



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



# Statistical Digest of Rural England:

## 1 – Population

May 2025





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### Cover photos

		Ward 2011	Rural-Urban Classification
TL	Helmsley marketplace	Helmsley	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TC	Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station with Penyghent behind	Penyghent	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TR	St Giles Church, Skelton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
CL	Fishing Boat, Marske-by-the-Sea with Hunt cliff in the distance	St Germain's; Saltburn	Rural Town and Fringe
CR	Thornton Force Waterfall, Ingleton Waterfalls Trail	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BL	Farmer working the fields in Knapton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
BC	Remote pub at Ribblehead viaduct	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BR	Glamping pod in the North York Moors	Pickering East	Rural Town and Fringe in a sparse setting

All cover photos provided by Martin Fowell.

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# About the Statistical Digest of Rural England

The Statistical Digest of Rural England (hereafter the Digest) is a collection of statistics on a range of social and economic topics and provides broad comparisons between Rural and Urban areas by settlement type.

The Digest has been restructured into thematic reports and incorporates the previously separate publication the [Rural Economic Bulletin](#).

The Digest consists of the following thematic reports:

1. Population
2. Housing
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Communities and Households
5. Connectivity and Accessibility
6. Education, Qualifications and Training
7. Rural Economic Bulletin
8. Energy

Appendix 1 shows the sub-themes within each of the 8 Digest reports. Thematic reports will be updated individually and not every report will be updated every month.

This report has been updated to include new population statistics from the 2021 Census, 2022 and 2023 mid-year estimates, and the new 2021 rural-urban classification.

## Official Statistics

These statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which sets out eight principles including meeting user needs, impartiality and objectivity, integrity, sound methods and assured quality, frankness and accessibility.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found at: [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

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There is a 2011 Census version of the Digest which looks at the data from the 2011 Census and where possible makes comparisons to the 2001 Census results.

This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-census-results-for-rural-england>

Analysis of the 2021 Census will be gradually added across the Digest publications following the release of the 2021-based rural-urban classification.

Details of the 2021 rural-urban classification can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification>



# Population

This part of the Statistical Digest of Rural England focuses on Population and covers the following:

- population levels and evaluating changes over time (Section A).
- proportions of the population within each age group (Section B).
- internal migration (Section C).
- population at Local Authority-level (Section D).
- population at Census 2021, including ethnicity (Section E).

The key findings from this chapter are summarised with the following set of headline clouds:

## Population level and change: age and type – key findings

Almost 10 million people live in rural settlements

17 out of every 100 people in England live in a rural settlement

2% of the rural population live in remote areas such that a town with at least 10,000 inhabitants cannot be reached within a 30-minute drive

2 in 3 rural residents live near to a major town or city

Both the rural and urban populations increased by 7% between 2011 and 2022

The rural population is almost evenly divided between larger (52%) and smaller (48%) settlements

## Population age profile: additions – key findings

In rural settlements, fewer than 1 in 5 people were aged between 20 and 39 years in mid-2022; this compares to more than 1 in 4 people in urban areas

50% of the urban population living outside of London were less than 40 years of age, compared to fewer than 40% in rural settlements in mid-2022

The average age in rural settlements was almost 46 years old in mid-2022; in urban areas, it was almost 40 years old

More than 1 in 4 people living in rural settlements were at least 65 years old in mid-2022; in urban areas, it was fewer than 1 in 5 people

Around 1 in 5 people were aged under 20 in both rural and urban areas in mid-2022

3 in 10 people living in rural settlements further from a major town or city were at least 65 years old in mid-2022



## Internal migration – key findings

In 2021/22, there was net migration to majority rural authorities of around 63,200 people

Net internal migration to majority rural authorities in 2022/23 was more than double what it was in 2012/13

Net migration to majority rural authorities is greatest for people in their 30s

There is net internal migration away from majority rural authorities for young people aged 15-19

In all majority rural authorities there was a net inwards migration from the rest of England and a net outwards migration to the rest of the UK

24% more people moved out to the rest of the UK from majority rural authorities than moved into majority rural authorities from the rest of the UK

## Local Authority population estimates – key findings

Nearly 1 in 4 people in England live in majority or intermediate rural authorities

Almost 6 million people live in local authorities where the majority of the population is rural

In majority rural areas, more than 6 in 10 people lived in authorities where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city

There were almost 200,000 more people aged 55 and above living in majority rural areas in 2013 than in 2019

## Census 2021 – key findings

9.5 million people  
lived in rural  
settlements

5.8 million people  
lived in majority rural  
local authorities

17 out of every 100  
people in England lived  
in a rural settlement

The population of majority  
rural authorities increased  
by 7% between Census  
2011 and Census 2021

98% of the rural population  
lived within a 30-minute  
drive of a town with at least  
10,000 inhabitants

There were fewer one-  
person households in rural  
areas than in urban areas

2 in 3 rural residents lived  
within a 30-minute drive  
to a town or city with at  
least 75,000 inhabitants

More than half of rural  
people living alone were  
aged 66 and above

96% of rural residents  
identified themselves  
as “white”

## A. Population level and change

**Between mid-2011 and mid-2022, the populations in rural and urban areas outside of London have both increased by 7%, to 9.5 million and 38.7 million respectively.**

### Summary

Population figures are available for Lower-layer Super Output areas (LSOAs) as annual mid-year population estimates, and at a more granular level (Output Areas) from the 2021 Census. More recent LSOA-level mid-year population estimates are presented in the first two subsections of this chapter, whilst Census data is given in the third subsection. Analysis is based on the 2021 rural-urban classification (RUC21).

57.1 million people were usual residents in England in 2022, based on ONS mid-year estimates. 9.5 million people (17% of the population) lived in rural areas; this consisted of 4.6 million people living in smaller rural settlements, and 4.9 million people living in larger rural settlements. 3.1 million rural residents lived further from a major town or city in mid-2022, compared to 6.4 million people living nearer to a major town or city. 47.6 million people lived in urban areas in mid-2022 (83% of the total population).

Between mid-2011 and mid-2022, the population in both rural and urban areas outside of London increased by 7%; in absolute terms, the rural population increased from 8.9 million in mid-2011 to 9.5 million in mid-2022. The rural population that lived further from a major town or city increased by 5% between mid-2011 and mid-2022, from 3.0 million to 3.1 million. The rural population that lived nearer to a major town or city increased by 9% between mid-2011 and mid-2021, from 5.9 million to 6.4 million.

## Mid-year population 2022

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year population estimates, available from Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) to local authorities and other higher geographies. For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note A-2.

57.1 million people were usual residents (Note A-1) in England in 2022, based on ONS mid-year estimates. Of this, 9.5 million people (17% of the population) lived in rural settlements; this is shown in the infographic in Figure A-1.

**Figure A-1: Infographic showing the proportion of the population living in rural settlements, based on the 2021 rural-urban classification of Lower-layer Super Output Areas, mid-year, 2022**

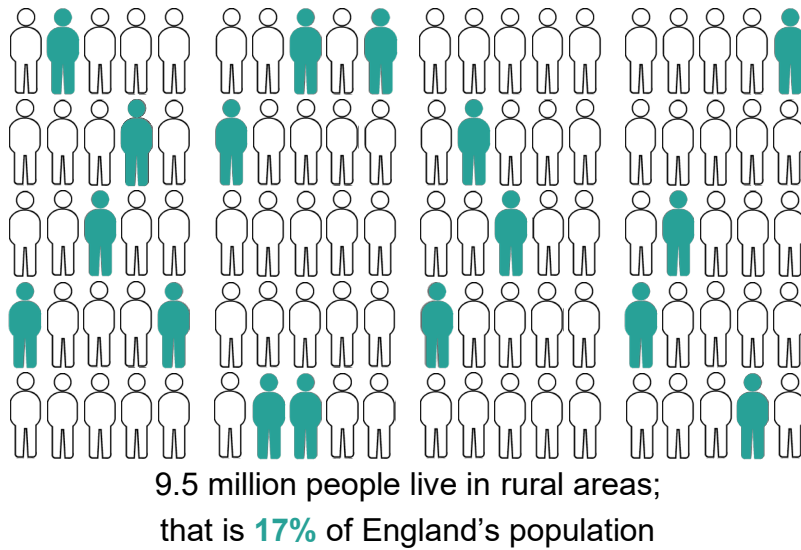


Figure A-1 shows that 9.5 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2022, which was 17% of the population of England.

Table A-1 shows the proportion of the population living within each area described in RUC21, as at mid-2022.

**Table A-1: Proportion of the population by settlement type, based on 2022 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England (Note A-1)**

Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Rural-urban classification	Population	Proportion (%)
Smaller rural	4,577,000	8.0
Larger rural	4,922,400	8.6
<b>Rural</b>	<b>9,499,500</b>	<b>16.6</b>
Urban (excluding London)	38,744,000	67.8
London	8,869,000	15.5
<b>Urban</b>	<b>47,613,100</b>	<b>83.4</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>57,112,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table A-1 can be described as follows:

- 9.5 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2022 (17% of the population of England); this consisted of 4.6 million people living in smaller rural settlements (8% of the population of England) and 4.9 million people living in larger rural settlements (9% of the total population).
- 47.6 million people lived in urban areas in mid-2022; this consisted of 38.7 million people living in urban areas outside of London (68% of the population of England), and 8.9 million people living in London (16% of the total population).
- Proportionally the population living in rural settlements is slightly larger than the population living in London (16.6% compared with 15.5%).

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the settlements' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table A-2 shows the proportion of the population within rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at mid-2022.

**Table A-2: Proportion of the population within rural settlements by proximity to a major town or city, based on 2022 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England (Note A-1)**

Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Rural-urban classification by relative access	Population	Proportion (%)
Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city	1,685,200	3.0
Larger rural: Further from a major town or city	1,450,700	2.5
<b>Rural: Further from a major town or city</b>	<b>3,136,000</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city	2,891,800	5.1
Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city	3,471,700	6.1
<b>Rural: Nearer to a major town or city</b>	<b>6,363,500</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>57,112,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table A-2, which shows the proportions of the population of England by RUC21 settlement type and relative access, can be described as follows:

- 3.1 million people lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city in mid-2022 (equivalent to 5% of the total population of England); this consisted of 1.7 million people living in smaller rural settlements (3% of the total population), and 1.5 million people living in larger rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (3% of the total population).
- 6.4 million people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city in mid-2022 (equivalent to 11% of the total population of England); this consisted of 2.9 million people living in smaller rural settlements (5% of the total population), and 3.5 million people living in larger rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (6% of the total population).
- This means that in mid-2022, around twice as many people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city than rural settlements that were further from a major town or city.



## Population change

The Office for National Statistics publish annual mid-year population estimates, allowing for comparisons over time using the RUC21 settlement types. Table A-3 shows mid-year estimates of the usual resident population of England, by RUC21 settlement types, at three distinct points in time: 2011 (the earliest data available), 2019 (just before the COVID-19 pandemic), and 2022 (the latest data available).

**Table A-3: Usual resident population, based on mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England at 2011, 2019 and 2022 (Note A-1)**

Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Rural-urban classification	2011	2019	2022
Rural	8,851,800	9,229,100	9,499,500
Urban (excluding London)	36,051,000	38,111,200	38,744,000
London	8,204,400	8,889,700	8,869,000
<b>England</b>	<b>53,107,200</b>	<b>56,230,100</b>	<b>57,112,500</b>

Table A-3, which shows the usual resident population of RUC21 settlement types in England at mid-2011, mid-2019, and mid-2022, can be described as follows:

- 8.9 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2011. By mid-2019, the rural population had increased by 4%, up to 9.2 million. By mid-2022, the rural population had increased by a further 3% (up to 9.5 million), resulting in an overall increase of 7% since mid-2011.
- 36.1 million people lived in urban areas outside of London in mid-2011. By mid-2019, the urban population outside of London had increased by 6%, up to 38.1 million. By mid-2022, the urban population outside of London had increased by a further 2% (up to 38.7 million), resulting in an overall increase of 7% since mid-2011. This indicates that the population grew at a similar rate in rural and urban areas.
- 8.2 million people lived in London in mid-2011. By mid-2019, the population of London had increased by 8%, up to 8.9 million; this was a greater population growth than any other settlement type in England. By mid-2022, the population of London had decreased marginally, indicating [internal migration](#) to other areas of the country.

By setting 2011 as a reference point, it is possible to measure the proportional change in the population over time. The line chart in Figure A-2 shows the index of change in the usual resident population of England, based on the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs (Note A-1), from mid-2011 to mid-2022. Lines with higher gradients (i.e. “steeper” lines) indicate faster population growth.

Between mid-2011 and mid-2020, the population in rural settlements increased by 5% (from 8.9 million); this was less than in urban areas, where the population increased by 6% (from 36.1 million).

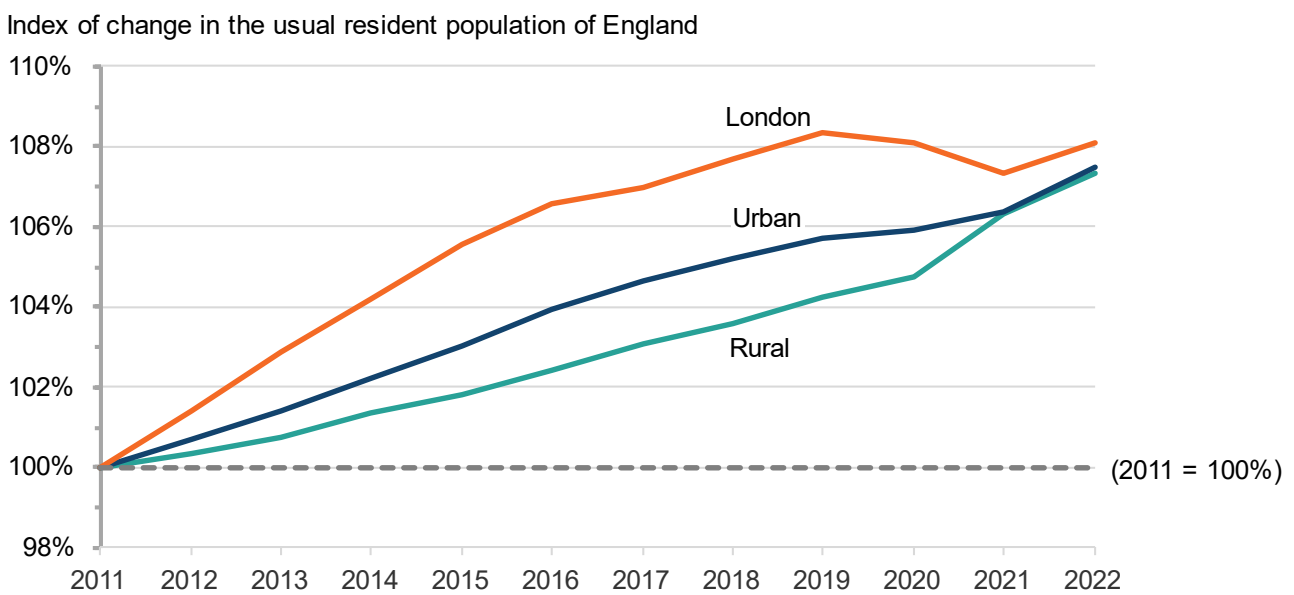
In London, the population increased 7% between mid-2011 and mid-2016, and by mid-2019 the population was 8% higher than it was in mid-2011 (8.2 million). Between mid-2019 and mid-2020, the population living in London decreased which is likely to be owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The population in rural settlements increased notably between mid-2020 and mid-2021 to be 6% higher than it was in mid-2011. In urban areas, the mid-2021 population was also 6% higher than it was in mid-2011. In London, the population decreased between mid-2020 and mid-2021 (i.e. the two years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic), although it was still 7% higher than in mid-2011.

In mid-2022, the populations in both rural settlements and urban areas outside of London were 7% higher than they were in mid-2011. In London, the population was 8% higher in mid-2022 than it was in mid-2011.

**Figure A-2: Line chart showing the index of change in the usual resident population of England, by broad 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, mid-year, 2011 to 2022**

An index value of 100% is equivalent to the usual resident population in 2011 in the specified settlement type; this is indicated by the horizontal dashed line. By extension, an index of 99% or 101% mean the population was 1% smaller or larger than in 2011, respectively.



Proximity to towns and cities has been considered in the more detailed version of the 2021 rural-urban classification. Table A-4 shows the change in the usual resident population of rural settlements in England, based on RUC21 LSOAs, at mid-2011, mid-2019, and mid-2022.

**Table A-4: Usual resident population of rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, based on mid-year estimates of LSOAs in England at 2011, 2019 and 2022 (Note A-1)**  
Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Relative access in rural settlements	2011	2019	2022
Rural: Further from a major town or city	2,991,600	3,071,900	3,136,000
Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	5,860,200	6,157,300	6,363,500
<b>Rural</b>	<b>8,851,800</b>	<b>9,229,100</b>	<b>9,499,500</b>

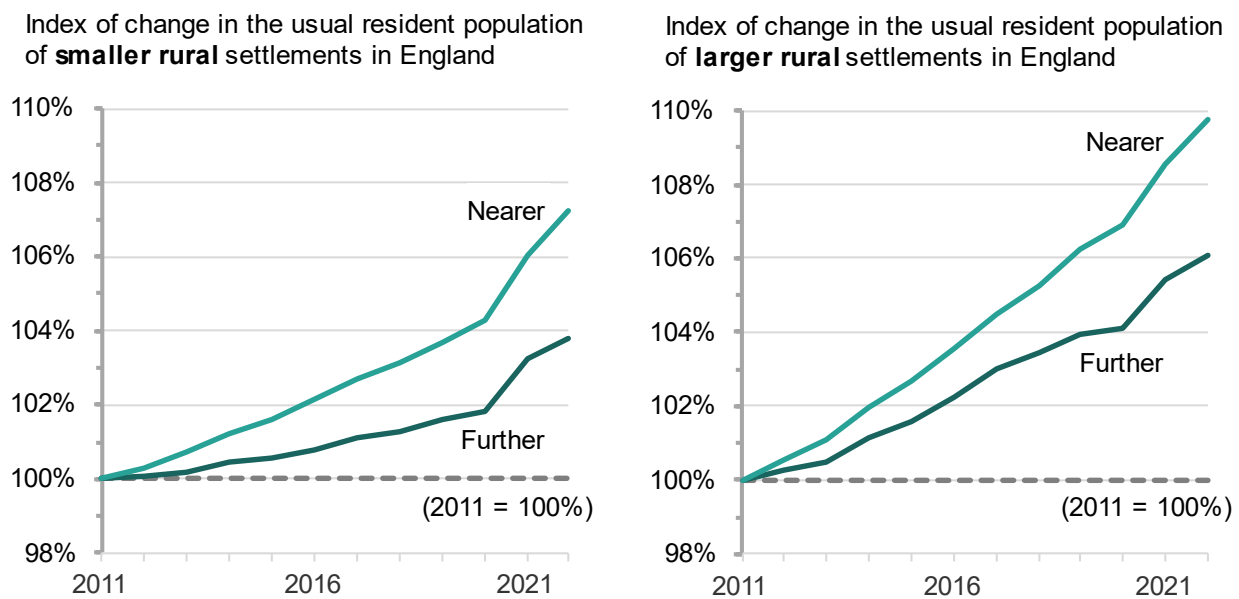
Table A-4, which shows the usual resident population of rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city at mid-2011, mid-2019, and mid-2022, can be described as follows:

- 3.0 million people lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city in mid-2011. By mid-2019, the population of rural settlements that were further from a major town or city had increased by 3%, up to just under 3.1 million. By mid-2022, the population of rural settlements that were further from a major town or city had increased by an additional 2% (up to just over 3.1 million), resulting in an overall increase of 5% since mid-2011.
- 5.9 million people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city in mid-2011. By mid-2019, the population of rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city had increased by 5%, up to 6.2 million. By mid-2022, the population of rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city had increased by an additional 3% (up to 6.4 million), resulting in an overall increase of 9% since mid-2011.

The line charts in Figure A-3 show the index of change in the usual resident population of rural settlements in England, based on the detailed 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, from mid-2011 to mid-2022. The left-hand chart is for smaller rural settlements and the right-hand chart is for larger rural settlements. The charts show the impact of proximity to an urban area on population growth.

**Figure A-3: Line charts showing the index of change in the usual resident population of smaller rural settlements (left-hand chart) and larger rural settlements (right-hand chart) in England, by proximity to a major town or city and 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, mid-year, 2011 to 2022**

An index value of 100% is equivalent to the usual resident population in 2011 in the specified settlement type; this is indicated by the horizontal dashed line. By extension, an index of 99% or 101% mean the population was 1% smaller or larger than in 2011, respectively. “Nearer” = Nearer to a major town or city. “Further” = Further from a major town or city.



The left-hand line chart in Figure A-3 shows that between mid-2011 and mid-2020, the usual resident population of smaller rural settlements increased steadily by 2% for settlements further from a major town or city (from 1.6 million), and by 4% for settlements nearer to a major town or city (from 2.7 million).

Between mid-2020 and mid-2021, there were sharp increases in the usual resident population, up to 3% higher than it was in mid-2011 in settlements that were further from a major town or city, and up to 6% higher than it was in mid-2011 in settlements that were nearer to a major town or city.

Between mid-2021 and mid-2022, the rate of change slowed, however there was still an overall increase in the usual resident population in smaller rural settlements. In settlements that were further from a major town or city, the population was 4% higher in mid-2022 than it was in mid-2011. In settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, the population had increased by 7% across the same period.

The right-hand line chart in Figure A-3 shows a similar pattern, however the rate of increase was greater for larger rural settlements than it was for smaller rural settlements.

Between mid-2011 and mid-2019, the population increased by 4% in settlements that were further from a major town or city (from 1.4 million), and by 6% in settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (from 3.2 million).

Between mid-2019 and mid-2020, there was little change in the population of larger rural settlements that were further from a major town or city, but in settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, the population continued to increase up to 7% higher than it was in mid-2011.

Between mid-2020 and mid-2021, the usual resident population increased sharply in larger rural settlements, up to 5% higher than the mid-2011 population in settlements that were further from a major town or city, and up to 9% higher in settlements that were nearer to a major town or city.

Between mid-2021 and mid-2022, the rate of change slowed, however there was still an overall increase in the usual resident population in larger rural settlements. In settlements that were further from a major town or city, the population was 6% higher in mid-2022 than it was in mid-2011. In settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, the population had increased by 10% within the same time frame.

## Population level and change explanatory notes

- **Note A-1**

While the indicators we use for population estimates are broadly in line with Census level population data, there are minor differences relating to the area classifications: Census population data are based on Output Areas (OAs, approx. 300 people), and mid-year population estimates are based on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs, approx. 3000 people). The larger the area the more likely it is to contain an urban settlement and be classified as urban. Analysis using LSOAs may slightly under-estimate the rural population.

- **Note A-2**

Mid-year estimates source: [Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note A-3**

The estimated resident population of an area includes all those people who usually live there, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usual resident population if they remain in the UK for at least a year. Emigrants are excluded if they remain outside the UK for at least a year. This is consistent with the United Nations definition of a long-term migrant. Armed forces stationed outside of the UK are excluded. Students are taken to be usually resident at their term time address.

- **Note A-4**

Data presented in this section is available from the [population supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note A-5**

For the relative access categories, 'nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). More information regarding the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#)

## B. Population age profile

**The more rural the area the higher the average age and the faster this average age is increasing.**

### Summary

The average age of the population is affected by several factors including birth rate, mortality rate, and migration. Internal migration can have a notable effect on the age profile of some regions.

As of mid-2022, the population in rural settlements has a higher proportion of older people compared with urban areas (excluding London). In 2022, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over in rural settlements was 26%, whilst in urban areas outside of London the proportion was 18%. In 2022, 27% of the smaller rural and 25% of the larger rural population was aged 65 and over. However, there were similar proportions of the population aged less than 20 years old between rural and urban areas outside of London (20% and 21%, respectively).

In mid-2022, the average age in rural settlements was 45.6 years; this was 5.3 years older than in urban areas outside of London (40.3 years). Between mid-2011 and mid-2022, the average age increased by 2.1 years in rural settlements, and by 1.1 years in urban areas outside of London. The gap in average ages between rural and urban areas has been widening over time.



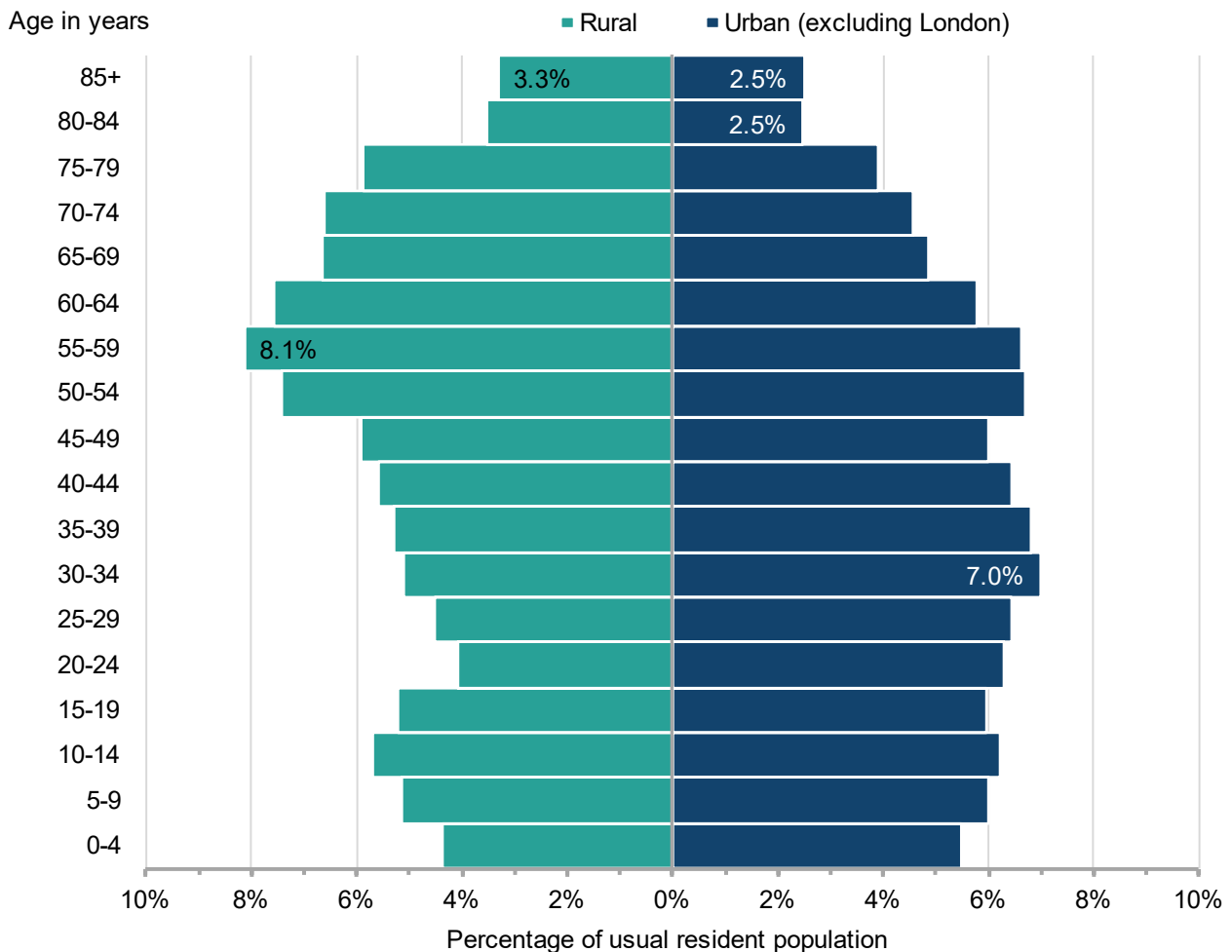
## Population by age

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year population estimates, available from Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) to local authorities and other higher geographies. For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note B-2.

Figure B-1 is a population pyramid showing the proportion of the rural and urban population within each five-year age band. It is structured as a bar chart with a central vertical axis and rural data projecting to the left of this central axis and urban data projecting to the right. Overall, Figure B-1 shows that the population in rural settlements had a higher proportion of older people compared with urban areas.

### Figure B-1: Population pyramid showing the percentage of population within five-year age bands, by 2021 rural-urban classification, based on 2022 mid-year estimates of LSOAs

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars. Only the highest and lowest proportions have been labelled on the chart. Proportions shown on the chart have been rounded to the nearest 0.1%.



In mid-2022, there were proportionally more people aged 55 to 59 than any other five-year age band in rural settlements (8.1%). The age group with the largest proportional population in urban areas outside of London was 30- to 34-year-olds (7.0%). 3.3% of the rural population were aged 85 or above in mid-2022; this compares to 2.5% in urban areas. From the “20-24” age band to the “55-59” age band, there was a stepped increase in the proportion of the resident population in rural

settlements, from 4% for 20- to 24-year-olds to just under 6% for 45- to 49-year-olds. In each of the five-year age bands between the ages of 50 and 74, the rural population was at least 6%. There was less variation in the proportion of the urban population; in each of the five-year age bands between the ages of 5 and 59, the urban population was between 6 and 7%.

The RUC21 provides information regarding proximity to a major town or city to indicate. The bar chart in Figure B-2 shows the difference in the population between rural settlements that are further from a major town or city, and those which are nearer to a major town or city.

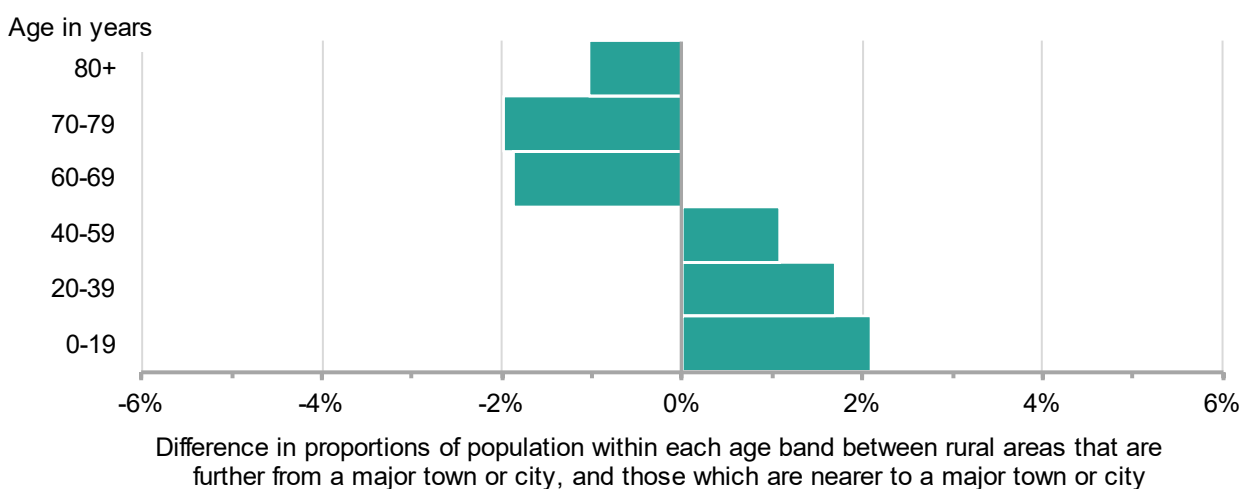
In mid-2022, the population aged between 0 and 59 was proportionally larger in rural settlements that are nearer to a major town or city. For people aged 60 and above, the population was proportionally larger in those rural settlements that were further from a major town or city.

The greatest difference in the proportion of the population between rural settlements that were further from or nearer to a major town or city was for those aged under 20. There were 2% more people living in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, compared to those which were further from a major town or city.

Around the age of 60, population differences change; there were 2% fewer people aged between 60 and 69 living in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, compared to those which were further from a major town or city. The same is true for people aged between 70 and 79. For people aged 80 and above, there were 1% fewer people living in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city, compared to those which were further from a major town or city.

**Figure B-2: Bar chart showing the percentage change in the population between rural settlements that are further from a major town or city, compared to rural settlements which are nearer to a major town or city, by 2021 rural-urban classification, based on 2022 mid-year estimates of LSOAs**

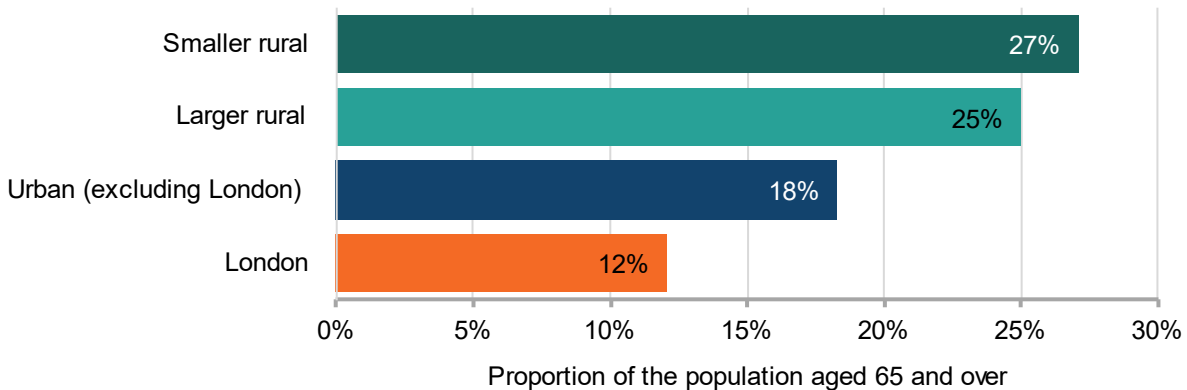
A negative percentage change (i.e. where the bars are left of the 0% vertical axis) indicates that the proportion of the population is larger in rural settlements that are further from a major town or city. A positive percentage change therefore indicates that the proportion of the population is larger in rural settlements that are nearer to a major town or city.



There were just under 2.5 million people aged 65 and over in rural areas in mid-2022; this compares to just under 8.2 million people in urban areas. The bar chart in Figure B-3 shows the proportion of the population aged 65 and over within the settlement types described in the 2021 rural-urban classification.

**Figure B-3: Bar chart showing the proportion of the population in each settlement type aged 65 and over, by 2021 rural-urban classification, based on 2022 mid-year estimates of LSOAs in England**

Proportions shown on the chart have been rounded to the nearest 1%.

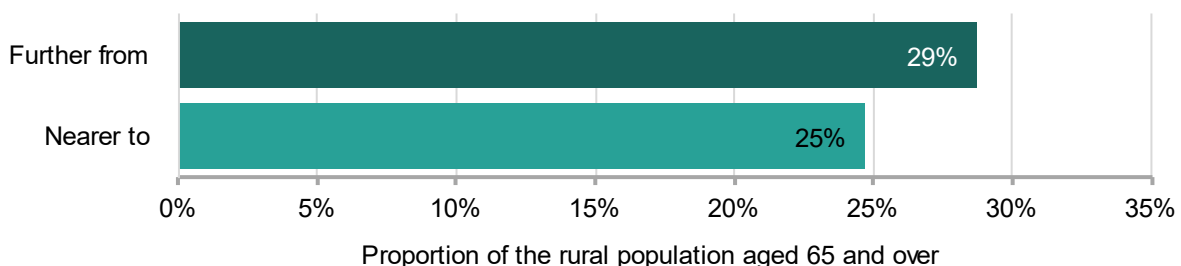


In 2022, smaller rural settlements had the largest proportion of their population aged 65+ (27%; equivalent to 1.2 million people). The proportion of the population aged 65 and over was 2 percentage points higher in smaller rural settlements than in larger rural settlements (25%) but it was still equivalent to 1.2 million people. London had the smallest proportion of its population aged 65+ (12%; equivalent to 1.1 million people) and this was 9 percentage points lower than the proportion of the population in urban areas outside of London aged 65+ (18%; equivalent to 7.1 million people).

The bar chart in Figure B-4 shows proximity to a major town or city with the proportion of the rural population aged 65 and over. In mid-2022, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over was 4 percentage points higher in rural settlements that are further from a major town or city (29%; equivalent to 0.9 million people) compared to those nearer to a major town or city (25%; equivalent to 1.6 million people).

**Figure B-4: Bar chart showing proximity to a major town or city in rural areas with the proportion of the population aged 65 and over based on 2022 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification, England (Note B-5)**

When describing proximity, the descriptors "Further from" and "Nearer to" mean that the majority of the settlement is further from, or nearer to, a major town or city. Proportions shown on the chart have been rounded to the nearest 1%.

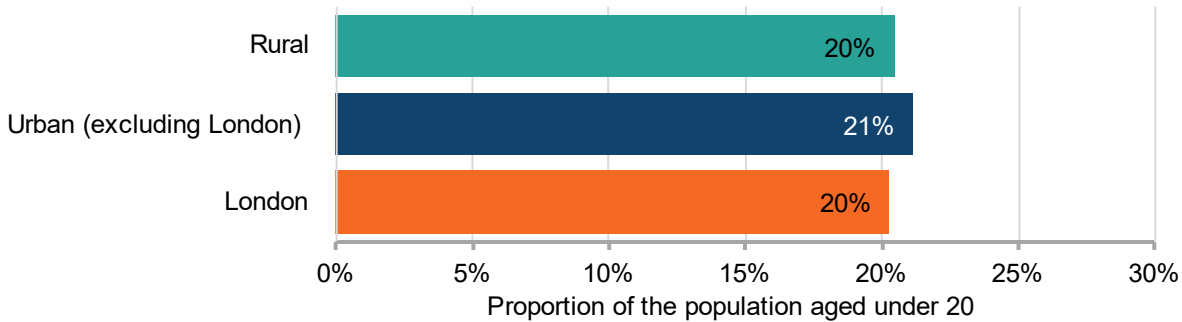


Whilst there is some evidence to suggest the proportion of the population that is older increases with rurality, there appears to be little difference in the proportion of the population aged under 20 between rural and urban areas (as shown in the bar chart in Figure B-5).

In mid-2022, 20% of the population were aged between 0 and 19 years old in both rural areas and in London (equivalent to 1.9 million and 2.1 million people respectively). In urban areas outside of London, the proportion of the population aged under 20 was marginally higher (21%; equivalent to 9.2 million people).

**Figure B-5: Bar chart showing the rural urban classification and proportion of the population aged under 20, based on 2022 mid-year estimates of LSOAs in England**

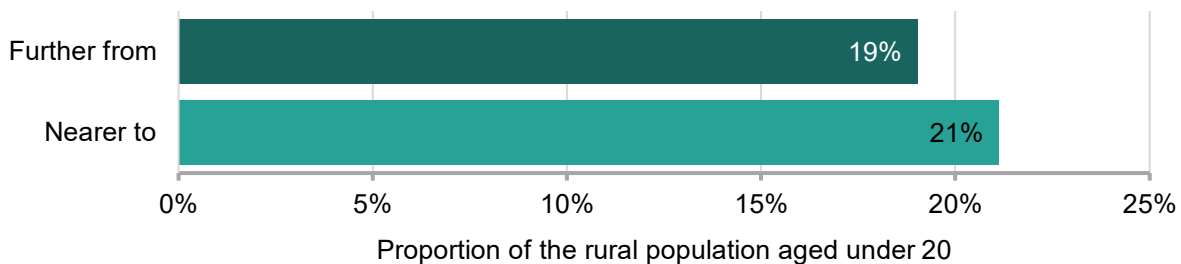
Proportions shown on the chart have been rounded to the nearest 1%.



The bar chart in Figure B-6 shows the proportion of the rural population aged under 20 by proximity to a major town or city. In mid-2022, the proportion of the population aged between 0 and 19 years old was 2 percentage points lower in rural settlements that are further from a major town or city (19%; equivalent to 0.6 million people) compared to those which were nearer to a major town or city (21%; equivalent to 1.3 million people).

**Figure B-6: Bar chart showing proximity to a major town or city in rural areas by the proportion of the population aged under 20 as described in the 2021 rural-urban classification, based on 2022 mid-year estimates, England (Note B-5)**

When describing proximity, the descriptors "Further from" and "Nearer to" mean that the majority of the settlement is further from, or nearer to, a major town or city. Proportions shown on the chart have been rounded to the nearest 1%.

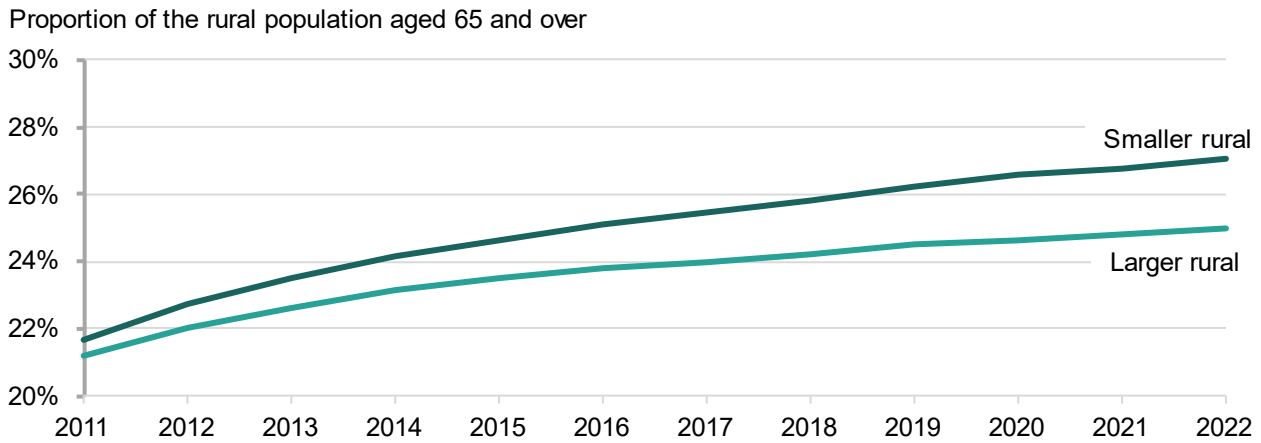


Long-term trends can be observed for the proportion of the population aged 65 and over; a time series line chart presenting the trends between mid-2011 and mid-2022 is shown in Figure B-7. In mid-2011, 21% of the rural population were aged 65 and over; this was equivalent to 1.9 million people. In comparison, 26% of the rural population were aged 65 and over in mid-2022 (equivalent to 2.5 million people), meaning the population aged 65 and over increased by 5 percentage points.

The proportion of the population aged 65 and over has consistently been higher in smaller rural settlements than larger rural settlements; however, the gap between these settlement types has widened over time. In mid-2011, 22% of the population in smaller rural settlements was aged 65 and over; this compared to 21% in larger rural settlements. The gap between settlement types remained at around 1 percentage point until mid-2017, where 25% of the smaller rural population

(and 24% of the larger rural population) were aged 65 and over. From mid-2018, the gap between the proportions increased to 2 percentage points.

**Figure B-7: Line chart showing the proportion of the population aged 65 and over in rural areas, by broad 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, mid-year, 2011 to 2022**



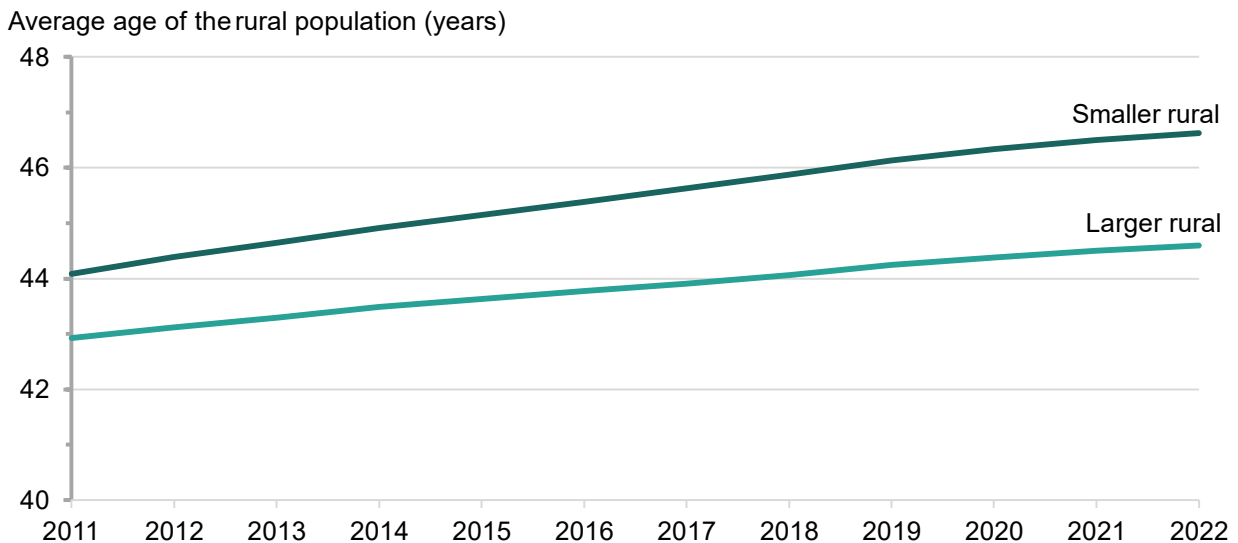
### Average age of the population

The average age of the population is affected by birth rate, [mortality rate](#), and [migration](#).

In mid-2022, the average age in rural areas was 45.6 years; this was 5.3 years older than in urban areas outside of London (40.3 years), and 8.5 years older than in London (37.0 years). In rural areas, the average age increased by 2.1 years between mid-2011 (43.5 years) and mid-2022. In comparison, the average age increased by 1.1 years in urban areas outside of London (from 39.2 years in mid-2011), and by 1.5 years in London (from 35.6 years).

The line chart in Figure B-11 shows the average age of the rural population from mid-2011 to mid-2022. The average age has consistently been higher in smaller rural settlements than larger rural settlements.

**Figure B-8: Line chart showing the average age of populations in rural areas, by broad 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England, mid-year, 2011 to 2022**



In mid-2011, the average age in smaller rural settlements was 44.1 years; this was 1.2 years higher than in larger rural settlements (42.9 years). The gap in average ages has been widening between smaller and larger rural settlements since mid-2011, by around 0.1 years difference per year of data. In mid-2019, the average age in smaller rural settlements was 46.1 years; this was 1.9 years higher than in larger rural settlements (44.2 years). In mid-2022, the average age in smaller rural settlements had increased to 46.6 years; this was 2.0 years higher than in larger rural settlements (44.6 years).

In smaller rural settlements, the average age increased by 2.5 years between mid-2011 and mid-2022; in larger rural settlements, the average age increased by 1.7 years across the same period.

## Population age profile explanatory notes

- **Note B-1**

While the indicators we use for population estimates are broadly in line with Census level population data, there are minor differences relating to the area classifications: Census population data are based on output areas (OAs, approx. 300 people), and mid-year population estimates are based on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs, approx. 3000 people). The larger the area the more likely it is to contain an urban settlement and be classified as urban. Analysis using LSOAs may slightly under-estimate the rural population.

- **Note B-2**

Mid-year estimates source: [Population estimates by output areas, electoral, health and other geographies, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note B-3**

The estimated resident population of an area includes all those people who usually live there, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usual resident population if they remain in the UK for at least a year. Emigrants are excluded if they remain outside the UK for at least a year. This is consistent with the United Nations definition of a long-term migrant. Armed forces stationed outside of the UK are excluded. Students are taken to be usually resident at their term time address.

- **Note B-4**

Data presented in this section is available from the [population supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note B-5**

For the relative access categories, 'nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). More information regarding the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#)



## C. Internal migration

**Net internal migration within England tends to be towards majority rural authorities, and in 2023 the rate of this migration was higher than in 2013; the exception to this are 15- to- 19-year-olds for which there is net migration from majority rural authorities.**

### Summary

Internal migration is defined as changes of usual residence within a country. Analysis here is based on movement between one local authority and another. It does not consider movement within an authority. For Digest purposes, all migration within the UK is considered internal; external migration is entering the UK from another country is not included within our analysis.

Between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2023, there was net inwards migration from urban authorities to majority rural authorities or intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities. There was a sharp increase in migration in year ending June 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, where a greater number of people living in urban areas moved to majority rural or intermediate rural/urban areas. Within majority rural local authorities, the net inwards migration was greater for authorities with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city. In both cases, the net population inflow increased over time.

Overall, there was a net inwards migration in majority rural areas of 63,200 people in year ending June 2022. In particular, inflow from urban authorities outside of London to majority rural authorities was 1.3 times larger than the outflow, resulting in a net inwards migration of 39,000 people; 9,200 to authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city and 29,600 to authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city.

Net internal migration inwards to majority rural local authorities occurred for all age groups except for 15- to- 19-year-olds. In year ending June 2023, there was a net outward migration of 13,700 15- to 19-year-olds from majority rural areas, which is likely to reflect young people leaving home to attend education elsewhere. In majority rural authorities, the largest net inwards migration was for 30- to- 39-year-olds, where 15,600 people moved into such authorities in year ending June 2023.

## Long-term internal migration trends

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year data on internal migration moves. In our analysis “internal migration” means population moving between Local Authorities within the UK. The Census 2021-based rural-urban classification – hereafter referred to as RUC21 – was published in March 2025, meaning analysis within this publication align with the new RUC21 settlement types. For more information regarding the data source, please see the original publication referenced in Note C-4.

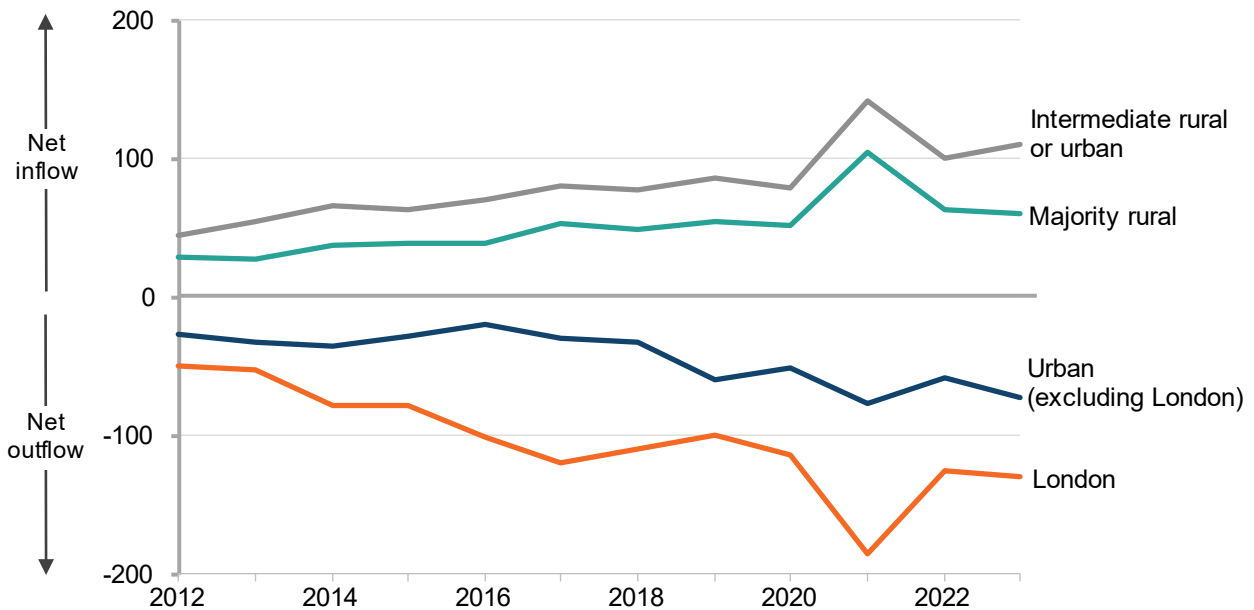
As the analysis is using data for local authority areas, it does not distinguish the type of settlement a migrant has moved to. So, in the case of migration to an authority classed as a majority rural area, this could be migration to an urban settlement within that authority. Similarly, migration to an authority classed as an urban could be migration to a rural settlement within that authority.

The line chart in Figure C-1 shows the internal migration trends from year ending June 2012 to year ending June 2023, by Local Authority rural-urban classification.

**Figure C-1: Line chart showing internal migration trends by 2021 rural-urban classification for 2023 local authorities in England, year ending June 2012 to year ending June 2023**

“Inflow” refers to inward migration (population gain), whereas “outflow” refers to outward migration (population loss). Chart commentary is rounded to the nearest 1,000 people.

Annual gain or loss of population (thousands) due to internal migration



Between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2023, there was net population inflow to intermediate rural or intermediate urban local authorities and to majority rural local authorities. Local authorities in London had a consistently greater net population outflow than any other authority type. The individual trends are described as follows:

- In majority rural and intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities, there was an increase in the net inwards migration between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2020. In majority rural authorities, net population inflow increased by around 24,000 from 2012 (+28,000) to 2020 (+52,000). In intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities, net population inflow increased by around 35,000 from 2012 (+45,000) to 2020 (+80,000).

- The inflow was 11% larger than the outflow in majority rural authorities in 2012, and increased such that the inflow was 19% larger than the outflow in 2020. In intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities, the net inflow was 7% larger than the outflow in 2012, and increased such that the inflow was 12% larger than the outflow in 2020.
- In London and in urban authorities outside of London, there was an increase in the net outwards migration between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2020. In urban authorities outside of London, net population outflow increased by around 24,000 from 2012 (-27,000) to 2020 (-51,000). In London, net population outflow increased by around 64,000 from 2012 (-50,000) to 2020 (-114,000).
- The net outflow was 2% larger than the inflow in urban authorities outside of London in 2012, and increased such that it was 3% larger than the inflow in 2020. In London, the net outflow was 7% larger than the inflow in 2012, and increased up to 14% larger than the inflow in 2020.
- In year ending June 2021, there was a spike in the population inflow in majority rural authorities (+105,000) and intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities (+142,000), and a greater population outflow from urban local authorities - particularly those in London (-186,000). This coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The net inflow was 34% larger than the outflow in majority rural authorities in year ending June 2021; and the net inflow was 19% larger than the outflow in intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities.
- In year ending June 2022, internal migration trends returned to pre-pandemic levels. In year ending June 2023, net migration to majority rural authorities was 61,000 people (the inflow being 22% larger than the outflow), and 110,000 to intermediate rural or intermediate urban local authorities (the inflow being 16% larger than the outflow). There was net outward migration of 73,000 from urban authorities outside of London (the outflow being 4% larger than the inflow), and of 129,000 people from local authorities in London (the outflow being 15% larger than the inflow).

Between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2023, the usual resident population increased by 455,000 in majority rural authorities (from 5.5 million to 5.9 million); 7% of this increase was due to internal migration (+32,000).

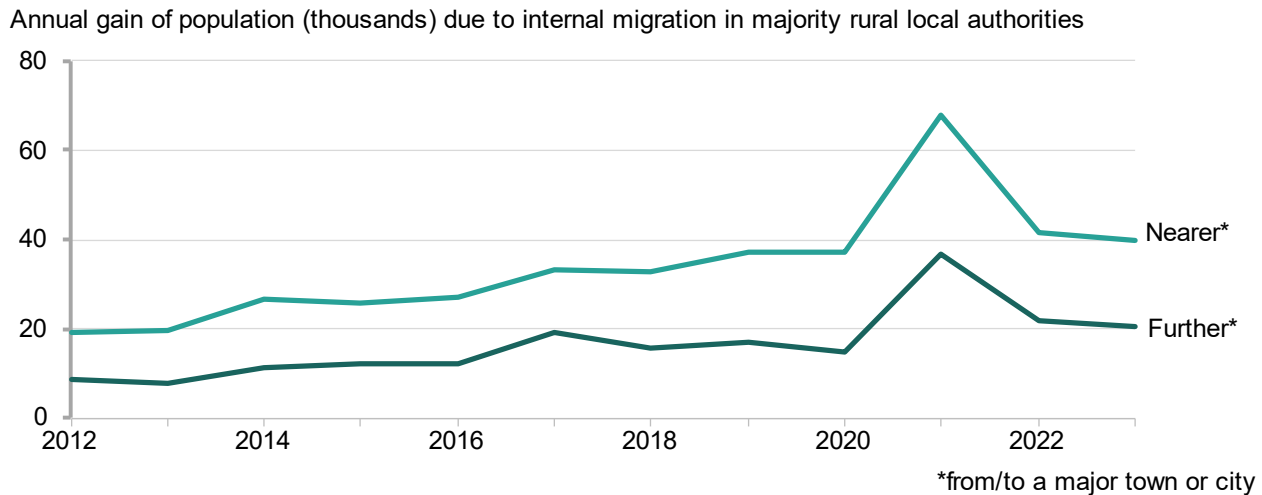
In intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities, the population increased by 1.1 million between 2012 and 2023 (from 13.0 million to 14.1 million); 6% of this increase was due to internal migration (+65,000).

The RUC21 provides information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. "Nearer to a major town or city" is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely, "further from a major town or city" is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents).

The line chart in Figure C-2 shows the internal migration trends in majority rural local authorities by proximity to a major town or city.

**Figure C-2: Line chart showing internal migration trends in majority rural local authorities, by proximity to a major town or city, using the 2021 rural-urban classification in England, year ending June 2012 to year ending June 2023 (Note C-5)**

Chart commentary is rounded to the nearest 100 people.



The line chart in Figure C-2 can be described as follows:

- Within majority rural local authorities, the net inwards migration was greater for authorities with a majority residing nearer to a major town or city than not. In both cases, the net population inflow increased over time, with a sharp spike in year ending 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no net outwards migration from majority rural areas between year ending June 2012 and year ending June 2023.
- In year ending June 2012, there was net inward migration of 8,900 people to majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city (based on the inflow being 10% larger than the outflow); there was net inward migration of 19,300 people to local authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city (based on the inflow being 12% larger than the outflow).
- In year ending June 2021, there was net inward migration of 36,900 people to majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city (based on the inflow being 37% larger than the outflow); there was net inward migration of 68,000 people to local authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city (based on the inflow being 33% larger than the outflow). All majority rural authorities saw their largest net inward migration in 2021.
- In year ending June 2023, there was net inward migration of 20,600 people to majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city (based on the inflow being 22% larger than the outflow); there was net inward migration of 39,900 people to local authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city (based on the inflow being 21% larger than the outflow).

## Short-term internal migration trends

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year data on internal migration moves; “internal migration” refers to population movement occurring between local authorities within the UK. As part of this release, they publish a matrix of moves to and from each local authority. By applying the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, it is possible to analyse specific migration between types of authority. Migration between local authorities in the same Rural-Urban Classification group will have no net effect on the population for that class and is therefore excluded from the analysis. Movement within the same authority will have no effect on migration. Movements between different types of settlement will have no effect, only movement between different types of authority.

Detailed movements are generally released one year behind the long-term trends, meaning the latest data uses year ending June 2022. Migration between local authority rural-urban classifications, whether in or out, is shown in Table C-1, whilst the net migration is shown in Table C-2.

Breakdowns of internal migration for other settlement types are provided within the [Population supplementary data tables](#).

**Table C-1: Internal migration, presented in thousands, between local authorities in England and the rest of the UK, by 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2022**

“Out” = outwards migration (“out from”); “In” = inwards migration (“into”). [z] is used to represent values which have been excluded (i.e., migration within the same class of authority). (e) = excluding London. “Intermediate” = intermediate rural or intermediate urban.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	In: majority rural	In: intermediate	In: urban (e)	In: London	In: rest of UK	Total outflow
Out: majority rural	[z]	78.0	122.0	18.0	17.1	<b>235.0</b>
Out: intermediate	95.2	[z]	324.6	61.1	33.3	<b>514.2</b>
Out: urban (e)	160.8	405.4	[z]	180.4	64.4	<b>811.0</b>
Out: London	28.5	106.6	251.8	[z]	17.9	<b>404.8</b>
Out: rest of UK	13.8	24.6	54.3	19.5	[z]	<b>112.1</b>
<b>Total inflow</b>	<b>298.3</b>	<b>614.6</b>	<b>752.6</b>	<b>279.0</b>	<b>132.7</b>	<b>2,077.1</b>

**Table C-2: Net internal migration, presented in thousands, between local authorities in England and the rest of the UK, by 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2022**

Positive values represent net inwards migration; negative values represent net outwards migration.

Rural-Urban Classification 2021	Net migration
Majority rural	63.2
Intermediate rural or intermediate urban	100.3
Urban (excluding London)	-58.3
London	-125.8
Rest of UK	20.6

The following commentary focuses on majority rural authorities only. Analysis regarding majority rural authorities featured in Table C-1 and Table C-2 can be described as follows:

- In year ending June 2022, 78,000 people moved from majority rural to intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities. Conversely, 95,200 people moved from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities to majority rural authorities. This means that there was a net inwards migration (i.e. more people moving into the specified authority type than out from) of 17,200 people to majority rural from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities. The net inflow was 1.2 times larger than the net outflow.
- 122,000 people moved from majority rural to urban authorities outside of London. Conversely, 160,800 people moved from urban authorities outside of London to majority rural authorities. This means that there was a net inwards migration of 38,800 people to majority rural from urban authorities outside of London. The net inflow was 1.3 times larger than the net outflow.
- 18,000 people moved from majority rural authorities to London in year ending June 2022. Conversely, 28,500 people moved from London to majority rural authorities. This means that there was a net inwards migration of 10,500 people to majority rural authorities from London. The net inflow was 1.6 times larger than the net outflow.
- 17,100 people moved from majority rural authorities to the rest of the UK (i.e., outside of England). Conversely, 13,800 people moved from the rest of the UK to majority rural authorities in England. This means that there was a net outwards migration of 3,300 people from majority rural authorities to the rest of the UK outside England. The net outflow was 1.2 times larger than the net inflow.
- Overall, there was a net inwards migration to majority rural areas of 63,200 people (based on a total outflow of 235,000 people and an inflow of 298,300 people) in year ending June 2022.

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. "Nearer to a major town or city" is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city and , "further from a major town or city" is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents).

Table C-3 shows internal migration between majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population resides further from a major town or city. For all authority types there was a net inwards migration to majority rural authorities.

**Table C-3: Internal migration between majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city and the rest of the UK, as determined by the 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2022 (Note C-5)**

Migration is presented in thousands. Positive values represent net inwards migration; negative values represent net outwards migration.

<b>Net migration between majority rural authorities with the majority of the population residing further from a major town or city, and:</b>	
intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities	-8.4
urban authorities outside of London	-9.2
London	-3.0
the rest of the UK	1.0
<b>Total net migration for majority rural authorities</b>	<b>-19.6</b>



Table C-3 can be described as follows:

- In year ending June 2022, the net migration from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city was 8,400 people; this is based on an inflow of 25,200 people moving into intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city. The inflow was 25% smaller than the outflow: 33,600 people moved from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city.
- There was net migration from urban authorities outside of London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city of 9,200 people; this is based on an inflow of 35,300 people moving into urban authorities outside of London from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city. The inflow was 21% smaller than the outflow: 44,500 people moved from urban authorities outside of London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city.
- There was net migration from London to majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city of 3,000 people; this is based on an inflow of 5,900 people moving into London out from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city. The inflow was 34% smaller than the outflow: 8,900 people moved from London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city.
- There was net migration to the rest of the United Kingdom (outside of England) from majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city of 1,000 people; this is based on an inflow of 7,300 people moving into the rest of the UK out from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city. The inflow was 15% larger than the outflow: 6,300 people moved from the rest of the UK into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside further from a major town or city.

Table C-4 shows internal migration between majority rural local authorities where the majority reside nearer to a major town or city. For all settlement types, there was a net inwards migration to majority rural authorities.

**Table C-4: Internal migration between majority rural local authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city and the rest of the UK, as determined by the 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2022 (Note C-5)**

Migration is presented in thousands. Positive values represent net inwards migration; negative values represent net outwards migration.

<b>Net migration between majority rural authorities with the majority of the population residing nearer to a major town or city, and:</b>	
intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities	-8.9
urban authorities outside of London	-29.6
London	-7.5
the rest of the UK	2.4
<b>Total net migration for majority rural authorities</b>	<b>-43.6</b>

Table C-4 can be described as follows:

- In year ending June 2022, the net migration from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city out was 8,900 people; this is based on an inflow of 52,800 people moving into intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city. The inflow was 14% smaller than the outflow: 61,700 people moved from intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city.
- There was net migration from urban authorities outside of London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city of 29,600 people; this is based on an inflow 86,800 people moving into urban authorities outside of London from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city. The inflow was 25% smaller than the outflow: 116,300 people moved from urban authorities outside of London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city.
- There was net migration from London to majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city of 7,500 people; this is based on an inflow of 12,100 people moving into London out from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city. The inflow was 38% smaller than the outflow: 19,600 people moved from London into majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city.
- There was net migration to the rest of the United Kingdom (outside of England) from majority rural authorities where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city of 2,400 people; this is based on an inflow of 9,800 people moving into the rest of the UK out from majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city. The inflow was 32% larger than the outflow: 7,400 people moved from the rest of the UK into majority rural areas where the majority of the population reside nearer to a major town or city.

## Internal migration by age

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year data on internal migration moves; “internal migration” refers to population migration occurring between local authorities within the UK. As part of this release, they publish data by five-year age group. By applying the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, it is possible to analyse specific migration trends between age groups.

The bar chart in Figure C-3 shows net internal migration for majority rural authorities and urban authorities outside of London, by specified age bands; age bands have been combined where data were similar, and therefore the age bands are not all of equal size.

The figures shown will include migration from or to other types of authority – not just between majority rural and urban authorities. For most age bands, there was a net outward migration in urban authorities outside of London, and a net inward migration in majority rural authorities. The only age group which does not follow this trend is for people aged between 15 and 19 years old; for this age group, there was a net outward migration of 13,700 people in majority rural areas. For

those aged 15- to 19-years-old, there was a net inward migration of 47,100 people in urban authorities outside of London; this was the largest net inwards migration of all age groups.

Net inwards migration to urban authorities can be anticipated as students around this age are likely to move into higher education (e.g. college or university), which are usually located within authorities with large urban populations.

The largest net outward migration was seen for 20- to 29-year-olds in urban authorities outside of London, where 59,600 people moved out from these authorities; this is based on the inflow (585,800 people) being 9% smaller than the outflow (645,400 people). In majority rural authorities, there was a net inward migration of 6,300 people for this age group; this is based on the inflow (84,400 people) being 8% larger than the outflow (78,100 people).

In majority rural authorities, the largest net inwards migration was for 30- to 39-year-olds, where 15,600 people moved into these authorities; this is based on the inflow (58,500 people) being 36% larger than the outflow (42,900 people). In urban authorities outside of London, there was a net outward migration of 9,500 people for this age group; this is based on the inflow (314,800 people) being 3% smaller than the outflow (324,300 people)

For people aged 70 and over there was limited migration, but the migration that did occur favoured movement towards majority rural areas and away from urban areas outside of London.

**Figure C-3: Bar chart showing net internal migration for majority rural authorities and urban authorities outside of London in England, by age band, using the 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2023**

Darker bars represent urban authorities outside of London and the lighter bars represent majority rural authorities. The highest values for inwards and outwards migration have been labelled. Positive values represent net inwards migration; negative values represent net outwards migration.

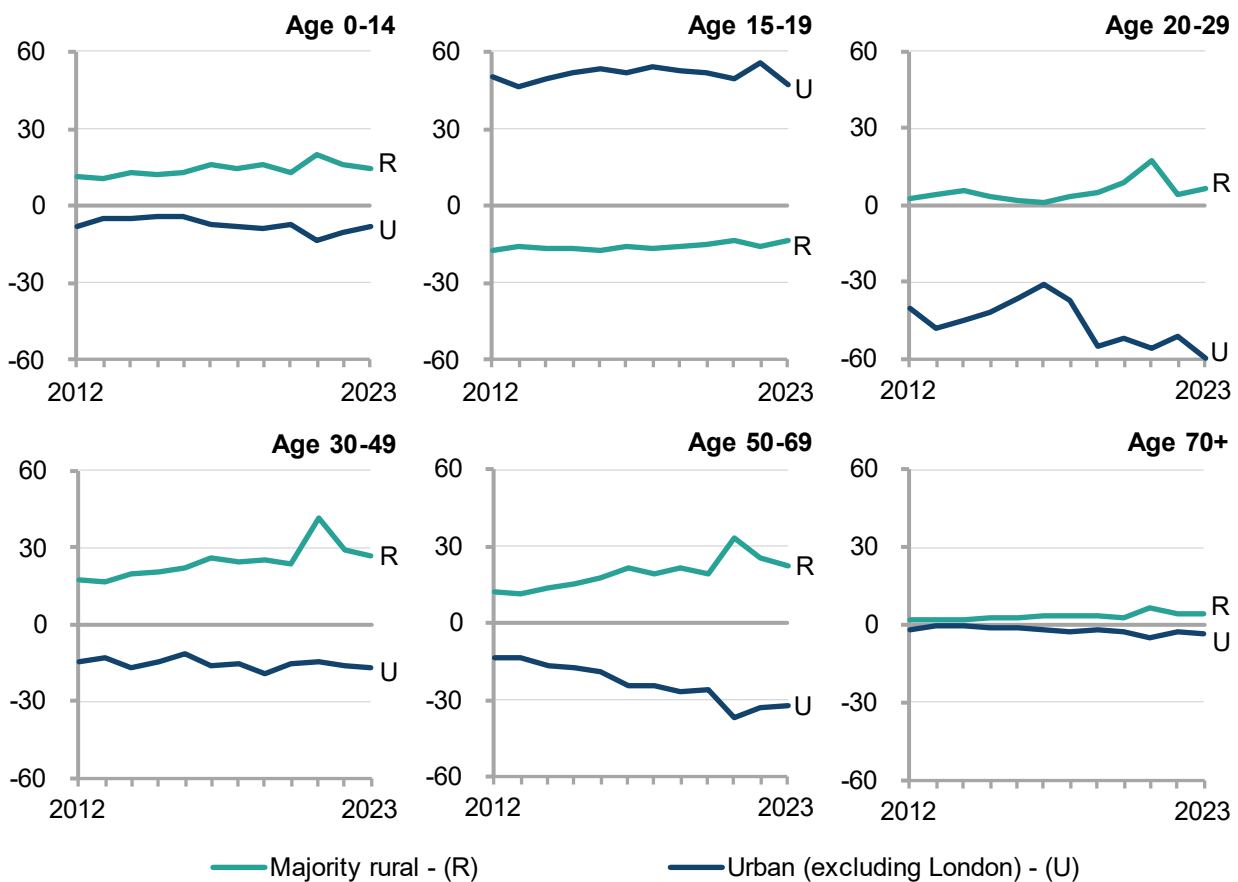


These internal migration patterns can be analysed over time, as shown in the six time series charts in Figure C-4. Age bands have been combined where data were similar, and therefore the age bands are not all of equal size.

**Figure C-4: Line charts showing net internal migration for majority rural authorities and urban authorities outside of London in England, by age band, using the 2021 rural-urban classification, year ending June 2012 to year ending June 2023**

Lines representing majority rural authorities are indicated by an “R”; those representing urban authorities outside of London are indicated by a “U”. Top left-hand chart: 0- to- 14-year-olds. Top middle chart: 15- to- 19-year-olds. Top right-hand chart: 20- to- 29-year-olds. Bottom left-hand chart: 30- to- 49-year-olds. Bottom middle chart: 50- to- 69-year-olds. Bottom right-hand chart: people aged 70 or above.

Vertical axis: Annual gain or loss of population due to internal migration (thousands)



**For people aged 0-14:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net inwards migration of 11,400 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net outwards migration of 7,800 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net inwards migration of 14,600 people in majority rural authorities (28% higher than in year ending June 2012); this compared to a net outwards migration of 8,100 people in urban authorities outside of London (4% higher than in year ending June 2012).

**For people aged 15-19:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net outwards migration of 17,400 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net inwards migration of 50,500 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net outwards migration of 13,700 people in majority rural authorities (21% lower than in year ending June 2012); this

compared to a net inwards migration of 47,100 people in urban authorities outside of London (7% lower than in year ending June 2012).

**For people aged 20-29:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net inwards migration of 2,800 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net outwards migration of 40,400 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net inwards migration of 6,300 people in majority rural authorities (127% higher than in year ending June 2012); this compared to a net outwards migration of 59,600 people in urban authorities outside of London (47% higher than in year ending June 2012).

**For people aged 30-49:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net inwards migration of 17,300 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net outwards migration of 14,700 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net inwards migration of 26,700 people in majority rural authorities (54% higher than in year ending June 2012); this compared to a net outwards migration of 16,800 people in urban authorities outside of London (15% higher than in year ending June 2012).

**For people aged 50-69:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net inwards migration of 11,900 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net outwards migration of 13,100 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net inwards migration of 22,600 people in majority rural authorities (89% higher than in year ending June 2012); this compared to a net outwards migration of 31,800 people in urban authorities outside of London (143% higher than in year ending June 2012).

**For people aged 70+:** In year ending June 2012, there was a net inwards migration of 2,100 people in majority rural authorities; this compared to a net outwards migration of 1,700 people in urban authorities outside of London. In year ending June 2023, there was a net inwards migration of 4,100 people in majority rural authorities (95% higher than in year ending June 2012); this compared to a net outwards migration of 3,600 people in urban authorities outside of London (112% higher than in year ending June 2012).

## Internal migration explanatory notes

- **Note C-1**

Often statistics are compiled at Local Authority level, in which case the Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities is used. This is different from looking at the population using the more detailed Rural-Urban classification as it is based on whole Local Authorities. The whole population in an authority will be attributed to the class assigned to the authority. So, an authority that is majority rural or intermediate rural will have the whole population counted as being in a majority or intermediate rural area, even those living in an urban settlement within that Authority, while all those living in a rural area but within an authority classed as urban or intermediate urban will not be counted in the majority or intermediate rural figure.

- **Note C-2**

Data presented in this section is available from the [population supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note C-3**

Internal migration is defined as residential moves between Local Authorities. Moves within a single Local Authority are excluded, as are international moves into or out of the UK. Further information on the data sources and methods, and their limitations, is available via: [Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note C-4**

Source: [Internal migration in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note C-5**

For the relative access categories, 'nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). Therefore, a "majority rural authority with the majority of the population nearer to a major town or city" would indicate that the local authority itself is designated as majority rural (as at least 50% of the population reside in rural settlements), and of the whole population of the local authority (not just the rural population), the majority of people live within a 30-minute drive of a built up area with at least 75,000 residents. More information regarding the 2021 Census-based Rural-Urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#)

## D. Local Authority population data

**5.9 million people lived in majority rural local authorities in mid-2023 (10% of England's population); 37% of these lived in authorities where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city.**

### Summary

Population data is available for Local Authorities and Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) as annual mid-year population estimates. LSOA-level population estimates can be found in [Section A](#).

57.7 million people were usual residents of local authorities in England in 2023, based on ONS mid-year estimates. 13.0 million people (23% of the population) lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities; this consisted of 5.9 million people living in majority rural areas, and 7.1 million people living in intermediate rural areas. Of those living in majority rural areas, there were 2.2 million people who lived in authorities where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city; this is equivalent to 37% of the majority rural population, or 4% of the total population of England.

For all people aged 75 and above, the rural population increased between mid-2019 and mid-2023; the greatest proportional change was seen for 75- to 79-year-olds, as there were 28% more people within this age band in mid-2023 (735,000) compared to mid-2019 (572,900). In majority or intermediate rural local authorities, the only age bands showing decreases of more than 3% were for those aged 45 to 49, 50 to 54, or 70 to 74.

We provide local authority population figures because statistics are often compiled at Local Authority-level; these rural and urban populations are different to the population figures calculated using the more detailed rural-urban classification because the local authority ones are based on whole local authorities. So, an authority that is classed as rural will have the whole population counted as being in a rural, even those living in an urban settlement within that authority; while all those living in a rural area but within an authority classed as urban will not be counted in the rural figure.

## Mid-year population 2023 for Local Authorities

Earlier sections show population using granular data at the level of LSOAs, whereas this section uses data at the level of Local Authorities (as at 2023). See Note D-1 for more detail regarding the use of Local Authority data.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year population estimates, available from Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) to Local Authorities and other higher geographies. For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note D-3.

57.7 million people were residents of England in 2023, based on ONS mid-year estimates. Of this, 13.0 million people (23% of the population) lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities; this is shown in Table D-1.

**Table D-1: Proportion of the population in each type of authority, based on 2023 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for local authorities in England (Note D-1)**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority rural	5,910,000	10.2
Intermediate rural	7,079,600	12.3
<b>Majority or intermediate rural</b>	<b>12,989,600</b>	<b>22.5</b>
Intermediate urban	7,006,300	12.1
Urban (excluding London)	28,749,100	49.8
London	8,945,300	15.5
<b>Urban</b>	<b>44,700,700</b>	<b>77.5</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>57,690,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table D-1, which shows the proportions of the population of England by RUC21 settlement type, can be described as follows:

- 13.0 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural authorities in mid-2023 (23% of the total population of England); this consisted of 5.9 million people living in majority rural authorities (10% of the population), and 7.1 million people living in intermediate rural authorities (12% of the population).
- 44.7 million people lived in urban authorities in mid-2023 (77% of the total population of England); this consisted of 7.0 million people living in intermediate urban authorities (12% of the population), and 28.7 million people living in urban authorities outside of London (50% of the population). 8.9 million people lived in authorities in London in mid-2023 (16% of the total population).
- Just under 1 in 4 people lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities in mid-2023.

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table D-2 shows the proportion of the population within majority rural local authorities (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at mid-2023.



**Table D-2: Proportion of the population within majority rural authorities by proximity to a major town or city, based on 2023 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for local authorities in England (Note D-1)**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Proximity to a major town or city	Population	Proportion of majority rural population (%)	Proportion of England population (%)
Majority further from	2,209,100	37.4	3.8
Majority nearer to	3,700,900	62.6	6.4
<b>All majority rural</b>	<b>5,910,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10.2</b>

Table D-2, which shows the proportions of the population of England by RUC21 settlement type and relative access, can be described as follows:

- 5.9 million people lived in majority rural local authorities in mid-2023.
- Of this, there were 2.2 million people who lived in authorities where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city; this is equivalent to 37% of the majority rural population and 4% of the total population of England.
- There were 3.7 million people who lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city in mid-2023; this is equivalent to 63% of the majority rural population and 6% of the total population of England.

## Population change by age for Local Authorities

The Office for National Statistics publish annual mid-year population estimates, allowing for comparisons over time using the RUC21 settlement types. Longer-term comparisons highlight changes in the age demography of the population of England; comparisons have been made between 2019 and 2023 to show this (particularly due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic).

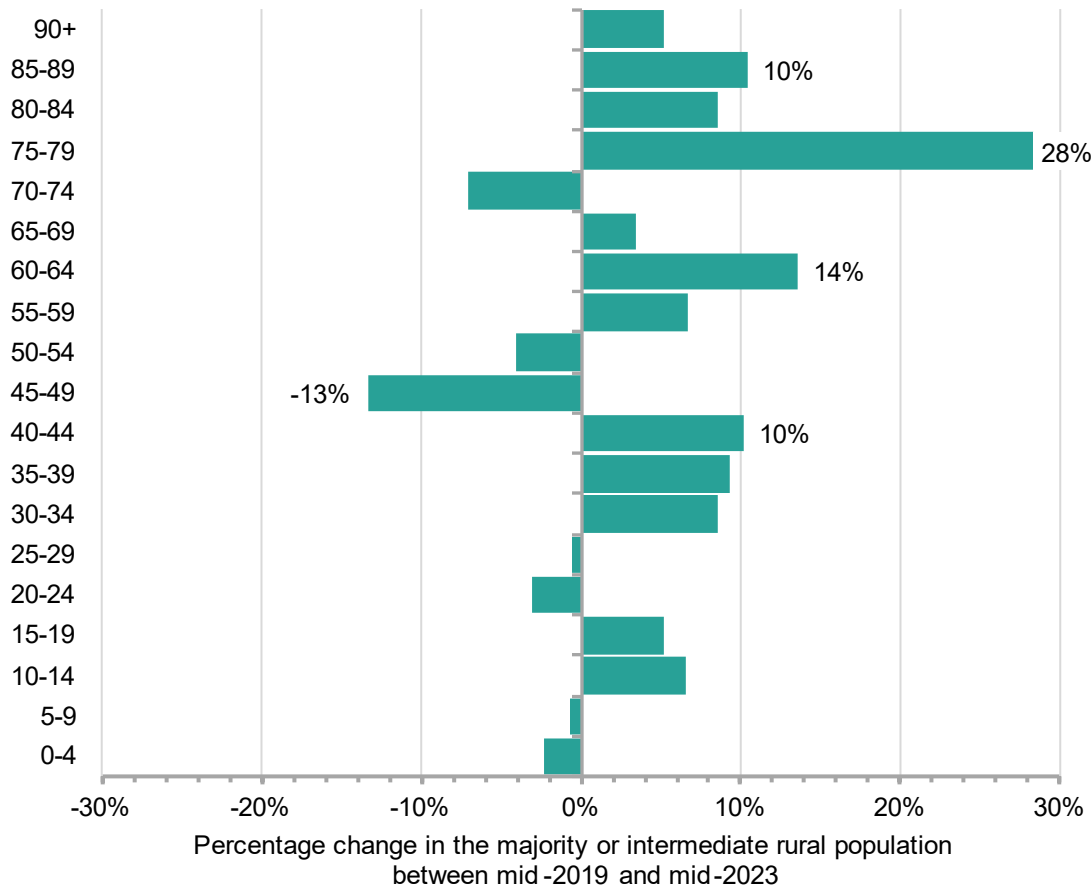
The bar chart in Figure D-1 shows the percentage change in the rural population for five-year age bands, based on mid-year Local Authority-level estimates, between 2019 and 2023. Further statistics regarding the age of the population can be found within the [population age profile](#). Changes in the demography of the rural population can be affected by [internal migration](#), birth and death rates, and people ageing.

For all people aged 75 and above, the majority or intermediate rural population increased between mid-2019 and mid-2023. The only age bands showing decreases of more than 3% were for those aged 45 to 49, 50 to 54, or 70 to 74. For people aged between under 10, or between 20 and 29, the majority or intermediate rural population decreased by up to 3% between 2019 and 2023.

The greatest proportional change in the size of the population was seen for 75- to 79-year-olds living in majority or intermediate rural areas, as there were 28% more people within this age band in mid-2023 (735,000) compared to mid-2019 (572,900). The next largest increase was for 60- to 64-year-olds living in majority or intermediate rural areas; there were 14% more people within this age band in mid-2023 (934,100) compared to mid-2019 (822,600). The largest decrease in the size of the population was seen for 45- to 49-year-olds living in majority or intermediate rural areas, as there were 13% fewer people within this age band in 2023 (734,400) compared to 2019 (847,100).

**Figure D-1: Bar chart showing the percentage change in the population in majority or intermediate rural local authorities, by five-year age bands, between mid-2019 and mid-2023, based on the 2021 rural-urban classification, England (Note D-1)**

A negative percentage change (i.e., where the bars are left of the 0% axis) indicates a population decrease, whereas a positive percentage change indicates a population increase.



### Local Authority population data explanatory notes

- Note D-1**

Often statistics are compiled at Local Authority-level, in which case the rural-urban classification for local authorities is used. This is different from looking at the population using the more detailed Rural-Urban classification as it is based on whole local authorities. The whole population in an authority will be attributed to the class assigned to the authority. So, an authority that is majority rural or intermediate rural will have the whole population counted as being in a majority or intermediate rural area, even those living in an urban settlement within that authority, while all those living in a rural area but within an authority classed as urban or intermediate urban will not be counted in the majority or intermediate rural figure.

While these population estimates are broadly in line with the Census, there are minor differences relating to the area classifications: Census population data are based on Output Areas (OAs, approx. 300 people), and mid-year population estimates in this section are based on local authorities (currently range from 2,000 to 1.2 million people). The larger the area the more likely it is to contain an urban settlement and be classified as Urban. Analysis using local authorities may under-estimate the rural population.

- Note D-2**

Data presented in this section is available from the [population supplementary data tables](#).

- Note D-3**

Mid-year estimates source: [Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

## E. Census 2021: Population

**Around 9.5 million people lived in rural settlements at Census 2021.**

### Summary

Census population data is available from Census Output Area-level up to Local Authority and other higher levels of geography.

**Based on Output Area-level data:** At Census 2021, 9.5 million people lived in rural settlements and 47.0 million people lived in urban areas (including 8.8 million who lived in London). Of those who lived in rural settlements, 4.9 million people lived in smaller rural settlements whilst 4.6 million people lived in larger rural settlements. Twice as many people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (6.4 million) than those that were further from a major town or city (3.2 million). Just 2% of the rural population (193,000 people) lived in what might be considered as remote areas with more than a 30- minute drive to the nearest town with at least 10,000 inhabitants.

In smaller or larger rural settlements just 4% of people identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic group other than “white”. In urban areas outside of London, 16% of the population identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic group other than “white”.

In smaller rural settlements, 25% of households were just one person living alone; 70% were households consisting of one family. More than half of the people living alone were aged 66 and above. In larger rural settlements, a larger proportion of all households were just one person living alone than in smaller rural settlements.

**Based on Lower Super Output Area-level data:** At Census 2021, 9.4 million people lived in rural settlements and 47.1 million people lived in urban areas (including 8.8 million who lived in London). Of those who lived in rural settlements, 4.5 million people lived in smaller rural settlements whilst 4.9 million people lived in larger rural settlements. Twice as many people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (6.3 million) than those that were further from a major town or city (3.1 million).

**Based on Local Authority-level data:** At Census 2021, 5.8 million people lived in majority rural local authorities, and 6.4 million people lived in intermediate rural authorities. 7.2 million people lived in intermediate urban authorities, and 37.0 million people lived in urban authorities (including London, which itself had a concentrated population). More people lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city (3.2 million) than those where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city (2.6 million). For each type of authority, the population increased by at least 5% between Census 2011 and Census 2021.

## Background information

The [rural-urban classification](#) (released on 6 March 2025) is an official statistical classification for England and Wales, used to distinguish rural and urban areas; it is presented only for England within this publication. Urban areas are determined as settlements with populations of 10,000 or more, based on the 2021 Census; rural settlements are everywhere else and will include rural towns, villages, hamlets, isolated dwellings and open countryside.

The latest Census data was taken on Census Day: 21 March 2021. This was shortly after the third national lockdown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning society was still being impacted by the restrictions. For example, some city-dwellers opted to move to rural locations, which might not have happened if the COVID-19 pandemic not occurred. Similarly, many students moved back to their home address due to the closure of university campuses and the provision of education on-line.

A census is always a snapshot of the population at the time, and this was particularly the case in the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Population (Output Area-based)

The 2021 rural-urban classification was released on 6 March 2025; see the [rural-urban classification](#) for more information. As a result, it is possible to present population statistics in England from the 2021 Census. Output Areas (OAs) are the most precise geography available, resulting in the most precise estimate of the population. However, many datasets are not available at Output Area-level, therefore analysis of population data at other geographical levels are provided in other sections of this publication. For more information about statistical geographies, please see the explanatory document provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS): [Statistical geographies - ONS](#).

Table E-1 shows the 2021 Census output area population by settlement type (RUC21). In 2021, the rural population was 9.5 million and represented 16.9% of England's population.

**Table E-1: (Census 2021): Proportion of the population by 2021 OA rural-urban classification**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion of population (%)
Smaller rural	4,909,400	8.7
Larger rural	4,611,000	8.2
<b>Rural</b>	<b>9,520,400</b>	<b>16.9</b>
Urban (excluding London)	38,170,200	67.6
London	8,799,800	15.6
<b>Urban</b>	<b>46,969,900</b>	<b>83.1</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-1 (Census 2021) can be described as follows:

- 9.5 million people lived in rural settlements at Census 2021; this consisted of 4.9 million people living in smaller rural settlements (9% of the population of England) and 4.6 million people living in larger rural settlements (8% of the total population).
- 47.0 million people lived in urban areas at Census 2021; this consisted of 38.2 million people living in urban areas outside of London (68% of the population of England), and 8.8 million people living in London (16% of the total population).

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table E-2 shows the proportion of the population within rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at Census 2021.

**Table E-2 (Census 2021): Proportion of the population within rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, by 2021 OA rural-urban classification (Note E-3)**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Relative access in rural settlements (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion of population (%)
Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city	1,802,800	3.2
Larger rural: Further from a major town or city	1,354,300	2.4
<b>Rural: Further from a major town or city</b>	<b>3,157,100</b>	<b>5.6</b>
Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city	3,106,600	5.5
Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city	3,256,700	5.8
<b>Rural: Nearer to a major town or city</b>	<b>6,363,300</b>	<b>11.3</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-2 (Census 2021) shows that:

- 3.2 million people lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 6% of the total population of England); this consisted of 1.8 million people living in smaller rural settlements (3% of the total population), and 1.4 million people living in larger rural settlements (2% of the total population).
- 6.4 million people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 11% of the total population of England); this consisted of 3.1 million people living in smaller rural settlements (5% of the total population), and 3.3 million people living in larger rural settlements (6% of the total population).

Ability to reach towns or cities of specified populations within a 30-minute drive can offer insight into the relative accessibility of where people live. For RUC21 purposes, a major town or city is defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents. A medium urban area is a built-up area with at least 30,000 residents. A small urban area is a built-up area with at least 10,000 residents. These definitions are presented in the infographic in Figure E-1.

A remote settlement is defined as one from which it is not possible to reach the nearest small urban area within a 30-minute drive.

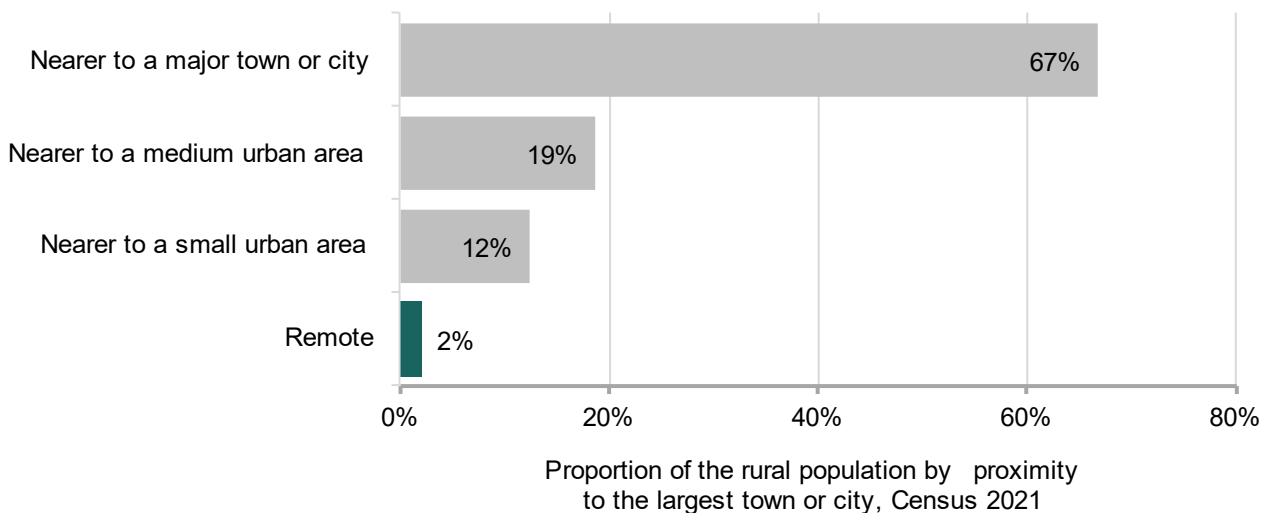
**Figure E-1: Infographic showing the definitions of settlement types from the 2021 rural-urban classification in England**



In regarding the largest urban area that can be reached within a 30-minute drive, of the 3.2 million people who lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city, just 192,600 people lived in remote rural settlements at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 0.3% of England’s population, or just 2% of the total rural population. 12% of the rural population lived nearer to a small urban area, and 19% lived nearer to a medium urban area. 67% of the rural population lived nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021. Figure E-2 shows a focus bar chart of rural population by relative access.

**Figure E-2 (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the proportion of the rural population by proximity to the largest town or city within a 30-minute drive**

The bar representing remote areas is coloured to draw focus. Proportions have been rounded to the nearest 1% on the chart labels.



## Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation. It is not a measure of race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship. Statistics about ethnicity give information by the ethnic groups that people identify with or feel they belong to.

The bar chart in Figure E-3 shows the proportion of the population of each settlement type by ethnic group, as at Census 2021.

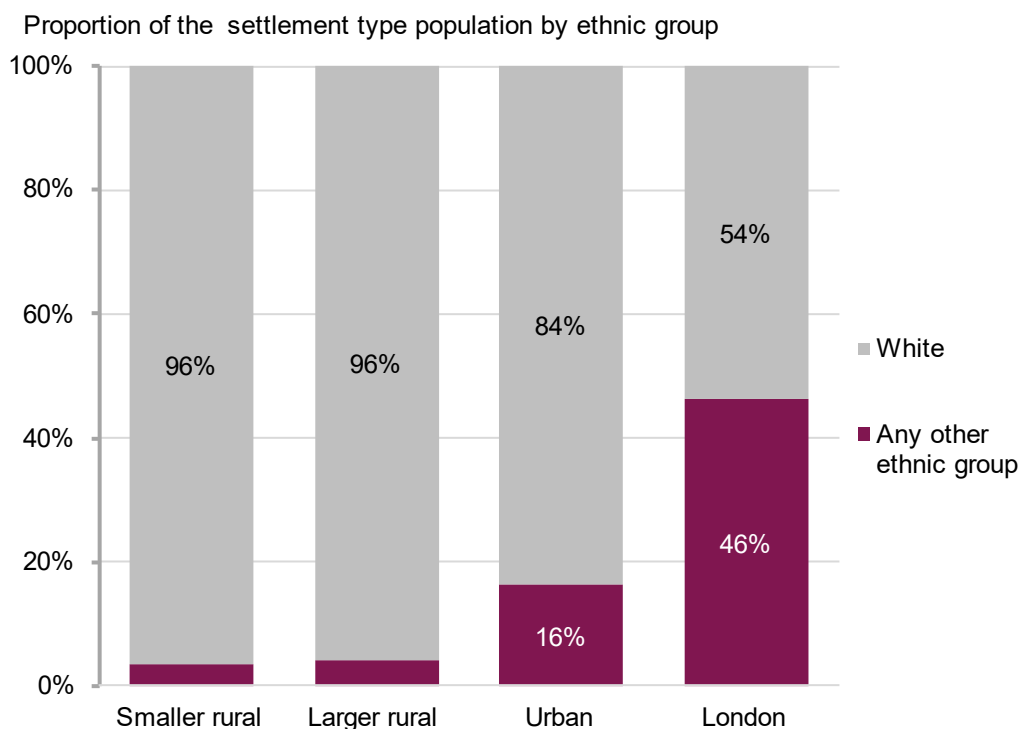
The terms used in Figure E-3 are defined as:

**“White”**: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, or any other white ethnic group.

**“Any other ethnic group”**: Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh, Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, African, people with mixed or multiple ethnic groups, and any other ethnic groups.

**Figure E-3 (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the proportion of the population by ethnic group and settlement type, 2021 OA rural-urban classification, in England**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars. “Urban” excludes London. Values of less than 5% have not been labelled on the chart.



In both smaller and larger rural settlements, 96% of the population identified as “white”; this meant that just 4% identified as another ethnic group. In urban areas outside of London, 84% of the population considered themselves to be “white”; this meant that 16% of the population identified as another ethnic group. In London, 54% of people considered themselves to be “white”, meaning 46% identified as another ethnic group.

Table E-3 presents the proportion of the rural population identified as belonging to each ethnic group in more detail. Detailed statistics for other settlement types can be found within the [Population supplementary data tables](#). The table can be described as follows:

- In smaller or larger rural settlements (rural settlements overall), 131,300 people identified as “Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 1% of the rural population, and 2% of the total “Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh” community in England.
- 52,400 people living in rural settlements identified as “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 1% of the rural population, and 2% of the total “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” community in England.



- 137,100 people living in rural settlements identified as having “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 1% of the rural population, and 8% of the total community with “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” in England.
- 8.8 million people living in rural settlements identified as “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 93% of the rural population, and 21% of the total “White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British” community.
- 55,500 people living in rural settlements identified as “White: Irish” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 1% of the rural population, and 11% of the total “White: Irish” community.
- 15,800 people living in rural settlements identified as “White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to less than 1% of the rural population, and 25% of the total “White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller” community in England.
- 3,800 people living in rural settlements identified as “White: Roma” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to less than 1% of the rural population, and 4% of the total “White: Roma” community.
- 242,900 people living in rural settlements identified as “White: Other White” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 3% of the rural population, and 7% of the “Other White” community.
- 40,000 people living in rural settlements considered themselves to belong to any “Other ethnic group” at Census 2021; this was equivalent to less than 1% of the rural population, and 3% of the total “Other ethnic group” community in England.

**Table E-3 (Census 2021): Proportion of the rural population, as defined within the 2021 OA rural-urban classification, by ethnic group in England**

Values are rounded to the nearest 100 people, or nearest 0.1%. [low] represents values which round to zero but are not a true zero.

Ethnic groups in rural settlements (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion of rural population (%)	Proportion of ethnic population (%)
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	131,300	1.4	2.4
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	52,400	0.6	2.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	137,100	1.4	8.2
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	8,841,500	92.9	21.3
White: Irish	55,500	0.6	11.2
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	15,800	0.2	24.7
White: Roma	3,800	[low]	3.9
White: Other White	242,900	2.6	6.8
Other ethnic group	40,000	0.4	3.3
<b>Total: all usual rural residents</b>	<b>9,520,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16.9</b>

RUC21 provides information regarding the areas’ proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. In rural settlements that were further from a major town or city (i.e., at least a 30-minute drive away), 97% of the resident population considered themselves to be “White” at Census 2021; this is marginally higher than in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (96%).



## Household composition

The Office for National Statistics provide Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by the relationships between household members (household composition). This provides context to other areas of the Digest publication, where we may refer to a “per household” measure.

Table E-4 shows the number of households in England, by composition and settlement type; this table provides context to the bar chart in Figure E-4.

**Table E-4 (Census 2021): Number of households in England, by composition and settlement type as defined within the 2021 OA rural-urban classification**

Values are rounded to the nearest 100 households.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	One-person	Single family	Other	All households
Smaller rural	502,600	1,440,300	100,900	<b>2,043,800</b>
Larger rural	607,400	1,342,900	75,300	<b>2,025,600</b>
Urban (excluding London)	4,939,600	9,993,700	1,009,100	<b>15,942,500</b>
London	1,002,200	1,986,900	435,900	<b>3,425,000</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>7,051,800</b>	<b>14,763,900</b>	<b>1,621,300</b>	<b>23,436,900</b>

**Figure E-4 (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the proportion of households in England, by composition and settlement type as defined within the 2021 OA rural-urban classification**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars. Proportions have been rounded to the nearest 1% on the chart labels, and values of less than 10% have not been labelled. “Urban” excludes London.

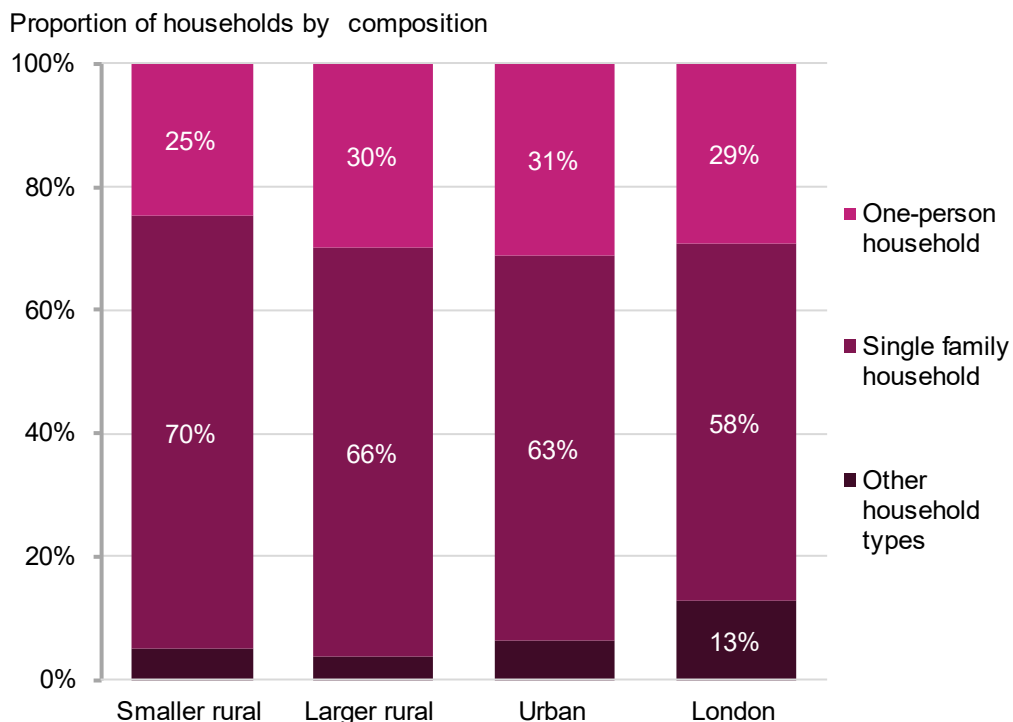


Table E-4 and Figure E-4 can be described as follows:

- In England, single family households were the most common composition at Census 2021, whilst “other household types” - such as multiple family households - were the least common.
- In smaller rural settlements, 25% of all households were just one person living alone (502,600); this was proportionally less than any other settlement type. In comparison, 70% were single family households (1.4 million), and 5% were other types of household (100,900).
- In larger rural settlements, a larger proportion of all households were just one person living alone (30%; 607,400) than in smaller rural settlements. 66% of households were single families (1.3 million), and just 4% were other types of household (75,300).
- In urban areas outside of London, 31% of all households were just one person living alone (4.9 million); this was proportionally more than any other settlement type. 63% of households were single families (10.0 million), whilst 6% were other types of household (1.0 million).
- In London, 29% of households were just one person living alone (1.0 million); this compared to 58% of households being single families (2.0 million), and 13% being other types of household (435,900).

Of the one-person households in England, there were many which were people aged 66 years or older. In smaller rural settlements, 55% of one-person households were aged 66 and above; this was proportionally higher than any other settlement type, and was equivalent to 14% of all households in smaller rural settlements. In larger rural settlements, 53% of one-person households were aged 66 and above; this was equivalent to 16% of all households in larger rural settlements. In urban areas outside of London, 42% of one-person households were aged 66 and above; this was equivalent to 13% of all households in urban areas outside of London. In London, 31% of all one-person households were aged 66 and above; this was proportionally lower than any other settlement type, and was equivalent to 9% of all households in London.

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas’ proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. However, there was little difference in household composition depending on proximity to towns or cities. For example, in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city, 29% of households were one-person households compared with 27% in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (27%).

## Population (Lower Super Output Area-based)

The 2021 rural-urban classification was released on 6 March 2025; see the [rural-urban classification](#) for more information. As a result, it is possible to present population statistics in England from the 2021 Census. The lowest level of geography available from the Census are Output Areas. The larger the area the more likely it is to contain an urban settlement and be classified as urban. Analysis using Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) may slightly underestimate the rural population.

Table E-5 shows the 2021 Census LSOA population by settlement type (RUC21). In 2021, the rural population was 9.4 million and represented 16.6% of England’s population; this is based on Census lower-layer super output areas, which are less granular than Census output areas.

**Table E-5 (Census 2021): Proportion of the population within each settlement type described in the 2021 LSOA rural-urban classification**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion of population (%)
Smaller rural	4,516,300	8.0
Larger rural	4,858,100	8.6
<b>Rural</b>	<b>9,374,400</b>	<b>16.6</b>
Urban (excluding London)	38,315,800	67.8
London	8,799,800	15.6
<b>Urban</b>	<b>47,115,600</b>	<b>83.4</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-5 (Census 2021) can be described as follows:

- 9.4 million people lived in rural settlements at Census 2021; this consisted of 4.5 million people living in smaller rural settlements (8% of the population of England) and 4.9 million people living in larger rural settlements (9% of the total population).
- 47.1 million people lived in urban areas at Census 2021; this consisted of 38.3 million people living in urban LSOAs outside of London (68% of the population of England), and 8.8 million people living in London (16% of the total population).

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table E-6 shows the proportion of the population within rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at Census 2021.

**Table E-6 (Census 2021): Proportion of the population within rural settlements as described in the 2021 LSOA rural-urban classification, by proximity to a major town or city (Note E-3)**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Relative access in rural settlements (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion of population (%)
Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city	1,668,900	3.0
Larger rural: Further from a major town or city	1,436,900	2.5
<b>Rural: Further from a major town or city</b>	<b>3,105,800</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city	2,847,400	5.0
Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city	3,421,200	6.1
<b>Rural: Nearer to a major town or city</b>	<b>6,268,700</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,100</b>	<b>16.6</b>

Table E-6 shows that:

- 3.1 million people lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 5% of the total population of England); this consisted of 1.7 million people living in smaller rural settlements (3% of the total population), and 1.4 million people living in larger rural settlements (3% of the total population).

- 6.3 million people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 11% of the total population of England); this consisted of 2.8 million people living in smaller rural settlements (5% of the total population), and 3.4 million people living in larger rural settlements (6% of the total population).

## Population (Local Authority-based)

The 2021 rural-urban classification was released on 6 March 2025; see the [rural-urban classification](#) for more information. As a result, it is possible to present population statistics in England from the 2021 Census. 12.2 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 22% of the total population in England. Table E-7 shows the usual resident population at Census 2021 for 2021 local authorities.

**Table E-7 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within each settlement type described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification**

Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority rural	5,837,900	10.3
Intermediate rural	6,408,700	11.3
Intermediate urban	7,233,700	12.8
Urban	37,010,000	65.5
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table E-7, which analyses usual resident population at Census 2021, can be described as follows:

- 12.2 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities at Census 2021; this consisted of 5.8 million people living in majority rural areas (10% of the total population of England), and 6.4 million people living in intermediate rural areas (11% of the total population).
- 7.2 million people lived in intermediate urban local authorities at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 13% of the total population of England.
- 37.0 million people lived in urban local authorities, including London, at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 66% of the total population of England, meaning 2 in every 3 people lived in an urban area at Census 2021.

RUC21 provide information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table E-8 shows the proportion of the population within majority rural and intermediate rural local authorities (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at Census 2021. It can be described as follows:

- 4.5 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities where the majority of the resident population lived further from a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 8% of the total population of England). This consisted of 2.6 million people living in majority rural local authorities (5% of the total population), and 1.9 million people living in intermediate rural local authorities (3% of the total population).

- 7.7 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural local authorities where the majority of the resident population lived nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021 (equivalent to 14% of the total population of England). This consisted of 3.2 million people living in majority rural local authorities (6% of the total population), and 4.5 million people living in intermediate rural local authorities (8% of the total population).

**Table E-8 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within rural areas as described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification, by proximity to a major town or city (Note E-3)**

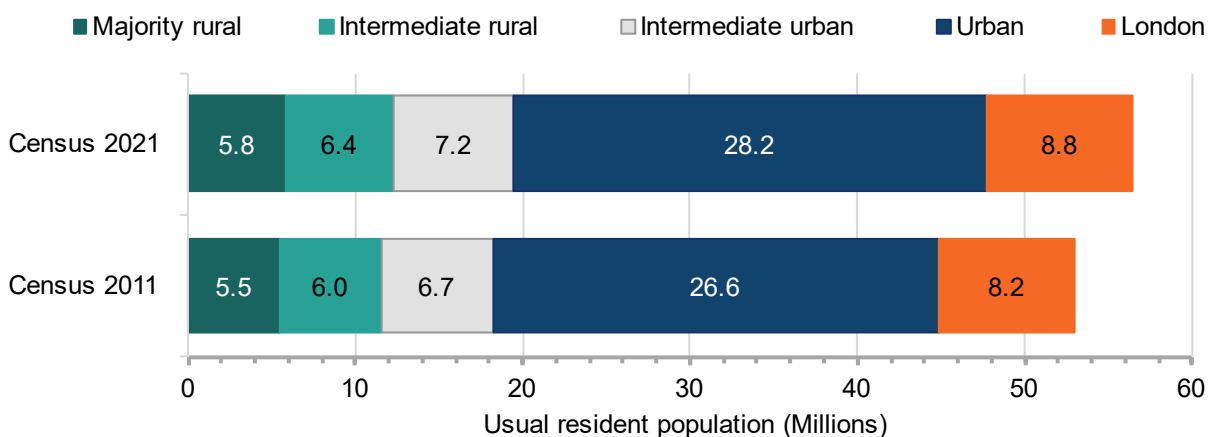
Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification by relative access (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority rural: Majority further from a major town or city	2,619,500	4.6
Intermediate rural: Majority further from a major town or city	1,922,300	3.4
Majority rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city	3,218,400	5.7
Intermediate rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city	4,486,400	7.9
<b>England</b>	<b>56,490,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

By comparing Census 2021 to Census 2011, it is possible to quantify how the population has changed over time. The bar chart in Figure E-5 shows the usual resident population as at Census 2011 and Census 2021, based on the local authority RUC21. Data from the 2011 Census has been analysed using the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification to enable comparisons.

**Figure E-5 (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the change in the usual resident population between Census 2011 and Census 2021, by settlement types described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification**

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars. “Urban” excludes London. Population is rounded to the nearest 0.1 million people on the chart labels.



The bar chart in Figure E-5 can be described as follows:

- In England, the usual resident population increased from 53.0 million and 56.5 million between Census 2011 and Census 2021; this was a 6.6% increase.
- The population of intermediate urban authorities increased proportionally more than any other settlement type in England between Census 2011 and Census 2021. The population of urban authorities outside of London had the lowest proportional increase.

- In majority rural local authorities, the population increased by 6.8% between Census 2011 (5.5 million) and Census 2021 (5.8 million).
- In intermediate rural authorities, the population increased by 6.0% between Census 2011 (6.0 million) and Census 2021 (6.4 million).
- In intermediate urban authorities, the population increased by 8.0% between Census 2011 (6.7 million) and Census 2021 (7.2 million).
- In urban authorities outside of London, the population increased by 5.9% between Census 2011 (26.6 million) and Census 2021 (28.2 million).
- In London, the population increased by 7.7% between Census 2011 (8.2 million) and Census 2021 (8.8 million).

## Census 2021 explanatory notes

- **Note E-1**

The estimated resident population of an area includes all those people who usually live there, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usual resident population if they remain in the UK for at least a year. Emigrants are excluded if they remain outside the UK for at least a year. This is consistent with the United Nations definition of a long-term migrant. Armed forces stationed outside of the UK are excluded. Students are taken to be usually resident at their term time address.

- **Note E-2**

Data presented in this section is available from the [population supplementary data tables](#).

- **Note E-3**

For the relative access categories, 'nearer to a major town or city' is defined as being within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. Conversely 'further from a major town or city' is defined as being more than a 30-minute drive by car from a major town or city (built-up area with a population of at least 75,000 residents). More information regarding the 2021 Census-based rural-urban classification, including detailed data tables, can be found via: [2021 Rural Urban Classification - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Note E-4**

Often statistics are compiled at Local Authority-level, in which case the rural-urban classification for local authorities is used. This is different from looking at the population using the more detailed Rural-Urban classification as it is based on whole local authorities. The whole population in an authority will be attributed to the class assigned to the authority. So, an authority that is majority rural or intermediate rural will have the whole population counted as being in a majority or intermediate rural area, even those living in an urban settlement within that authority, while all those living in a rural area but within an authority classed as urban or intermediate urban will not be counted in the majority or intermediate rural figure.

- **Note E-5**

Census source: [Census - Office for National Statistics](#)

Data source: Census 2021 via [Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

# Appendix 1: The 8 thematic reports that make up the Statistical Digest of Rural England (and the topics included within them)

## 1. [Population](#)

- A. Population level and change
- B. Population age profile
- C. Internal migration
- D. Local Authority population data
- E. Census 2021

## 2. [Housing](#)

- A. Housing stock: age and type
- B. Housing stock: additions and affordable housing
- C. Housing costs: purchases and rentals
- D. House purchase affordability
- E. Second and empty homes
- F. Homelessness
- G. Land use change for housing
- H. Housing quality

## 3. [Health and Wellbeing](#)

- A. Life expectancy and Mortality
- B. Wellbeing
- C. NHS Dentistry provision
- D. NHS General Practices
- E. Childcare provision
- F. Loneliness
- G. Volunteering and charity

## 4. [Communities and Households](#)

- A. Deprivation
- B. Poverty due to low income
- C. Household expenditure
- D. Police recorded crime and outcomes
- E. Crime surveys: local police and businesses
- F. Feelings about the local neighbourhood

## 5. [Connectivity and Accessibility](#)

- A. Broadband and mobile
- B. Travel behaviours
- C. Access to personal transport
- D. Access to services
- E. Home working

## 6. [Education, Qualifications and Training](#)

- A. Schools and their workforce
- B. Class sizes
- C. Secondary education attainment
- D. School inspections
- E. Free school meals - eligibility
- F. Alternative and specialist education provision
- G. Progression to higher education
- H. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training
- I. Workforce education level

## 7. [Rural Economic Bulletin](#)

- A. Employment
- B. Earnings
- C. Redundancies
- D. Claimant count - Jobseeker's Allowance
- E. Output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)
- F. Business demographics
- G. Businesses by industry
- H. Business survival and growth
- I. Innovation and investment

## 8. [Energy](#)

- A. Fuel poverty
- B. Energy Performance Certificates: average Energy Efficiency Score
- C. Energy Performance Certificates: achieving energy efficiency category C
- D. Energy Costs
- E. Energy Consumption
- F. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

Each of the 8 themes also has their own set of supplementary data tables that include the larger source data that could not be included in the presented document. The chapter headings above are hyperlinked to the home page for that specific digest theme. The supplementary tables can be accessed from these home pages.

There is a further document including the individual Local Authority data tables, which have been separated for ease of use.