

NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN

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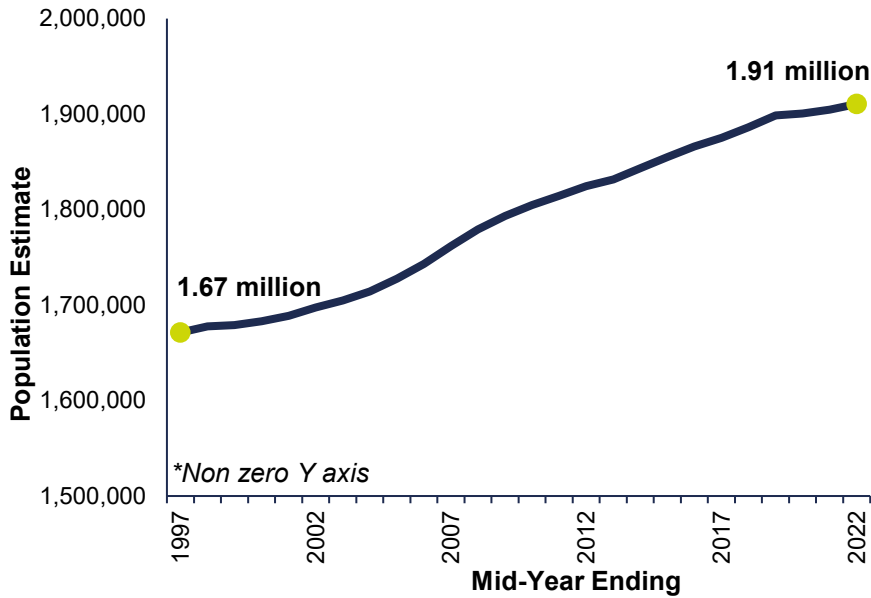


2022 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland



This statistical report provides population estimates for Northern Ireland and its Local Government Districts by age and sex.

2022 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - Summary

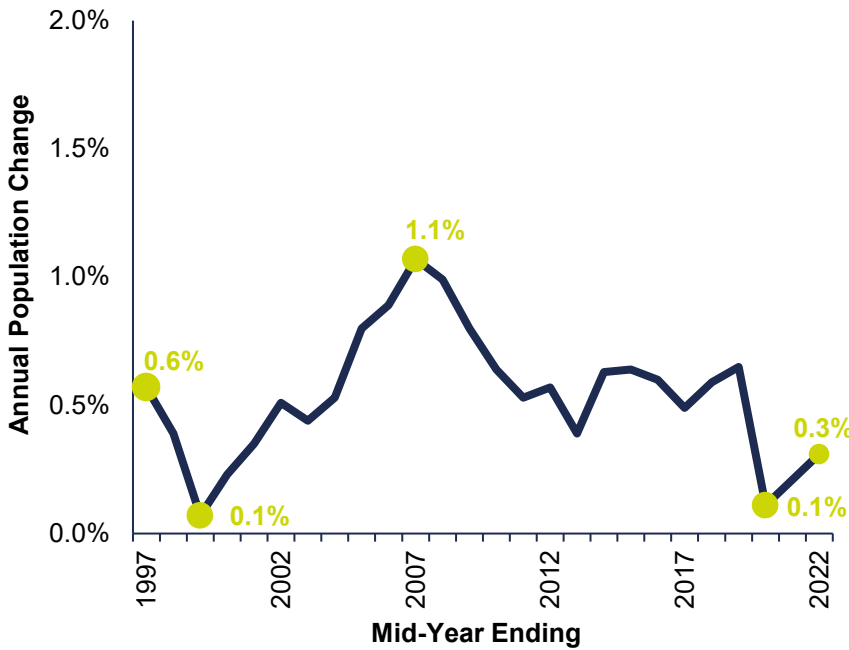


Northern Ireland population grows to 1.91 million in mid-2022

Northern Ireland's population (30 June 2022) was 1,910,500.

The population increased by 6,000 people or 0.3 per cent between mid-2021 and mid-2022.

The graph shows the trend from 1997-2022.

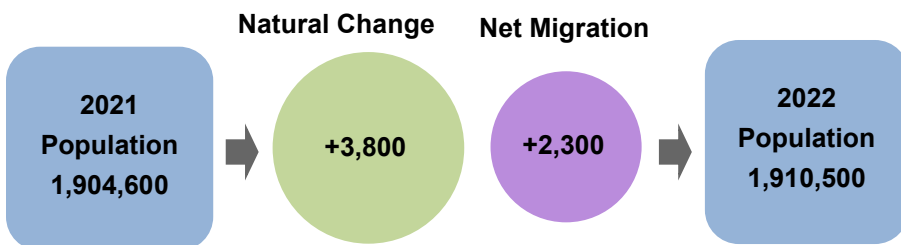


Population Continues to Grow

Annual population change has remained positive over the last twenty five years.

Growth over the last year has increased to 0.3 per cent from a recent low of 0.1 per cent in 2020.

Over the decade mid-2012 to mid-2022, the population of Northern Ireland increased by a total of 85,900 people with an average year-on-year increase of 0.5 per cent.

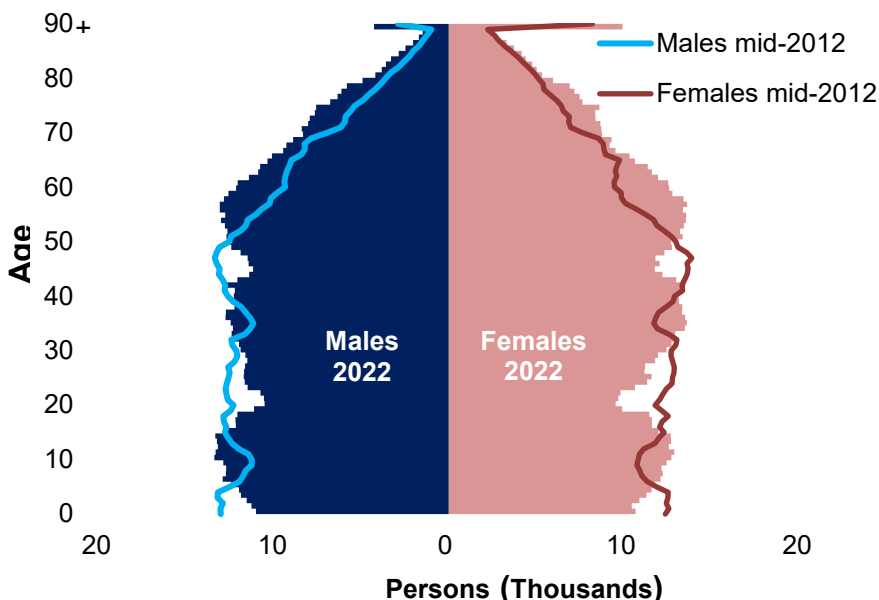


Natural change is the main driver of population growth

Natural change (births minus deaths) was the main contributor to the population increase over the last year.

Net migration for Northern Ireland was positive (+2,300) for the first time since mid-2019.

2022 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - Summary



The Northern Ireland population continues to age

The population pyramid (left) shows the population structure. The ageing of the population from 2012 to 2022 is evident in the increasing population amongst the older ages. This can be seen in the pyramid where the population begins to broaden around age 50.

In the year to mid-2022, the number of people aged 65 or more increased by 1.9 per cent from 329,200 to 335,400 people.

By mid-2022, one in six people in Northern Ireland were aged 65 and over

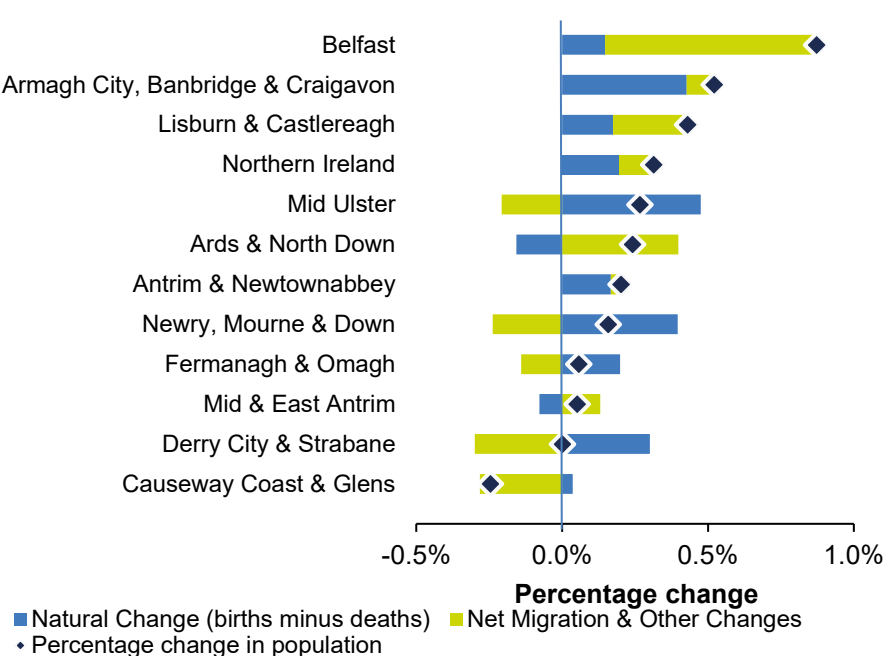
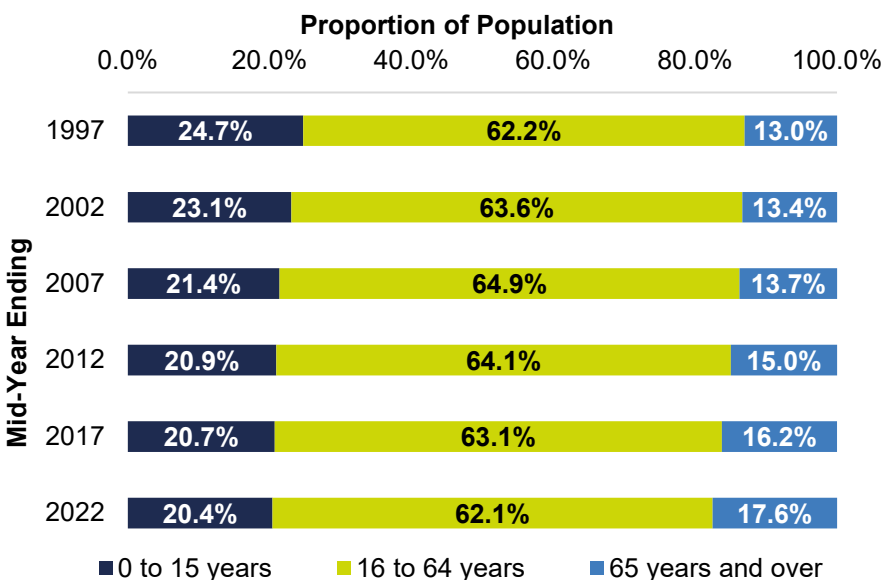
The proportion of the population aged 65 or more has increased from 13.0 per cent in mid-1997 to 17.6 per cent in mid-2022.

In contrast, the proportion of the population aged 0 to 15 years has decreased from 24.7 per cent in mid-1997 to 20.4 per cent in mid-2022.

All but one LGD experienced population growth over the year

Belfast LGD had the largest population growth over the year (0.9 per cent) with net migration being the main contributor to population change (0.7 per cent).

Causeway Coast & Glens was the only LGD to experience population decline over the year (-0.2 per cent). Negative net migration was the driver of this population decrease.



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Note: Throughout the report figures have been presented in a rounded form to ease readability. For example, population figures have been presented to the nearest 100 and percentages have been presented to 1 decimal place. However, all calculations have been undertaken on the basis of unrounded numbers which will, in some instances, give rise to apparent discrepancies.

1 Introduction

This bulletin details the key findings from the 2022 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland and for areas within Northern Ireland published on 31 August 2023. This bulletin contains analyses of the population and migration estimates for Northern Ireland and its 11 Local Government Districts.

Detailed tables for Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Population statistics are used to allocate public funds to the Northern Ireland Executive through the Barnett formula¹. Population estimates are also widely used by Northern Ireland government departments for the planning of services, such as health and education. These statistics are also of interest to those involved in research and academia. They are widely used to express other statistics as a rate, and thus enable comparisons across the United Kingdom and other countries. Furthermore, population estimates form the basis for future population statistics such as population projections².

2 Background

The population estimates refer to the number of people in the population at 30 June each year. Population estimates for Northern Ireland, sub-national levels and small geographical areas are published annually and approximately one year in arrears. Population estimates are based on the most recent Census of population: each year, the population is 'aged-on' by one year with the number of births in the year added and the number of deaths in the year subtracted. An adjustment is also made for migration. Subsequent mid-year population estimates then use the previous year's figures as the base.

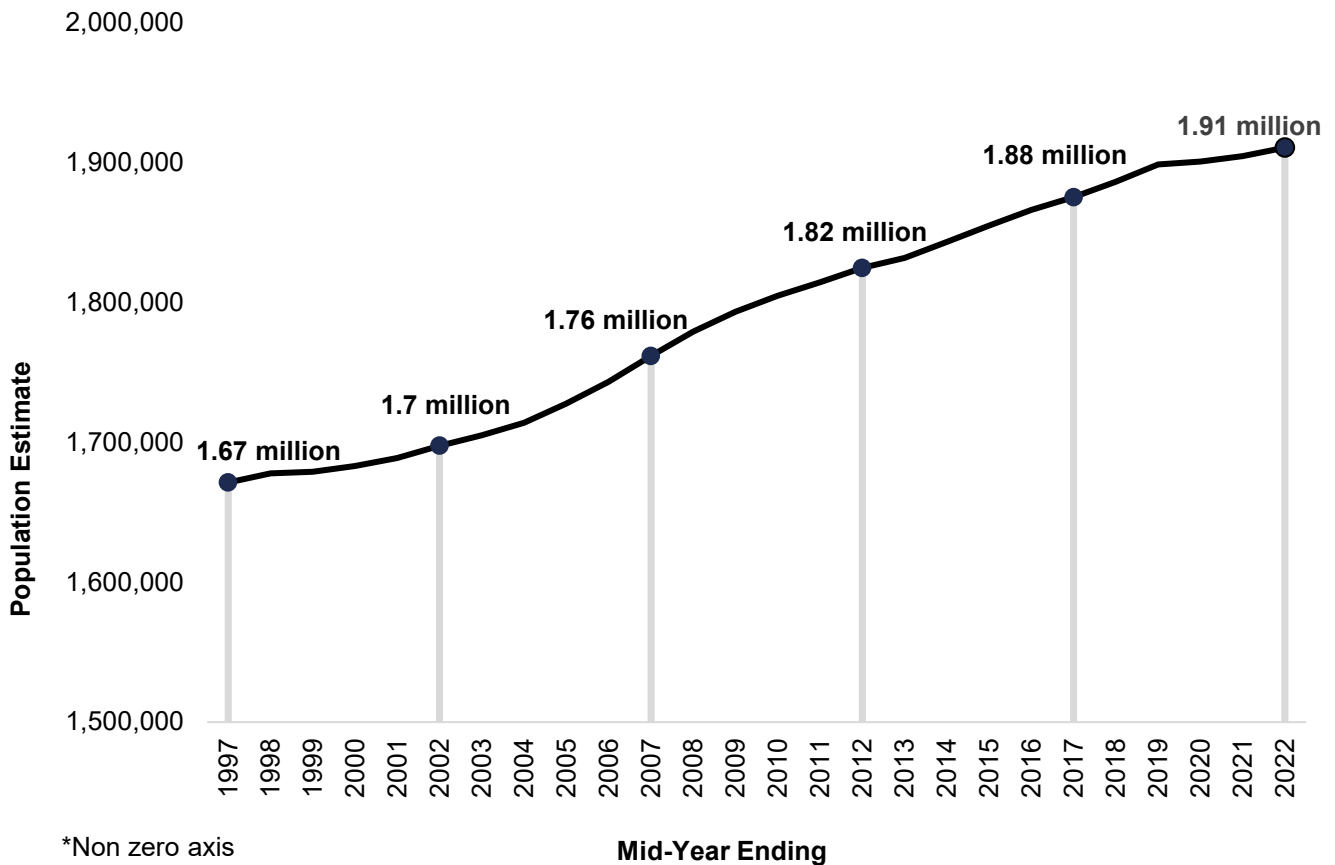
¹ A mechanism used by His Majesty's Treasury to adjust the amounts of public expenditure allocated to the Devolved Administrations. For more information see the [NI Assembly website](#).

² For the latest Northern Ireland population projections see the [NISRA website](#).

3 Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

3.1 Northern Ireland's population continues to increase

Figure 1: Estimated Population of Northern Ireland, mid-1997 to mid-2022*



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 150 Kb)

At 30 June 2022, Northern Ireland's population was estimated to be 1.91 million people. Between mid-2021 and mid-2022, the population of Northern Ireland increased by 6,000 people (0.3 per cent). Just over half of the population (50.8 per cent) were female, with 970,600 females compared to 939,900 males (49.2 per cent).

Figure 2: Annual population change for Northern Ireland, mid-1997 to mid-2022



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 91 Kb)

Over the decade mid-2012 to mid-2022, the population of Northern Ireland increased by a total of 85,900 people with an average year-on-year increase of 0.5 per cent.

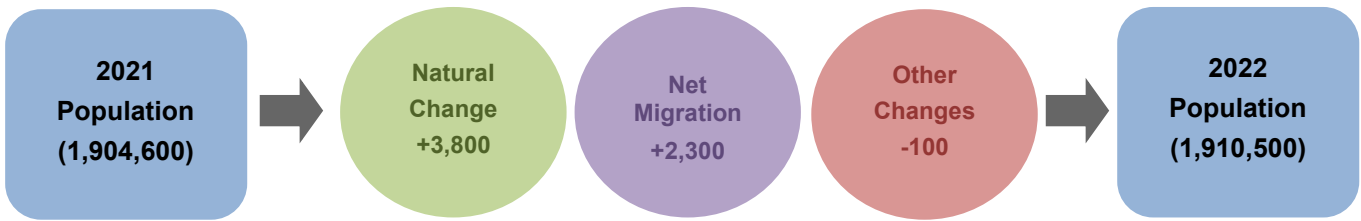
3.2 Why is the population increasing?

The two main components of population change are **natural change** and **net migration**. Natural change is the difference between the number of births and deaths, while net migration is the difference between the number of people entering and leaving Northern Ireland. **Other Changes** is a third minor component and takes into account changes such as the number of armed forces stationed here.

The latest increase in the Northern Ireland population was a result of (see Figure 3):

1. Positive natural change of 3,800 people (21,500 births minus 17,700 deaths);
2. An estimated gain of 2,300 people due to net migration (27,000 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 24,700 people left).
3. A slight reduction of 100 people due to other changes.

Figure 3: Contribution of components of change to population increase, mid-2021 to mid-2022

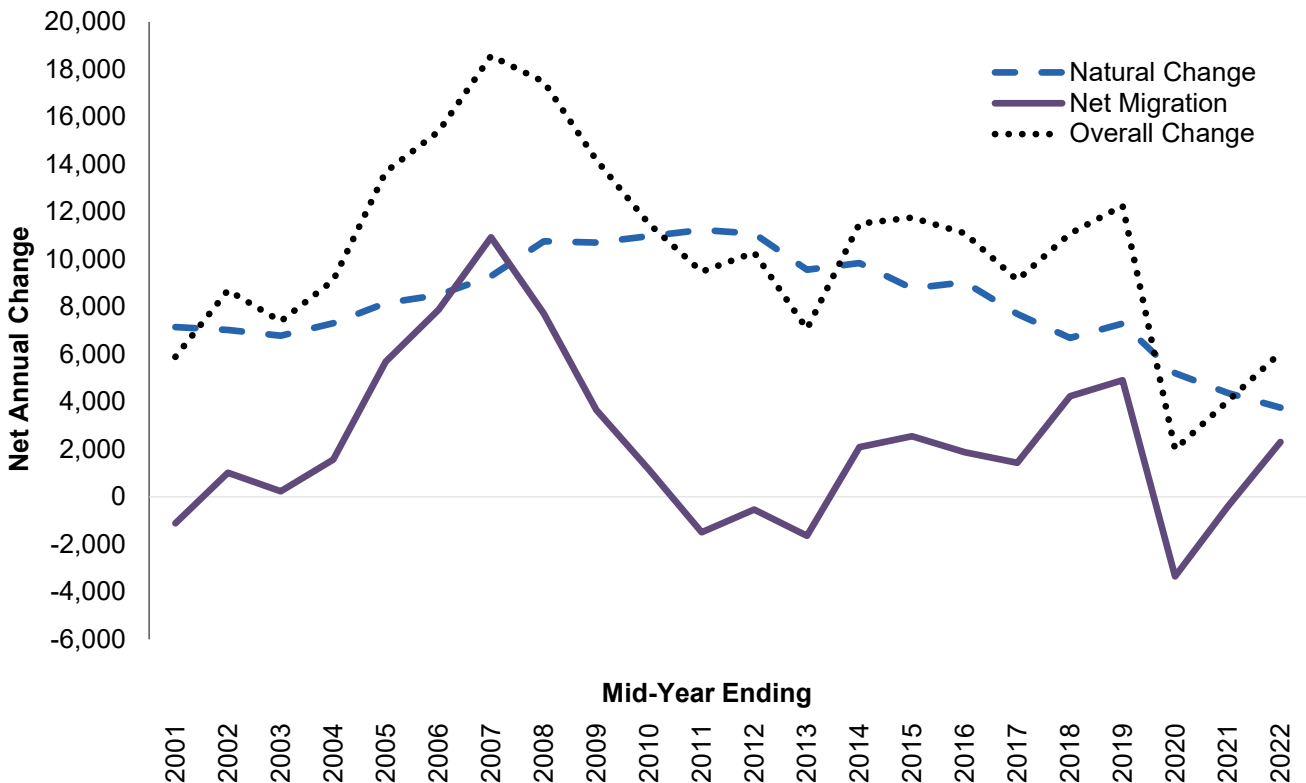


In the year between mid-2021 and mid-2022 population change totalled 6,000 people, which was a result of positive natural change and net migration. This marks a continued increase in population growth since a recent low in mid-2020. Natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) was the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 62.8 per cent (3,800) of this growth.

In 2022, net migration was at its highest level (+2,300 people) since mid-2019

Northern Ireland has also experienced positive net migration (i.e. inflows³ minus outflows⁴), over the year with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving by 2,300 (see Figure 4). Mid-2022 represents the first positive net migration year since mid-2019.

Figure 4: Components of population change (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2022)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 148 Kb)

³ Inflows: the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live.

⁴ Outflows: the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere.

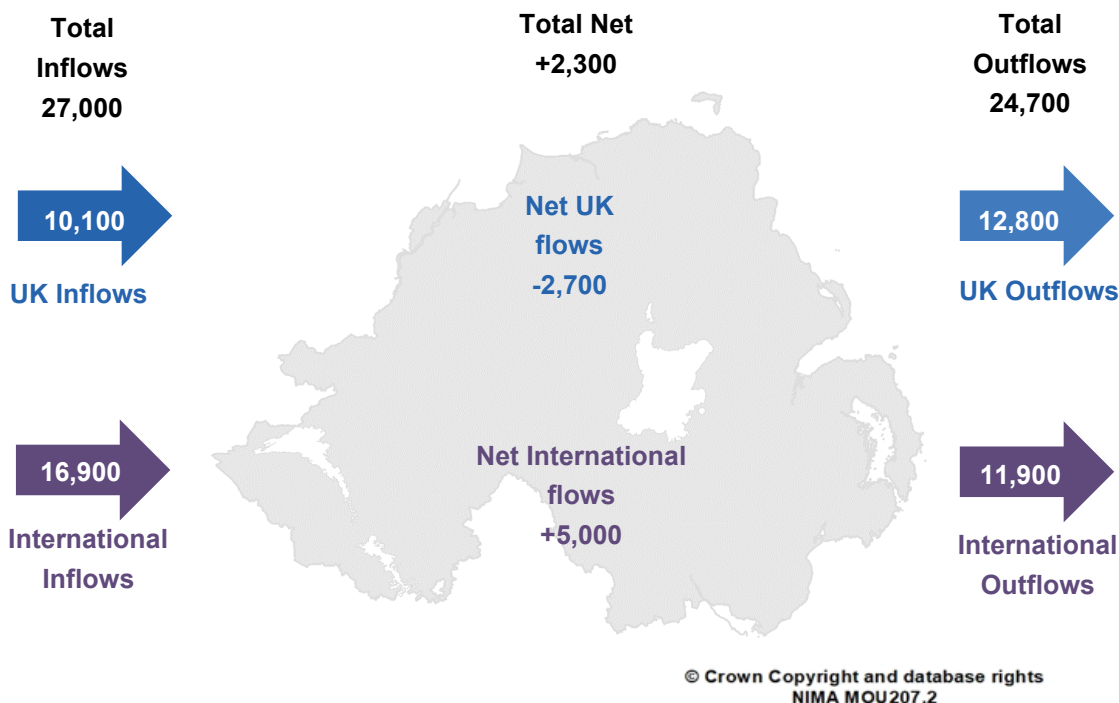
4 Where do migrants come from and go to?

Migration into and out of Northern Ireland can be analysed in two groups, namely:

- UK migration – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK
- International migration – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and outside the UK

Figure 5 below shows the number of people migrating into and out of Northern Ireland by type (i.e. whether to/from the UK or International) for the year ending mid-2022.

Figure 5: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by type in the year ending mid-2022



[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 135 KB)

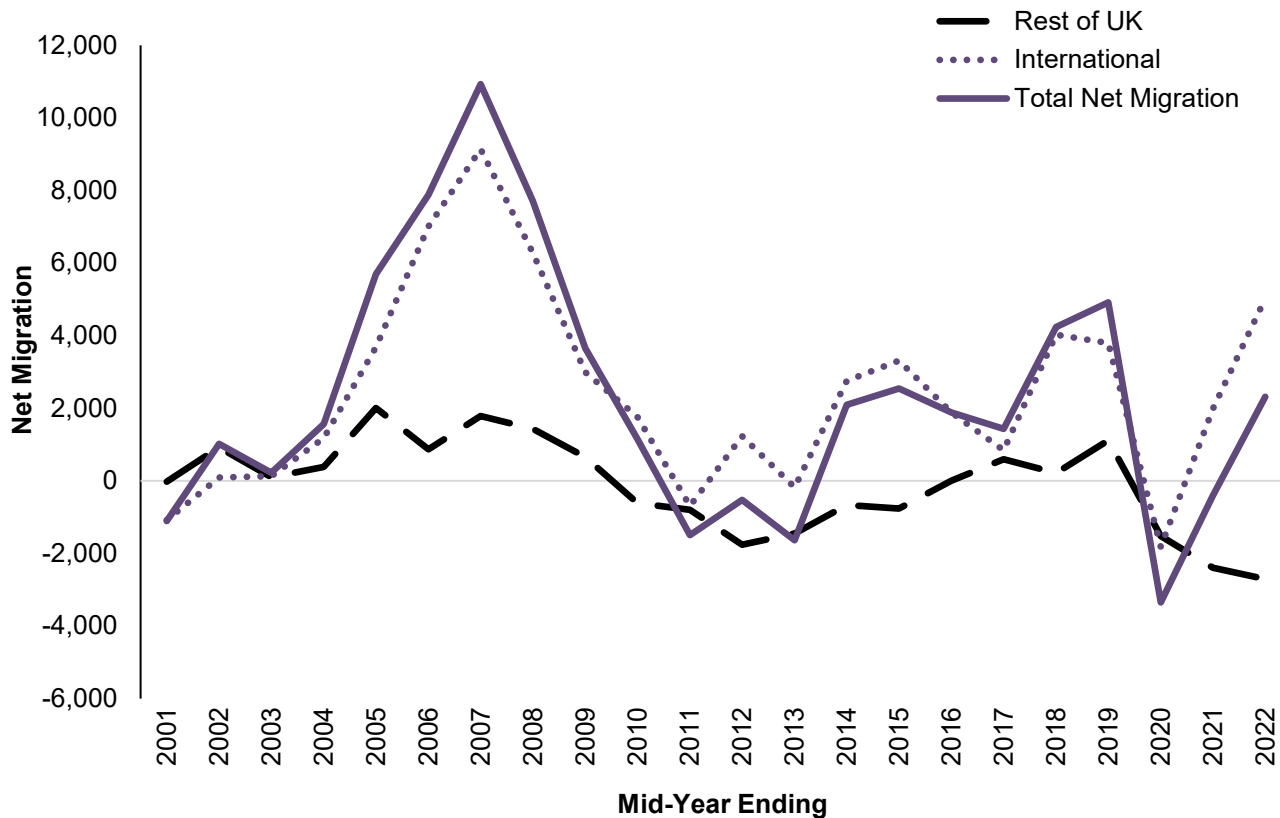
Between the year ending mid-2021 and the year ending mid-2022, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK decreased by 2,800 people (17.7 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK decreased by 3,100 people (23.3 per cent). This led to inflows of 10,100 people and outflows of 12,800 people in the year ending mid-2022 and resulted in a net UK migration loss of 2,700 people.

During the same time, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK increased by 600 (5.3 per cent) to 11,900, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK increased by 3,600 (27.3 per cent) to 16,900⁵. As a result, in the year ending mid-2022, there was a net migration gain of 5,000 people due to international migration.

⁵ This figure includes asylum seekers and those who arrived as part of the humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine.

Figure 6 shows a time series of net migration by type from the year ending mid-2001 to the year ending mid-2022. Mid-2022 represents the first positive net migration year since mid-2019.

Figure 6: Estimated net migration by type (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2022)

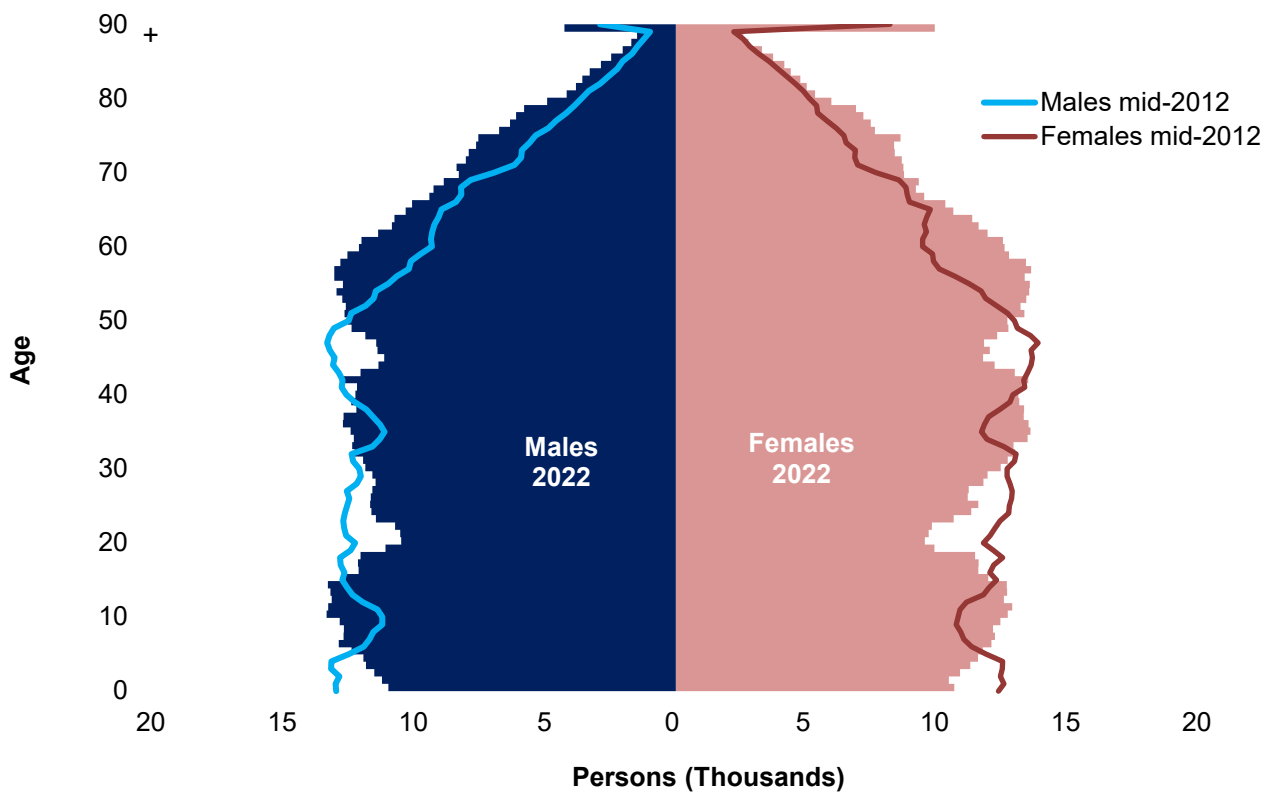


[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 93 Kb)

5 The age structure of Northern Ireland's population

5.1 The population of Northern Ireland is ageing

Figure 7: Population by age and sex (mid-2012 and mid-2022)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 100 Kb)

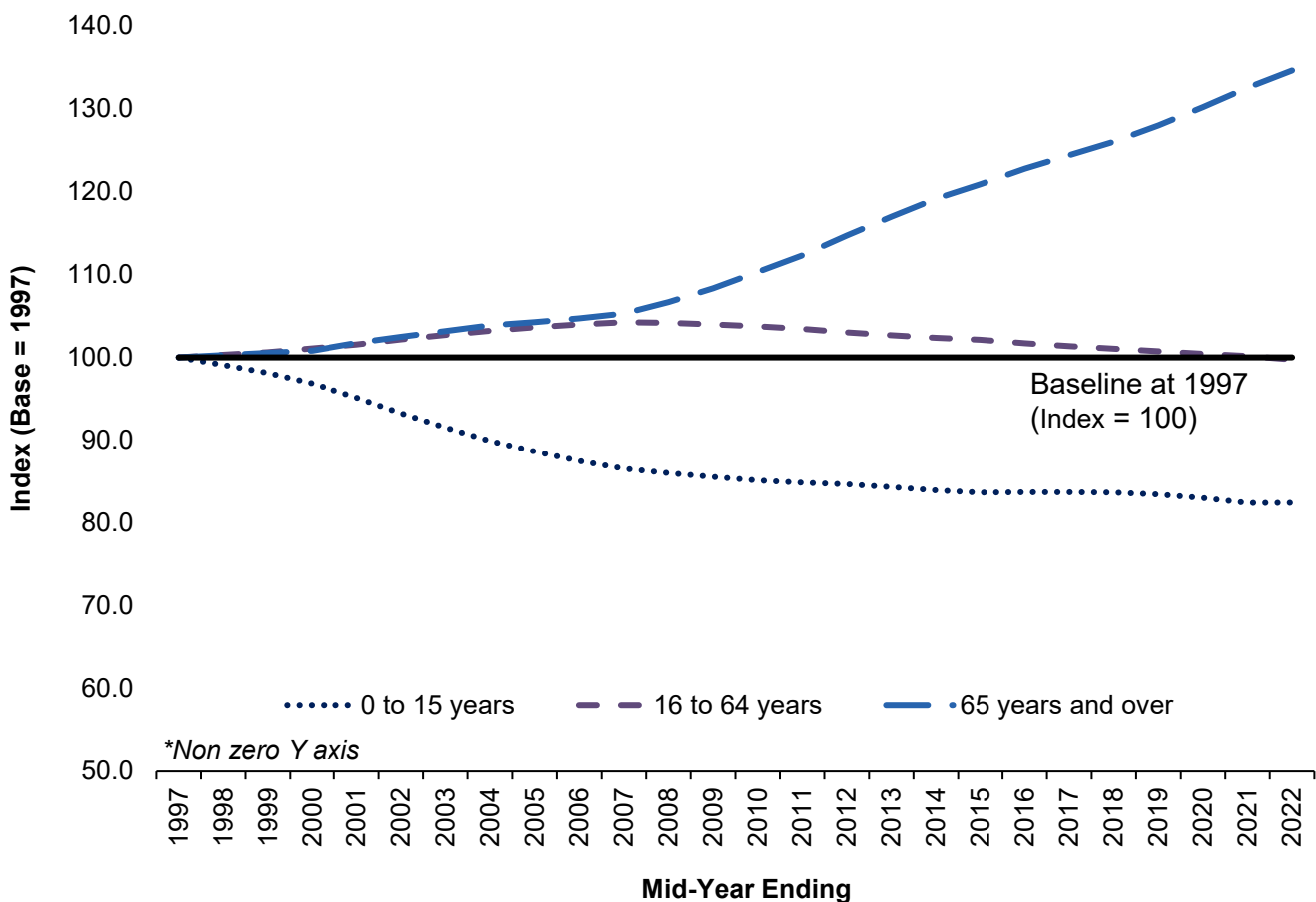
Age composition is one of the most important aspects of the population since changes in different age groups will have varied social and economic impacts. Figure 7 shows the population split by age and sex for mid-2012 and mid-2022 in the form of a population pyramid. This particular data representation allows for a more visual idea of how the numbers of people have 'aged on' in the decade to the year ending mid-2022 with the pyramid beginning to broaden around age 50 and over.

Over the three decades from the year ending mid-1992 to the year ending mid-2022 the median age (i.e. the age at which half the population is older and half is younger) of the Northern Ireland population has increased from 31.5 to 40.0 years.

5.2 How is the age structure of the population changing?

Over the 25 year period (from 1997 to 2022) Northern Ireland has seen changes in the proportion of the population in key age groups. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over has experienced the largest increase over the 25 year period, with a distinct accelerated growth in this population occurring from mid-2007. As a result, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over has increased by 34.6 per cent from mid-1997 to mid-2022. Conversely, the proportion of children (i.e. people aged 0 to 15 years) in Northern Ireland has decreased since mid-1997 by 17.6 per cent to mid-2022. The proportion of the population who are of working age (i.e. people aged 16 to 64 years) has remained relatively stable over the period.

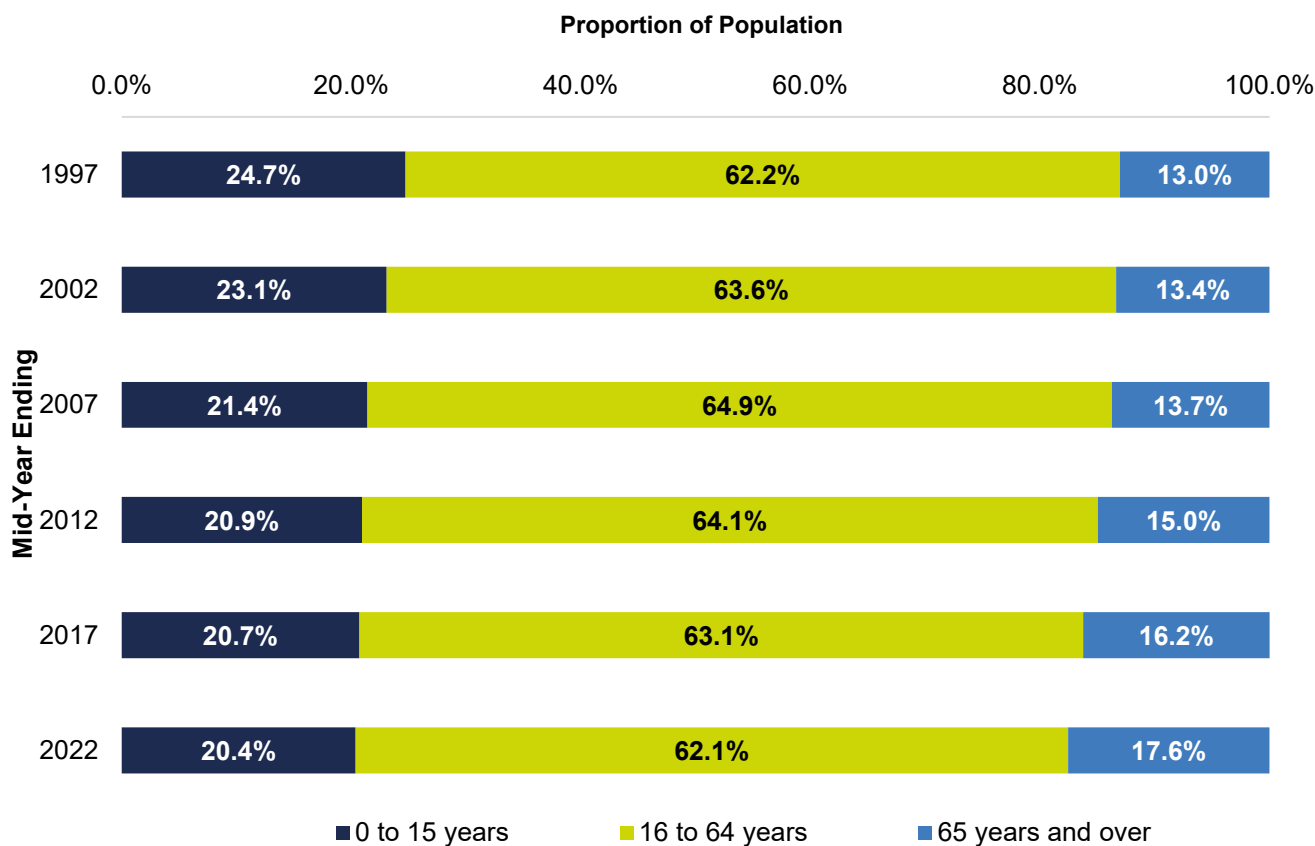
Figure 8: Index of population change for key age groups in Northern Ireland, mid-1997 to mid-2022



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 97 Kb)

Figure 9 shows how the rate of change between these three age groups translates into the makeup of the Northern Ireland population as a whole. The population has gradually become older with the proportion older population (aged 65 years and over) increasing throughout this period from 13.0 per cent in mid-1997 to 17.6 per cent in mid-2022. Conversely, the proportion of the of children has decreased from 24.7 per cent of the population in mid-1997 to 20.4 per cent of the population in mid-2022.

Figure 9: Age structure of Northern Ireland's population, mid-1997 to mid-2022



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 90 Kb)

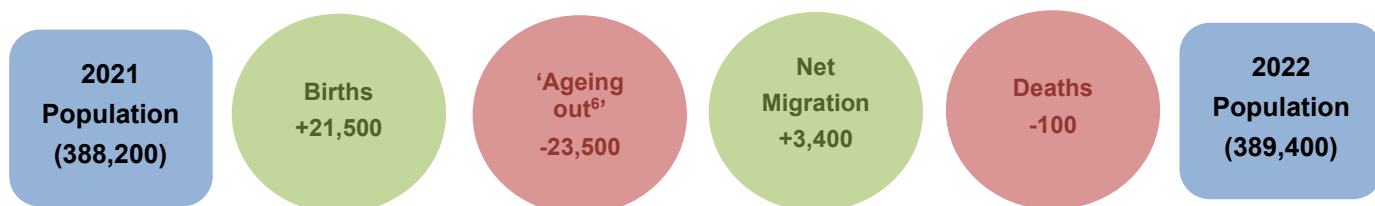
5.3 Change in age structure over the year

5.3.1 Children (0 to 15 years)

In mid-2022, just over **one in five** (20.4 per cent) people in Northern Ireland were children

In the year ending mid-2022, the number of children increased by 1,300 people (from 388,200 to 389,400), representing 20.4 per cent of the population.

This increase of 1,300 children was a result of:



⁶ 'Ageing out' refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. In this case, people who are aged 15 in mid-2021 will turn 16 by mid-2022 and therefore 'age out' of the Children (0 to 15 years) age group.

5.3.2 Working age population (16 to 64 years)

In the year ending mid-2022 the working age population⁷ decreased by 0.1 per cent (from 1,187,200 to 1,185,700), representing 62.1 per cent of the population.

This decrease of 1,500 people was a result of:



Over the same period, the **younger working age population** (i.e. people aged 16 to 39 years) is estimated to have decreased by 0.7 per cent from 569,600 people to 565,900 people, representing 29.6 per cent of the population. This population decline of 3,800 people in the younger working age group was a result of:

- more people 'ageing out' of this age group (25,200) than 'ageing in' (23,500);
- a net loss of 1,600 in this population age group due to migration; and
- a relatively small number of deaths (400)

The **older working age population** (i.e. people aged 40 to 64 years) grew by 0.4 per cent in the year ending mid-2022 (from 617,600 to 619,800), representing 32.4 per cent of the population. This growth of 2,200 was a result of:

- more people 'ageing into' this age group (25,200) than 'ageing out' (21,100);
- a net gain of 700 in this population age group due to migration; and
- a total of 2,500 deaths among people in this age group

⁷ The working age population is defined by the age at 30 June 2022 and is not based on the age for entitlement to state pension. Following the Pensions Act 2007 and 2011, the State Pension Age (SPA) for women will increase gradually to 65 by November 2018.

⁸ 'Ageing in' refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. In this case, people who are aged 15 in mid-2021 will turn 16 by mid-2022 and therefore 'age in' to the 'working age' group (16 to 64 years).

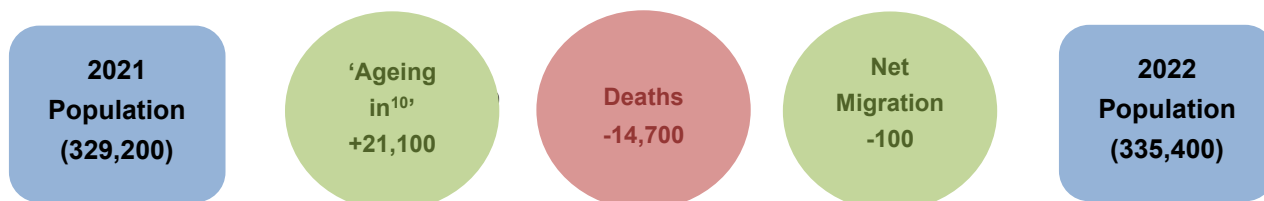
⁹ 'Ageing out' refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. In this case, people who are aged 64 in mid-2021 will turn 65 by mid-2022 and therefore 'age out' of the working age group and 'age in' to the 'older population' group (65 years and over) age group.

5.3.3 The older population (65 years and over)

One in six (17.6 per cent) people in Northern Ireland were aged 65 and over

In the year mid-2021 to mid-2022, the population aged 65 and over increased by 1.9 per cent (from 329,200 to 335,400), representing 17.6 per cent of the population.

This increase of 6,200 was due to:



The **population aged 85 and over** increased by 2.1 per cent (from 40,200 to 41,100) between mid-2021 and mid-2022, representing 2.2 per cent of the population. The growth of 900 people in this age group was a result of:



¹⁰ Ageing in refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. For example, people who are aged 64 in mid-2021 will turn 65 by mid-2022 and therefore 'age in' to the 'older population' group (65 years and over).

¹¹ Ageing in refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. For example, people who are aged 84 in mid-2021 will turn 85 by mid-2022 and therefore 'age in' to the 'population aged 85 and over' group.

6 Population Estimates for areas within Northern Ireland

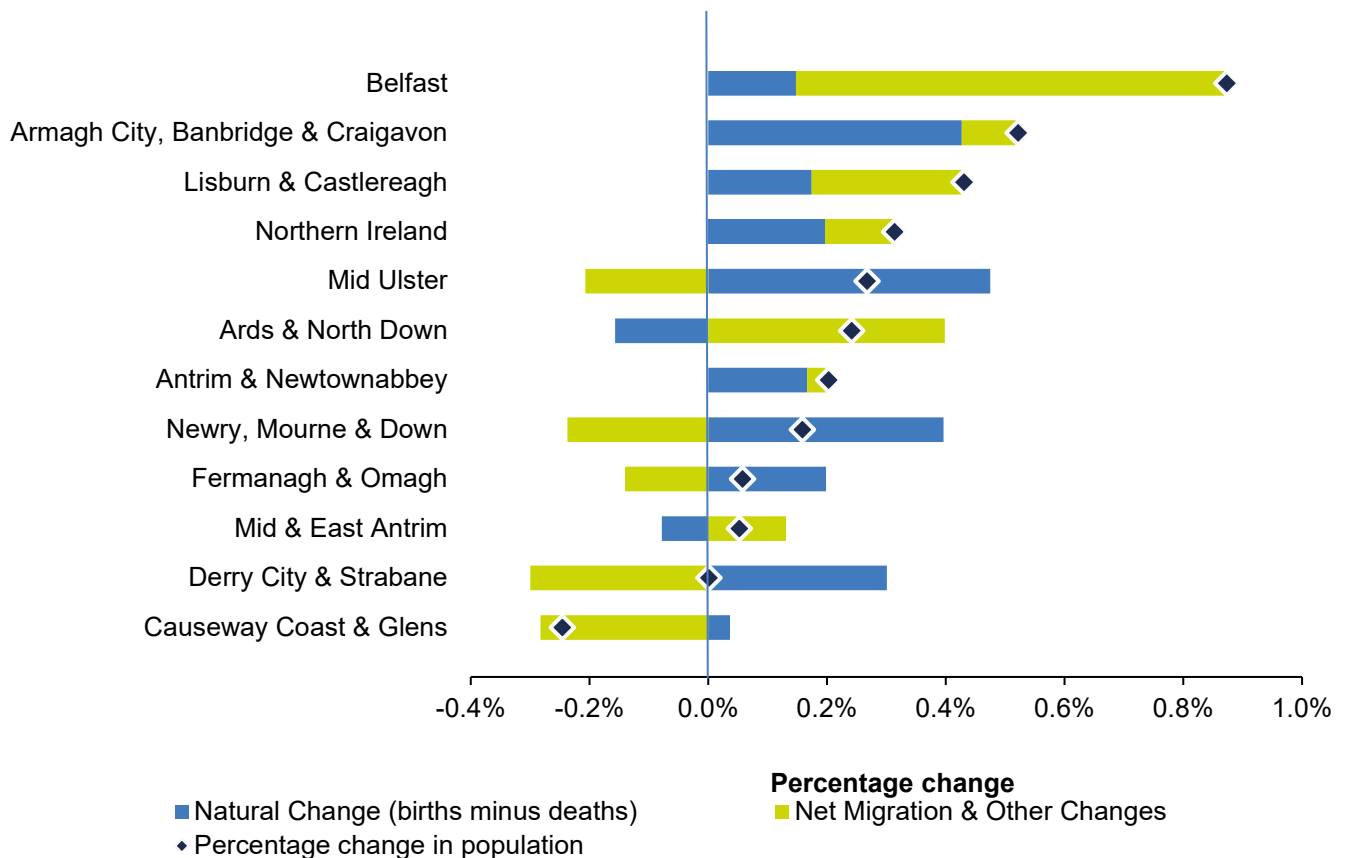
6.1 How has the population changed for Local Government Districts?

The estimated population for the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) in mid-2022 ranged from 117,000 people in Fermanagh & Omagh LGD to 348,000 in Belfast LGD. The mid-2022 population estimates by LGD are shown in Map 1 (overleaf).

Belfast LGD experienced the largest population growth over the year (0.9 per cent)

Figure 10 presents the overall percentage population change for LGDs and the effect the components of change have had on the population. The population in ten LGDs increased in the year ending mid-2022. Belfast LGD experienced the largest percentage increase in population (0.9 per cent), with positive net migration (0.7 per cent) being the main driver of population incline in this area. Causeway Coast and Glens LGD had the only percentage decrease in population (-0.2 per cent) which was mainly driven by negative net migration (-0.3 per cent) and negligible natural change over the year.

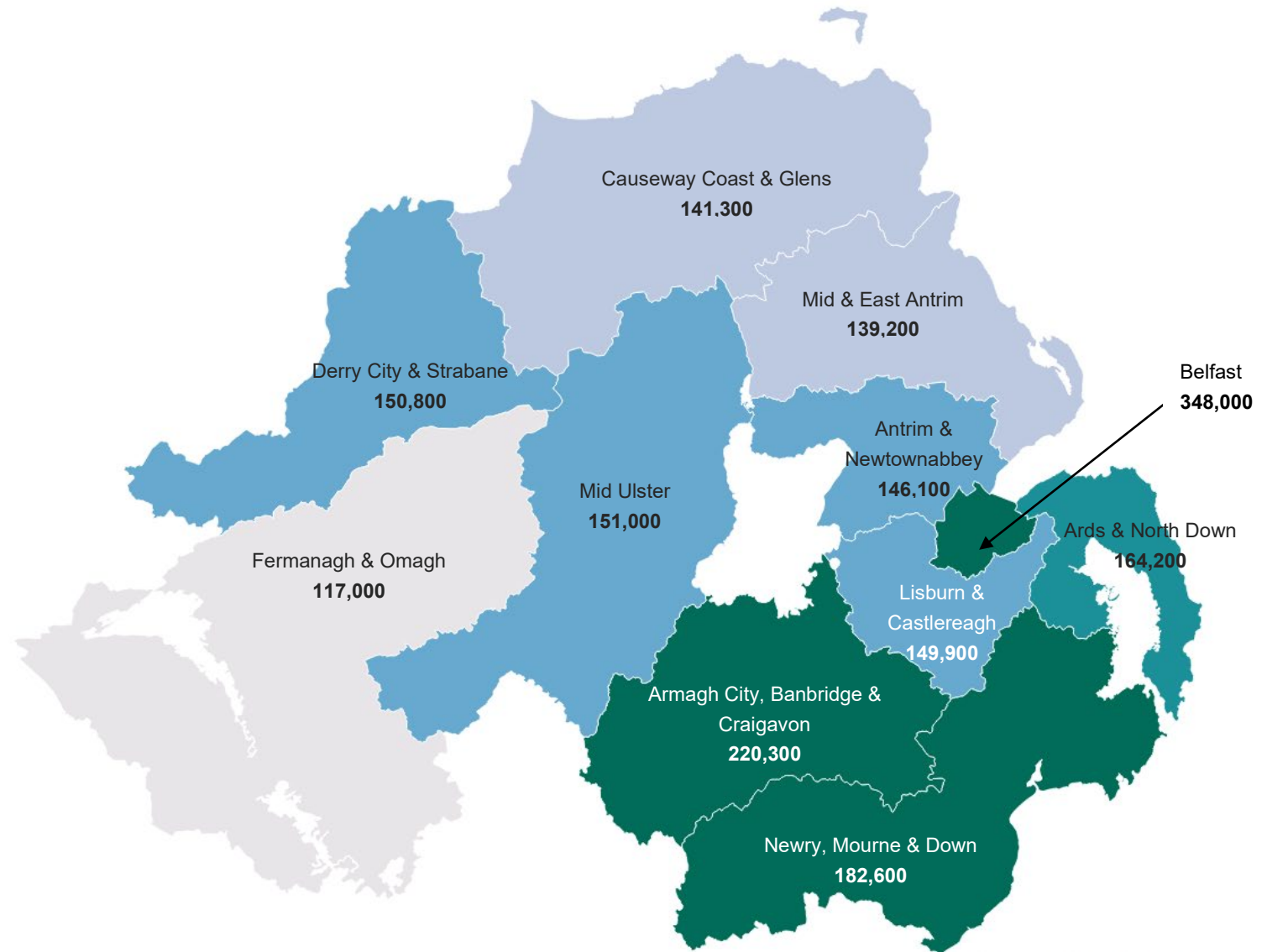
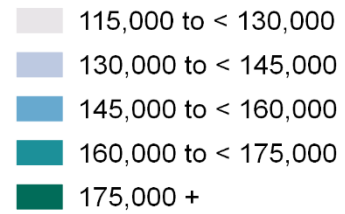
Figure 10: Components of population change by Local Government District, mid-2021 to mid-2022 (ordered by population change)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 150 Kb)

Map 1: Population estimates by Local Government District (mid-2022)

Population Size



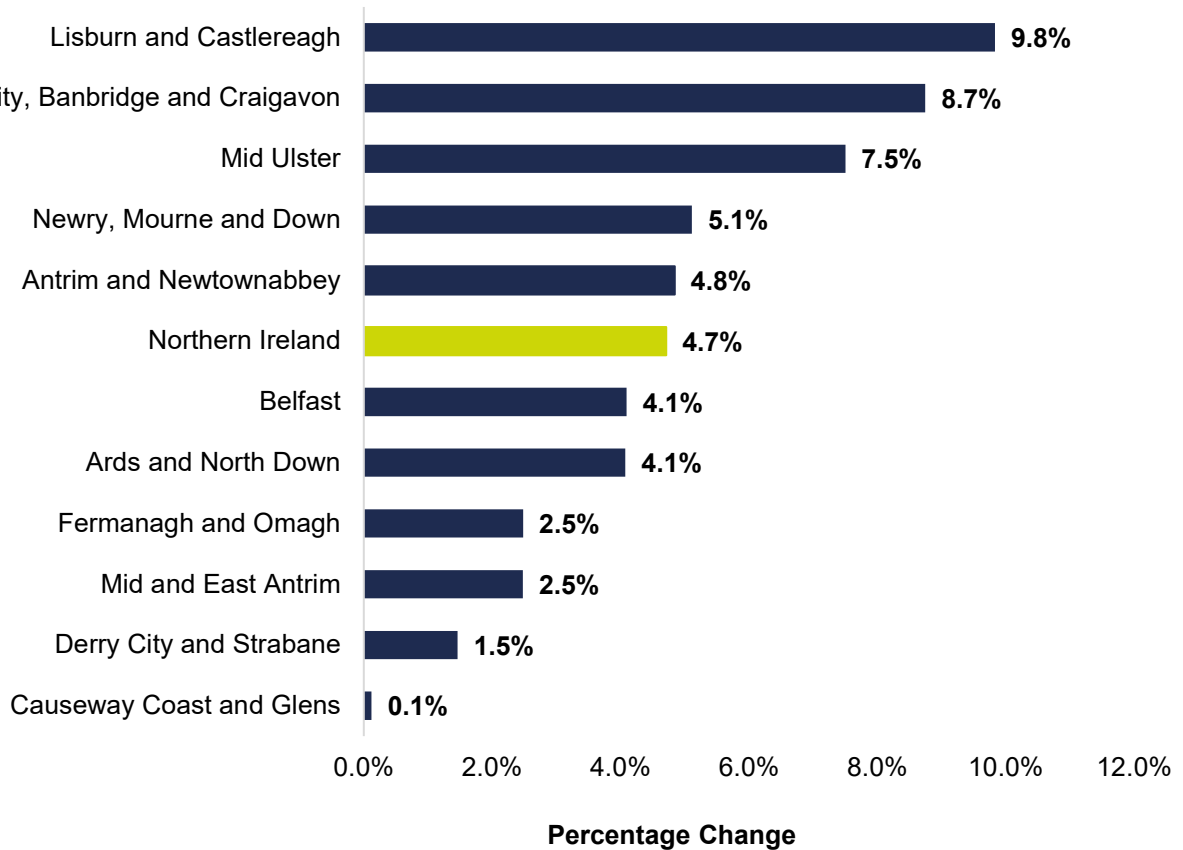
[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 125 Kb)

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Population change in Local Government Districts over the decade

Figure 11 presents the overall percentage population change for LGDs in the decade between mid-2012 and mid-2022 and shows that all LGDs increased in population over the ten year period. Over the decade, population growth ranged from 0.1 per cent in Causeway Coast and Glens LGD to 9.8 per cent in Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD.

Figure 11: Percentage population change by Local Government District (mid-2012 to mid-2022) (ordered by population change)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 91 Kb)

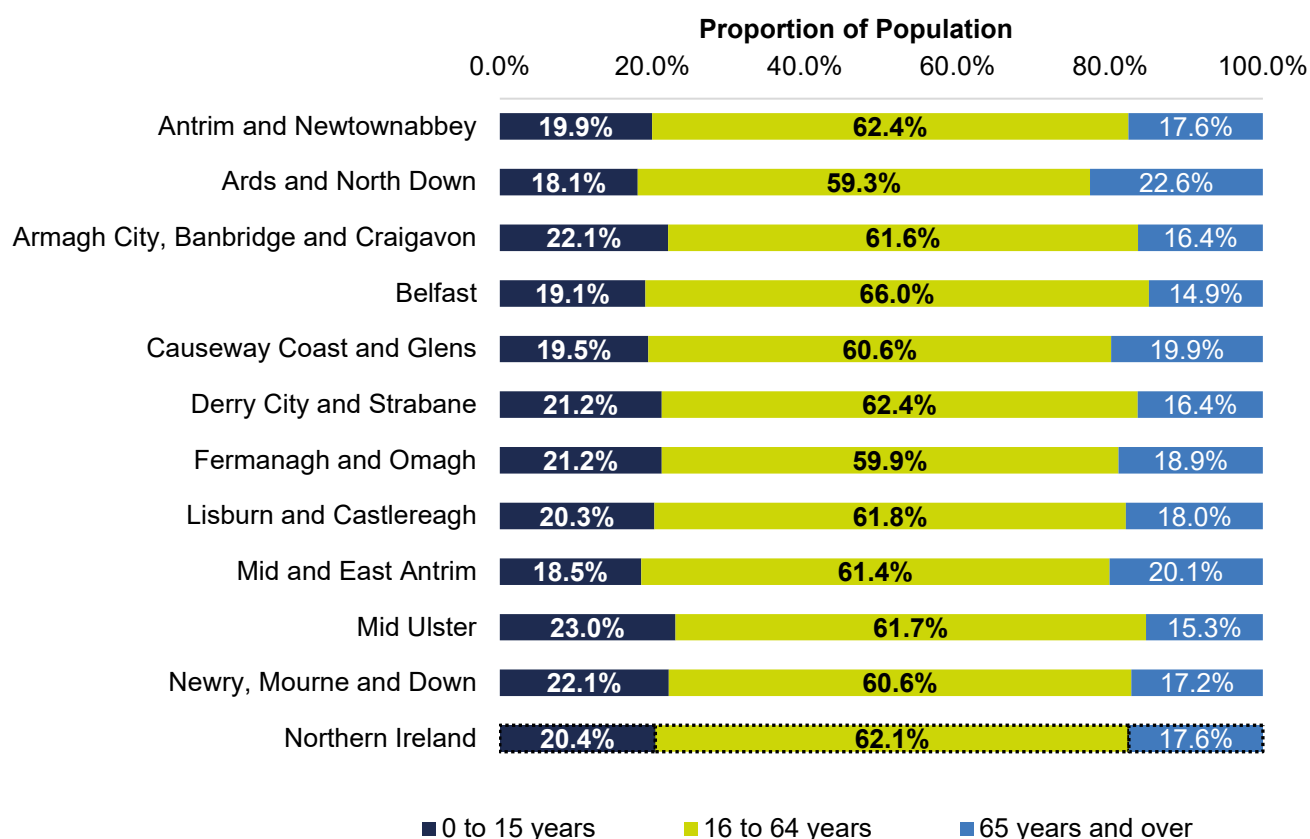
6.2 What is the age structure of the population in Local Government Districts?

Over **one in five** people (22.6 per cent) living in Ards and North Down in mid-2022 were estimated to be aged 65 and over

Some general themes can be observed when looking at the age distribution of Local Government Districts. Figure 12 shows that in mid-2022, Mid Ulster LGD had the highest proportion of **children** (i.e. people aged 0 to 15 years) among its population (23.0 per cent) and the second lowest proportion of population aged 65 and over (15.3 per cent). Conversely, Ards & North Down LGD had the lowest proportion of **children** (18.1 per cent) and the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over (22.6 per cent) in its population.

Belfast LGD had the highest proportion of the **working age population** (i.e. people aged 16 to 64 years) among its population (66.0 per cent), particularly at the **younger working ages** (people aged 16 to 39 years) (36.2 per cent). This may be attributable, in part, to Belfast being the primary centre for third-level education in Northern Ireland. Belfast LGD also had the lowest proportion of population aged 65 and over (14.9 per cent).

Figure 12: Age structure of Local Government Districts (mid-2022) (ordered alphabetically)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 92 Kb)

Median Age at Local Government District level

The differences in age distribution across the Local Government Districts can also be demonstrated using the median age. The median age in mid-2022 ranged from 36.3 years in Belfast LGD to 45.2 years in Ards and North Down LGD. In addition, the median in all eleven LGDs has steadily increased over the decade from mid-2012. For example, the median age in Newry, Mourne and Down (36.3 years to 39.9 years), Derry City and Strabane (35.9 years to 39.6 years), Causeway Coast and Glens (39.3 years to 42.8 years), Fermanagh and Omagh (37.8 years to 41.3 years) and Ards and North Down (42.1 years to 45.2 years) has increased by over 3.0 years from mid-2012 to mid-2022 respectively (download [median age table](#) for all LGDs).

7 Links to related statistics

More detailed population estimates for Local Government Districts and Parliamentary Constituencies are available on the [NISRA website](#).

[Population projections for Northern Ireland](#) and [sub-national areas](#) (2018-based) are available from the NISRA website. [2020-based National Interim Population Projections](#) were published at the end of 2021. Release dates for all population projection outputs are being reviewed in conjunction with the ONS in light of the revised publication plans for rebased population estimates and mid-year population estimates. Further information and updates will be pre-announced and updated on the [release calendar](#).

How to find data and related documents	
What are you looking for?	Where is it?
The tables and figures used throughout this publication in Excel format.	Tables and figures
Population estimates on NISRA data portal can be exported in CSV, JSON-stat, PX, XLSX formats.	NISRA data portal
Quality Report	Background Quality Report
Methodology Report	Methodology Report

8 National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

Population Estimates for Northern Ireland last underwent a full assessment by the Statistics Authority against the [Code of Practice](#) in July 2015. The assessment report can be found on the [NISRA website](#). Following the Statistics Authority assessment the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in [August 2016](#).

National Statistics status was confirmed subject to NISRA implementing six specific requirements. An action plan outlining how and when NISRA addressed each of these requirements can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

An action plan checklist with supporting documentation can also be found on the [NISRA website](#).

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved clarity and insight by redesigning the statistical bulletin to include a key point's summary for users. In addition, key point headlines have been included throughout the commentary, so users are alerted to key messages.
- The associated data tables for mid-year population estimates are disseminated in a more innovative way by including a flat file and tabular format which users can interact with.
- We improved the accessibility of mid-year population estimates and were publishing data in 3* open data format on Open Data NI. We will publish the mid-2021 population estimates on the data on the NISRA data portal shortly. We have also included a new 'Links to related statistics' section within the bulletin so users can explore the whole population statistics package, including older person estimates, population projections, small area population estimates and a range of other material.

9 Background Notes

9.1 Population coverage

Mid-year population estimates relate to the *usually resident* population on 30 June of the reference year and ages relate to a person's age at this mid-year period. Long term international migrants are included in population estimates; however, short term migrants are not. The definition of a long-term migrant which has been adopted from the United Nations is, '*a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country*'

of usual residence'. Other changes include changes in armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland.

9.2 Methodology

Population estimates for 2012-2020 contained within this report have been revised in line with the most recent Census 2021 population estimates. This was carried out by examining the difference between the rolled-forward 2011-based estimates for mid-2021 and the Census 2021-based estimates. A weighted cohort model was used to apply changes to the series from 2012 to 2020 at a Northern Ireland level initially. From there we have distributed to Local Government Districts (LGDs). A period adjustment was also applied to people of student age at LGD level. The majority of the adjustment to this series was applied to international outward migration with some other changes applied to within Northern Ireland migration and 'other' unattributable changes.

9.3 Quality of administrative data

Population estimates are produced using a range of administrative data sources, the quality of which have been assessed in detail within the [Population Estimates and Projections Data Quality Document](#). In addition, population estimates are compared to several administrative data sources including, active medical cards, electoral register, benefit claimants and National Insurance Number registrations to assure the quality of outputs. Any significant differences are examined further. NISRA also works closely with colleagues in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) to assure the quality of population estimates across the UK. A paper comparing the methodological approaches adopted by producers of population statistics across the UK is available on the [ONS website](#).

9.4 Census 2021 and Rebasing Exercise of 2012-2020

The decennial census population estimate forms the baseline for the mid-year population estimates going forward. As each year from the baseline passes the accuracy of the population estimates slightly diminishes. Following the [2021 mid-year population estimates](#) (published 29 November 2022) which were based on the results of the 2021 census, a reconciliation process, which looked at the intercensal drift between 2011 and 2021 was carried out. The rebased population estimates for this period are included in the [2011-2021 Rebased Mid-Year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#) publication.

10 Limitations

Migration is the most difficult component of population change to measure due to the absence of an administrative dataset designed specifically for measuring migration. NISRA uses the medical card register as the source in the production of migration estimates, however, there are

known deficiencies with this approach. For example, it is recognised that the medical card register is deficient in recording the movements of young adult males; therefore, the age distribution for movements of young adult males is adjusted to be similar to the age distribution for the movements of young adult females. Furthermore, not all outflows are measured fully by the medical card register and therefore outflows are scaled up by an additional 67 per cent. It is assumed only 3 out of 5 people will de register with their GP if they are leaving Northern Ireland (see [Methodology Report](#) for more detail).

England, Wales and Scotland used International Passenger Survey (IPS) for producing official migration statistics. Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced in August 2020 that they would not return to producing official migration statistics from the IPS and instead shift to a new approach that will rely on administrative data first and foremost (admin-based migration estimates (ABMEs)). This shift means that in future they will be basing their estimates on actual patterns of migration, rather than relying on potential migrants to respond to survey questions about whether they are planning to remain in or out of the UK in the next 12 months. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) works closely with ONS to ensure comprehensive and coherent UK and country level migration statistics.

While this means there is a methodological difference for the international migration estimates of Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, NISRA and ONS are content that the methods used for Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK yield robust estimates for the UK as a whole. Furthermore, Northern Ireland migration statistics have been previously assessed by UKSA, who found them to be fit for purpose¹².

Some data sources used in the production of population estimates for small geographical areas (e.g., School Census, Child Benefits, and Pensions data) rely on the use of postcodes to allocate people to specific small geographical areas. In a small number of cases, postcodes can span more than one small geographical area (3-5 per cent of postcodes). Therefore, properties within the same postcode can be in different small geographical areas. However, all properties with a given postcode are allocated to a single small geographical area based on where the “centre of the postcode” is located. This can give rise to some small inaccuracies in the resultant estimates for small geographical areas and is not unique to Northern Ireland statistics.

¹² For more detail see the [NISRA website](#).

Enquiries and suggestions

- The revisions policy for Northern Ireland population statistics is available [here](#).
- We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback directly to census@nisra.gov.uk.
- Follow NISRA on [X](#), formerly known as Twitter and [Facebook](#).
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