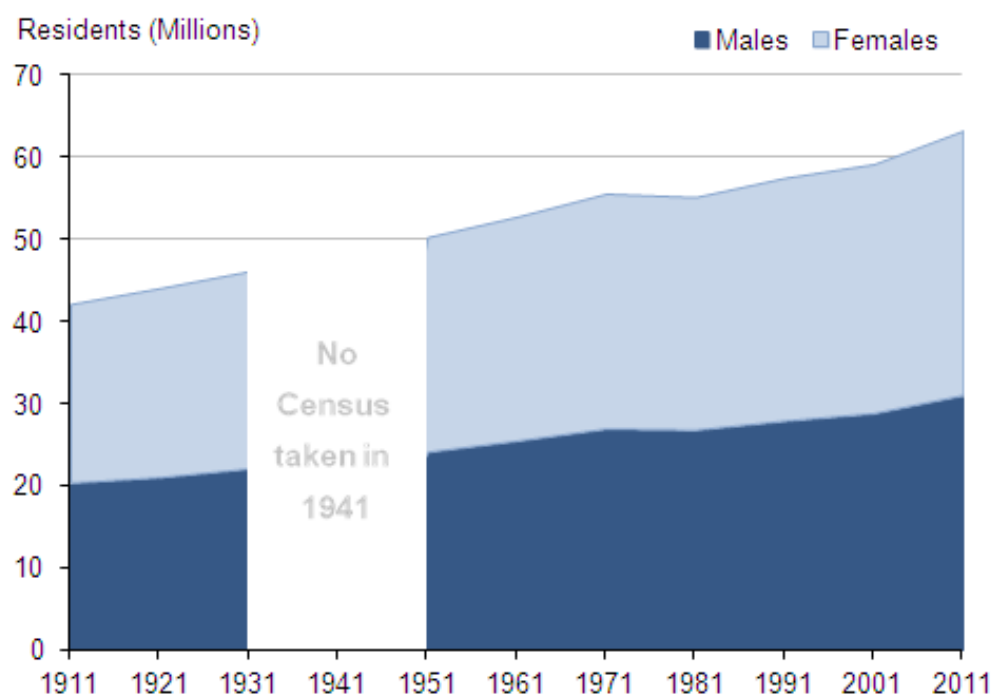
**The growth of the population of the United Kingdom**

The population of the UK in 2011 was 63.2 million, the largest it has ever been. Between 2001 and 2011, the UK population grew by 4.1 million, nearly a 7 per cent increase. This is the largest decennial percentage change recorded since 1961.

Figure 2 below shows the population of the UK in each census year from 1911 to 2011; no census was held in 1941 throughout the UK due to the Second World War. In 1981 there was a small decrease, in contrast to the increasing population of the UK, generally, between 1911 and 2011.

**Figure 2 : UK population change**

1911-2011



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

**Notes:**

1. Usual resident population data are shown in millions, but are rounded to the nearest thousand persons.
2. The 1911 Northern Ireland population is created from aggregating the constituent Counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone) and the Belfast and Londonderry County Boroughs.
3. Northern Ireland Census date was 1926. (This has been included and presented for 1921).
4. Northern Ireland Census date was 1937. (This has been included and presented for 1931).
5. There was no census undertaken throughout the UK in 1941 due to the Second World War.
6. UK population calculated using mid-year population estimates for 1991 and 2001, and 1981 in Northern Ireland. See background note 4 for further information.

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Over the last one hundred years, the UK population has grown by 21.1 million (a 50 per cent increase). A population decrease was only recorded during one decade, 1971 to 1981, when the population fell by 0.7 per cent. This population decrease was driven by net international emigration (more people leaving the UK than arriving) during the late 1970s.

**Table 1: UK percentage population change**

1911-2011

Thousands, per cent

Census Year	Change between Census		
	Persons	Period	Difference (per cent)
1911	42,082,000	—	—
1921	44,026,000	1911-1921	4.6
1931	46,075,000	1921-1931	4.7
1941	—	—	—
1951	50,225,000	1931-1951	9.0
1961	52,709,000	1951-1961	4.9
1971	55,515,000	1961-1971	5.3
1981	55,100,000	1971-1981	-0.7
1991	57,439,000	1981-1991	4.2
2001	59,113,000	1991-2001	2.9
2011	63,182,000	2001-2011	6.9

**Table source:** Office for National Statistics**Table notes:**

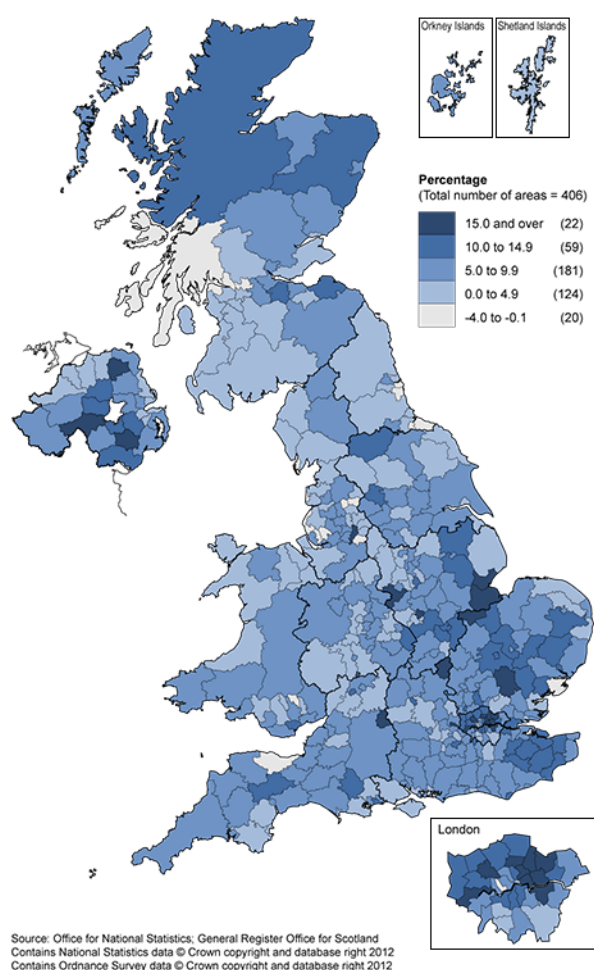
1. Data are rounded to the nearest thousand persons.
2. The 1911 Northern Ireland population is created from aggregating the constituent Counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone) and the Belfast and Londonderry County Boroughs.
3. Northern Ireland Census date was 1926. (This has been included and presented for 1921).
4. Northern Ireland Census date was 1937. (This has been included and presented for 1931).
5. There was no census undertaken throughout the UK in 1941 due to the Second World War.
6. Change and percentage change for 1951 reflects change over twenty years.
7. UK population calculated using mid-year population estimates. See background note 4 for further information.

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Map 1 below shows the percentage change in the estimated usual resident population of the UK between 2001 and 2011, for local authorities in England and Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government districts in Northern Ireland.



**Map 1: Percentage difference in UK population, 2001-2011, by local authority district**

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

### Notes:

1. Percentage changes are calculated using mid-year population estimates for 2001.

Local authorities (or equivalents) with the largest percentage population increases, over the period 2001 to 2011, are particularly concentrated in London, the South East, East Midlands and East England and Northern Ireland. The three local authorities with the largest percentage population increases were in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets (26.4 per cent) and Newham (23.5 per cent), and Dungannon in Northern Ireland (20.9 per cent).

However, the population of some local authority districts decreased between 2001 and 2011. The areas experiencing population decline are concentrated in the North East and North West regions of England and the west of Scotland. In Wales one local authority, Blaenau Gwent, showed a small decrease.

No local authority districts in Northern Ireland had a decrease in population between 2001 and 2011. The three local authorities with the largest percentage population decreases were in Barrow-in-



Furness, England (-4.0 per cent) and Inverclyde (-3.7 per cent) and Argyll and Bute in Scotland (-3.6 per cent).

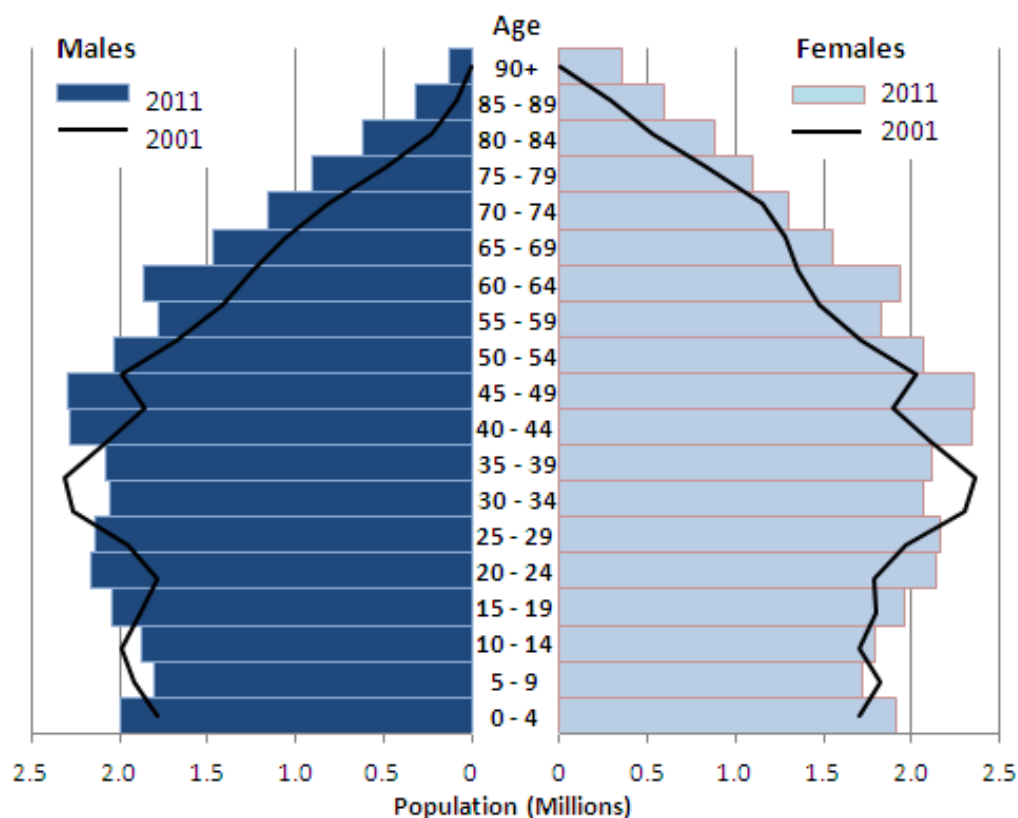
## The structure of the population of the United Kingdom

The structure of the population is defined by its age and sex; this can be visualised using a population pyramid. Figure 3 below shows the population pyramid for the UK in 2001 and 2011, by five-year age group.

The overall chart shape of the UK population pyramid demonstrates an ageing population, which can be seen by comparing both the size of the older population in 2011 against the 2001 overlaid line. The smaller base of the 2001 pyramid, indicating the lower birth rates of the late 1990s and early 2000s, can also be seen.

**Figure 3: UK Population by sex and five-year age group**

2001 and 2011



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

### Notes:

1. UK population pyramid for 2001 is based on mid-year population estimates.

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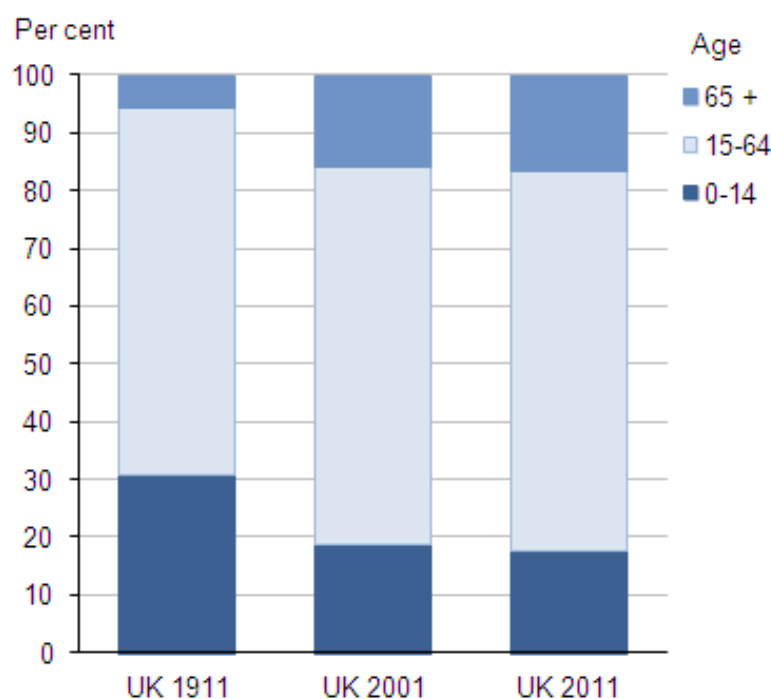
Each line (up to 85-89) in the pyramid represents a five-year age band and the length of the line relates to the number of people of that age in the population. The size and composition of the population is determined by the pattern of births, deaths and migration that have taken place in previous years. Some key details illustrated by the pyramid for 2011 are:

- Peaks and wide bands of the pyramid reflect high numbers of births in previous years (particularly for people aged 60-64 born following the Second World War and those aged 40-49, born during the 1960s baby boom).
- The narrowing of the pyramid for people aged five to nine years is a consequence of low numbers of births at the beginning of the last century, and the broadening of the pyramid in the 0-4 years category is due to a higher numbers of births in recent years.
- At older ages, females outnumber males, reflecting the higher life expectancy of females.
- At younger ages there are more males than females, reflecting that there are slightly more boys than girls born each year.

Figure 4 below shows the percentage by broad age group, of the UK population for 1911, 2001 and 2011; illustrating the change in the broad age structure.

**Figure 4: UK population by broad age group**

1911, 2001 and 2011



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

**Notes:**

1. UK population figure for 2001 is based on mid-year population estimates.
2. The 1911 Northern Ireland population is created from aggregating the constituent Counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone) and the Belfast and Londonderry County Boroughs.

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At broad age level the structure of the UK population in 2011 remains similar to that seen in 2001 with 66 per cent of the population aged 15-64, compared to 65 per cent in 2001, despite the variation visible in the five-year age groups shown by figure 3. The percentage of the population aged under 15 decreased slightly (1 percentage point) whilst the older population (aged 65 and over) increased by 0.5 percentage points.

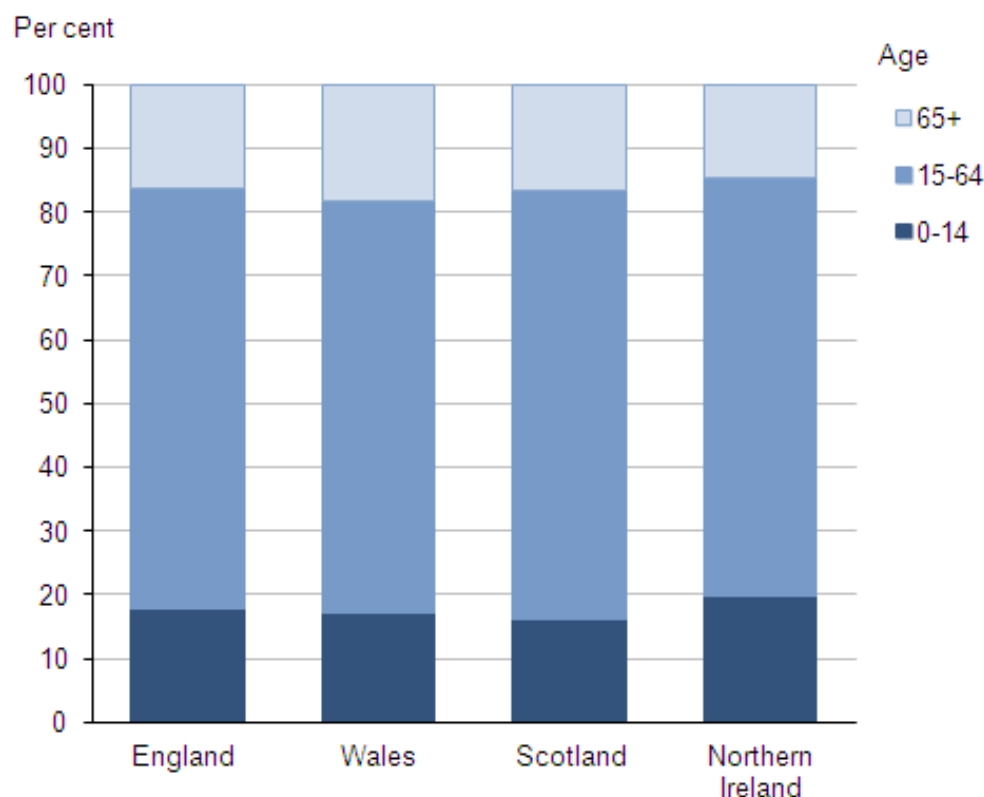
However, over the last century the UK population structure has changed significantly. Although the proportion of the population aged 15-64 has remained broadly similar, the proportion of the population aged 0-14 has nearly halved (31 per cent in 1911 compared to 18 in 2011) and the proportion of older people aged 65 and over has more than trebled (from 5 to 16 per cent).

This highlights the impact of the declining birth and mortality rates recorded across the one hundred year period, the cause of the UK's ageing population structure. This ageing population has considerable implications for a range of policy issues within the UK, such as pensions and provision of health-care. The population aged 15-64 was 64 per cent in 1911 and 66 per cent in 2011.

Figure 5 shows the broad age structures of the four constituent countries of the UK in 2011. Although minor differences can be seen in the age make-up of the countries, this figure shows how similar it is at the national level within the UK.

**Figure 5: Population of UK constituent countries by broad age group**

2011



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, National Records of Scotland

### Download chart

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### Background notes

1. ONS is responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales. Simultaneous but separate censuses took place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These were run by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).
2. ONS is responsible for the publication of UK statistics (compiling comparable statistics from the UK statistical agencies above).
3. Figures may not sum due to rounding. The numbers presented in this report have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Similarly, percentages have generally been rounded to the nearest whole number to ease readership. Unrounded data from England and Wales and Northern Ireland are summed together first, before rounding and adding to rounded data from Scotland. As a result, final unrounded data may be slightly different to data in this report. Percentage figures are similarly affected.

4. Comparisons of 2011 Census data with 1991 and 2001 are made for the UK using mid-year population estimates. For Northern Ireland only, 1981 data uses mid-year population estimates.
5. A person's place of usual residence is in most cases the address at which they stay the majority of the time. For many people this will be their permanent or family home. If a member of the armed services did not have a permanent or family address at which they are usually resident, they were recorded as usually resident at their base address.
6. Further information on the methodology and quality assurance processes used to produce 2011 Census estimates are available from the [ONS](#), [NRS](#) and [NISRA](#) websites for their respective countries.
7. The [Statement of Agreement \(65.7 Kb Pdf\)](#) of the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland ensures that the independent censuses carried out in each constituent country of the UK are able to provide consistent and high quality statistics that meet user requirements for UK level data.
8. There will be further releases of data from the 2011 Census over the next 18 months; information is available online in the 2011 Census prospectuses for each country: [England and Wales \(754.4 Kb Pdf\)](#), [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#). Further information on forthcoming UK releases can be found within the [ONS Census Prospectus](#), as ONS is responsible for collating and publishing statistics for the UK as a whole.
9. The census provides estimates of the characteristics of all people and households in the UK on census night, 27 March 2011. These are produced for a variety of users including government, local authority areas, business and communities. The census provides population statistics from a national to a local level. This bulletin discusses the results for the UK as a whole, for the four UK constituent countries and for local authority areas. Future releases from the 2011 Census will include tabulations at other geographies, more detailed statistics (such as by single year of age) and additional variables (such as socio-economic characteristics).
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