

# Population & Migration

In 2015:

- The population of Northern Ireland is estimated to be 1.852 million people at 30 June 2015.
- Over the year mid-2014 to mid-2015, the number of people living in Northern Ireland increased by 11,100 people (0.6 per cent).
- Natural growth was the main driver of population growth, adding 8,800 people (24,200 births minus 15,400 deaths) to the population.
- For the second year in a row, the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (23,600) was greater than the number of people leaving (21,500), leading to a net population gain of just over 2,000 people due to migration.
- The number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere was at its lowest level since the year ending mid-2006, falling by 6 per cent between July 2014 and June 2015.
- The population aged under 65 increased at a moderate rate (0.3 per cent) in the year ending mid-2015, reaching 1,559,800 people, whilst the population aged 65 and over increased by 2.1 per cent in the same period to reach 291,800 people in mid-2015.
- The Northern Ireland population is projected to exceed 2 million people by 2034.
- Projections also indicate a continued aging population, with the number of people aged 65 and over projected to grow by 26 per cent in the 10 year period to mid-2024.
- Each of the 11 Local Government Districts experienced an increase in population between mid-2014 and mid-2015.



### Population Estimates

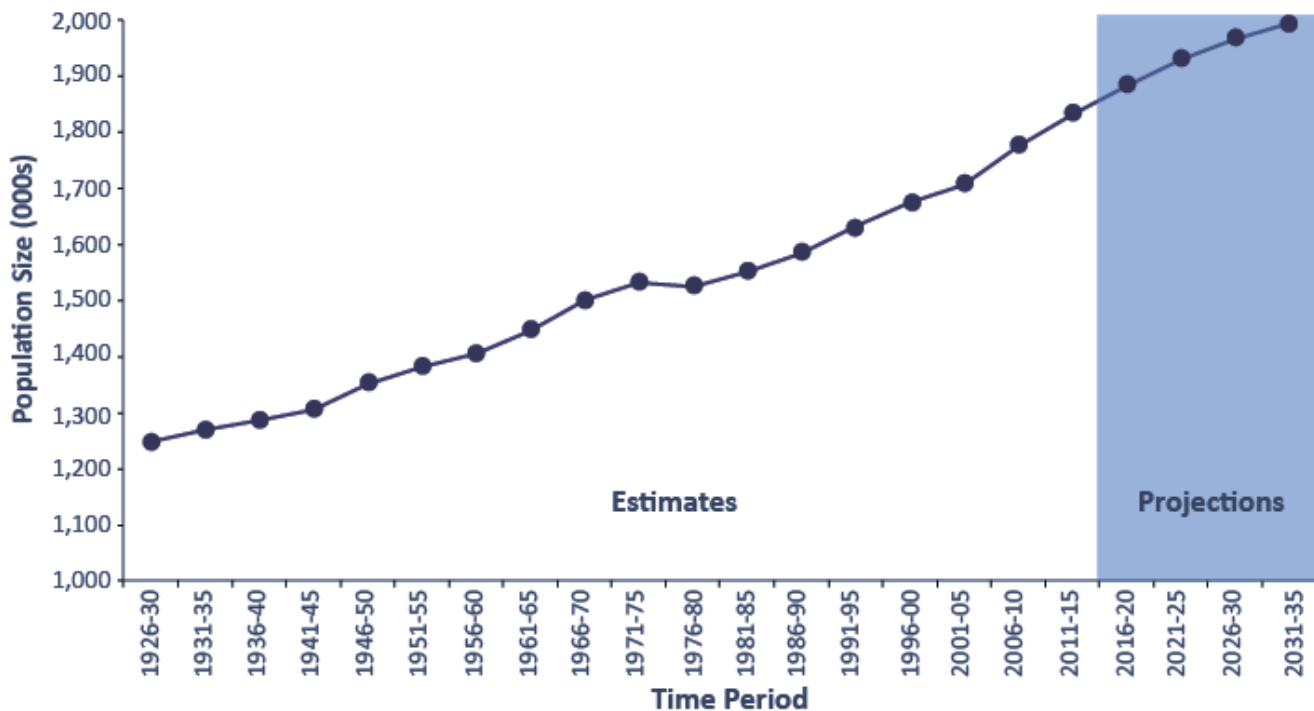
The latest estimate of the size of the Northern Ireland population<sup>i</sup> (30 June 2015) is 1,851,600 people.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, Northern Ireland’s population is estimated to have risen by 11,100 people. Natural growth (i.e. births minus deaths) added 8,800 people to the population, but there was also a net population gain of 2,000 people resulting from more people arriving to live in Northern Ireland (23,600) than leaving (21,500). Changes in the number of Her Majesty’s Forces stationed in Northern Ireland accounted for a further population increase of 300 people.

Figure 1.1 shows the long term trend of increasing population, despite a slight decrease in population in the early 1970s as a result of high levels of net outward migration at that time. The latest population projections for Northern Ireland (2014-based) show that the population is projected to continue to increase, exceeding 1.9 million people by mid-2020 and 2.0 million people by mid-2034.

**Population estimated to have risen by 11,100 people**

**Figure 1.1: Estimated (1926 to 2015) and projected (2016 to 2035) Population of Northern Ireland – non-zero y-axis**

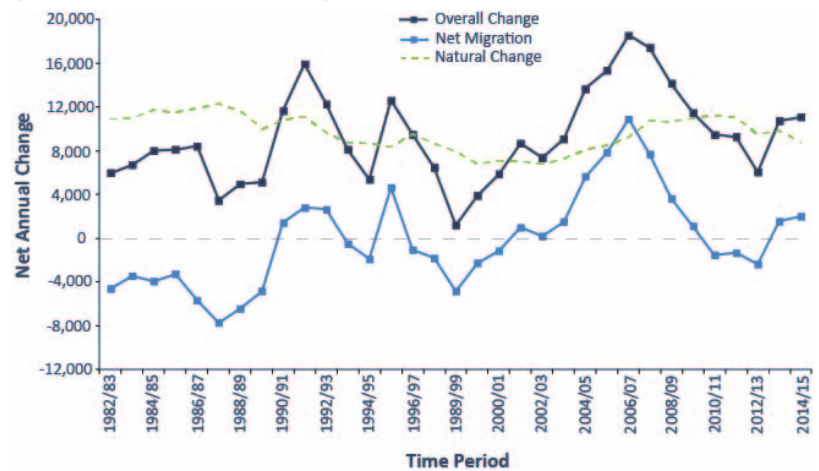


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<sup>i</sup> Reports and statistics are available at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>. Population pyramids and interactive maps are available at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp19.htm>.

It can be seen from the trends in natural change and net migration presented in Figure 1.2 that, up to mid-2005, population increase was mostly due to natural change. In contrast, in the following year the contributions to population increase from natural change and migration were of a similar magnitude and in the year ending mid-2007 the contribution from migration exceeded that from natural change. Beyond that, net migration started to gradually reduce, falling below zero in the year ending mid-2011, indicating that more people left Northern Ireland than came here to live. In the years ending mid-2014 and mid-2015, Northern Ireland did however see a return to net inward migration, with a net population gain of 1,600 people and 2,000 people respectively due to migration.

**Figure 1.2: Components of population change (1982/83 to 2014/15)**



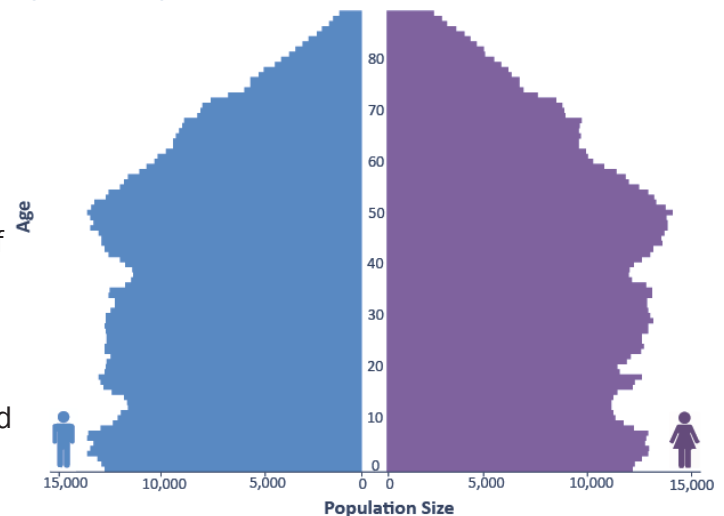
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## Age and Sex Structure

Figure 1.3 presents the age structure of the Northern Ireland population as at mid-2015. Females outnumber males in Northern Ireland, making up 51 per cent of the population. The age structure of Northern Ireland's population continues to get older due to a 23 year period of below replacement level fertility<sup>i</sup> (from 1992 to 2015) and continued increasing life expectancy.

During the twelve months to mid-2015, the number of children aged 0 to 15 years increased by 0.4 per cent to 385,200, the number of people aged 16 to 64 increased by 0.3 per cent to 1,174,600 people, while the older population (those aged 65 and over) increased by 2.1 per cent to 291,800. This compares to an overall population increase of 0.6 per cent. In the decade to mid-2004, the overall annual rate of population increase was around 7,000 people (equivalent to 0.4 per cent each year). Between mid-2004 and mid-2009, increases were significantly larger, averaging at 0.9 per cent each year. Since then, the annual rate of population increase fell gradually, reaching 0.3 per cent in the twelve months to June 2013, the lowest annual population increase seen this century.

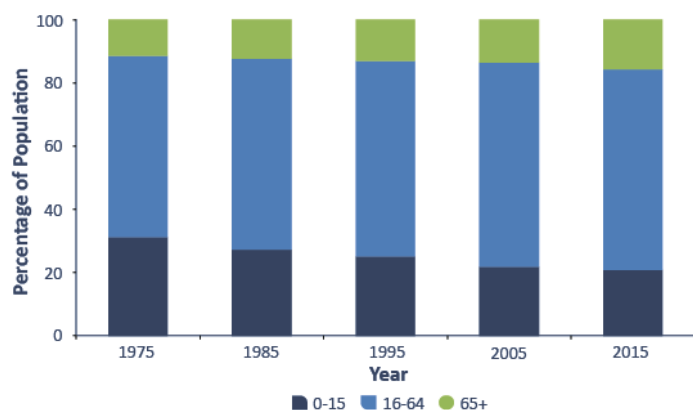
**Figure 1.3: Northern Ireland population pyramid by sex and age (2015)**



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<sup>i</sup> In western countries a total period fertility rate of 2.1 live births per female over her lifetime is required to maintain long-term population levels.

**Figure 1.4: Changing age structure of Northern Ireland population (1975 to 2015)**



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Over the past thirty years, lower fertility levels have resulted in a 9.4 per cent decrease in the number of children aged 0 to 15 years. In contrast, the number of people aged 16 to 64 has increased by 24 per cent; and the older population (those aged 65 and over) has increased by 51 per cent. The changing age structure of the population since 1975 is illustrated in Figure 1.4.

## All Local Government Districts experienced an increase in population

### Estimates of the Population aged 85 and over<sup>i</sup>

In mid-2015, 35,500 people (1.9 per cent of the population) were aged 85 years or over. This number has increased by 1,000 people (2.9 per cent) since mid-2014. Within the population aged 85 and over women significantly outnumber men, accounting for two thirds (67 per cent) of this population group.

### Area Comparisons within Northern Ireland

The pattern of continuing population growth is evident in each of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts. All Local Government Districts experienced an increase in the population between mid-2014 and mid-2015, with the smallest growth in Derry City & Strabane (0.2 per cent). In the same period, Lisburn & Castlereagh Local Government District had the greatest proportional increase in population (1.1 per cent). Of the other Local Government Districts, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon (1.0 per cent) and Mid Ulster (0.8 per cent) were the only Local Government Districts with a population growth rate greater than the Northern Ireland percentage increase (0.6 per cent).

All Local Government Districts experienced a natural increase in population (i.e. more births than deaths) between mid-2014 and mid-2015. The largest natural increase in population was in Belfast and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Local Government Districts, each adding 1,400 people.

<sup>i</sup> More detailed statistics on the population aged 85 and over for mid-2001 to mid-2014 are available at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp134.htm>. Equivalent estimates for 2015 are due to be published in September 2016.

In 2015, 21 per cent of the Northern Ireland population were aged 0 to 15, whilst 16 per cent were aged 65 and over. Mid Ulster was the Local Government District with the highest proportion of children aged 0 to 15 among its population (23 per cent), while Ards & North Down had the smallest proportion (19 per cent). Conversely, Ards & North Down Local Government District had the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over (20 per cent), whereas Mid Ulster Local Government District had the smallest proportion (14 per cent).

## Migration

Measures of population movement or migration are based on the United Nations definition of a long-term international migrant<sup>i</sup>. This definition is in use in population statistics for countries across the European Union. Unlike some other European countries, there is no comprehensive system which registers population movement in the United Kingdom. Therefore, estimates of population movement into, and out of, Northern Ireland are derived from proxy indicators. In Northern Ireland the primary source for estimating this is anonymised medical card registrations. At the Northern Ireland level, the overall effect of population movement is derived from the difference in two “population flows”: the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland and the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere. The difference between these flows provides information on net migration, referred to earlier.

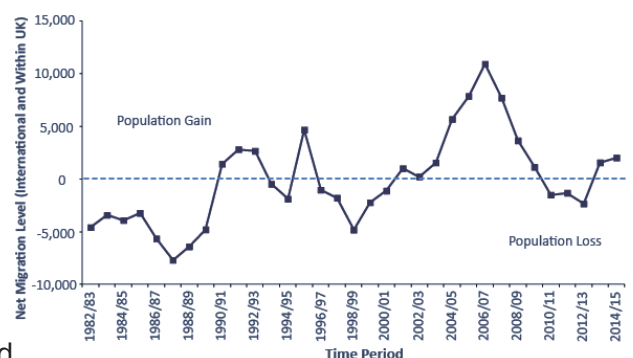
Estimates of net migration for Northern Ireland since the early 1980s are shown in Figure 1.5. The graph can be viewed in terms of distinct phases of migration. The first phase during the 1980s was when Northern Ireland experienced consistently large net population loss due to outward-migration of, on average, 5,500 people each year. The “Troubles” will have had a marked impact on this.

The second phase from year ending mid-1991 until year ending mid-2004 shows a period in which population movement fluctuated between net inward and net outward migration. Over the fourteen year period in question, the net inflow varied between 1,400 in the year ending mid-

## Largest natural increase in population was in Belfast and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Local Government Districts

## 21,500 people left NI in year ending June 2015 - lowest level since mid-2006

**Figure 1.5: Estimated level of net migration (1982/83 to 2014/15)**



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<sup>i</sup> “A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.” - Taken from “Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. UN 1998” available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?ID=116>



**Net migration estimated to be inward at around 2,000 people**

1991 to a peak of 4,700 in the year ending mid-1996. In contrast the net outflow ranged from a loss of 500 people in year ending mid-1994 to a loss of 4,800 people in year ending mid-1999. The various net inflows and net outflows over this entire period broadly cancelled each other out, with an overall net gain of around 1,100 people. However, in the third phase between mid-2004 and mid-2008, the number of people estimated to have come here to live rose to, on average, 29,300 people each year with net inward migration peaking at 11,000 people in the year ending mid-2007. This indicates a marked increase in international inflows and is related to the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004, when people from countries in Eastern Europe were allowed to come to work in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

After mid-2008, following the economic downturn, the net gain through migration fell as quick as it rose, with Northern Ireland once again experiencing a net population loss due to migration for three consecutive years between years ending mid-2011 and mid-2013.

In both of the years ending mid-2014 and mid-2015 the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number of people who left to live elsewhere, giving rise to a switch back to net inward migration of 1,600 people and 2,000 people respectively. The year ending mid-2015 did however see a decline in both inward and outward migration, with the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland falling by around 800 people (from 24,400 to 23,600; a reduction of 3.3 per cent) and the number who left falling by around 1,300 people (from 22,800 to 21,500; a reduction of 5.6 per cent).

**56 per cent of new arrivals came from outside the UK**

### Place of Origin/Destination of People Coming to/Leaving Northern Ireland (2014-15)

Table 1 shows the previous country of residence of people who came to Northern Ireland to live. This does not necessarily reflect their nationality or country of birth. Of the 23,600 people who came to live here in the year ending June 2015, around 56 per cent (13,100) came from outside the United Kingdom, 5,500 of whom came from recent EU Accession countries<sup>i</sup> that joined the European Union since May 2004.

<sup>i</sup> These countries include Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, which joined on 1 May 2004, as well as Bulgaria and Romania (members since 1 January 2007) and Croatia (member since 1 July 2013).

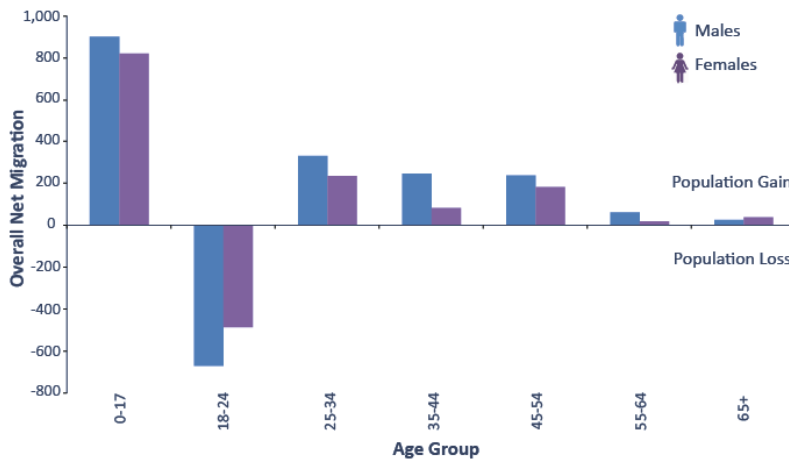
**Table 1: Number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland by country of last residence (2012 to 2015)**

Country of last residence	People coming to live in Northern Ireland					
	Mid-2012 to Mid-2013		Mid-2013 to Mid-2014		Mid-2014 to Mid-2015	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
England	7,800	34	8,500	35	8,000	34
Scotland	2,100	9	2,100	9	1,900	8
Poland	2,200	9	2,100	8	1,900	8
Republic of Ireland	1,600	7	1,700	7	1,500	7
Romania	200	1	1,100	4	1,300	6
Lithuania	1,000	4	800	3	800	3
China	500	2	500	2	600	2
Portugal	500	2	600	2	500	2
Wales	400	2	400	2	400	2
Bulgaria	100	0	300	1	400	2
Spain	500	2	400	2	400	2
East Timor	300	1	300	1	400	2
United States of America	300	1	400	2	400	2
All other EU Accession Countries	1,200	5	1,100	4	1,000	4
All other countries	3,300	14	3,500	14	3,200	14
Unknown	1,200	5	700	3	700	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24,400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23,600</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** HSC Business Services Organisation, May 2016, Medical Card Registrations

In contrast, 52 per cent of the 21,500 people who left Northern Ireland to live elsewhere between mid-2014 and mid-2015 went to the rest of the UK to live, with the remainder (48 per cent) moving to countries outside the UK. In total, it is estimated that 800 more people moved from Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK than moved in the opposite direction. Conversely, 2,800 more people came to live here from outside the UK than moved in the opposite direction.

**Figure 1.6: Net total migration by age group and sex (2014-15)**



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### Age-Distribution of Migrants

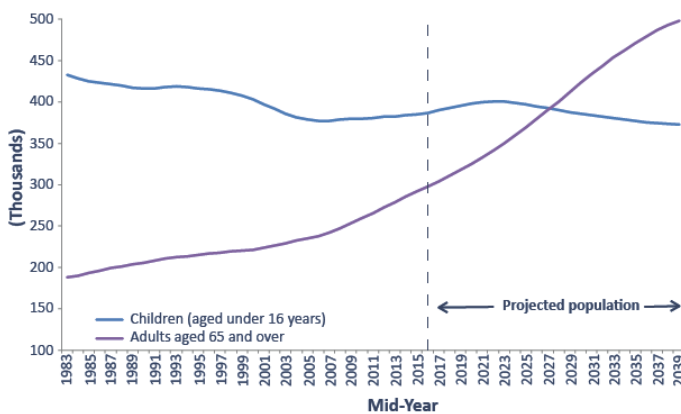
Figure 1.6 shows the age and sex distribution of net migration in Northern Ireland for the period mid-2014 to mid-2015. Of the age categories presented, the 18-24 age group is the only group to show a net outflow (1,200 people), which will include students who moved to the rest of the UK for study. For the remaining age categories the number of people coming to Northern Ireland exceeded the number of people who left. This was most noticeable among the 0-17 age group, which saw a net inflow of 1,700 young people. While there were also net inflows among the remaining age categories, it was relatively minor among those aged 55 and over.

### Projected Population – Northern Ireland

Population projections are produced every other year and the latest projections<sup>i</sup>, which use mid-2014 as the base year, indicate that the Northern Ireland population is projected to increase from 1.840 million people in mid-2014 to 1.939 million by mid-2024 (an increase of 5.3 per cent). Over the longer term the population is projected to reach 2.0 million people by mid-2034.

The projected increase in population is primarily due to natural growth. In the period mid-2014 to mid-2024, it is projected

**Figure 1.7: Children (those aged 0-15 years) and adults aged 65 and over, estimates (1983 to 2015) and projections (2016 to 2039) – non-zero y-axis**



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that there will be 89,000 more births than deaths. Migration projections suggest a net inflow of 9,200 people over the decade to mid-2024.

The projections indicate a marked increase in the size of the population at older ages, as seen in Figure 1.7. While the population of children (i.e. those aged 0 to 15 years) in Northern Ireland is projected to increase by 3.9 per cent (14,900 children) over the decade mid-2014 to mid-2024, the population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 26 per cent, from 285,900 to 359,700. Indeed by mid-2028, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to exceed the number of children.

<sup>i</sup> Further information on the 2014-based population projections is available at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp20.htm>



The largest projected population change, in percentage terms, will occur among those aged 85 and over, rising from 34,400 people in mid-2014 to 48,100 in mid-2024 (an increase of 40 per cent). By mid-2032 the population aged 85 and over will have doubled to 70,200.

## Projected Population – Areas within Northern Ireland

Population projections are also created for areas within Northern Ireland<sup>i</sup>, with the latest local area projections, like the Northern Ireland projections, also using 2014 as the base year. Over the period 2014 to 2024, all of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts are projected to experience population growth.

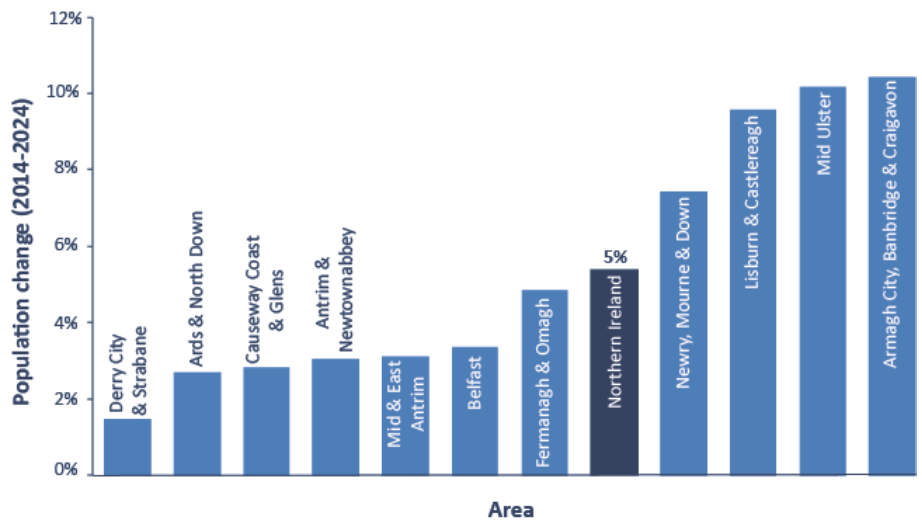
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon is projected to have the highest percentage growth (10.4 per cent) with an increase from 205,700 to 227,100 between 2014 and 2024. Figure 1.8 shows the percentage change in all Local Government Districts.

The number of children (aged 0-15) is projected to increase in 6 out of the 11 Local Government Districts by 2024, with the largest percentage increase in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon (9.6 per cent). The largest percentage decrease is projected in Ards & North Down (2.3 per cent).

The population aged 16-64 years is projected to increase in 4 out of the 11 Local Government Districts by 2024, with the largest percentage increase in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon (6.6 per cent). The largest percentage decrease is projected in Derry City & Strabane (3.5 per cent).

The population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase in all Local Government Districts by 2024, with the largest percentage increases in Newry, Mourne & Down, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh Local Government Districts (33 per cent each). The smallest projected increase is in Belfast (15 per cent).

**Figure 1.8: Overall projected percentage change in population size of Local Areas between 2014 and 2024**



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<sup>i</sup> Further information on the 2014-based population projections for areas within Northern Ireland is available at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp47.htm>.