Statistical bulletin

National population projections: 2024-based

The potential future population size of the UK and its constituent countries. These statistics are widely used in planning, including fiscal projections, health, education and pensions.

Contact:
Population and Household Projections
pop.info@ons.gov.uk
+44 1329 444661

Release date:
28 April 2026

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1 . Overview

The UK population is projected to reach 71 million by 2034. This is slower growth than our previous, 2022-based projections, which projected the UK population would reach 72.2 million by mid-2034. Over the first 10 years of our projections period, the population is projected to grow from 69.3 million in mid-2024 to 71.0 million in mid-2034, an increase of 1.7 million (2.5%). The increase arises from net international migration.

Net migration remains the only source of expected population growth, though at a lower level than in our previous projections. It is projected that net migration will add 2.2 million to the population in the 10 years to mid-2034. Over the same period, natural change (births minus deaths) is projected to be negative 450,000 (6.40 million births and 6.85 million deaths).

After peaking at 72.5 million in mid-2054, the UK population is projected to decrease. The population of England is projected to peak at 62.1 million in mid2056, while Wales is projected to peak at 3.2 million in mid2035, Scotland at 5.6 million in mid2033, and Northern Ireland at 1.9 million in mid2031.

Over the 10 years to mid-2034, England's population is projected to grow more quickly than other UK nations, at 2.9%. The projected population growth for Wales (1.0%), Northern Ireland (0.6%), and Scotland (0.3%) is slower in this period.

National population projections are not forecasts and do not predict international migration changes. They do not directly account for recent and future policy or economic changes. Assumptions for fertility, migration, and mortality are based on observed trends.

Assumption setting

Our assumptions are based on current and past demographic behaviours (births, deaths, and migration) and trends. As those patterns change, we will adjust our projections accordingly. For instance, these projections assume lower long-term international migration and lower future fertility than in the previous (2022-based) national population projections (NPPs).

Migration

The 2024-basedNPPslong-term average annual net international migration assumption is 230,000, down by 110,000 from 340,000 in the 2022-based projections.This reflects the sharp decrease in net migration since it peaked in 2023, as well as expert advice.

There is always uncertainty in estimatesand projectionsof migration. This means actual levels of future migrationandtheresulting population may be higher or lower than assumed in these projections.

Births and deaths

Deaths are projected to exceed births in the UK from mid-2026 onwards. There are projected to be around 450,000 more deaths than births between mid-2024 to mid-2034.

Age structure

Between mid-2024 and mid-2034, the number of people of pensionable age is projected to increase by 1.8 million (14.6%), from 12.4 million to 14.2 million. This is one in five of the total projected population, and takes into account the planned increases in State Pension age to 67 years for both sexes. Over the same period, children (those under 16 years) are projected to comprise 15.5% of the total population in mid-2034, down from 18.2% in mid-2024.

Important information on developing and using 2024-based national population projections

Migration assumptions do not directly account for recent and future policy, economic changes, or international events. Future releases of long-term international migration estimates will include updates to provisional and past estimates used in this release and will be incorporated into future projections.

For users who require a UK-level estimate for mid-2025 that is consistent with estimates for years before mid-2025, we recommend continued use of our Provisional population estimate for the UK: mid-2025 bulletin. For users who require data by UK country, age or sex for mid-2025, these projections can be used until equivalent mid-2025 population estimates are published later in 2026.

We recommend that the NPPs are used:

- for forming the basis of fiscal projections, identifying future demand for health and education services, and estimating the future cost of state pensions; they can provide a valuable planning tool, taking into account the uncertainty around future population levels
- as the base for bespoke population projections
- with variant projections to understand the implications of higher or lower assumed levels of fertility, migration, and life expectancy

We recommend that the NPPs are not used:

- to replace use of provisional population estimates for mid-2025 unless data for future years are needed; mid-year population estimates for mid-2025 will be published in summer 2026
- as a prediction or forecast of specific demographic outcomes; long-term assumptions are an illustration of an assumed average sustained in the long-term

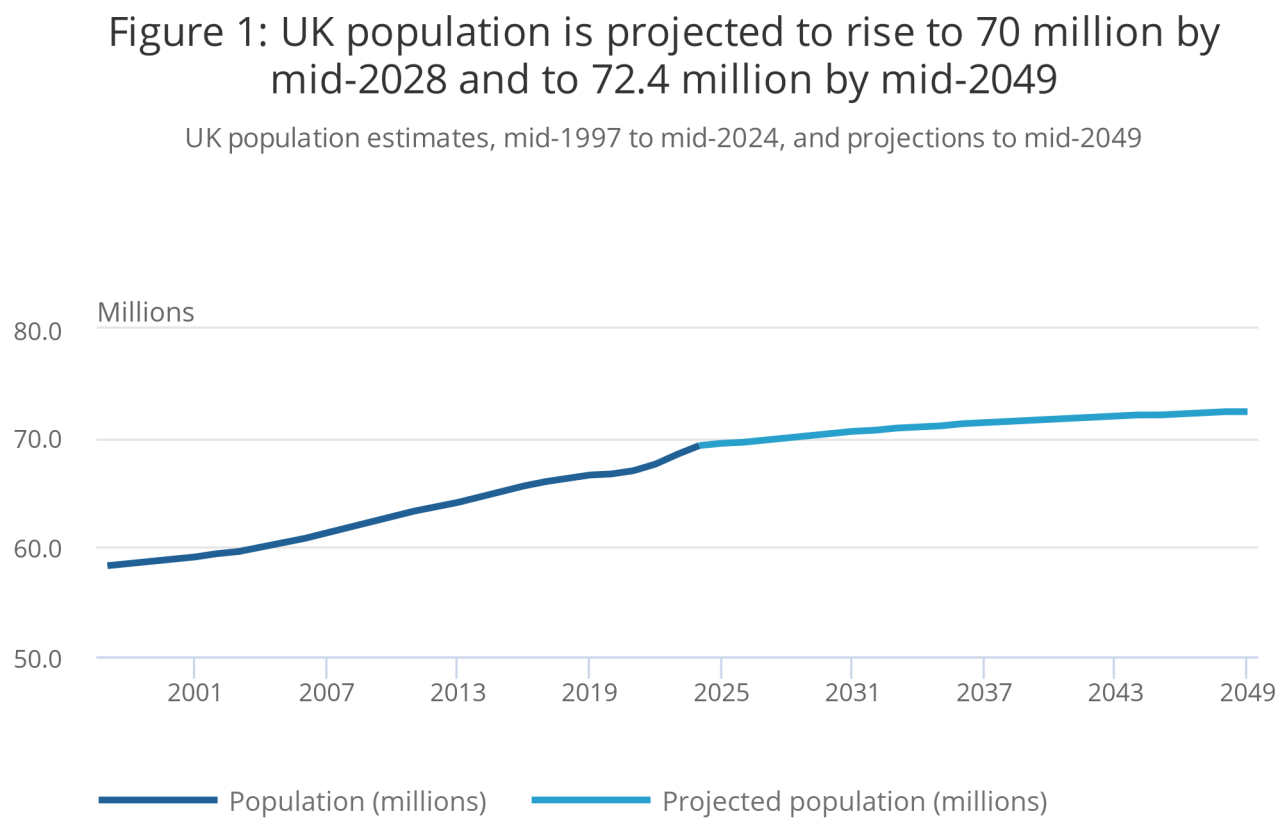
2 . UK population

Projected population change over 10 years

The UK population is projected to rise by 1.7 million over the first 10 years of the projections, from 69.3 million in mid-2024 to 71.0 million in mid-2034 (a 2.5% increase). The population is estimated to have grown by 4.7 million (a 7.2% increase) in the 10 years between 2014 and 2024. The population of the UK is projected to exceed 70 million by mid-2028.

Figure 1: UK population is projected to rise to 70 million by mid-2028 and to 72.4 million by mid-2049

UK population estimates, mid-1997 to mid-2024, and projections to mid-2049

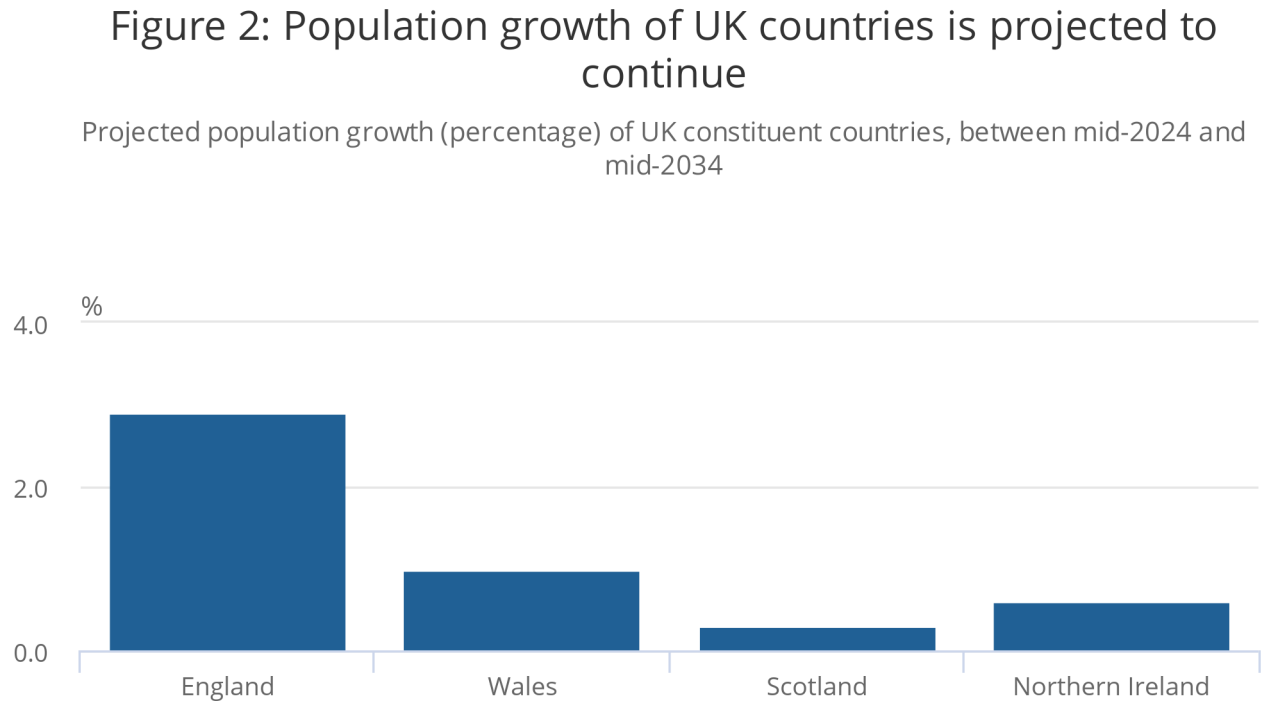


Source: Mid-year population estimates and 2024-based national population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 2 shows projected growth over the 10-year period between mid-2024 and mid-2034, which varies between the four countries of the UK. England's population is projected to grow by 2.9%, Wales by 1.0%, and Northern Ireland by 0.6%. Scotland has the lowest projected growth at 0.3%. There is year-to-year variation in these projections; for some years decreases are also projected.

Figure 2: Population growth of UK countries is projected to continue

Projected population growth (percentage) of UK constituent countries, between mid-2024 and mid-2034



Source: National population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Projected population change over 25 years

Population growth over the next 25 years is projected to be slower than the 25 years to mid-2024. The total projected growth for the UK population is 3.1 million (4.5%) over the 25 years between mid-2024 and mid-2049 (Table 1). In comparison, the population growth was estimated to be 10.6 million (18.1%) for the 25 years between 1999 and 2024.

The UK population is projected to peak at 72.5 million in mid-2054 before declining thereafter, rather than continuing to grow until mid-2096, as in the 2022-based national population projections (NPPs).

Table 1: Estimated and projected population of the UK and constituent countries, mid-2024 to mid-2049, thousands (persons)

	2024	2029	2034	2039	2044	2049
UK	69,281	70,224	71,014	71,594	72,063	72,410
England	58,620	59,518	60,294	60,899	61,416	61,832
Wales	3,187	3,208	3,218	3,216	3,208	3,195
Scotland	5,547	5,558	5,563	5,548	5,518	5,475
Northern Ireland	1,928	1,940	1,939	1,931	1,922	1,909

Source: Mid-year population estimates and 2024-based national population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Figures may not sum because of rounding.

England’s population is projected to increase by 5.5% over the 25-year period between mid-2024 and mid-2049, while Wales’s population is projected to have the smallest growth (0.3%). Scotland’s population is projected to decrease by 1.3%, and Northern Ireland’s by 1.0%, over the same period.

The population of Scotland is projected to decrease in the year to mid-2026 and from mid-2033. The population of Northern Ireland is projected to decrease from mid-2032 onwards, and for Wales from mid-2036 onwards.

The projections trend differs from that seen in our previous 2022-based projections. This is because of the relatively small difference between births and deaths, along with lower assumed future levels of migration and fertility. Additionally, the relatively large post-World War 2 birth cohorts are projected to reach older ages over the early part of the projections period, leading to increases in the number of deaths until mid-2061.

For more information on changes since the last release, see Section 5: Changes since the 2022-based projections
.

3 . Births, deaths, and migration

Components of population change over the first 10 years of the projection

The population of the UK is projected to increase by 1.7 million (from 69.3 million to 71.0 million) overthe 10 years between mid-2024 and mid-2034. During this period, it is projected that:

- 6,396,000 people will be born
- 6,846,000 people will die
- 7,278,000 people will immigrate long term to the UK
- 5,096,000 people will emigrate long term from the UK

There are projected to bearound450,000moredeaths thanbirths over the 10 years between mid-2024 and mid-2034. Deaths are projected to exceed births in the UK from mid-2026, with mid-2025 being the last year in which births are slightly higher. Net international migration is the difference between immigration and emigration. During the same decade, it is projected that net migration will be 2.2 million people.

Figure 3 shows how changes in births, deaths, and migration contribute to the overall change in population between 2024 and 2034 for the UK and its constituent countries. Net international migration is projected to be the largest contributor to population growth in England, adding around 2 million people, and in Northern Ireland, adding around 20,000 people.

Over the same 10-year period, the biggest factor in population change in Wales and Scotland is net cross-border migration, with projected increases of around 92,000 and 110,000 people, respectively.

Figure 3:Net migration is projected to be the largest contributor to population change in the UK

Contributors to population change (thousands), UK and constituent countries, mid-2024 to mid-2034

Downloac

Components of change over the first 25 years of the projection

Net migration is projected to be the only source of population growth in the UK over the next 25 years, as deaths are expected to exceed births by 2.5 million. Overall, it is projected that the population will grow by 3.1 million, with projected net migration totalling 5.6 million between mid-2024 and mid-2049.

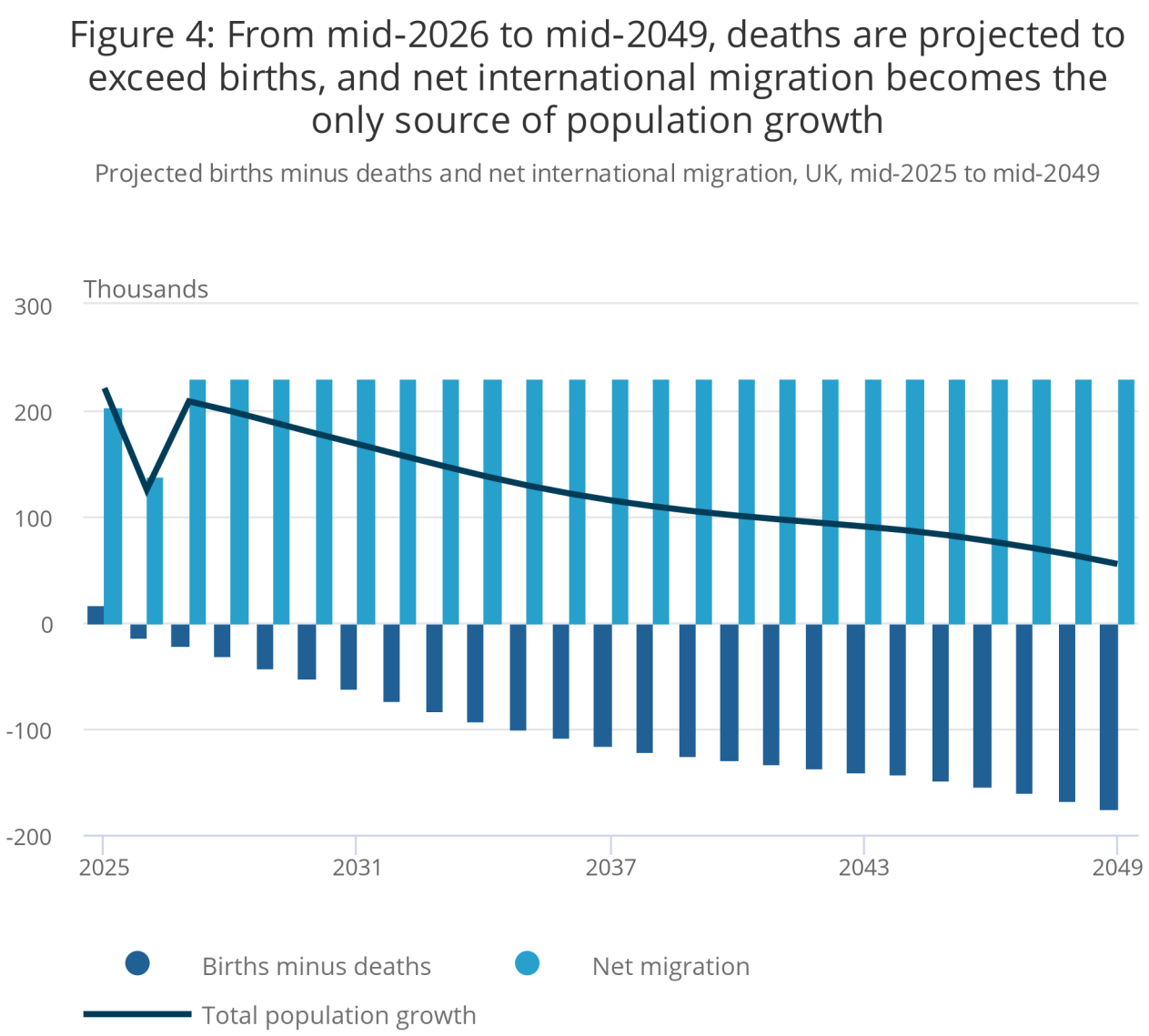
Net migration has fallen in recent years, and the early years of our projections reflect this. We project that net migration will reach the longterm assumption of 230,000 a year from mid-2027 onwards (Figure 4).

We set the longterm international migration assumption using a 10year average of long-term international migration data. For this release, the 10-year average uses the period from mid2013 to mid2021 and mid2025. It excludes mid2022, mid2023, and mid2024, which were affected by shortterm factors that led to unusually high levels of migration. This approach provides a longterm average for future migration, which is likely to be more representative of prevailing trends and is closer to expert views on the potential range within which we may see average long-term net international migration.

Demographic behaviour is inherently uncertain, so it is not possible to predict future migration trends. The long-term assumption should not be viewed as a forecast, but as a scenario where long-term net migration averages at a certain level with year-to-year variation. As trends change in births, migration, and deaths, then so will our assumptions for use in future projections.

Figure 4: From mid2026 to mid2049, deaths are projected to exceed births, and net international migration becomes the only source of population growth

Projected births minus deaths and net international migration, UK, mid-2025 to mid-2049



Source: National population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 4 also shows that births are projected to exceed deaths in the UK in the year to mid2025. From mid2026 onwards, deaths are projected to outnumber births each year, with the difference increasing throughout the projection period.

4 . Changing age structure

Figure5shows the age structure of the population in mid-2024andthe projected age structure in mid-2034.

In mid-2024, there were more females than males at older ages, reflecting their higher life expectancy. The spike at age 77 years reflects the baby boom after World War 2 and the second peak around age 59 years reflects the baby boom of the 1960s. The decreases in the late teenage years are because of lower birth rates around the turn of the millennium.

In mid-2034, there are still projected to be more females than males at older ages. The post-World War 2 bump represents 87-year-olds, and the 1960s baby boom peak represents those aged around 69 years.

Figure 5: Age structure of the UK population, mid-2024 and mid-2034

Downloac

More people at older ages

In mid-2024 there were 1.75 million people aged 85 years and over, making up 2.5% of the population. By mid-2049, this is projected to have doubled to 3.6 million, representing 4.9% of the total UK population. There are projected to be many more people at older ages by mid-2049. This is, in part, because of larger cohorts from the 1960s are now aged over 80 years, as well as general increases in life expectancy. Over the longer-term, lower assumed fertility affects the percentage balance between older and younger cohorts.

Fewer children

There are projected to be fewer children inthe UKby mid-2034 and mid-2049, compared with mid-2024. Thisreflects that theassumed fertility rates in the 2020s and 2030s are lower than those around 2001, when UK fertility was at a record low for the time.

Figure 6shows the changing age structurein mid-2024, mid-2034,and mid-2049by life stage:

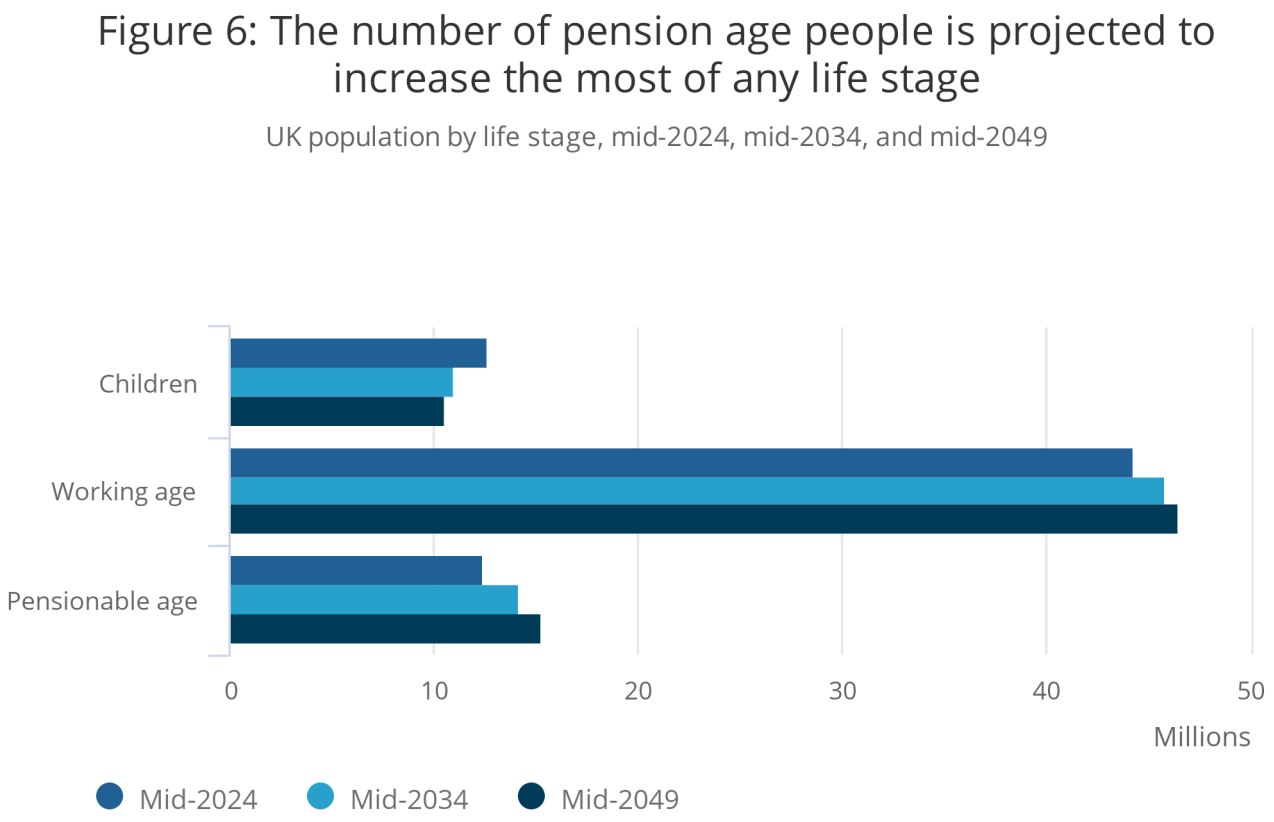
- children
- working age
- pensionable age

By mid-2034, the number of children (those aged from 0 to 15 years) is projected to decrease by 1.6 million (negative 12.7%), from 12.6 million to 11.0 million. Over the same period, the number of working-agepeople is projected to increase by1.5 million (3.4%), from 44.3 million to 45.8 million. The number of people of pensionable age is projected toincrease by1.8million (14.6%), from 12.4 million to 14.2 million. This includes the planned increases in State Pension age to 67 years for both sexes.

By mid-2049, the number of children is projected to decrease by 2.1 million (16.3% below 2024 levels). During the same period, the number of working-age people is projected to increase by 2.2 million (5.1%). The number of people of pensionable age is projected to increase by 23.7%, to 15.3 million. Therefore, the percentage of people of pensionable age is projected to grow the most of any life stage between mid-2024 and mid-2049.

Figure 6: The number of pension age people is projected to increase the most of any life stage

UK population by life stage, mid-2024, mid-2034, and mid-2049



Source: National population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Children are defined as those aged 0 to 15 years.
2. Working age and pensionable age populations are based on State Pension age for the stated year according to current legislation.

Old-age-dependency ratio

The numbers of people in each life stage are used to calculate dependency ratios, which inform government financial planning. A common measure is the old-age-dependency ratio (OADR), which is the number of people of pensionable age for every 1,000 people of working age. It is projected that OADR will increase from 280 in mid-2024 to 310 in mid-2034, and reach 329 by mid-2049.

Interactive population pyramids

Explore in more detail how the UK population is projected to change over time in our interactive population pyramids (Figure 7).

Figure7: Use our interactive population pyramids to explore our projections

5 . Changes since the 2022-based projections

The 2024-basednational populationprojections (NPPs) are based on the population estimatesfrom mid-2024. They use the latest data on births, deaths,and migration, along with assumptions ofpotentialfuture fertility, migration,and mortality. More detail on these assumptions can be found in:

- our National Population projections, fertility assumptions: 2024-based methodology
- our National Population projections, mortality assumptions: 2024-based methodology
- our National Population projections, migration assumptions: 2024-based methodology

Net international migration

Compared with the migration category variant projection from the 2022-based NPPs at UK level, we have assumed lower net international migration. The 2024-based NPPs long-term average net international migration assumption is 230,000, down by 110,000 from 340,000 in the 2022-based projections. This assumption is based on 10 years of international migration data and expert advice, including insights from our Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2025 bulletin. We are using the latest available international migration data in the projections, including where this exists beyond the base year.

Fertility

We have assumed a lower fertility rate than in the 2022-based NPPs. In the 2024-based NPPs the long-term total fertility rate is 1.42, down by 0.03 from 1.45 in the 2022-based projections. This reflects the long-term trends seen in fertility and input from our Expert Advisory Panel.

Life expectancy

The assumed long-term rate of annual mortality improvement for the UK and each of its countries is the same as in the 2022-based NPPs. It has been set at 1.1% for ages 0 to 90 years. This reflects the latest data and expert advice.

Table 2 contains details of the long-term assumptions for fertility, international migration (the difference between immigration and emigration), and mortality. These assumptions should not be interpreted as predictions of the future, but as plausible scenarios based upon what has happened in the past.

Table 2: UK long-term assumptions for the 2024-based national population projections compared with 2022-based

	2022-based	2024-based
Net annual long-term international migration (mid-2027 onwards)	340,000	230,000
Long-term average number of children per woman	1.45	1.42
Life expectancy at birth, females, 2049 (years)	85.8	85.9
Life expectancy at birth, males, 2049 (years)	82.2	82.4

Source: National population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Life expectancies are period expectations of life for the start of 2049. They do not account for future improvements in mortality projected after that point.

2. Fertility and mortality assumptions have been changed from the 2022-based national population projections with new assumptions based on recent data.

3. Net international migration does not include cross-border migration between the countries of the UK.

Table 3 shows headline statistics from the 2024-based NPPs, compared with the previous 2022-based NPPs. At the total population level, a major difference is that the UK population is not projected to pass 73 million. Projected old-age-dependency ratio (OADR) in mid-2049 is higher compared with the previous 2022-based NPPs.

Table 3: Summary of UK projected outcomes, 2024-based and 2022-based NPPs

	2022-based	2024-based
Projected UK population in mid-2034	72.2 million	71 million
Projected UK population in mid-2049	75.9 million	72.4 million
UK population projected to pass 70 million	mid-2027	mid-2028
Projected old-age-dependency ratio (OADR) in mid-2049	311	329

Source: National population projections from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. 2022-based statistics are from the migration category variant.

6 . Data on national population projections

National population projections table of contents
Dataset | Released 28 April 2026
Tools to locate the dataset tables and supporting documentation for the national population projections. Contains links to the principal and variant projections for the UK and constituent countries for 100 years ahead.

7 . Glossary

Long-term assumptions

The 2024-based national principal projections use a set of long-term assumptions that are considered to best reflect recent patterns of future fertility, net migration, and mortality. These assumptions are based on past trends and input from an independent panel of experts. The assumptions are:

- the average UK completed family size will be 1.42 children per womanby mid-2049
- the annual improvement in UK mortality rates will be 1.1% for both males and femalesaged 0 to 90 yearsby 2049
- average annual net international migration to the UK will be 230,000from year ending mid-2027 onwards

Life expectancies

Life expectancies at birth are period expectations of life; this is the average number of years that a newborn baby could expect to live if the mortality rates at the time of their birth stayed constant throughout their lives. For example, life expectancy in the year betweenmid-2049and mid-2050 reflects the life expectancy projected for the start of 2050. It does not account for the continuing decrease in mortality rates projected after that point.

Old-age-dependency ratio (OADR)

The number of people of pensionable age for every 1,000 people of working age.

Population projections

Population projections provide statistics on potential future population levels of the UK and its constituent countries by age and sex. These are based on assumptions of future levels of births, deaths, and migration.

Total fertility rate

The total fertility rate (TFR) represents the average number of children born per woman if women experienced the age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) of the year in question throughout their childbearing lives.

Variant projections

Variant projections are based on alternative assumptions of fertility, migration and mortality compared with the principal projection. These provide an indication of uncertainty in, and the outcomes of, alternative demographic assumptions but do not represent upper or lower limits of future demographic behaviour.

8 . Data sources and quality

Accredited official statistics

The Office for Statistics Regulation independently reviewed these accredited official statistics in April 2019. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value inthe Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled “accredited official statistics”.

Production of the national population projections

National population projections (NPPs) provide an indication of the potential future population size of the UK and its constituent countries. These statistics are widely used in planning, for example:

- economic and fiscal forecasts
- health
- education
- pensions

We normally produce NPPs for the UK and its constituent countries every two years, although this has changed around the time of the census and in response to user needs. This release supersedes the 2022-based NPPs release, published in January 2025 that followed the 2021-based interim release published in January 2024.

The 2024-based projections have been produced using a new set of demographic long-term assumptions for fertility, migration, and mortality, which are derived from analysis of past trends and through consultation with independent academic experts. The mid-year population estimate for mid-2024 is used as the starting point of the projection. This release is based upon the 2024 mid-year estimate for the UK and a revised back series from the 2021 (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) and 2022 (Scotland) censuses. Births and deaths are constrained to mid-2024 data available in published sources.

This release provides a principal national population projection and 13 further variants, for example:

- high fertility
- low fertility
- high life expectancy
- low life expectancy
- high migration
- low migration
- zero net migration

These are single component variants, which show the effect of varying one assumption while keeping other assumptions in line with the principal projection. Others are combination variants, for example, old age structure and young age structure, which look at the effect of varying two or more assumptions. Information on the full range of variants is available in our National population projections variant projections: 2024-based methodology.

The National Population Projections (NPP) Committee comprises the Office for National Statistics (ONS), National Records of Scotland (NRS), Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), and the Welsh Government. After reviewing expert advisory feedback and our own research, the NPP Committee agreed to base the long-term assumptions on an average of 10 years of historical international migration data, including mid-2013 to mid-2021 and mid-2025. The long-term net migration assumption set out in our National population projections, migration assumptions: 2024-based methodology is 230,000 from year ending mid-2027. This is lower than the 340,000 assumption used in the 2022-based population projections.

For mid-2026 the short-term assumptions are produced using a methodology based upon stay rates and expected parameters for migrants. Values from the method have been fitted to the latest provisional estimate in mid-2025 and then capped at the long-term assumption (mid-2027). Assumptions for each year and geography are available in summary and machine-readable datasets which can be found in our National population projections table of contents. There remains uncertainty over future directions and levels of international migration. Over recent years, there have been differences in international migration arising from:

- free movement ending for EU nationals as part of the introduction of the new immigration system in January 2021
- the easing of travel restrictions following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- external developments such as the war in Ukraine and the Hong Kong scheme

Potential future changes in international migration are not directly accounted for in the migration assumptions used in these projections.

Quality

National population projections (NPPs) are used both within and outside of government as the definitive set of NPPs. 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.

The projections are based on the latest mid-year population estimates for each UK country and the latest births, deaths, and migration data. Because the NPPs use the accredited official mid-year estimates for each UK country, the NPPs do not use and will not match against the Provisional population estimate for the UK: mid-2025.

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.

Many factors such as geopolitical, economic and policy change can affect fertility, migration, and mortality. However, it is not possible to consider all possible factors or to know in advance what effects these might have. Therefore, the projections do not attempt to predict the effect of events such as the UK leaving the EU or the lasting effect of the coronavirus pandemic. However, the projections of people of State Pension age (SPA) do reflect future changes under existing legislation.

This bulletin focuses on the first 25 years of the projections, up to mid-2049. The data files include projections going forward 100 years, up to mid-2124. However, such long-term projections are subject to considerable uncertainty as much change can occur over that timescale.

More quality and methodology information

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our National population projections quality and methods guide.

9 . Related links

National population projections quality and methods guide
Methodology | Released 28 April 2026
What the national population projections statistics cover, how we produce them, and their quality and comparability. Includes definitions and latest, past and upcoming changes.

UK population projection explorer
Tool | 28 April 2026
An interactive tool that shows how changes in life expectancy, net migration, and fertility could affect the population over the next 50 years.

National population projections, mortality assumptions: 2024 based
Methodology | Released 28 April 2026
The data sources and methodology used to produce mortality assumptions in the 2024-based national population projections.

National population projections, fertility assumptions: 2024-based
Methodology | Released 28 April 2026
The data sources and methodology used to produce fertility assumptions in the 2024-based national population projections.

National population projections, migration assumptions: 2024-based
Methodology | Released 28 April 2026
The data sources and methodology used to produce migration assumptions in the 2024-based national population projections.

National population projections, variant projections: 2024-based
Methodology | Released 28 April 2026
The variant projections, a range of scenarios with alternative demographic assumptions, used in the 2024-based national population projections.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 28 April 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, National population projections: 2024-based