

NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Frequency: Annual

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Date: 11 June 2020 (9.30am)

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Theme: Population

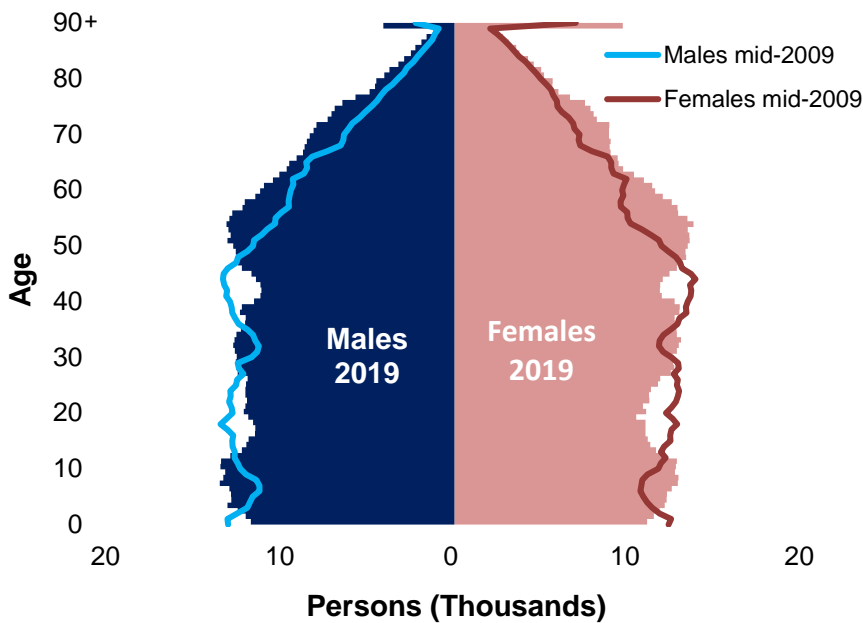
Time period: mid-2019

2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland



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

2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - Summary

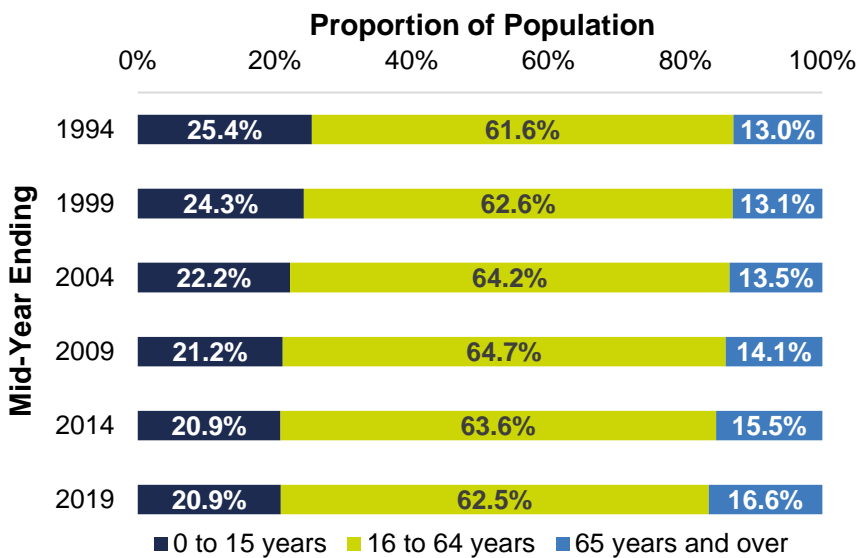


The Northern Ireland population continues to age

The population pyramid (left) shows the population structure.

The ageing of the population from 2009 to 2019 is evident in the increasing population amongst the older ages.

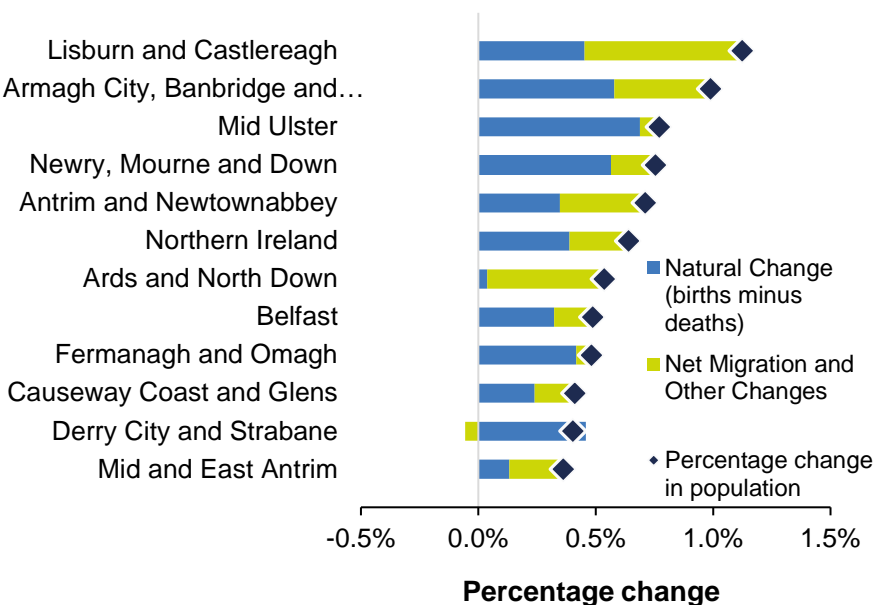
In the year to mid-2019, the number of people aged 65 or more increased by 2.1 per cent to 314,700 people.



By mid-2019, 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-1994 to 16.6 per cent in mid-2019.

In contrast, the proportion of the population aged 0 to 15 years has decreased from 25.4 per cent in mid-1994 to 20.9 per cent in mid-2019.

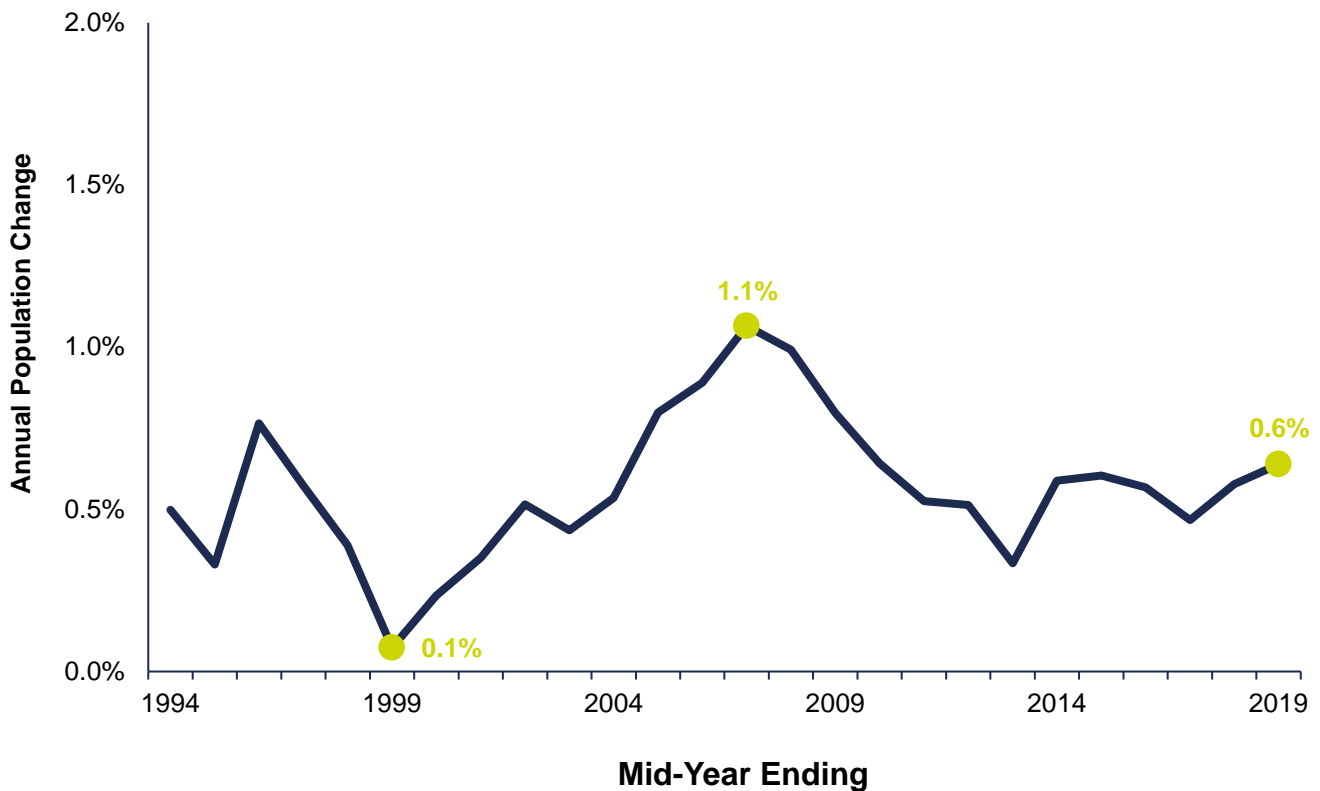


All Local Government Districts experienced population growth over the year

Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD had the largest population growth over the year (1.1 per cent) with net migration being the main contributor to population change (0.7 per cent).

Mid and East Antrim, Derry City and Strabane and Causeway Coast and Glens LGDs had the smallest population growth over the year (0.4 per cent).

Figure 2: Annual population change for Northern Ireland, mid-1994 to mid-2019



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

Over the last 25 years, the annual rate of population growth in Northern Ireland has fluctuated between a low of 0.1 per cent in 1999 and a high of 1.1 per cent in 2007. Over the decade mid-2009 to mid-2019, the population of Northern Ireland increased by a total of 100,300 people with an average year-on-year increase of 0.5 per cent.

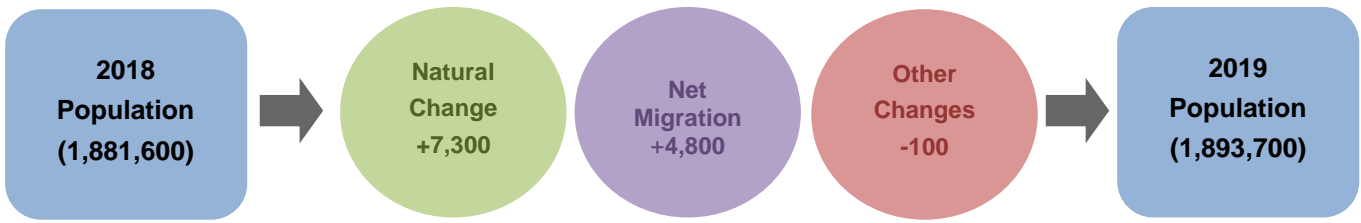
3.2 Why is the population increasing?

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 in 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 7,300 people (22,600 births minus 15,300 deaths);
2. An estimated growth of 4,800 people due to net migration (25,600 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 20,800 people left).
3. A slight reduction of 100 people due to other changes.

Figure 3: Contribution of components of change to population increase, mid-2018 to mid-2019

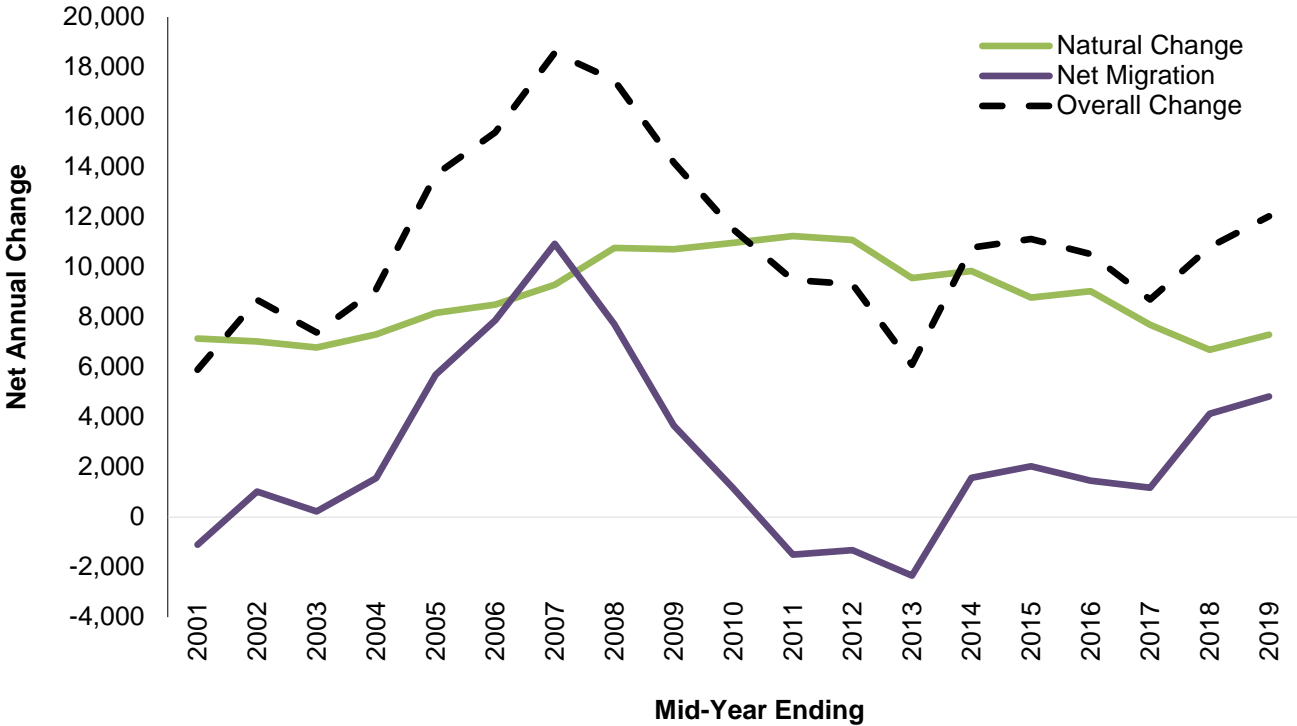


Natural change remains the main driver of population growth in Northern Ireland

In the year between mid-2018 and mid-2019 growth due to positive natural change and net migration totalled 12,100 people. As has been the case in recent years, natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) was the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 60.2 per cent (7,300 people) of this growth.

Net migration (i.e. inflows⁴ minus outflows⁵) accounted for 39.8 per cent of the growth, with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving by 4,800 (see Figure 4). Mid-2019 is the second consecutive year that net migration has exceeded +4,000 people, representing the largest levels of net migration since mid-2008.

Figure 4: Components of population change (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2019)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 98 Kb)

⁴ Inflows: the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live.

⁵ Outflows: the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere.

4 Migration of people into and out of Northern Ireland

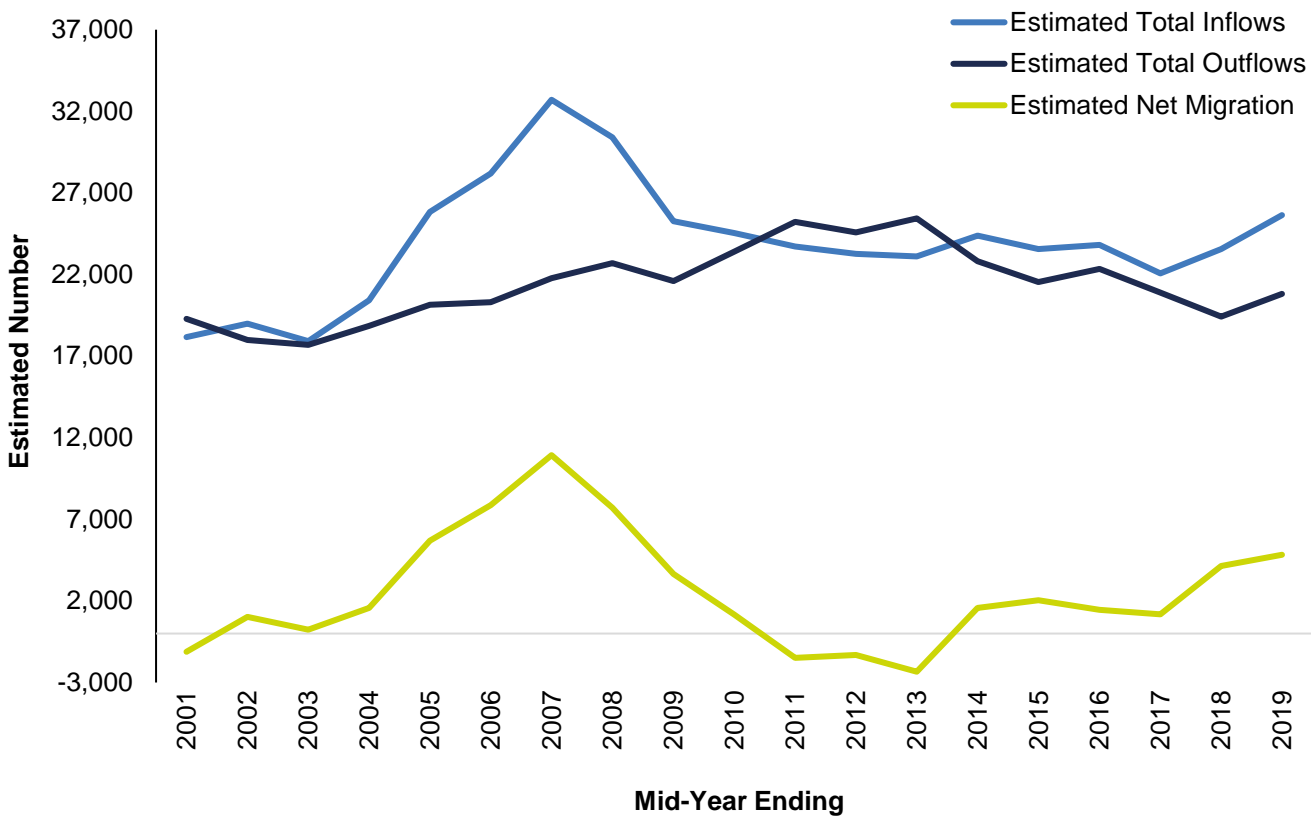
4.1 Northern Ireland continues to have a positive net migration

Immigration into Northern Ireland is at its **highest level (25,600 people)** in over a decade

In the year ending mid-2019, the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live was 25,600 and the number of people leaving to live outside of Northern Ireland was 20,800, resulting in a net increase in the population due to migration of 4,800 people. This was the highest total inflows to Northern Ireland since mid-2008.

Between the year ending mid-2018 and the year ending mid-2019, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland increased by 1,400 (7.2 per cent), and the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland also increased by 2,100 (8.9 per cent). Since the number of people immigrating into Northern Ireland increased at a higher rate than the number of people leaving Northern Ireland, the net change in population due to migration grew from +4,100 people to +4,800 people between the year ending mid-2018 and the year ending mid-2019 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Estimated Total Inflows, Total Outflows and Net Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2019)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 96 Kb)

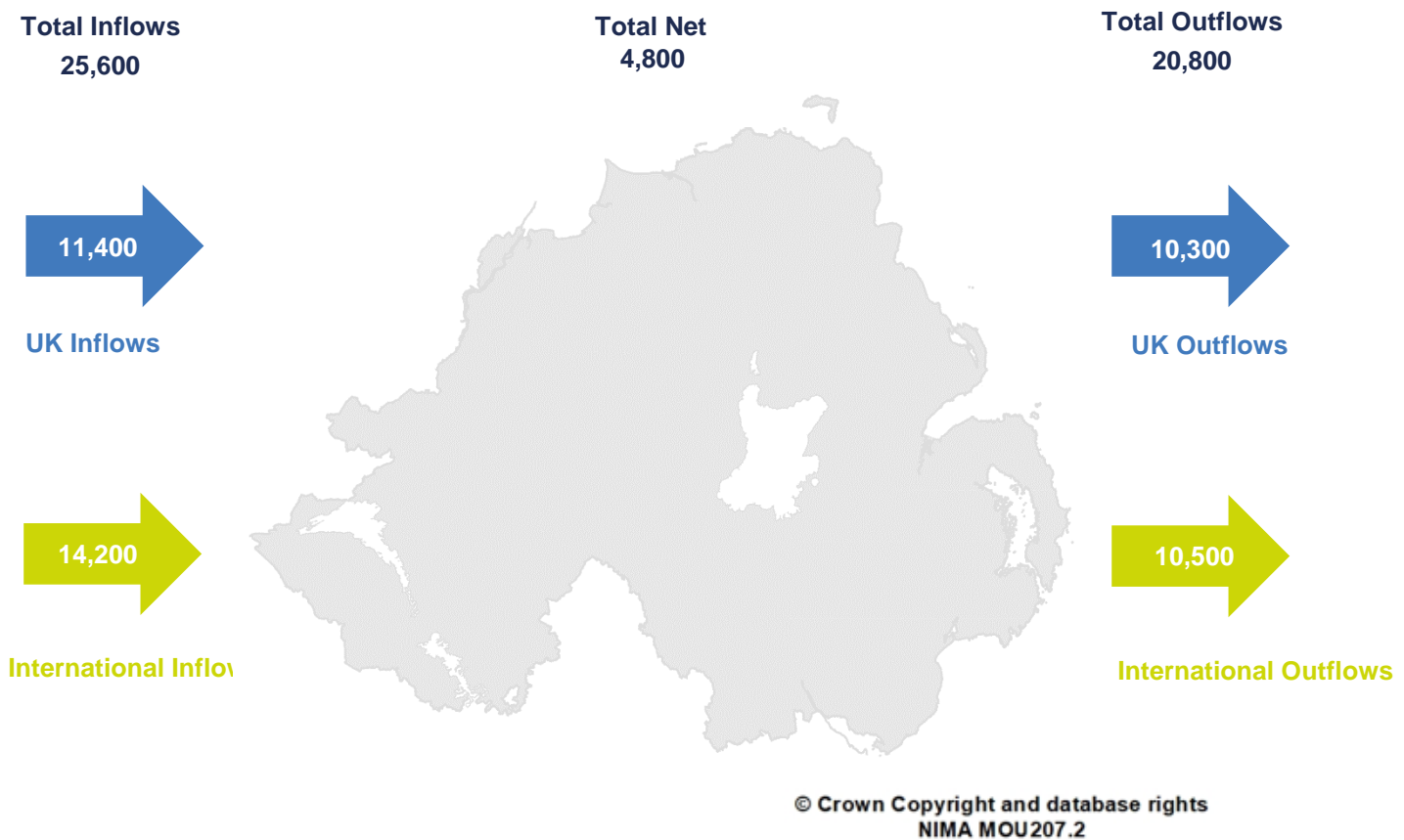
4.2 Where do migrants come from and go to?

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 6 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-2019.

Figure 6: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by Type in the year ending mid-2019



[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 89 KB)

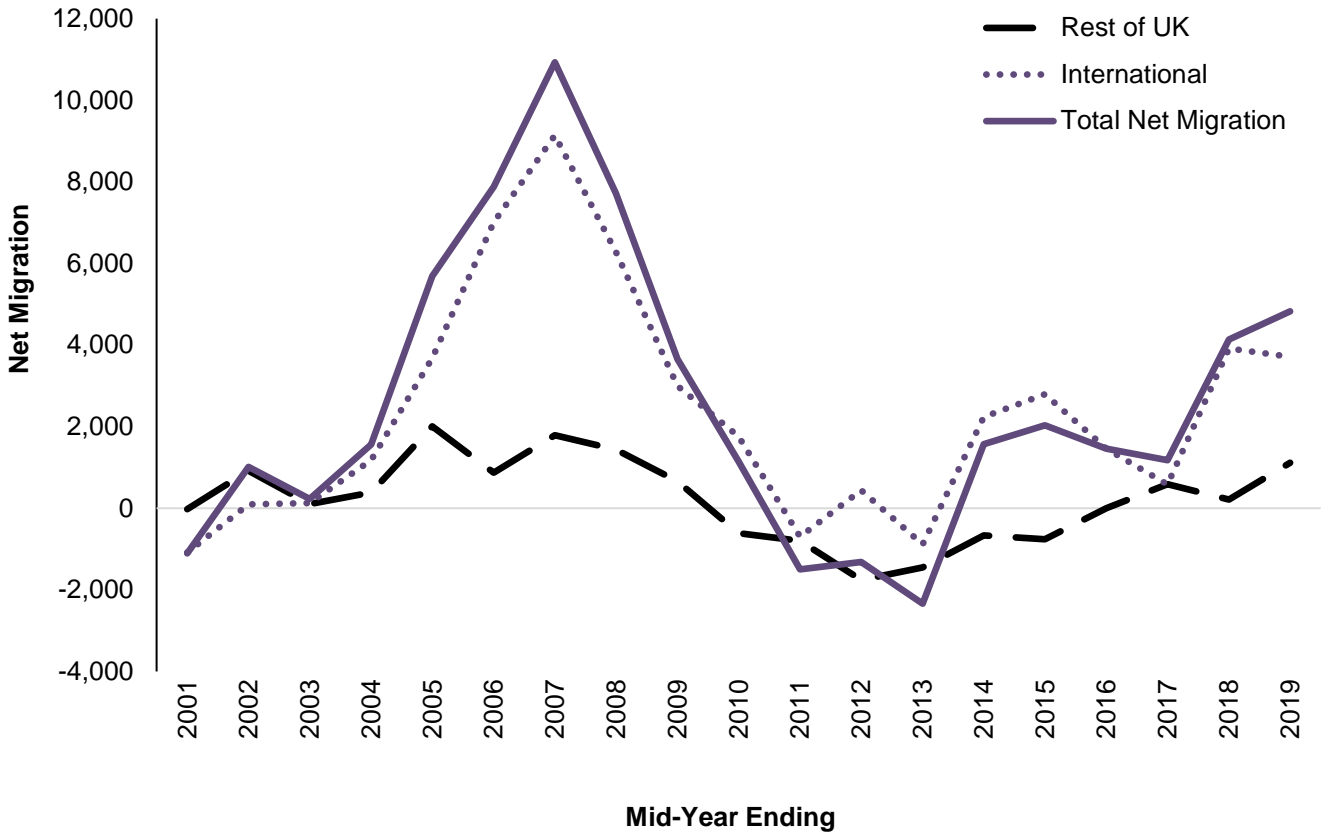
Between the year ending mid-2018 and the year ending mid-2019, there was negligible change (100) in the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK increased by 1,000 people (9.5 per cent). This led to inflows of 11,400 people and outflows of 10,300 people in the year ending mid-2019 and resulted in a net UK migration gain of 1,100 people.

During the same time, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK increased by 1,300 (14.1 per cent) to 10,500, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK increased by 1,100 (8.3 per cent) to 14,200. As a result, net international migration totalled 3,700 in mid-2019, slightly lower than 3,900 in mid-2018.

Figure 7 shows a time series of net migration by type from year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2019. Mid-2019 is the sixth consecutive year that migration inflows have been greater than outflows.

Clearly international travel patterns have changed significantly in 19/20 because of Covid-19. This will effect migration levels in 19/20 and beyond. However, the extent of the impact is unknown.

Figure 7: Estimated net migration by type (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2019)

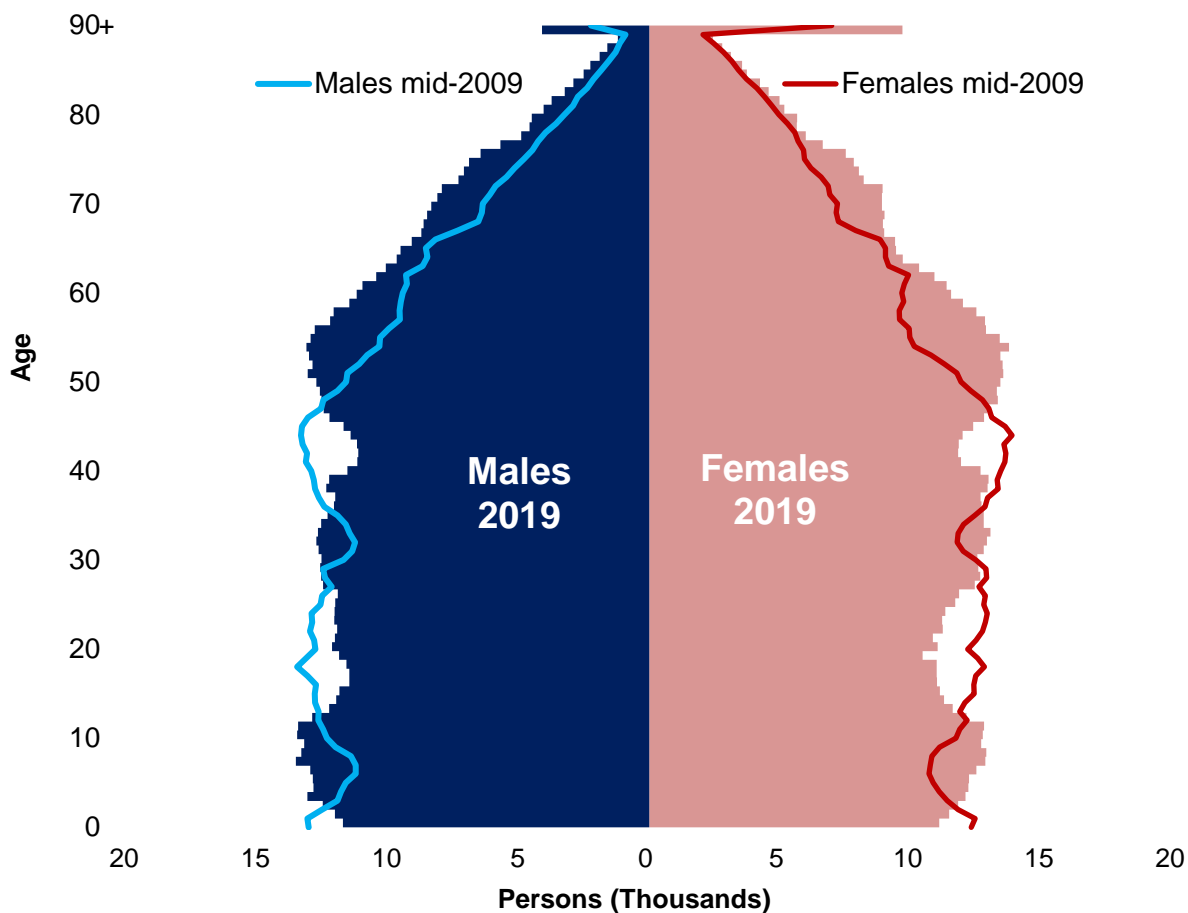


[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 95 Kb)

5 The age structure of Northern Ireland's population

5.1 The population of Northern Ireland is ageing

Figure 8: Population by age and sex (mid-2009 and mid-2019)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 98 Kb)

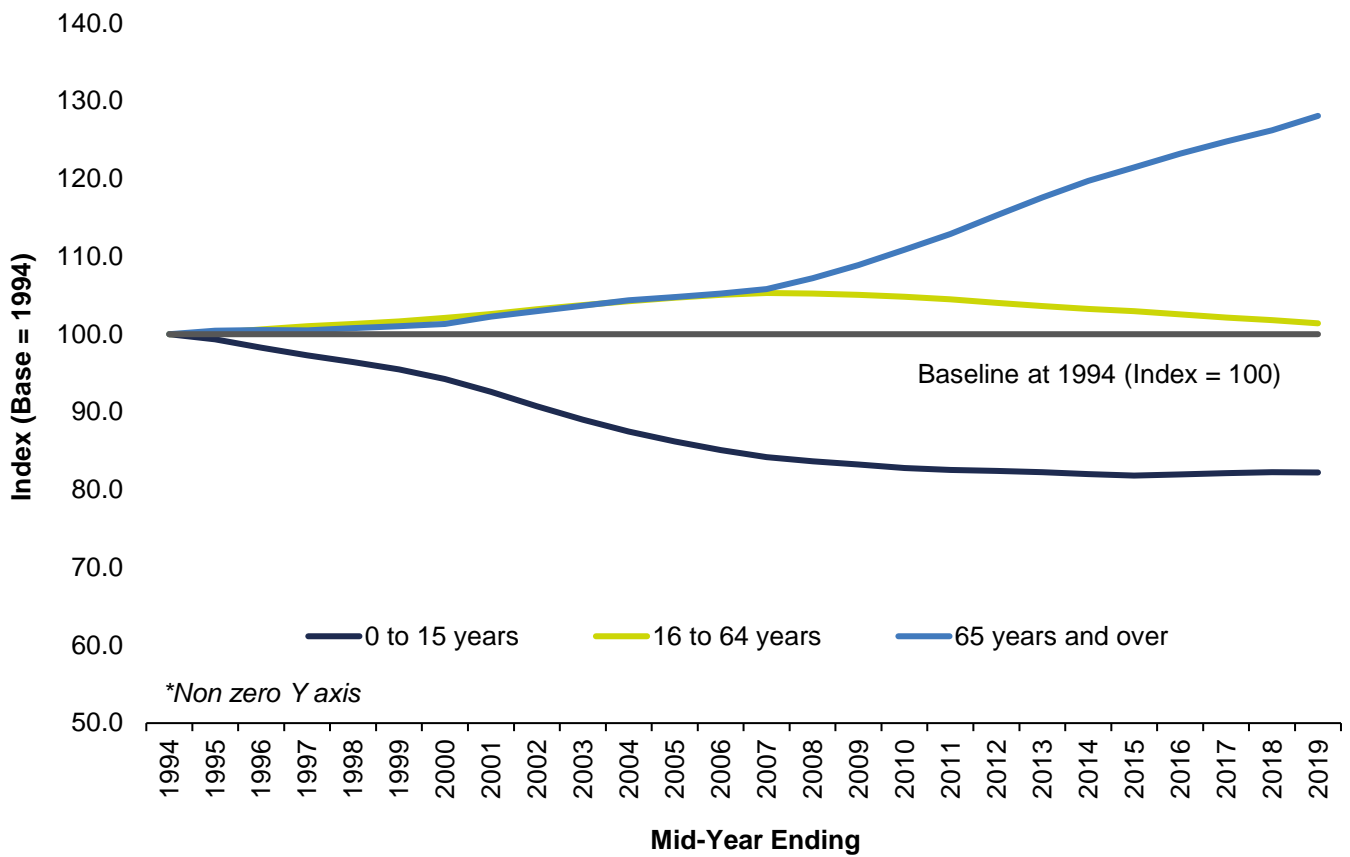
Age composition is one of the most important aspects of the population since changes in different age groups will have varied social and economic impacts. Figure 8 shows the population split by age and sex for mid-2009 and mid-2019 in the form of a population pyramid. This particular data representation allows for a more visual idea of how the numbers of people have 'aged on' in the decade to the year ending mid-2019 with the pyramid beginning to broaden around age 50 and over.

Over the three decades from year ending mid-1989 to year ending mid-2019 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 30.7 to 38.9 years. It is projected that from mid-2028 onwards the older population (people aged 65 and over) will be larger than the number of children (i.e. people aged 0 to 15 years).

5.2 How is the age structure of the population changing?

Over the 25 year period (1994 to 2019) 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 28.1 per cent from mid-1994 to mid-2019. Conversely, the proportion of children (i.e. people aged 0 to 15 years) in Northern Ireland has decreased since mid-1994 by 17.8 per cent to mid-2019. 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.

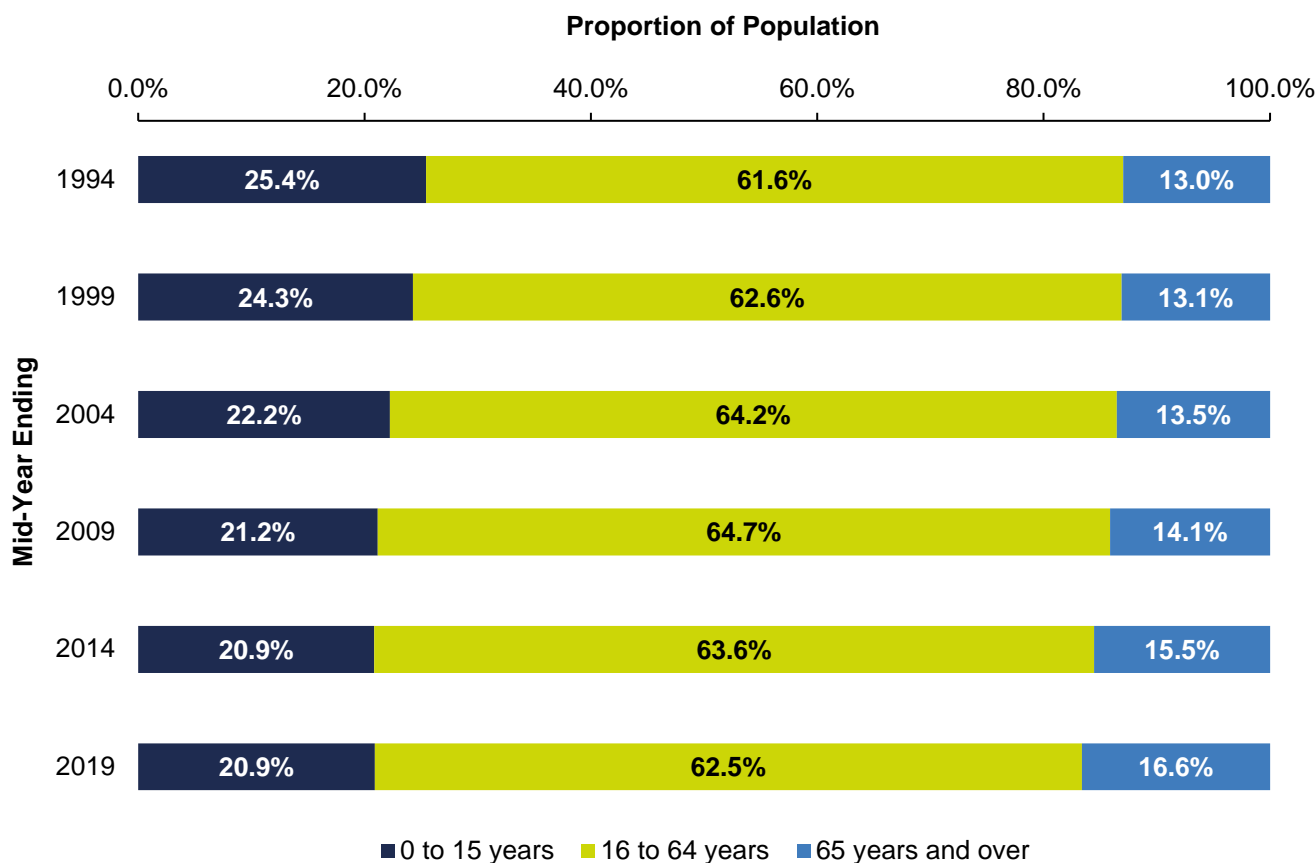
Figure 9: Index of population change for key age groups in Northern Ireland, mid-1994 to mid-2019



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 95 Kb)

Figure 10 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 of children decreasing from 25.4 per cent of the population in mid-1994 to 20.9 per cent of the population in mid-2019. Conversely, the proportion of the older population (aged 65 years and over) has increased throughout this period from 13.0 per cent in mid-1994 to 16.6 per cent in mid-2019.

Figure 10: Age structure of Northern Ireland's population, mid-1994 to mid-2019



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

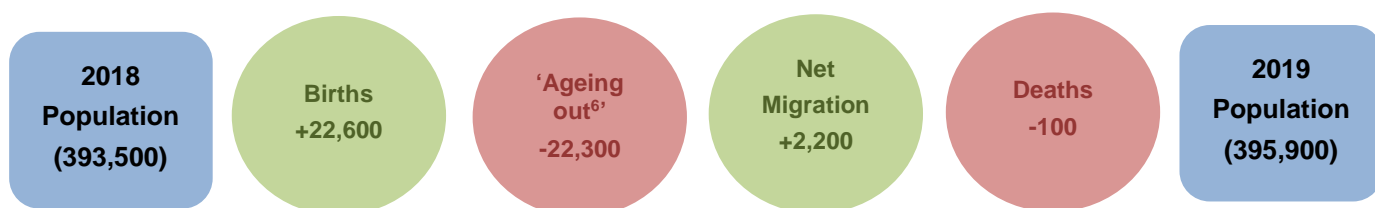
5.3 Change in age structure over the year

5.3.1 Children (0 to 15 years)

In mid-2019, just over **one in five** (20.9 per cent) people in Northern Ireland were Children

In the year ending mid-2019, the number of children increased by 0.6 per cent (from 393,500 to 395,900), representing 20.9 per cent of the population.

This growth of 2,400 children was a result of:

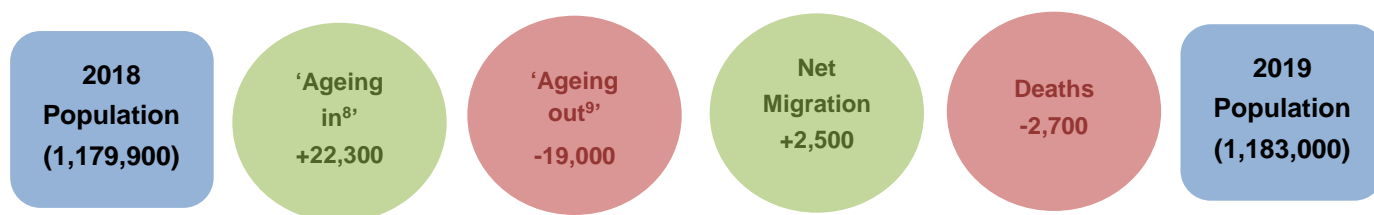


⁶ Ageing out refers to the cohort of people ageing from one group into the next. In this case, people who are aged 15 in mid-2018 will turn 16 by mid-2019 and therefore 'age out' of the Children (0 to 15 years) age group.

5.3.2 Working age population (16 to 64 years)

In the year ending mid-2019 the working age population⁷ increased by 0.3 per cent (from 1,179,900 to 1,183,000), representing 62.5 per cent of the population.

This growth of 3,100 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 remained stable with a slight reduction from 579,500 people to 578,500 people, representing 30.6 per cent of the population. This population decline of 1,000 people in the younger working age group was a result of:

- more people 'ageing out' of this age group (24,100) than 'ageing in' (22,300);
- a net gain of 1,200 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 0.7 per cent in the year ending mid-2019 (from 600,400 to 604,500), representing 31.9 per cent of the population. This growth of 4,100 was a result of:

- more people 'ageing into' this age group (24,100) than 'ageing out' (19,000);
- a net gain of 1,300 people due to migration; and
- a total of 2,300 deaths among people in this age group

⁷ The working age population is defined by the age at 30 June 2019 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-2018 will turn 16 by mid-2019 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-2018 will turn 65 by mid-2019 and therefore 'age out' of the working age group and 'age in' to the 'older population' group (65 years and over) age group.

6 Population Estimates for areas within Northern Ireland

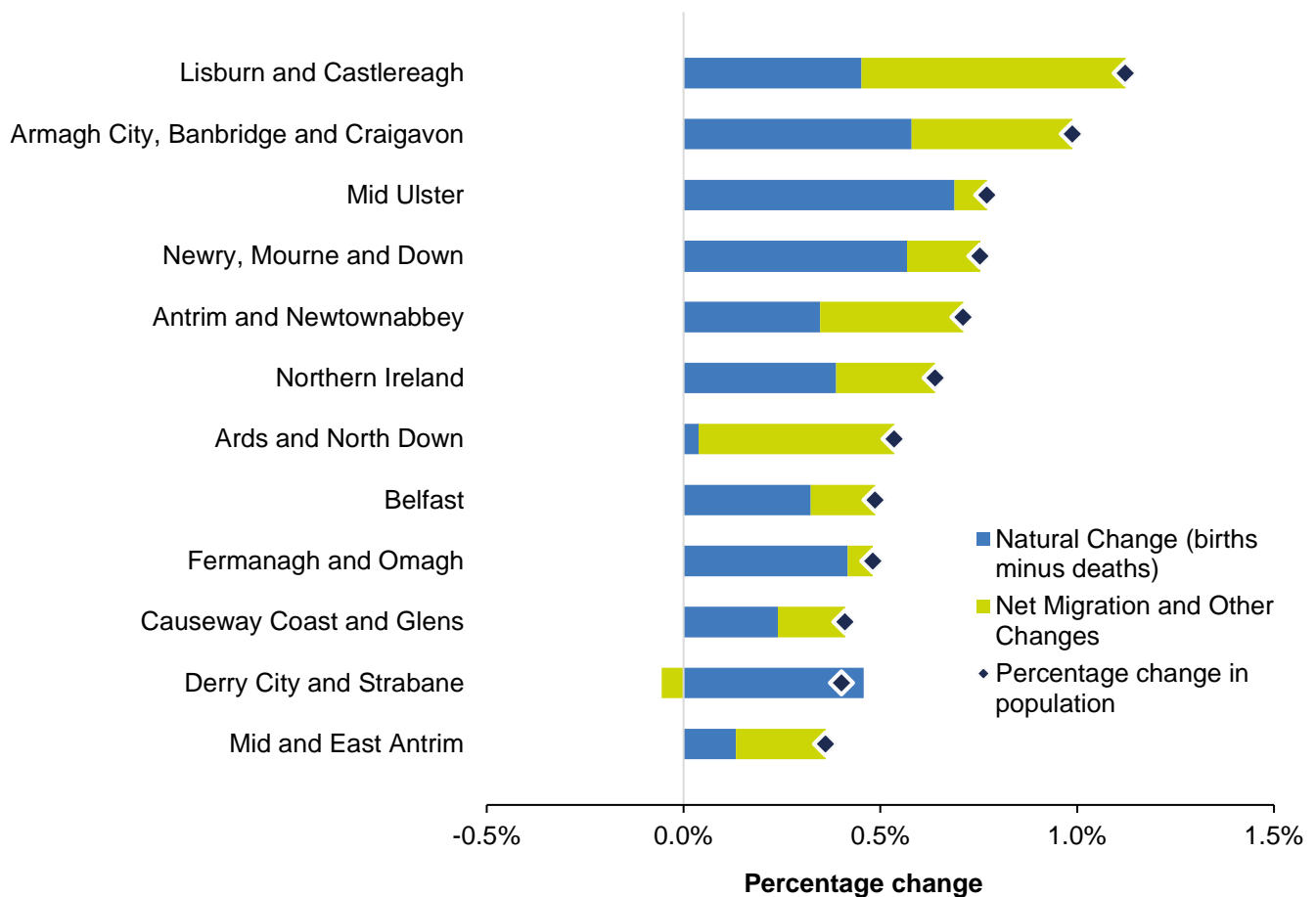
6.1 How has the population changed for Local Government Districts?

The estimated population for the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) in mid-2019 ranged from 117,400 people in Fermanagh & Omagh LGD to 343,500 in Belfast LGD. The mid-2019 population estimates by LGD are shown in Map 1 (overleaf).

All Local Government Districts experienced population growth in the year to mid-2019

Figure 11 presents the overall percentage population change for LGDs and the effect the components of change have had on the population. The population in all 11 LGDs increased in the year ending mid-2019. Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD had the largest percentage increase in population of 1.1 per cent, with migration being the main driver of growth (0.7 per cent) in this area. Mid and East Antrim LGD, had the smallest percentage change in population with an increase of just under 0.4 per cent which was caused by natural change of 0.1 per cent and positive net migration of 0.2 per cent.

Figure 11: Components of population change by Local Government District, mid-2018 to mid-2019 (ordered by population change)

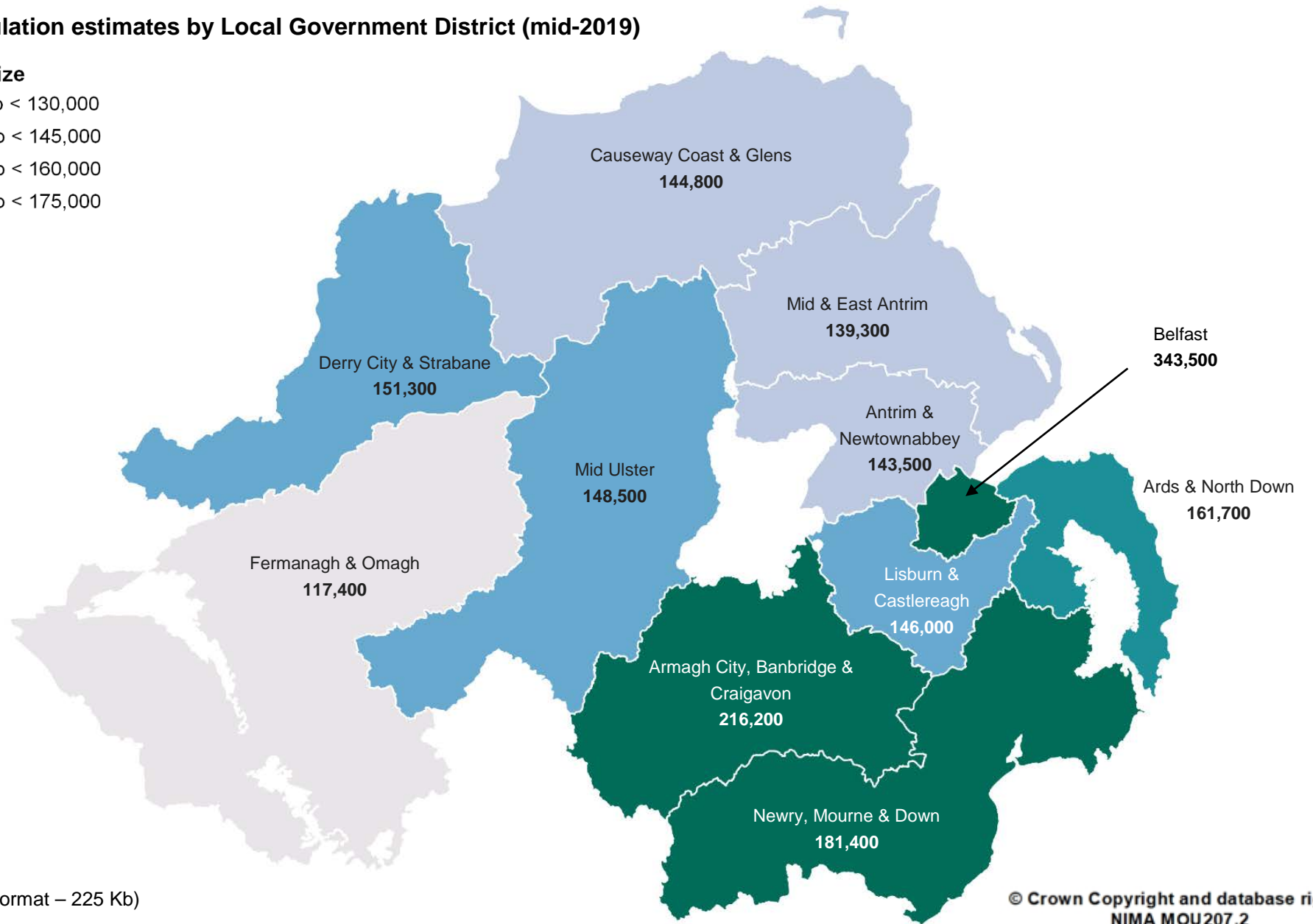


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Map 1: Population estimates by Local Government District (mid-2019)

Population Size

- 115,000 to < 130,000
- 130,000 to < 145,000
- 145,000 to < 160,000
- 160,000 to < 175,000
- 175,000 +



[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 225 Kb)

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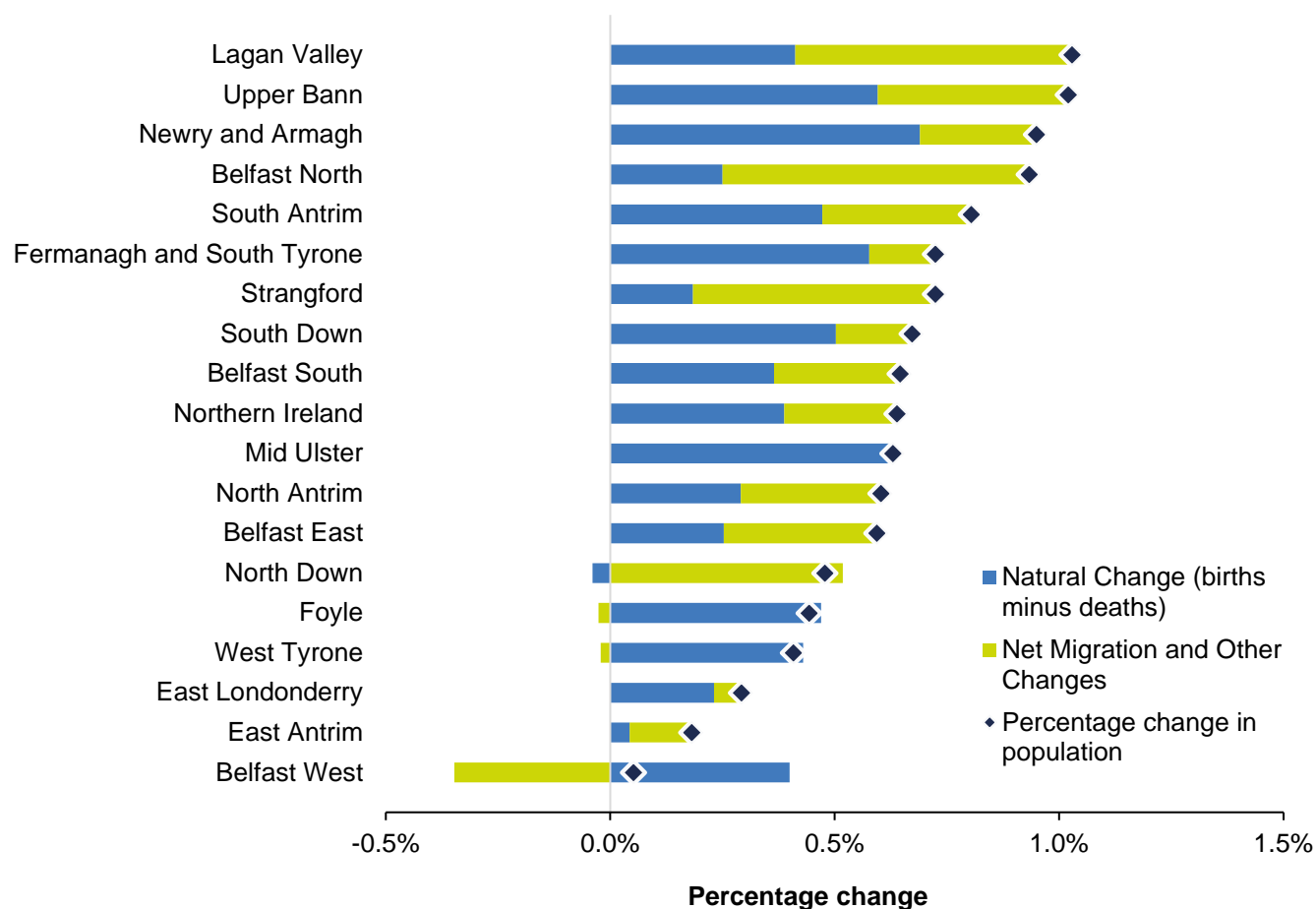
6.3 How has the population changed within Parliamentary Constituencies?

Parliamentary Constituencies¹⁴ (PCs) were designed to have roughly similar populations. The average population across PCs at mid-2019 was 105,200 people, ranging from 90,500 people in East Antrim PC to 128,900 in Upper Bann PC.

All Parliamentary Constituencies experienced population growth in the year to mid-2019

Lagan Valley PC and Upper Bann PC had the greatest percentage population increase (1.0 per cent). The main driver of population growth in Lagan Valley PC was migration (0.6 per cent), while the main driver for population growth in Upper Bann PC was natural change (0.6 per cent). The smallest percentage increase in population was in Belfast West PC (0.1 per cent) which was caused by natural change of 0.4 per cent and loss of people due to migration (-0.3 per cent). The net effect of natural change and outward migration in this area has led to a modest growth of 0.1 per cent.

Figure 14: Components of population change by Parliamentary Constituency, mid-2018 to mid-2019 (ordered by population change)

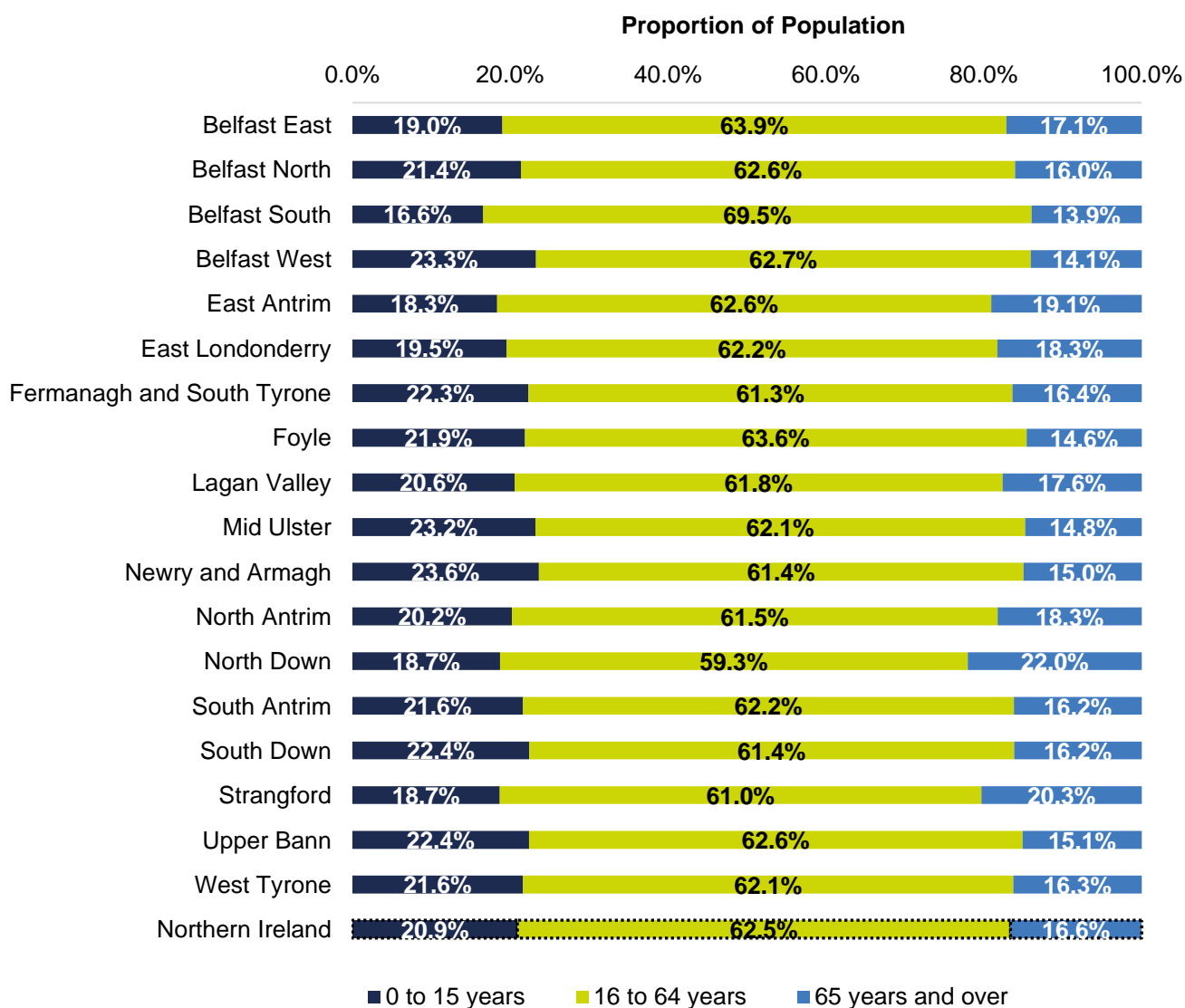


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¹⁴ Parliamentary Constituencies and Northern Ireland Assembly Areas share identical geographies and names.

At 69.5 per cent and 41.4 per cent Belfast South PC also had noticeably the largest proportion of its population being in the **working age** (i.e. people aged 16 to 64 years) and **younger working age** (i.e. 16 to 39 years) categories respectively.

Figure 16: Age structure of Parliamentary Constituencies (mid-2019) (ordered alphabetically)



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 95 Kb)

Median Age at Parliamentary Constituency Level

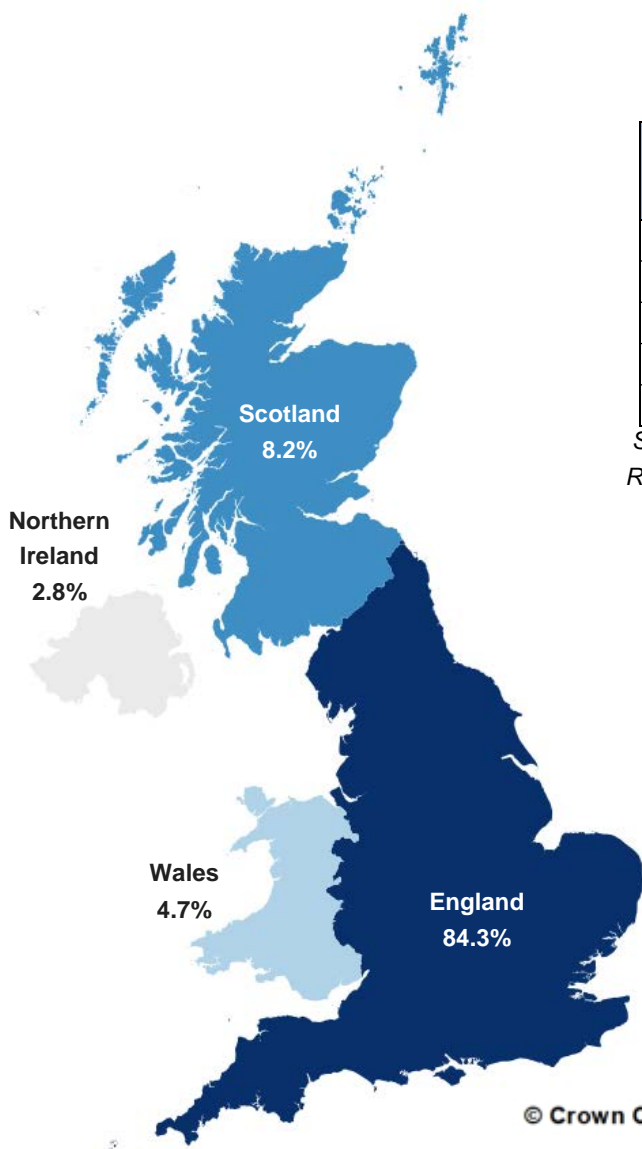
The differences in age distribution across the PCs can also be demonstrated using the median age. In mid-2019, the median age across PCs ranged from 34.4 years in Belfast South PC to 44.4 years in North Down PC. In addition, the median in all eighteen PCs has steadily increased over the decade from mid-2009, ranging from an increase of 0.3 years in Belfast East PC (39.3 years to 39.6 years) to an increase of 3.8 years in East Antrim PC (39.3 years to 43.1 years) (download [median age table](#) for all PCs).

7 How does Northern Ireland compare to the rest of the UK?

Provisional mid-2019 population estimates for England and Wales¹⁵ were published by the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) on 6 May 2020, together with the UK estimate as an aggregate of the UK constituent countries.¹⁶

Northern Ireland's share of the UK population has remained at 2.8 per cent since the year ending mid-2014. Map 2 below shows the mid-2019 population estimates for the UK. The population of Northern Ireland grew by 0.6 per cent in the year ending mid-2019. This was higher than the growth in Wales and Scotland (0.5 per cent each). England experienced growth similar to Northern Ireland at 0.6 per cent, while UK growth was 0.5 per cent for the year.

Map 2: Mid-2019 Population share of the UK by Constituent Countries



Country	Population mid-2019	Population change since mid-2018	
		Number	%
England	56,287,000	309,800	0.6
Wales	3,152,900	14,200	0.5
Scotland	5,463,300	25,200	0.5
Northern Ireland	1,893,700	12,000	0.6
U.K	66,796,800	361,300	0.5

Source for UK estimates: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland

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[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 65 Kb)

¹⁵ Final [mid-2019 population estimates for England, Wales and the UK](#) will be published by ONS on 24 June 2020.

¹⁶ The mid-2019 [population estimates for Scotland](#) were published on 30 April 2020.

8 How does Northern Ireland compare to ROI?

The population of Northern Ireland grew by 0.6 per cent in the year ending mid-2019. However, the Republic of Ireland (ROI) had a higher rate of population growth (year to April 2019), its population grew by 1.3 per cent to 4.92 million. Table 1 compares the population estimates for Northern Ireland, ROI and the UK.

Table 1: Estimates for the population of Northern Ireland, ROI and the UK (2019)

Country	2019 Population Estimate	Population change since 2018	
		Number	%
Northern Ireland	1,893,700 (mid-2019)	12,000	0.6
Republic of Ireland ¹⁷	4,921,500 (year ending April 2019)	64,500	1.3
Island of Ireland	6,815,200	76,500	1.1
UK ¹⁸	66,796,800 (mid-2019)	361,300	0.5

¹⁷ Population estimates for the Republic of Ireland (year ending April 2019) are published by the Central Statistics Office Ireland (CSO), and are available at:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2019/>

¹⁸ UK population estimates for the UK are published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), and are available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

9 Links to related statistics

[Population estimates for the UK](#) and its constituent countries are available from the Office for National Statistics website.

More detailed population estimates for Local Government Districts and Parliamentary Constituencies are available on the [NISRA website](#). Population estimates can also be found for Health and Social Care Trusts, former 26 Local Government Districts, former Education and Library Boards, former Health and Social Services Boards, former NUTS Level III areas, Super Output Areas and former Electoral Wards.

Population Factsheets for Local Government Districts are now published as a separate summary document and can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

[Estimates of the population aged 85 and over](#) are available on the NISRA website and released in September following the mid-year population estimates in June. Mid-2019 based population estimates will be released in September 2020.

[Population projections for Northern Ireland](#) and [sub-national areas](#) (2018-based) are available from the NISRA website. Future population projections will be released following the 2021 Census.

[Population estimates for small areas in Northern Ireland](#) are available on the NISRA website and are released in November following the mid-year population estimates in June. Mid-2019 based population estimates will be released in November 2020.

How to find data

What are you looking for?	Where is it?
The tables and figures used throughout this publication in Excel format.	Tables and figures
Population estimates in Open Data format (3* CSV).	Open Data NI
Interactive data to engage with population estimates and compare geographies within Northern Ireland	Interactive data visualisations <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Components of Change2. Population Totals3. Population by age bands4. Population Pyramid

10 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 [here](#). 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 [here](#).

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 have improved the accessibility of mid-year population estimates by publishing data in 3* open data format on Open Data NI. 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.

11 Background Notes

11.1 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.

11.2 Methodology

Population estimates are produced using two separate methods, the components of change and ratio change methods. At the Northern Ireland level population estimates are derived using the components of change method, which updates the latest Census estimates by 'ageing on' populations and adjusting for births, deaths and migration. Population estimates for areas within Northern Ireland are aggregated from Super Output Area level and are generally calculated from an average of the two statistical methods: the ratio change and cohort-component methods. Detailed information on the data sources which inform these two methods and how the estimates are produced is available in the [Methodology Report](#).

11.3 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 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 [here](#).

11.4 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 use the International Passenger Survey (IPS) to measure international migration, however, Northern Ireland cannot rely on the IPS for measurement. The limitation with the IPS is that it does not cover the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the uncertainty introduced when “Ireland” is given in response to survey questions – some people stating “Ireland” as their origin or destination may be referring to Northern Ireland.

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 purpose¹⁹.

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.

¹⁹[UKSA Assessment Report - Statistics on Demography and Vital Events in Northern Ireland \(2011\)](#)

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 [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- All media inquiries should be directed to the DOF Press Office:

Telephone: 028 9081 6724

Email: dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk

- Further statistical information can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

E-mail: census@nisra.gov.uk

Responsible Statistician: Jonathan Harvey