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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Population and Migration

Reversal of the southward population flow since start of the new century

Focus on People and Migration

Since 2001, more people have migrated from the more southern regions of London, South East, South West, East and East Midlands to the rest of the UK than migrated in the other direction. This is a significant reversal of the almost unbroken southward net migration flow since at least 1971.

This new finding is revealed in *Focus on People and Migration* * published today by the Office for National Statistics. The report describes the dynamics of the UK population using information on changes in the age structure of the UK, on population growth and the role of fertility and migration in driving population change. This is the first time the most up-to-date population statistics have been brought together to present a comprehensive demographic overview of the UK population.

It also shows that the movement of people from urban areas to the suburbs and rural areas continues.

The UK population is growing. Until the mid-1990s this growth was mainly due to natural increase (more births than deaths). Natural growth continues but, since the late 1990s, net international migration into the UK from abroad has become an increasingly important driver of population growth.

The UK population is becoming older due to both low fertility rates and low mortality rates. There is a declining proportion of the population aged under 16 and an increasing proportion aged 65 and over.

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****Focus on People and Migration***

Available free on the National Statistics website:
www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/migration



Key findings include:

Population – UK population grows to 59.8 million

In 2004, the UK was home to 59.8 million people. This represents a 19 per cent increase on the population of 50.3 million in 1951, and a 3.3 per cent increase over the last decade (1994 to 2004).

Where people live – 26 per cent in London and South East

The South East of England with 8.1 million residents in 2004, was the region with the largest population, followed by London, with 7.4 million people. Over a quarter (26 per cent) of the population was resident in London and the South East combined even though these two regions together cover less than a tenth of the UK land area.

Urban areas – 8 in 10 people live in an urban area

In 2001, nearly 80 per cent of the UK population lived in an urban area. The ten largest UK urban areas are home to nearly a third of the population, just over 19 million people.

Age structure – Average age rose to 38.6 years in 2004

The UK has an ageing population. The median age rose from 34.1 years in 1971 to 38.6 in 2004 and is projected to rise to 42.9 in 2031. The proportion of the population aged under 16 is declining as a result of sustained low fertility. It fell from over 25 per cent of the population in 1971 to 19 per cent in 2004. The proportion over state pension age increased from 16 per cent in 1971 to 19 per cent in 2004.

Births and Deaths – Later start and fewer children for families

Average family sizes have decreased in recent generations not just because women are having fewer children but also because the proportion not having children has increased. Among women born in 1945, 9 per cent were childless at age 45. This has doubled to 18 per cent for women who are just reaching the end of their childbearing years.

Life expectancy at birth for people born in 1901 was 50.3 years for men and 57.0 years for women. Rapid improvements during the first half of the twentieth century meant that life expectancy at birth increased to 77.3 years for men and 82.1 years for women, for those born in 1951.



Moves within the UK – 1 in 9 moved in the year to April 2001

Around one in nine people (11 per cent) moved within the UK in the year before the 2001 Census. Over 40 per cent of these moves were over a short distance of no more than 2 km. Young adults, particularly the single and childless and students tend to change address more frequently than others.

International migration – Net inflow rose in 2004

In 2004, an estimated 223,000 more people migrated to the UK than migrated abroad. This net inflow is much higher than for 2003 when 151,000 more people migrated to the UK than left to live abroad. A key reason for this was net inflows of non-British EU citizens to the UK which increased from 14,000 in 2003 to 74,000 in 2004. Citizens of the ten EU accession countries made up an estimated four fifths of the increase.

Foreign-born – 1 in 12 in UK were born overseas

In 2001, 4.9 million (8.3 per cent) of the total UK population were born overseas. This is more than double the 2.1 million (4.2 per cent) in 1951. Among the non-UK born population, Europe was the most common region of birth in both 1971 and 2001, although the proportion born in Europe fell from 51 per cent in 1971 to 33 per cent in 2004. Just over a third (34 per cent) of foreign-born migrants who came to the UK in the 1990s emigrated within four years of arrival.

Communal populations – 1 million live in communal establishments

Although the majority of the UK population live in private households, a small proportion (1.8 per cent) lives in communal establishments such as residential and nursing homes for older people, children's homes, students' halls of residence, defence establishments or prisons.

European context – 1 in 8 residents of the EU live in the UK

The population of the 25 countries of the European Union (EU25) was 466.9 million at the beginning of 2004. The UK was the third largest country in the EU25 in terms of its population size. The UK population is ageing but not as fast as the populations of many other EU25 countries. In 2004 there were four countries where the proportion of the population aged 65 and over exceeded the proportion under 16 – Italy, Greece, Germany and Spain. In the UK it is projected that this will not happen until the year 2014.



BACKGROUND NOTES

1. *Focus on People and Migration* updates and extends the on-line overview first published in July 2004 and is the third in the series to be published as a full report. It has been produced by the Office for National Statistics.
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
3. 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 that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2005.