

Revised 2004-based Subnational Population Projections for England

Key notes for users

1. Background

1.1 These revised subnational population projections for England, published by ONS on 27 September 2007, replace the previous set of subnational population projections for England published on 12 October 2006.

1.2 The projections are 2004-based, using information from the period 1999-2004 to set assumptions on levels of fertility, mortality and migration at local authority level for the 25 years to 2029. **They take no account of latest 2005 and 2006 mid year population estimates** but reflect the revisions made to the mid year population estimates for 2004 and earlier years published on 22 August 2007. They remain consistent with the current 2004-based National Population Projections published by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) on 20 October 2005.

1.3 Population projections are currently produced every two years. The 2006 mid year population estimates were produced on 22 August 2007; the 2006-based National Population Projections will follow them in October 2007; and the 2006-based sub-national population projections that will supersede those published today will become available, after consultation on the assumptions, by Summer 2008.

1.4 Projections for areas within Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the appropriate devolved administration and are not discussed here.

2. Why are we revising the projections?

2.1 The subnational population projections have been revised to take into account changes in the methodology used to produce population estimates resulting from the ONS Centre for Demography's Improvements to Migration and Population Statistics (IMPS) work programme. The following key changes have been incorporated:

- Assumptions on the proportions of "visitor switchers" (people who enter a country intending to visit, but stay to become usual residents) and "migrant switchers" (people who enter a country intending to become usual residents, but who leave after a short time) have been updated in light of quantitative evidence;
- The subnational distribution of international in-migration has been improved by using Labour Force Survey (LFS) results in conjunction with International Passenger Survey (IPS) data to produce more reliable estimates of international migration, and by allowing for inaccuracies in people's stated destination when entering the country;

- The subnational distribution of international out-migration has also been improved and now uses a propensity to migrate model, based on the population features of an area, to distribute out-migrants to local areas, rather than assuming an equal propensity to migrate within regions.

2.2 Detailed explanations of the changes are available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14834>.

2.3 Information on the size of the revisions for each local authority is available in the file *Actual Impacts of Improved Methods for Population Statistics in 2007* available from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/FinalImpactTables.xls

3. Assumptions underpinning the projections

3.1 Users of these revised projections should be aware that **many of the same strengths and limitations exist in the methodology and definitions as in previous releases**. Notably:

- The projections are demographic trend based and the approach used is consistent across all local areas. They take no account of local development policy, economic factors or capacity of areas to accommodate population. Their aim is simply to provide an indication of future population size and structure in any year should the assumptions used be realised.
- Since the local component of change assumptions are based on a five year reference period they may not take full account of very recent changes observed in the population. In other words there is a "damping" effect that means a sudden upturn or downturn in the later years of the reference period may be contrary to the future trend being assumed.
- The cohort component methodology on which the projections are based is most robust for large populations. As the level of detail at subnational levels is much greater (local authorities by age and sex) the populations are small and therefore there may be a greater degree of uncertainty associated with the estimated projection.

4. Future work developments

4.1 The ONS Centre for Demography (ONSCD) is continuing with its developmental work programme and **future population statistics releases will take into account other refinements** as research is completed. In particular:

- Short term migrants, those that enter the country and stay for less than 12 months, are not classified as part of the usually resident population and therefore do not appear in the population estimates or projections despite being users of local services. ONSCD is looking at methods for estimating the stock of short-term migrants to better inform population statistics (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ci/article.asp?id=1834>). The first

national estimates of the numbers of short term migrants will be published by ONSCD in October 2007.

- Under existing methodology, the projections use a "top down" approach in that they are constrained over all areas to the official National Population Projection for England. The Welsh Assembly Government is leading research looking at the feasibility of producing "bottom-up", perhaps unconstrained, projections that treat local authorities independently. Within this it may be possible to take account of local development and economic factors in the methodology.
- The Interdepartmental Migration Statistics Task Force looking at the whole issue of measuring migration reported with a number of recommendations in December 2006 (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14731>). These recommendations are being further developed. For example, one recommendation was to improve targeting of migrants in port surveys and so ONS is currently conducting a review of port surveys which will report in due course. Similarly, ONS is continuing to feed its statistical requirements into the electronic borders (e-Borders) programme designed to provide increasing levels of information on passenger arrivals and departures from end of 2009 onwards.