

Article

How population and migration estimates are evolving

This webpage provides the latest updates on our plans to further develop population and migration statistics

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1 . Why are population and migration statistics important?

This web page provides the latest updates on our plans to further develop population and migration statistics: continuous improvement is an important aspect of all statistics. For population and migration statistics, we are developing our use of new data sources and methods, and seeking to continuously improve the quality of our outputs in line with our [Statistical Quality Improvement Strategy](#) and our [Data Strategy](#). The use of rich administrative data provides an exciting opportunity to evolve these statistics, this page supports our ongoing commitment to engage with users as we develop our outputs.

Population and migration statistics support decisions and policies right across our society and economy, at national and local levels, and for different communities. They are crucial in capturing population changes and supporting service provision and decision making.

In 2023 we ran a consultation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics in England and Wales. It was designed to identify how well our proposals meet user needs and to evaluate, in cases where needs were not met, why this was the case. The consultation also aimed to provide us with information on how people use these data and to capture feedback on our proposals for future development of these statistics. For further details, please see our [consultation document \(PDF, 1334KB\)](#).

The [consultation update \(PDF, 163KB\)](#) details the number of consultation responses by sector and outlines how we engaged with users of population and migration statistics, both before and during the consultation. It also explains how we have carried out our analysis of the responses, our formal response will be published later in 2024.

User feedback received from the consultation included crucial uses of these statistics:

- informing national and local public policy to provide the best strategy and intelligence
- monitoring trends and changes in communities and populations
- informing funding and allocation decisions around service provision, to meet the needs of the local communities and societal groups
- academic research and detailed analysis in their respective fields of study
- respondents' personal interest in being kept up to date on the analysis of data for issues important to them or their organisation

2 . Why are we evolving population and migration statistics?

We strive to continuously improve the statistics available to our users, providing more frequent population statistics with consistent quality every year. For over 200 years, the census has provided the basis of population and migration statistics, offering a rich understanding of our society at national and local level every ten years. However, data from the census become less accurate as we get further from the census date and local detail on important topics is not available between census years. Using administrative data for population and migration statistics will provide a more timely insight and create new possibilities.

Policy users and decision makers have often told us they would benefit from more frequent and timely statistics. We are developing outputs that make greater use of administrative data to help us meet these needs. Using a range of sources from across government and the public sector, we can produce more frequent and timely national and local statistics about the size and structure of the population. We also use administrative data to estimate long-term international migration for the UK and provide detailed information about who is migrating and the reasons they migrate.

Watch our [Transforming the way we produce statistics video](#) to find out more about why we are developing the way we produce our statistics.

3 . What have we learnt so far?

In 2021 we published our first admin-based long-term international migration estimates, following the suspension of the international passenger survey (IPS). Our statistics now reflect actual behaviours recorded in administrative data rather than IPS responses on people's intentions, which can change. These statistics are published as official statistics in development and have been improving over time. As part of the quality assurance of our new methods, our [Estimating UK international migration: 2012 to 2021 article](#) provides comparisons with other sources to demonstrate confidence in these updated estimates up to year ending (YE) June 2021.

Last year we published admin-based mid-year population estimates for all local authorities in England and Wales, mid-2021 to mid-2022 and provisional estimates for mid-2023. These were published as official statistics in development to support user feedback and demonstrate our ability to produce provisional population estimates, earlier than ever before.

The dynamic population model is used to produce these population estimates, for more information on the dynamics of population change, please see our [Dynamic population model for England and Wales: July 2022 article](#).

Feedback received through user engagement informs all our work, and has also led to publication of additional outputs including publishing more information on net migration of international students in our [Reason for international migration, international students update article](#) and in our [interim National population projections bulletin](#).

4 . Timeline for the transformation of population and migration statistics

We are sharing our plans for the coming period, to help users understand how we are developing our migration and population estimates, and to hear more about what they can expect to see in future.

We will continue to develop our admin-based population estimates, working towards admin based mid-year population estimates (England and Wales) meeting the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value, and replacing our existing methods for producing population estimates. We will also be working to:

- improve our estimates of internal migration (within England and Wales)
- develop coherent UK population estimates that take account of our new methods
- develop our approach to producing small area (below local authority) population estimates

We will continue to develop our UK long-term international migration estimates, working towards greater coherence with population estimates. As part of this development work, we will also be looking at potential new methods and data for estimates of migration for EU, British and indefinite leave to remain (ILR), as well as further developing our uncertainty measures.

We have [requested an assessment of our admin-based population estimates](#) and are working to ensure that these, and our long-term international migration estimates, meet the standards expected of accredited official statistics by summer 2025.

23 May 2024

- Provisional year end December 2023 UK long-term international migration published as official statistics in development.

Summer 2024

- The Office for Statistics Regulation will publish their Admin-based population estimates Phase 1 assessment report.
- We will publish our methods paper on new approaches to estimating small area populations in July.
- We will publish population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2023 on 15 July (these estimates will continue to be produced using the existing cohort component method).
- We also plan to publish further information on the statistical design and an update to our [Population and migration statistics transformation quality strategy](#) in July, underpinning the future population and migration statistics system in England and Wales.

Autumn 2024

- We will undertake engagement on admin-based population estimates, to gather feedback on the new approach, which will focus on local authorities so we can draw on local insight as we improve the estimates.
- We will publish our mid-2023 UK population estimates and we plan to publish an update on plans for coherent UK estimates following introduction of admin-based population estimates.
- We will publish Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, England and Wales: rebased mid-2012 to mid-2020
- We will publish Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographics, England and Wales: mid-2023.
- We will publish Provisional year end June 24 long-term international migration, including updated estimates for year end June 23 and year end December 23, which will introduce new approaches for EU, British and indefinite leave to remain (ILR) migration and improved uncertainty measures.
- We will provide an update on feasibility to produce population estimates by country of birth and nationality.

Winter 2024

- We will publish our Admin-based population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2024 (provisional).

Summer 2025

- We aim to publish our Admin-based mid-year population estimates and long-term international migration data as accredited official statistics.

We will be publishing more details on other aspects of the future of population and migration programme in future, including, in autumn 2024 publishing plans for characteristics

5 . How to find out more?

Please [sign up to our monthly newsletter](#) for updates on publications and events, including our planned new programme of webinars on population and migration statistics.

We are committed to sharing an update to this web page on a quarterly basis, as development and analysis progresses. In line with best practice in continuous improvement on statistical outputs, this page supports our ongoing commitment to engage with users as we develop our outputs. We will continue to engage with our users in a range of ways, such as bilateral conversations, user engagement groups, and conferences.

User feedback plays an essential part in our ability to improve our statistics. Please email any questions or feedback to pop.info@ons.gov.uk.