

EXPERIMENTAL STATISTICS

Annual Mid-year Population Estimates for Wards, 2012

Coverage: **England and Wales**

Date: **26 November 2013**

Geographical Area: **Ward and Electoral District**

Theme: **Population**

Key points

- Mid-2012 ward population estimates refer to the 2012 electoral ward boundaries.
- Across England and Wales wards have a mean population size of 6,600.
- On average wards in Wales have smaller populations than those in England, with a mean population size of 3,500 compared to 7,000 in England.
- The largest wards by population size are city areas in the Midlands and Yorkshire.
- Wards with the youngest population age structures are all areas containing universities, in particular the ward with the lowest median age was Heslington in York at 20.3 years.
- Ward population estimates are particularly important for use in local government for the planning and monitoring of services, as well as providing detailed information on the population of small local areas for academics and commercial organisations.

Summary

This bulletin presents the 2012 mid-year population estimates for electoral wards in England and Wales. These estimates are consistent with the results of the 2011 Census and are available for 2012 electoral ward boundaries – the boundaries in place at the reference date of the estimates. Ward estimates are part of a wider suite of small area population estimates.

In general, small area population estimates are used by both central government departments and local authorities for a range of purposes including planning and monitoring of services; as denominators for the calculation of various rates and indicators and as a base for population

projections and forecasts. Ward population estimates are of particular interest to local government organisations, academics and commercial organisations.

Introduction

Mid-year population estimates for 2012 for England and Wales, regions within England, and local authorities within England and Wales, were published on 26 June 2013. The estimates refer to the usually resident population as at 30 June of the reference year and are published annually. In mid-2012 the population of England and Wales was 56,567,800, an increase of 0.7% since mid-2011 and 7.5% over the ten years since mid-2002.

Small Area Population Estimates

Mid-year population estimates for wards form part of the suite of small area population estimates for England and Wales, which are produced annually, usually approximately three to four months after the publication of the national, regional and local authority level estimates.

There are two main types of small area population estimates:

- Super Output Area (SOA) estimates – National Statistics including estimates for middle and lower layer SOAs. [Mid-2012 estimates](#) for SOAs were published on 17 October 2013.
- Estimates for other geographies – Experimental Statistics including estimates for parliamentary constituencies and wards. [Mid-2012 estimates for parliamentary constituencies](#) have been published alongside this release.

The mid-2012 ward population estimates, referred to in this bulletin, are aggregations of Output Areas (OAs). OA estimates are available as supporting information on the [ad-hoc](#) section of the ONS website.

Small area population estimates are fully consistent with population estimates for higher levels of geography including local authorities, regions and the national total for England and Wales. A [revised back series of small area population estimates for mid-2002 to mid-2010](#) have been published alongside this release in order to provide a time-series that is consistent with the [revised population estimates for local authorities](#), published on 30 April 2013.

Small area population estimates are used by both central government departments and local authorities for a range of purposes including planning and monitoring of services; as denominators for the calculation of various rates and indicators and as a base for population projections and forecasts.

Methodology

Small area population estimates for other geographies, including the ward estimates, are produced using Output Areas (OAs) as building blocks. Therefore the population of each small area is the sum of the population of the OAs which provide the 'best-fit' to the actual geographic boundaries of the

area. This approach is in accordance with the [Geography Policy for National Statistics \(55.9 Kb Pdf\)](#) published in July 2010.

Mid-2012 OA population estimates are based on mid-2012 lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) estimates and patient register data. The LSOA estimates are apportioned across OAs according to a distribution given by the number of patients living in each OA who are registered with a GP. These OA level estimates can then be aggregated to create population estimates for various higher level geographies. Full descriptions of the [methods](#) used to calculate mid-2012 small area population estimates, for both SOAs and other geographies, are available from the ONS website.

For further information on the quality and use of these statistics, please see the [Quality and Methodology Information](#) for Small Area Population Estimates.

Mid-2012 Ward Population Estimates

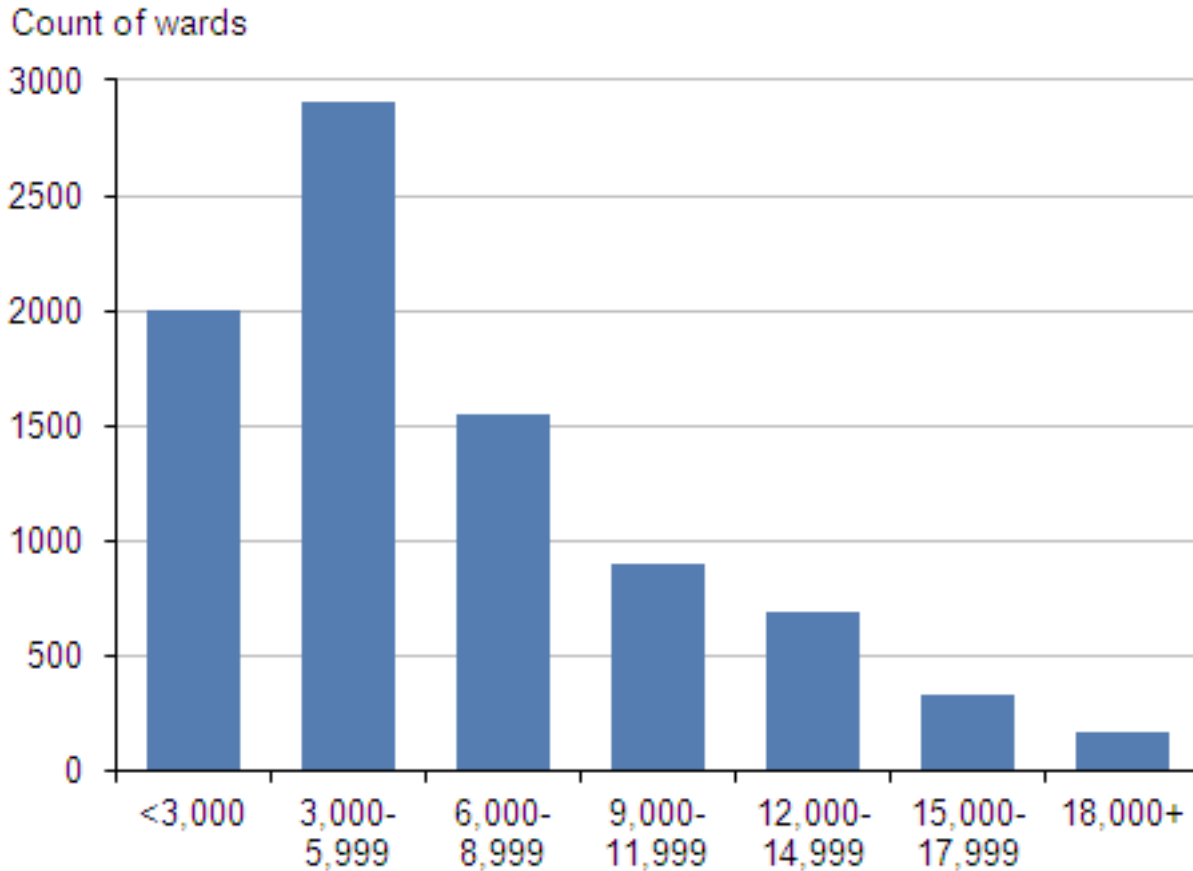
Electoral wards are a key building block of UK administrative geography. They are the spatial units used to elect local government councillors in metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and London boroughs in England; and unitary authorities in Wales. In some unitary authorities in England, they are legally termed as 'electoral divisions', however they are frequently referred to as wards and are referenced as such throughout this article. The five parishes of the Isles of Scilly are also treated as electoral wards for statistical purposes.

Electoral wards are subject to annual updates and boundary changes. Mid-2012 population estimates are therefore provided for the 8,564 electoral wards in England and Wales as at 31 December 2012, excluding the 18 wards which do not meet the minimum population requirements for data confidentiality (40 resident households and 100 resident people in the 2011 Census).

At mid-2012, the mean population of wards in England and Wales was 6,600. However, population sizes vary widely across the country ranging from 160 in St. Martin's ward in the Isles of Scilly to 38,000 in Central ward in Sheffield. On average, wards in England have larger populations than those in Wales with mean populations of 7,000 and 3,500 respectively.

Figure 1 below presents the overall distribution of wards by population size, in mid-2012. The majority of the wards with the largest populations of 18,000 and over are in areas of the Midlands and Yorkshire, such as Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield. In particular 73% of the very largest wards (with population greater than 24,000) are in Birmingham.

Figure 1: Distribution of wards by total population estimate, mid-2012



Source: Office for National Statistics

Download chart

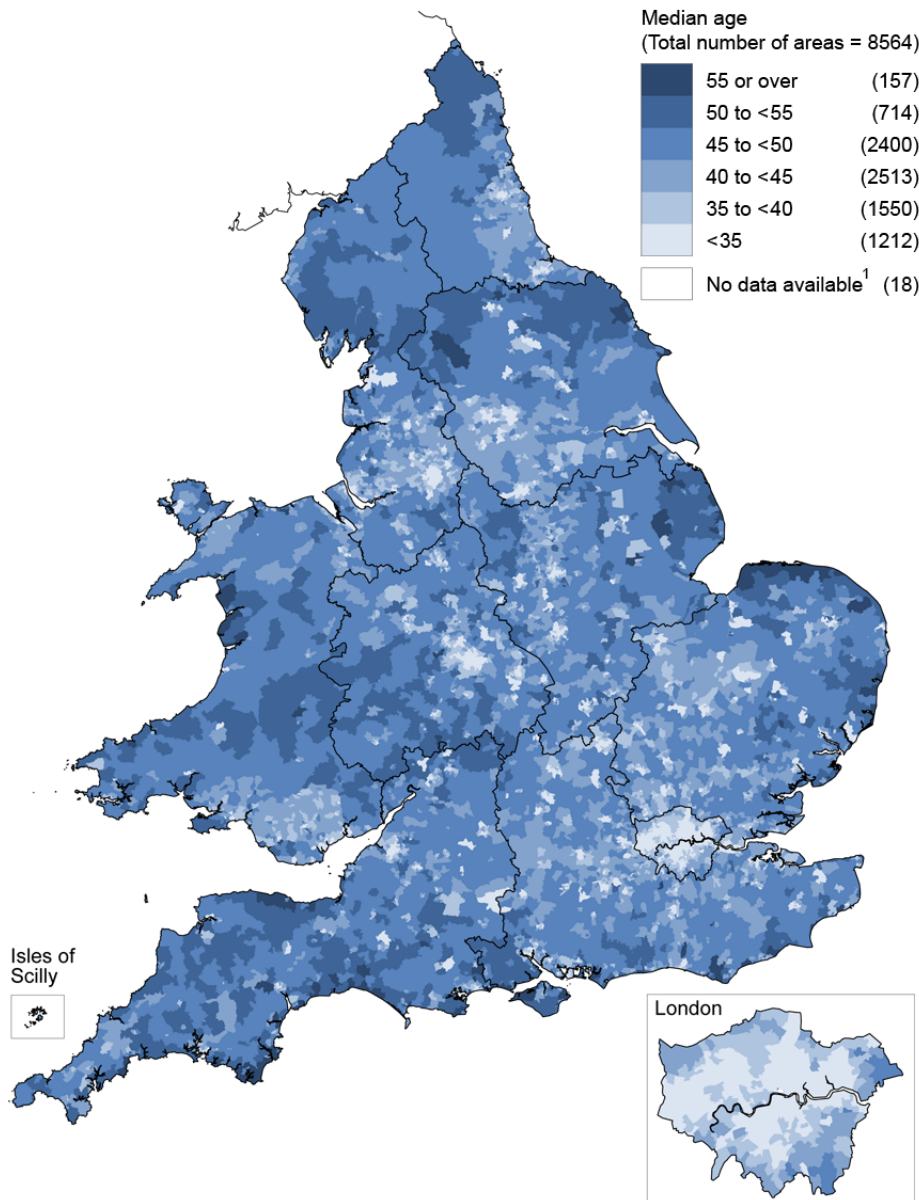
[XLS](#) [XLS format](#)
(31.5 Kb)

The majority of the smallest wards by population, those with fewer than 1,000 people, are in the Isles of Scilly, City of London or Wales.

Age Distribution

The median age of the population of England and Wales in mid-2012 was 39.6, however the median age of wards within England and Wales varies widely across the country.

Map 1: Distribution of wards by median age, mid-2012



¹ These areas are the sub-threshold wards for which population estimates are not available.

Source: Office for National Statistics

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Download map

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In mid-2012 the ward with the youngest median age (20.3) was Heslington ward in York, which contains the University of York's Heslington campus. All of the top ten areas with the lowest median age contain universities.

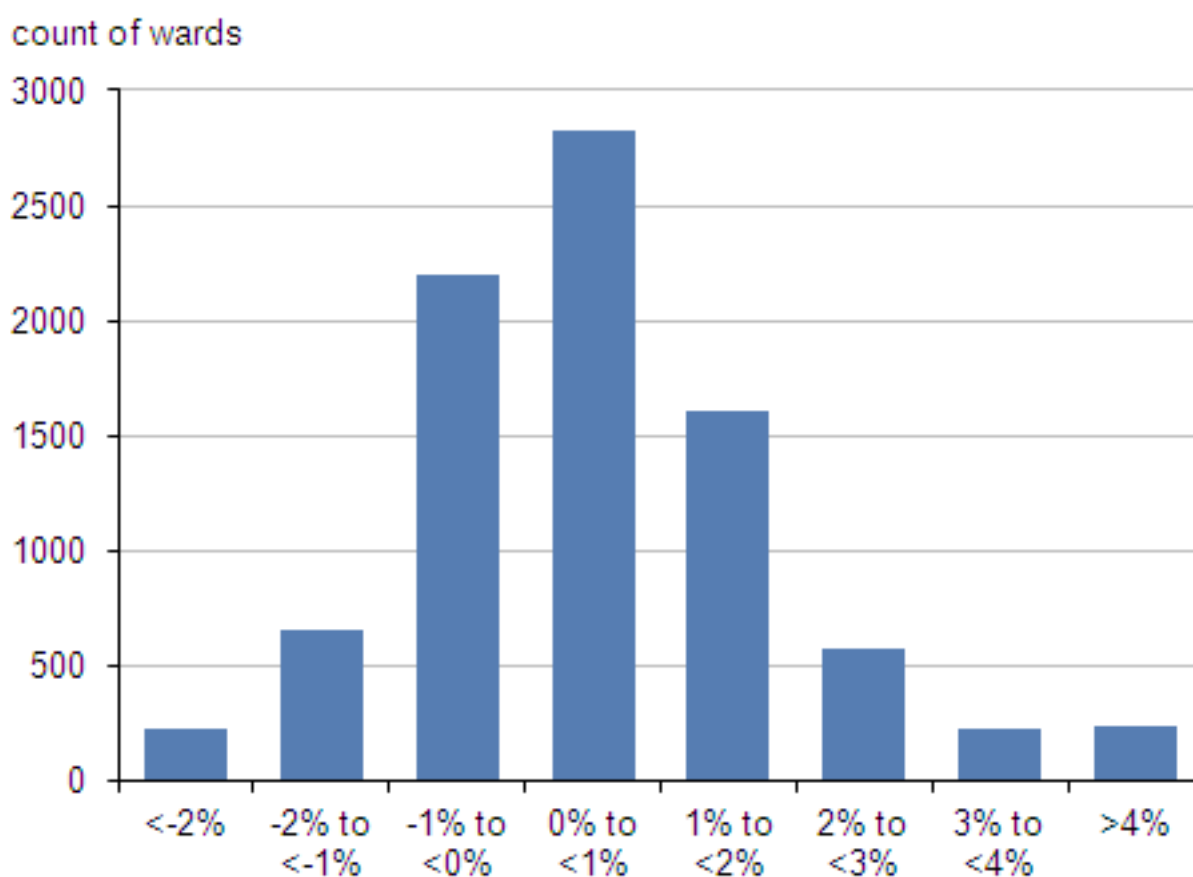
The highest median age in mid-2012 was 69.4 in South Downham ward in the local authority of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Nine of the top ten wards with the highest median ages are located

in areas of southern and eastern England which are known for their large populations of people of retirement age. The exception is Grange South which is located in Cumbria.

Comparison with mid-2011 estimates

In mid-2012 the population of England and Wales was 56,567,800, an increase of 0.7% since mid-2011. Figure 2 below presents the distribution of the percentage change in ward populations, from mid-2011 to mid-2012.

Figure 2: Distribution of wards by percentage change in total population estimate, mid-2011 to mid-2012



Source: Office for National Statistics

Download chart

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(31 Kb)

The large majority of wards (85%) had an annual population change of less than $\pm 2\%$, with around 5,000 (59%) increasing or decreasing by less than 1% in the year to mid-2012. There were 140 wards which had an annual population change of more than $\pm 5\%$ over the same period.

In particular, the wards with the highest percentage increases in population between mid-2011 and mid-2012 tend to be areas which include new housing developments, or areas with large populations of students or armed forces.

Small Area Population Estimates for other UK Countries

Small area population estimates for Scotland and Northern Ireland are produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) respectively. A paper, [Small Area Population Estimates across the UK](#) which provides a broad description of the different methodologies used to produce the wider set of small area population estimates in each constituent country of the UK, is available on the NISRA website.

Small area population estimates for Scotland are based on data zones and are produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS). Data zones are slightly smaller areas than LSOAs designed to contain approximately 500 to 1,000 household residents. NRS use a cohort component based method to produce estimates for data zones, further information on this methodology and the latest estimates (for mid-2011 based on 2001 Census results) are available from their [website](#). Mid-2011 and mid-2012 small area estimates (based on 2011 Census results) are planned for publication by the end of 2013.

Population estimates for wards in Northern Ireland are available from the [NISRA](#) website. The latest estimates are for mid-2010 and are also based on 2001 Census data. Mid-2011 and mid-2012 estimates (based on 2011 Census results) are planned for publication in winter 2013/2014.

Further Publications on Population Estimates

ONS produce statistics on the size, structure and geographic distribution of the population, on the factors driving population change (births, deaths and migration) and on topics such families and older people. In addition to the main national and local authority mid-year population estimates and the SOA estimates, other population estimates are produced. These include:

- parliamentary constituencies
- health geographies
- the very elderly

In addition, detailed results from the [2011 Census](#) provide information on the characteristics, for example, country of birth or marital status for small areas.

An [Overview of Population Statistics](#) is available on the ONS website.

Background notes

1. An [Overview of Population Statistics](#) is available on the ONS website.
2. Published tables include population estimates for wards by single year of age and sex.

3. A report describing the [methodology](#) used to create the ward population estimates is available on the ONS website.
4. This is the first release of mid-2012 population estimates for wards in England and Wales. No revisions of this dataset have been made.
5. [Mid-2012 population estimates](#) for the UK and for local authorities are also available on the ONS website.
6. Mid-2012 Output Area estimates are available as supporting information on the [ad-hoc](#) section of the ONS website.
7. Release Reference Number: SAPE12BL1
8. Next publication:
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