

Regional Trends 2004 edition – now available in book format

Over recent years there has been increased interest in local information and regional diversity across the United Kingdom. Programmes of work have been put in place to improve the scope and quality of local information, together with developments for making information more accessible. Further impetus has been given by recent reviews and emerging priorities.

Regional Trends No.38, published by the Office for National Statistics, seeks to contribute to decision making at national, local and European level, and to inform debate about the current state of the nation. It brings together data from a wide range of sources, both from within government and outside, to paint a comprehensive picture of the countries, regions and sub-regions of the United Kingdom.

Although regional disparity often draws the headlines, it is the variety within an area which can be more striking. Regional Trends presents data in such a way as to allow comparison. The publication includes short commentaries on each of the subject topics, together with an overview of each country and region.

The figures cover a wide range of subjects - from economics and the labour market to education and birth rates. The type and format of information in Regional Trends evolves to take account of new or revised material and to reflect current priorities and initiatives. Regional Trends is a useful aid to examine information in different ways, for example:

Monitoring change

- ◆ Participation rates in early years education by three- and four-year-olds in England rose in all English regions between January 2002 and January 2003, reaching around 100 per cent in each.
- ◆ Gross value added (GVA) at current basic prices continued to be highest in London and the South East in 2001; each area contributed approximately £140 billion. These two regions together accounted for almost one-third of the United Kingdom total in 2001. Northern Ireland had the smallest share with 2% (19 billion).
- ◆ Although London continued to have the highest gross value added (GVA) per head of over £19,000 in 2001, there was a slight reduction from 1999. During the same period the East of England and South East, whose GVA was also above the national average, continued to show a rise.
- ◆ There may be some evidence of improvement in road safety, as the number of accidents on all types of road in Great Britain decreased by just over 3 per cent between 2001 and 2002. The largest decrease was in London (7 per cent), while the number of accidents in North West increased by almost 19 per cent.

Some areas don't follow the national trend - change can be in a different direction from the country as a whole, or may proceed at differing rates.

- ◆ Employment rates in the United Kingdom as a whole increased between spring 1999 and spring 2003 from 73.8% to 74.7%. There were rises of around 3 or 4 percentage points in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North East of England, while in London and the South East there were falls.

Variation within a region can be more marked than between regions

- ◆ Average weekly earnings for full-time employees in London in 2002 were the highest in the UK at £624 compared with the UK average of £463, however variation within the region was considerable. Some 10 per cent of men in London earned more than £1,248 but 10 per cent earned less than £278, well below the average for other areas.

- ◆ In non-metropolitan areas similar variations are also evident. In the South West, for example, average weekly earnings were £422 in April 2002 which ranged from Torbay where earnings averaged £340 per week to £473 in South Gloucestershire; this compared to Northern Ireland where the average weekly earnings were £390.

Diversity between areas

- ◆ Behavioural differences can be seen; throughout Great Britain the proportion of males who had given up smoking was higher than for females; the biggest difference was in the West Midlands where 29 per cent of males had given up compared with 18 per cent of females. Overall, approximately one-fifth of females claimed to be ex-regular smokers, ranging from 17 per cent in London to 25 per cent in the South West.
- ◆ In Wales over a third of all recorded crime was detected by the police in 2002/03, whereas in London the detection rate was 15 per cent.

These are a few of the interesting statistics that appear in the 2004 edition of Regional Trends 38. Chapters in the publication cover a wide variety of topics including population, education, employment, housing, health, transport, industry and agriculture. We can also compare ourselves with other areas of the European Union in terms of demographic and employment profiles and how we use our agricultural land.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. This News Release contains a summary of some of the key points for each country and region. The data contained in Regional Trends 38 will be available electronically, free of charge, from the National Statistics website ([www. statistics. gov. uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)) through StatBase, the Government's online statistics service. A PDF of the publication is also available including maps and charts, commentary for each subject and region, Contents and Notes and Definitions. This can be accessed from the Regional Trends entry under the Compendia and Reference theme on the Virtual Bookshelf at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>
2. Population figures for mid-2001 and mid-2002 estimates, based on the 2001 Census released up November 2003 are included where appropriate.
3. Comprehensive and up-to-date statistics about regions and subregional areas are increasingly in demand. In response to this, we have produced the Region in Figures series to complement Regional Trends. The set of nine publications presents a wide range of subregional data at lower administrative levels for each Government Office Region in England and is as valuable as the information in Regional Trends for regional decision making. Further development of subregional data, which will also affect regional data, is influenced by the Neighbourhood Statistics programme; this is being led by the Office for National Statistics. The aim of this programme is to develop and make available statistics for small areas to meet the needs of the National Strategy Action Plan '*A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*'. As more small area statistics become available over a number of years they will grow to cover an increasing range of subjects, such as crime, education and health. More information about the service can be found on the Neighbourhood Statistics web pages at www.statistics.gov.uk/neighbourhood.
4. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office and is available on the website.
5. 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 they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.