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Food & Rural Affairs

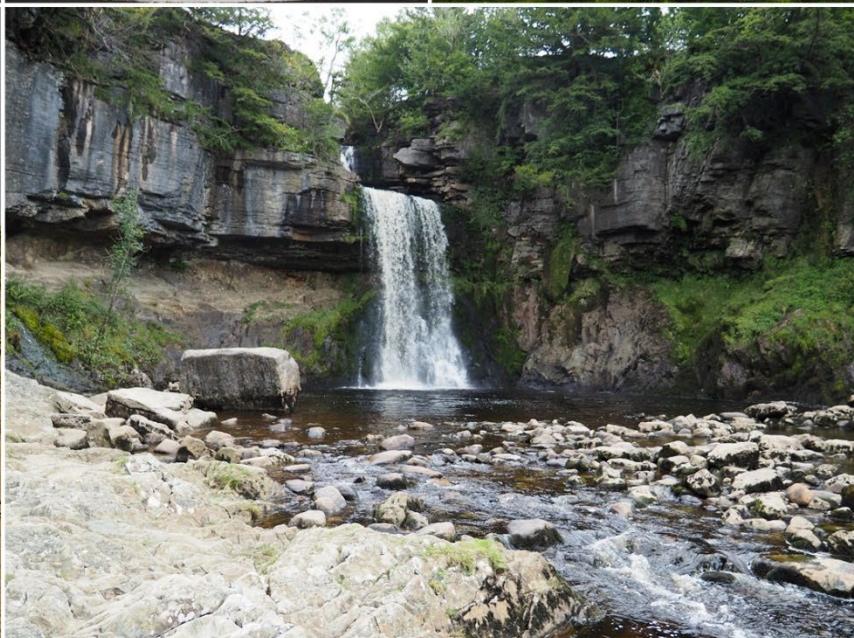


Government
Statistical Service

Statistical Digest of Rural England:

1 – Population

January 2026





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Cover photos

		Ward 2021	Rural-Urban Classification 2021
TL	Helmsley marketplace	Helmsley	Larger rural: Further from a major town or city
TC	Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station with Penyghent behind	Settle & Penyghent	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
TR	St Giles Church, Skelton	Rural West York	Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city
CL	Fishing Boat, Marske-by-the-Sea with Hunt cliff in the distance	St Germain's; Saltburn	Larger rural: Nearer to a major town or city
CR	Thornton Force Waterfall, Ingleton Waterfalls Trail	Bentham & Ingleton	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
BL	Farmer working the fields in Knapton	Rural West York	Smaller rural: Nearer to a major town or city
BC	Remote pub at Ribblehead viaduct	Bentham & Ingleton	Smaller rural: Further from a major town or city
BR	Glamping pod in the North York Moors	Pickering	Larger rural: Further from a major town or city

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 and 2024 mid-year estimates. The sections have also been reformatted to include further analysis by geography.

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](#).

This publication has been compiled by the Rural Statistics Team within the Rural and Place Team in Defra:

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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>

The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification was released on 6 March 2025. Details of the 2021 Rural Urban Classification can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification>. It will take some time for the Digest to be updated throughout using the new classification. Where relevant, statistics drawing on the 2021 Census will be added to Digest thematic reports.

Population

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

- population levels based on small areas (Section A)
- population levels based on parliamentary constituencies (Section B)
- population levels based on local authorities (Section C)
- internal migration (Section D)
- population at Census 2021, including ethnicity (Section E).

A. Population: Small area-based

In mid-2024, 17% of England's population lived in rural settlements. Over a quarter (27%) of rural residents were aged 65 and above.

Key findings – Population: Small area-based

9.7 million people live in rural settlements

- In mid-2024, 4.6 million people lived in smaller rural settlements in England, equivalent to 8% of the population.
- In mid-2024, 5.0 million people lived in larger rural settlements in England, equivalent to nearly 9% of the population.

The more rural the area, the higher the average age

- In mid-2024, the median age for smaller rural settlements was 51 years. In comparison, for London, it was 35 years – 16 years lower than for smaller rural settlements.

Summary

Population figures in this section are based on annual mid-year estimates for Lower-layer Super Output areas (LSOAs) which provide the most geographically disaggregated population estimates outside of the decennial census.

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in mid-2024, of which 9.7 million people (17%) lived in rural settlements. Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the population for both rural and urban areas outside of London increased by 8%; in absolute terms, the rural population increased from 9.0 million to 9.7 million, whilst the urban population outside of London increased from 36.9 million to 39.8 million. In rural areas specifically, the size of the population increased more rapidly for settlements that were nearer to major towns or cities.

Nearly 2.6 million people living in rural settlements in mid-2024 were aged 65 and above, equivalent to 27% of the rural population. In comparison, 18% of the population living in urban areas outside of London in mid-2024 were aged 65 and above. The more rural the settlement type, the higher the median age. Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the median age has increased for all settlement types, but has increased the fastest for rural settlements.

Population level and change

Annual mid-year population estimates are published for a range of geographies and this report includes analysis using estimates for Lower-layer Super Output Areas in Section A (this section); Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in [Section B](#); and Local Authorities in [Section C](#).

Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usual resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons; for more information about the various geographies, see [Statistical geographies - Office for National Statistics](#). For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note A-2.

Mid-year population 2024

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in 2024, based on ONS mid-year estimates. Of this, 9.7 million people (17% of the population) lived in rural settlements. The distribution of the population by settlement type within the 2021 rural-urban classification (RUC21) is shown in Table A-1. It can be described as follows:

- 9.7 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2024 (almost 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 5.0 million people living in larger rural settlements (9% of the total population).
- Almost 49.0 million people lived in urban areas in mid-2024; this consisted of 39.8 million people living in urban areas outside of London (68% of the population of England), and 9.1 million people living in London (16% of the total population).
- The population living in rural settlements was only slightly larger than the population living in London, at 9.7 million and 9.1 million, respectively.

Table A-1: Proportion of the population by settlement type, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England (Note A-1)

Data are rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification 2021	Population	Proportion (%)
Smaller rural	4,649,000	7.9
Larger rural	5,033,600	8.6
Urban (excluding London)	39,847,800	68.0
London	9,089,700	15.5
England	58,620,100	100.0

Settlement types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the settlements' 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).

Table A-2 shows the proportion of the population within rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at mid-2024. It can be described as follows:

- 9.7 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2024.
- Of this, there were 3.2 million people who lived in settlements that were further from a major town or city; this is equivalent to 33% of the rural population, and to 5% of the total population of England.
- There were 6.5 million people who lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 67% of the rural population, and to 11% of the total population of England.
- This means that in mid-2024, 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.

Table A-2: Proportion of the population within rural settlements by proximity to a major town or city, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England (Note A-1, Note A-5)

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 rural population (%)	Proportion of England population (%)
Further from	3,173,600	32.8	5.4
Nearer to	6,509,000	67.2	11.1
All rural settlements	9,682,600	100.0	16.5

Population change

Table A-3 shows mid-year estimates of the usual resident population of England, by RUC21 settlement types for 2014, 2019 and 2024. The RUC21 has been retrospectively applied to population estimates for 2014 and 2019 to provide comparison with 2024 unaffected by changes in the classification of settlements, so changes reflect

The rural population grew by 8% between mid-2014 and mid-2024, mirroring the growth of the population of England.

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 2021	2014	2019	2024
Smaller rural	4,361,700	4,447,600	4,649,000
Larger rural	4,609,000	4,781,500	5,033,600
Urban (excluding London)	36,852,500	38,111,200	39,847,800
London	8,547,200	8,889,700	9,089,700
England	54,370,300	56,230,100	58,620,100

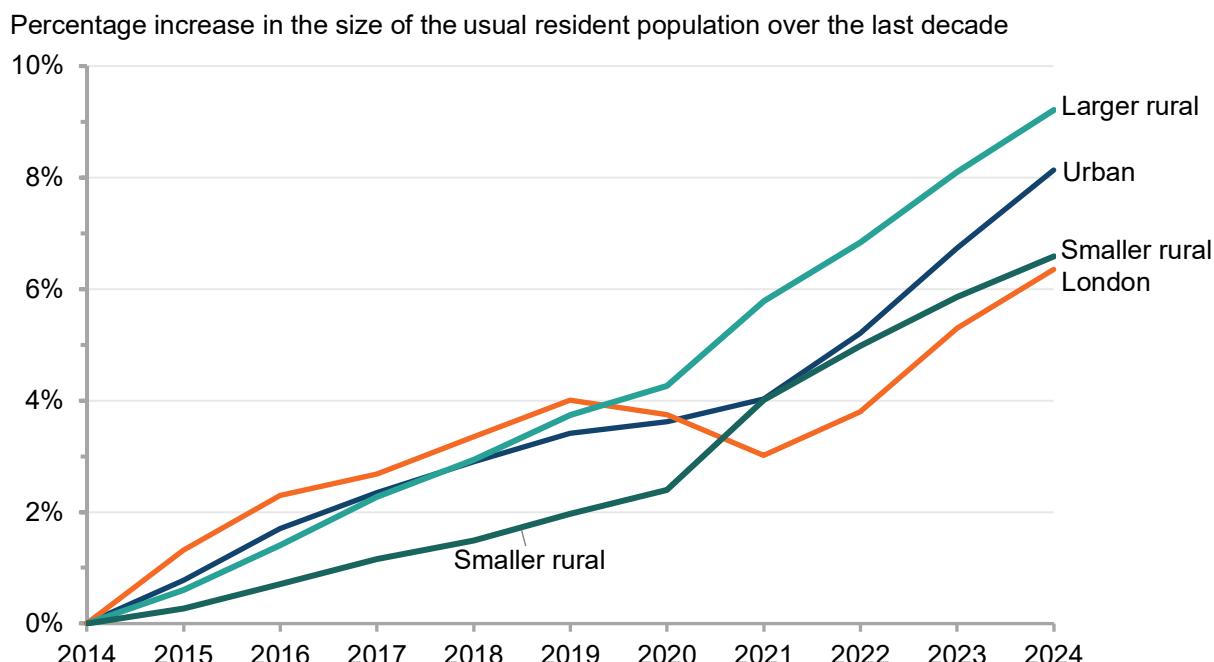
Table A-3 can be described as follows:

- 9.0 million people lived in rural settlements in mid-2014, of which 4.4 million lived in smaller rural settlements and 4.6 million lived in larger rural settlements. By mid-2019, the rural population had increased by 3%, up to 9.2 million. By mid-2024, the rural population increased by a further 5% (up to 9.7 million), resulting in an overall increase of 8%.
- Between mid-2014 and mid-2019, the population of smaller rural settlements increased by 2% (up to 4.5 million); for those in larger rural settlements, the population increased by 4% (up to 4.8 million), indicating a greater rate of population growth. Between mid-2019 and mid-2024, the populations living in both smaller rural and larger rural settlements increased by 5%, up to 4.6 million and 5.0 million respectively. Overall between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the populations living in smaller rural and larger rural settlements increased by 7% and 9%, respectively.
- 36.9 million people lived in urban areas outside of London in mid-2014. By mid-2019, the population living in these areas had increased by 3%, up to 38.1 million; this means that the rural population grew at a similar rate to the urban population outside of London between mid-2014 and mid-2019. By mid-2024, the population in urban areas outside of London had increased by a further 5% (up to 39.8 million), resulting in an overall increase of 8% since mid-2014. Overall the rural population saw a similar rate of growth to the urban population outside of London between mid-2019 and mid-2024.

The line chart in Figure A-1 shows the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of England, based on the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, from mid-2014 to mid-2024. Lines with higher gradients (i.e. “steeper” lines) indicate faster population growth.

Figure A-1: Line chart showing the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of England, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024

‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the population of the specified settlement type had increased by 1% since mid-2014.



Between mid-2014 and mid-2020, there were steady proportional increases in the size of each population (except for London, which steadily increased only to mid-2019). The population living in smaller rural settlements saw proportionally smaller increases than other settlement types, whilst the population living in London generally saw the greatest proportional increases. However, population growth in London was only slightly greater than in larger rural settlements across this period.

The populations living in larger rural settlements and in urban areas outside of London grew at a similar rate between mid-2014 and mid-2019. Between mid-2019 and mid-2021, the population in larger rural settlements saw a faster rate of growth than in urban areas. However, between mid-2021 and mid-2024, urban areas saw the fastest rate of growth. Population growth was affected between mid-2019 and mid-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the main effect was that the population living in London decreased, although it was still higher than in mid-2014. As a consequence, population growth increased in other settlement types.

Proximity to towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note A-5. Table A-4 shows the usual resident population of rural settlements in England, based on RUC21 LSOAs, at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024.

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 2014, 2019 and 2024 (Note A-5)
Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Proximity to a major town or city	2014	2019	2024
Further from	3,014,600	3,071,900	3,173,600
Nearer to	5,956,000	6,157,300	6,509,000
All rural settlements	8,970,600	9,229,100	9,682,600

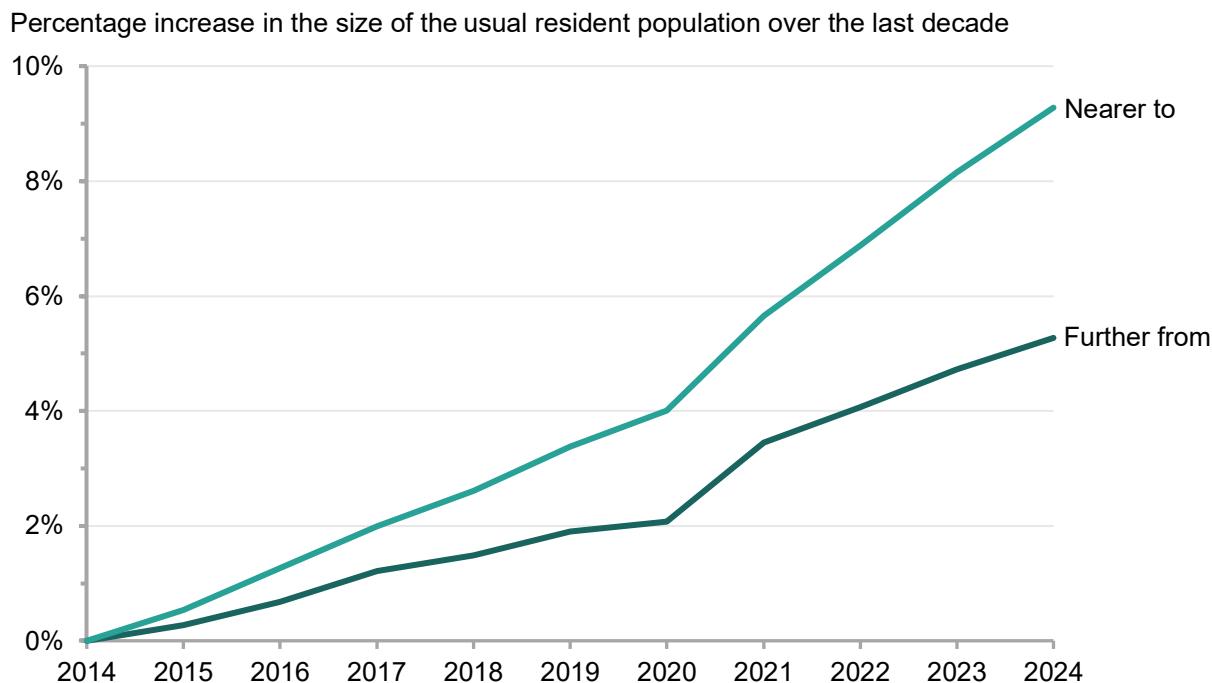
Table A-4, which shows the usual resident population of rural settlements (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024, can be described as follows:

- 3.0 million people lived in rural settlements that were further from a major town or city in mid-2014. By mid-2019, the population of rural settlements that were further from a major town or city had increased by 2%, up to around 3.1 million. By mid-2024, the population of rural settlements that were further from a major town or city had increased by a further 3% (up to 3.2 million), with an overall increase of 5% since mid-2014.
- 6.0 million people lived in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city in mid-2014. By mid-2019, the population of rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city had increased by 3%, up to 6.2 million. By mid-2024, the population of rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city had increased by an additional 6% (up to 6.5 million), with an overall increase of 9% since mid-2014.

The line chart in Figure A-2 shows the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of rural settlements in England, by proximity to a major town or city, from mid-2014 to mid-2024. Lines with higher gradients (i.e., “steeper” lines) indicate faster population growth.

Figure A-2: Line chart showing the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of rural settlements in England, by proximity to a major town or city, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024 (Note A-5)

‘Further from’ and ‘Nearer to’ refer to rural settlements that were further from/nearer to a major town or city, respectively. A value of 1% would indicate that the population of the specified authority type had increased by 1% since mid-2014.



Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the population living in rural settlements that are nearer to a major town or city grew at a faster rate than the population living in rural settlements that are further from a major or city. Between mid-2014 and mid-2020, the population in rural settlements that were further from major towns or cities increased by 2%; this compares to 4% in rural settlements that were nearer to major towns or cities, indicating population growth was twice as fast in these settlements. By mid-2024, the population in rural settlements that were further from major towns or cities had increased by 5% since mid-2014. In comparison, by mid-2024, the population in rural settlements that were nearer to major towns or cities had increased by 9% since mid-2014, indicating even greater population growth than in rural settlements that were further from major towns or cities.

Population age profile

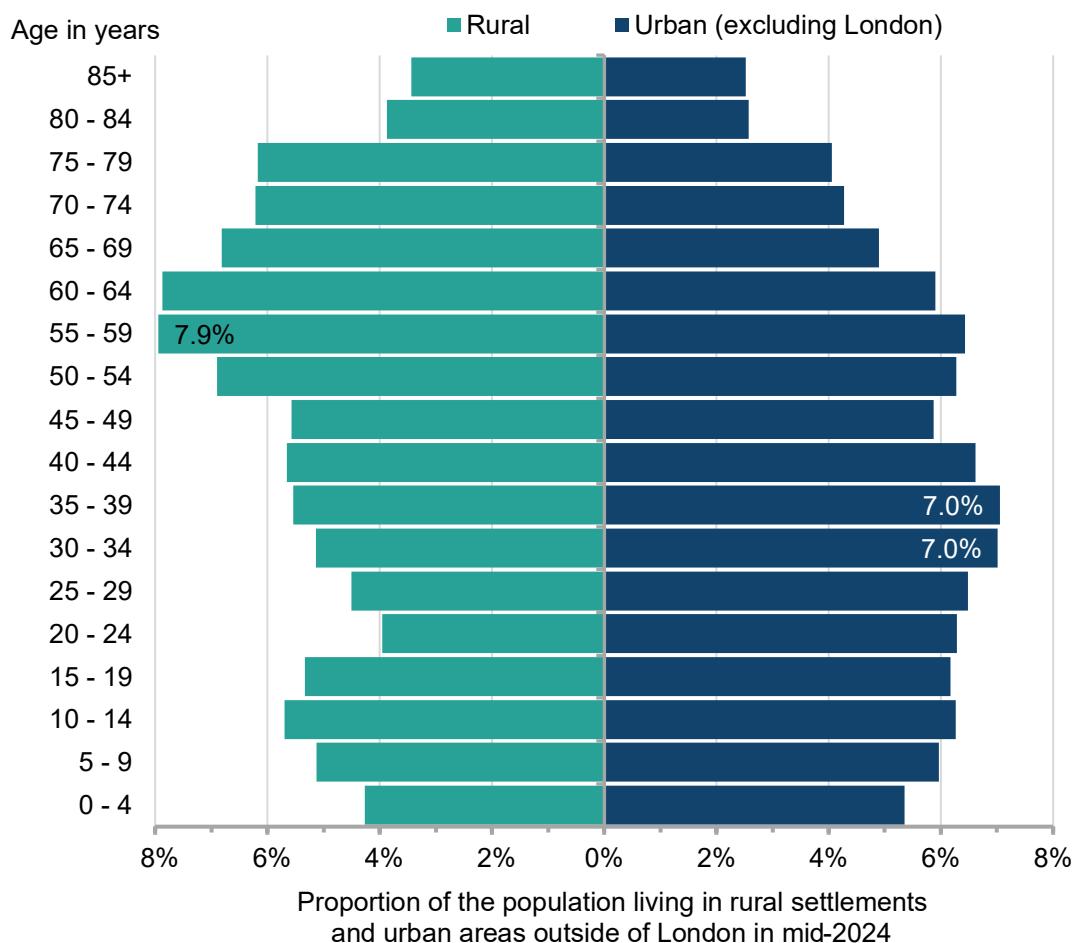
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year population estimates by five-year age band; this makes it possible to compare the distribution of ages between populations. Population estimates can also be found by single year of age, from which it is possible to calculate the average age of a population.

Population by age

Figure A-3 is a population pyramid showing the proportion of the rural and urban population outside of London 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 A-3 shows that the population in rural settlements had a higher proportion of older people compared with urban areas outside of London.

Figure A-3: Population pyramid showing the percentage of population within five-year age bands, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England, based on 2024 mid-year estimates

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



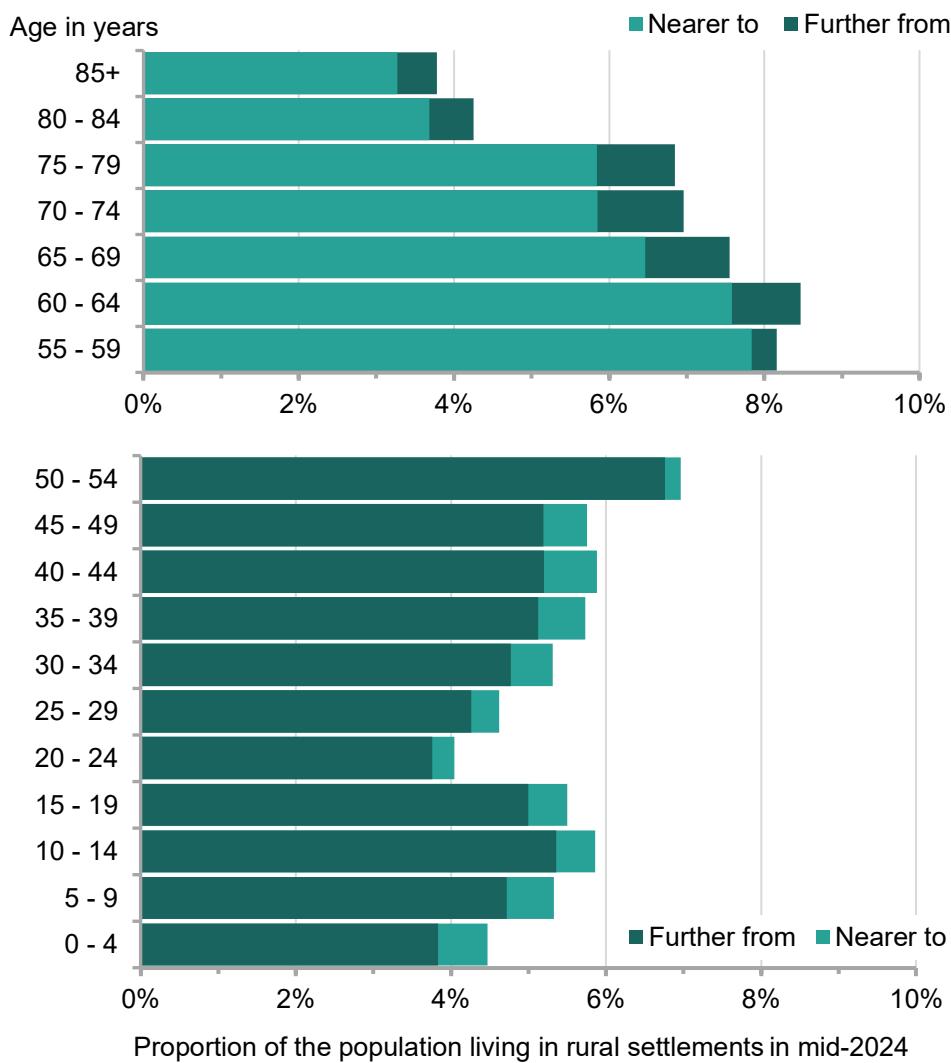
In mid-2024, the largest five-year age group for rural settlements was people aged 55 to 59, making up 7.9% of the population. For urban areas outside of London, the largest five-year age group was people aged 35 to 39 (closely followed by those aged 30 to 34). 3.4% of the rural population was aged 85 or above in mid-2024; this compares to 2.5% for urban areas outside of London. The five-year age group with the largest difference in the proportional share of each population was people aged 20 to 24; in rural settlements, this age group represented 4.0% of the population, compared to 6.3% in urban areas outside of London. When combining multiple age bands, the proportion of the population aged 0 to 49 years was smaller for rural settlements (51%) than for urban areas outside of London (63%). The proportion aged 50 and above was greater in rural areas, indicating an older population in rural areas compared to urban areas outside of London.

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note A-5. The bar charts in Figure A-4 show the difference in the proportions of the population within each five-year age band between rural settlements that are further from a major town or city, and those which are nearer to a major town or city.

Figure A-4: Bar charts showing 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, as defined within the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs, by five-year age band, based on 2024 mid-year estimates (Note A-5)

The legends are presented in the same order and orientation as the bars on each chart.

The top chart shows the proportion of people aged 55 and over, where the share is higher in rural settlements further from major towns or cities. The bottom chart shows the proportion of people aged under 55, where the share is higher in rural settlements nearer to major towns or cities.



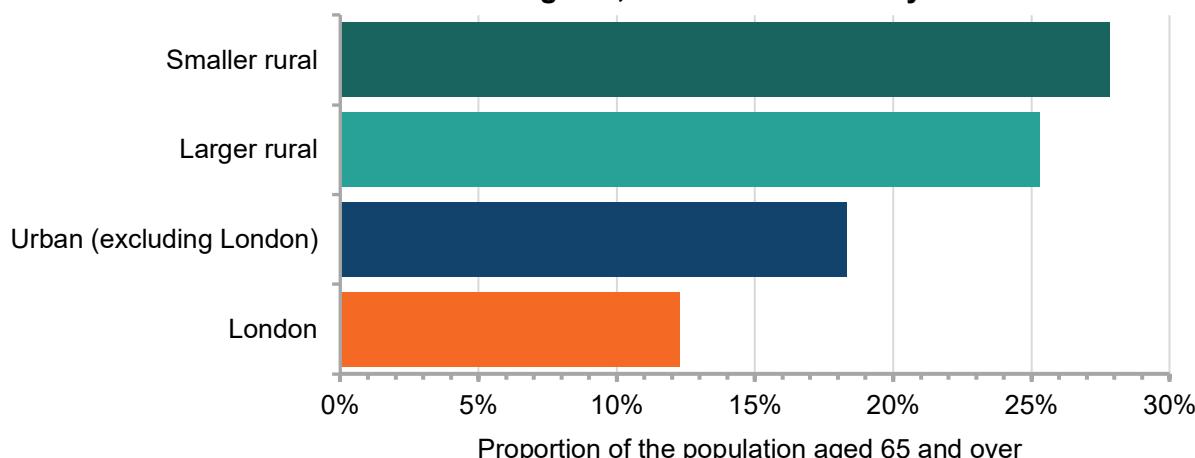
In mid-2024, the population aged 0 to 54 was proportionally larger in rural settlements that are nearer to a major town or city. For those aged 55 and over, the population was proportionally larger in rural settlements that are further from a major town or city. The greatest difference between populations was for people aged 70 to 74. In rural settlements that were further from a major town or city, this age group represented 7.0% of the population in mid-2024; this compares to 5.8% of the population in rural settlements that were nearer to a major town or city.

There were just under 11 million people aged 65 and above in England in mid-2024, of which nearly 2.6 million lived in rural settlements. 27% of the rural population were aged 65 and above. The bar chart in Figure A-5 shows the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, based on mid-2024 population estimates, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England.

In mid-2024, the more rural the settlement type, the greater the proportion of the population aged 65 and above. Smaller rural settlements had the largest share of their population being aged 65 and over (28%; equivalent to 1.3 million people) compared to other settlement types in England, whilst London had the smallest share (12%; equivalent to 1.1 million people).

In larger rural settlements, 25% of the population were aged 65 and over in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 1.3 million people. In urban areas outside of London, 18% of the population were aged 65 and over in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 7.3 million people.

Figure A-5: Bar chart showing the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England, based on 2024 mid-year estimates



Of the nearly 2.6 million people aged 65 and over in rural settlements, around 1.6 million lived in settlements that were nearer to a major town or city (representing 29% of the population in such settlements), and the remaining 0.9 million lived in settlements that were further from a major town or city (representing 25% of the population in such settlements). Whilst this is not shown in Figure A-5, the relevant data can be found in the [supplementary data tables](#).

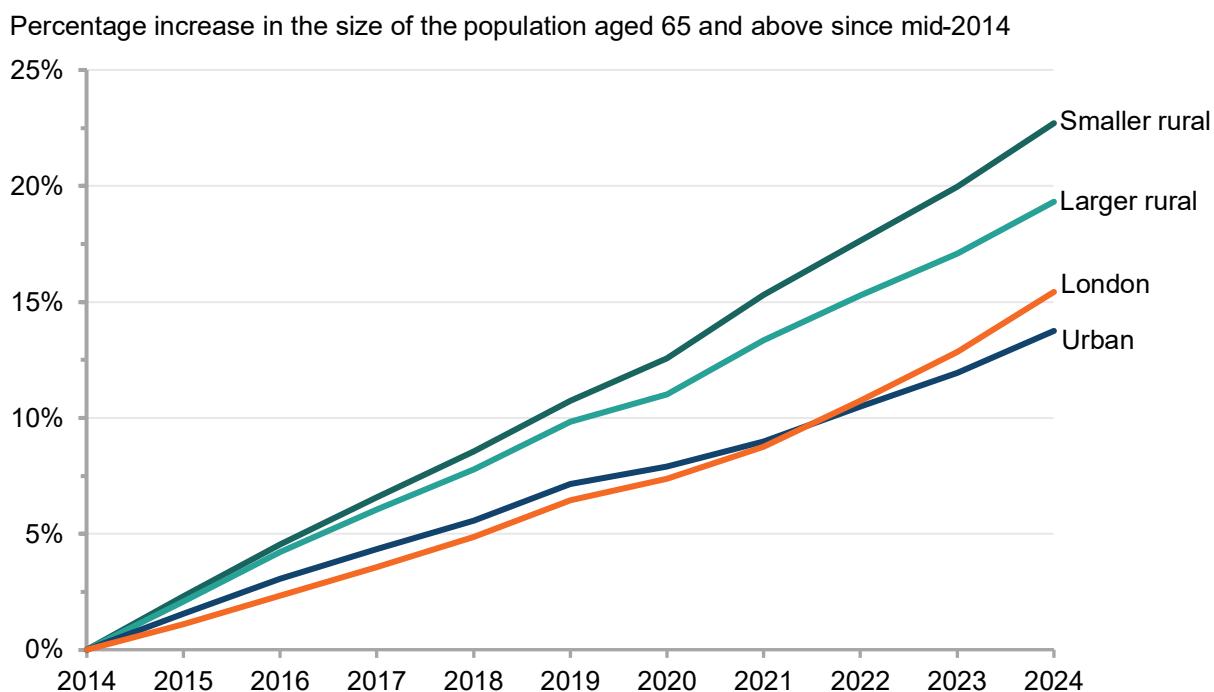
The proportion of the population aged 65 and over was consistently highest in smaller rural settlements between mid-2014 and mid-2024. For all settlement types, the population aged 65 and over has increased over time; this is shown in the line chart in Figure A-6. Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the percentage increase in the size of the population aged 65 and over in smaller rural settlements was greater than in larger rural settlements. The percentage increase was similar between urban areas outside of London, and London.

For smaller rural settlements, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased by 4 percentage points, from 24% in mid-2014 to 28% in mid-2024. For larger rural settlements, the proportion aged 65 and over increased by 2 percentage points, from 23% in mid-2014 to 25% in mid-2024. In absolute terms, the size of the population aged 65 and over in smaller rural settlements increased by 23% (from 1,054,000 to just under 1,293,000). In comparison, the size of the population aged 65 and over in larger rural settlements increased by 19% (from 1,067,000 to 1,273,000).

For urban areas both in and outside of London, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased by just 1 percentage point between mid-2014 and mid-2024. In absolute terms, the size of the population aged 65 and over in urban areas outside of London increased by 14% (from 6,417,000 to 7,299,000). In comparison, the size of the population aged 65 and over in London increased by 15% (from 966,000 to 1,115,000).

Figure A-6: Line chart showing the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population aged 65 and over, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England, based on mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024

‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the population aged 65 and over in the specified settlement type had increased by 1% since mid-2014.



Median age of the population

The average age of the population is affected by birth rate, [mortality rate](#), and [migration](#). The median is used as an average instead of the mean as the median is less affected by very young or very old ages, giving a better indication of the ‘typical’ age. Table A-5 shows the median age of the population at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024, by 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs.

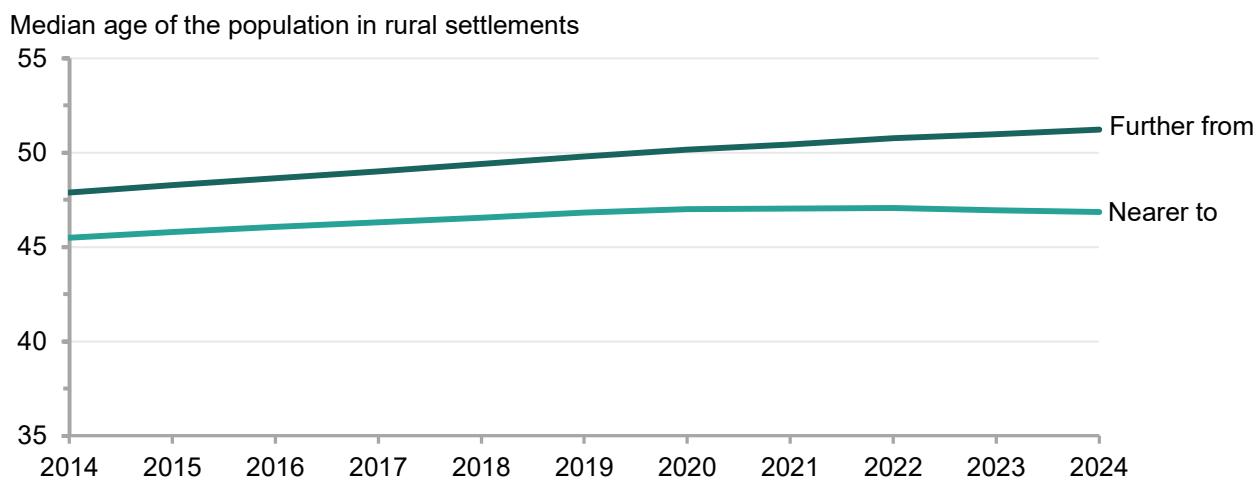
In mid-2024, the median age for smaller rural settlements was higher than in any other settlement type in England, at 50.5 years. In comparison, the median age in London was the lowest, at 34.7 years; this is 15.9 years lower than for smaller rural settlements. In mid-2014, the median age for smaller rural settlements was 47.6 years; this means that between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the median age increased by 3.0 years - the largest increase of all settlement types. The smallest increase was for urban areas outside of London, where there was little or no change between mid-2014 and mid-2024 in median age.

Table A-5: Median age, based on mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of LSOAs in England at 2014, 2019 and 2024 (Note A-1)

Data are rounded to the nearest 0.1 years.

Rural-urban classification 2021	2014	2019	2024
Smaller rural	47.6	49.4	50.5
Larger rural	45.0	46.1	46.0
Urban (excluding London)	38.4	38.6	38.6
London	33.4	34.4	34.7
England	38.9	39.2	39.3

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note A-5. The line chart in Figure A-7 shows the change in the median age of the population living for rural settlements between mid-2014 and mid-2024, by proximity to a major town or city.

Figure A-7: Line chart showing the change in the median age of the population living in rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024

Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the median age for rural settlements that were further from major towns or cities was higher than for rural settlements that were nearer to major towns or cities; however, in recent years, the gap between the median ages has been widening.

In mid-2014, the median age for rural settlements that were nearer to major towns or cities was 45.5 years; by mid-2021, this peaked at 47.1 years but then fell to 46.9 years in mid-2024. For rural settlements that were further from major towns or cities, the median age was 47.9 years in mid-2014, and peaked at 51.2 years in mid-2024.

Population: Small areas-based - 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: Constituency-based

In mid-2024, 11% of England's population lived in majority rural constituencies.

Key findings – Population: Constituency-based

Nearly 12 million people live in majority rural or intermediate rural constituencies

- In mid-2024, 6.7 million people lived in majority rural constituencies in England, equivalent to 11% of the population.
- In mid-2024, 5.3 million people lived in intermediate rural constituencies in England, equivalent to 9% of the population.

Summary

Population figures are available as annual mid-year estimates for a range of geographies, including Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies which are covered in this section.

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in mid-2024, of which 12.0 million people (20%) lived in majority rural or intermediate rural Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies. 6.7 million people lived in majority rural constituencies and 5.3 million people lived in intermediate rural constituencies.

Population level

Annual mid-year population estimates are published for a range of geographies and this report includes analysis using estimates for Lower-layer Super Output Areas in [Section A](#); Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies as of July 2024 in Section B (this section); and Local Authorities in [Section C](#).

Whilst Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies are not typical statistical geographies, they can be used as such due to their approximately equal size; since 2024, constituencies each have an electorate of around 73,000 registered voters. See Note B-1 for more detail regarding the use of constituency-level data. For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note B-3.

Mid-year population 2024

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in 2024, based on ONS mid-year estimates. Of this, 12.0 million people (20% of the population) lived in majority rural or intermediate rural Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies. The distribution of the population by 2021 rural-urban classification (RUC21) is shown in Table B-1.

Table B-1: Proportion of the population in each type of constituency, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England (Note B-1)

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

Rural-urban classification 2021	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority rural	6,659,100	11.4
Intermediate rural	5,335,900	9.1
Intermediate urban	6,971,200	11.9
Urban (excluding London)	30,564,200	52.1
London	9,089,700	15.5
England	58,620,100	100.0

12.0 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural constituencies in mid-2024; this consisted of 6.7 million people living in majority rural constituencies (11% of the population), and 5.3 million people living in intermediate rural constituencies (9% of the population).

7.0 million people (12% of the population) lived in intermediate urban constituencies in mid-2024. 39.7 million people lived in urban constituencies in mid-2024; this consisted of 30.6 million people living in urban constituencies outside of London (52% of the population), and 9.1 million people in London (16% of the population).

Constituency types specified within RUC21 provide information regarding the populations' 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).

Table B-2: Proportion of the population within majority rural constituencies by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England (Note B-1, Note B-5)

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	2,529,900	38.0	4.3
Majority nearer to	4,129,100	62.0	7.0
All majority rural	6,659,100	100.0	11.4

Table B-2 shows the proportion of the population within majority rural constituencies (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city, as at mid-2024. It can be described as follows:

- 6.7 million people lived in majority rural constituencies in mid-2024.
- Of this, there were 2.5 million people who lived in constituencies where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city; this is equivalent to 38% of the majority rural population and 4% of the total population of England.
- There were 4.1 million people who lived in majority rural constituencies where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 62% of the majority rural population and 7% of the total population of England.

Population: Constituency-based - explanatory notes

• Note B-1

Often statistics are compiled at Westminster Parliamentary Constituency-level, in which case the rural-urban classification for constituencies is used. This is different from looking at the population using the more detailed rural-urban classification as it is based on whole constituencies. The whole population in a constituency will be attributed to the class assigned to the constituency. So, a constituency 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 constituency, while all those living in a rural area but within a constituency classed as urban or intermediate urban will not be counted in the majority or intermediate rural figure. Analysis using constituencies may under-estimate the rural population.

• Note B-2

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

• Note B-3

Sources: [Parliamentary Constituency population estimates - Office for National Statistics](#) and [NOMIS](#).

• Note B-4

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-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](#)

• Note B-6

Westminster parliamentary constituencies (as of July 2024) that are 'in London' can be defined in two different ways: 1) just constituencies in 'Inner London', or 2) constituencies in both 'Inner London' and 'Outer London'. For the purposes of this publication, constituencies 'in London' refers to only those in 'Inner London'. This is all 'London-area' constituencies, minus those in the 'Outer London-area', as given in the [IPSA guidance from the 5 July 2024 General Election](#). Included 'London' constituencies are listed within the [supplementary data tables](#).

C. Population: Local Authority-based

In mid-2024, 10% of England's population lived in majority rural authorities. Over a quarter (26%) of residents of majority rural authorities were aged 65 and above.

Key findings – Population: Local Authority-based

More than 13 million people live in majority rural or intermediate rural authorities

- In mid-2024, 6.0 million people lived in majority rural authorities in England, equivalent to 10% of the population.
- In mid-2024, 7.2 million people lived in intermediate rural authorities in England, equivalent to 12% of the population.

The more rural the authority, the higher the average age

- In mid-2024, the median age for majority rural authorities was 47 years. In comparison, for urban authorities outside of London, it was 38 years – 9 years lower than for majority rural authorities.

Majority rural authorities projected to see largest population growth

- Between mid-2022 and mid-2032, the population living in majority rural authorities is projected to increase by 9%, from 5.9 million to 6.4 million people.
- In comparison, in urban authorities outside of London, the population is projected to increase by 5% between mid-2022 and mid-2032, from 28.4 million to 30.0 million.

Summary

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in mid-2024, of which just under 6.0 million people (10%) lived in majority rural authorities. Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the population in majority rural authorities increased by 9%; this was slightly higher than in urban authorities outside of London, where the population increased by 8%. In absolute terms, the population in majority rural authorities increased from 5.5 million to 6.0 million, whilst the urban population outside of London increased from 27.2 million to 29.3 million. For majority rural authorities, the size of the population increased more rapidly in authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to major towns or cities and between mid-2022 and mid-2032, the population living in majority rural authorities is projected to increase by 9%, up to 6.4 million; this is the largest projected growth of all authority types in England.

Nearly 1.5 million people living in majority rural authorities in mid-2024 were aged 65 and above, equivalent to 26% of the population in such authorities. In comparison, 17% of the population living in urban authorities outside of London in mid-2024 were aged 65 and above. The more rural the authority type, the higher the median age; for majority rural authorities, the median age in mid-2024 was 46.9 years (up from 45.2 years in mid-2014). In comparison, in urban authorities outside of London, the median age in mid-2024 was 37.7 years (with little or no change since in mid-2014).

Population level and change

Annual mid-year population estimates are published for a range of geographies and this report includes analysis using estimates for Lower-layer Super Output Areas in [Section A](#); Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in [Section B](#); and Local Authorities in Section C (this section).

Local authorities are not standardised statistical geographies because their population and household sizes vary considerably. They are, however, widely used in official statistics and planning, as many datasets are collected at this level and they align with administrative responsibilities for service delivery. See Note B-1 for more detail regarding the use of Local Authority data. For more information regarding the mid-year estimates, please see the original publication as referenced in Note C-3.

Mid-year population 2024

58.6 million people were usual residents of England in 2024, based on ONS mid-year estimates. Of this, 13.2 million people (22% of the population) lived in majority rural or intermediate rural local authorities. The distribution of the population by rural-urban classification is shown in Table C-1.

Table C-1: Proportion of the population in each type of authority, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for local authorities in England (Note C-1)
Population has been rounded to the nearest 100 persons, and proportions to the nearest 0.1%.

Rural-urban classification 2021	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority rural	5,984,300	10.2
Intermediate rural	7,180,900	12.2
Intermediate urban	7,106,400	12.1
Urban (excluding London)	29,258,800	49.9
London	9,089,700	15.5
England	58,620,100	100.0

13.2 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural authorities in mid-2024; this consisted of 6.0 million people living in majority rural authorities (10% of the England population), and 7.2 million people living in intermediate rural authorities (12% of the England population).

7.1 million people (12% of the England population) lived in intermediate urban authorities in mid-2024. 38.3 million people lived in urban authorities in mid-2024; this consisted of 29.3 million people living in urban authorities outside of London (50% of the England population), and 9.1 million people in London (16% of the England population).

Authority types specified within 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. 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). Table C-2 shows the proportion of the population within majority rural local authorities (RUC21) based on the majority's proximity to a major town or city, as at mid-2024.

It can be described as follows:

- 6.0 million people lived in majority rural local authorities in mid-2024.
- 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 3.8 million people who lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 63% of the majority rural population and 6% of the total population of England.

Table C-2: Proportion of the population within majority rural authorities by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, based on 2024 mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification for local authorities in England (Note C-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	2,228,300	37.2	3.8
Majority nearer to	3,756,000	62.8	6.4
All majority rural	5,984,300	100.0	10.2

Population change

Table C-3 shows mid-year estimates of the usual resident population of local authorities in England, by RUC21, for 2014, 2019 and 2024. RUC21 has been retrospectively applied to population estimates for 2014 and 2019 so that changes not as a result of changes in the classification of settlements or authorities but changes in population.

Table C-3 can be described as follows:

- 5.5 million people lived in majority rural authorities in mid-2014. By mid-2019, the population living in these authorities had increased by 3%, up to 5.7 million. By mid-2024, the population in majority rural authorities had increased by a further 5% (up to 6.0 million), resulting in an overall increase of 9% since mid-2014.
- 27.2 million people lived in urban authorities outside of London in mid-2014. By mid-2019, the population living in these authorities had increased by 3%, up to 28.0 million; this means that the majority rural population grew at a similar rate to the urban population outside of London between mid-2014 and mid-2019. By mid-2024, the population in urban authorities outside of London had increased by a further 4% (up to 29.3 million), resulting in an overall increase of 8% since mid-2014; this means that the population in majority rural authorities saw a greater proportional increase than the urban population outside of London between mid-2019 and mid-2024.

Table C-3: Usual resident population, based on mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England at 2014, 2019 and 2024 (Note C-1)

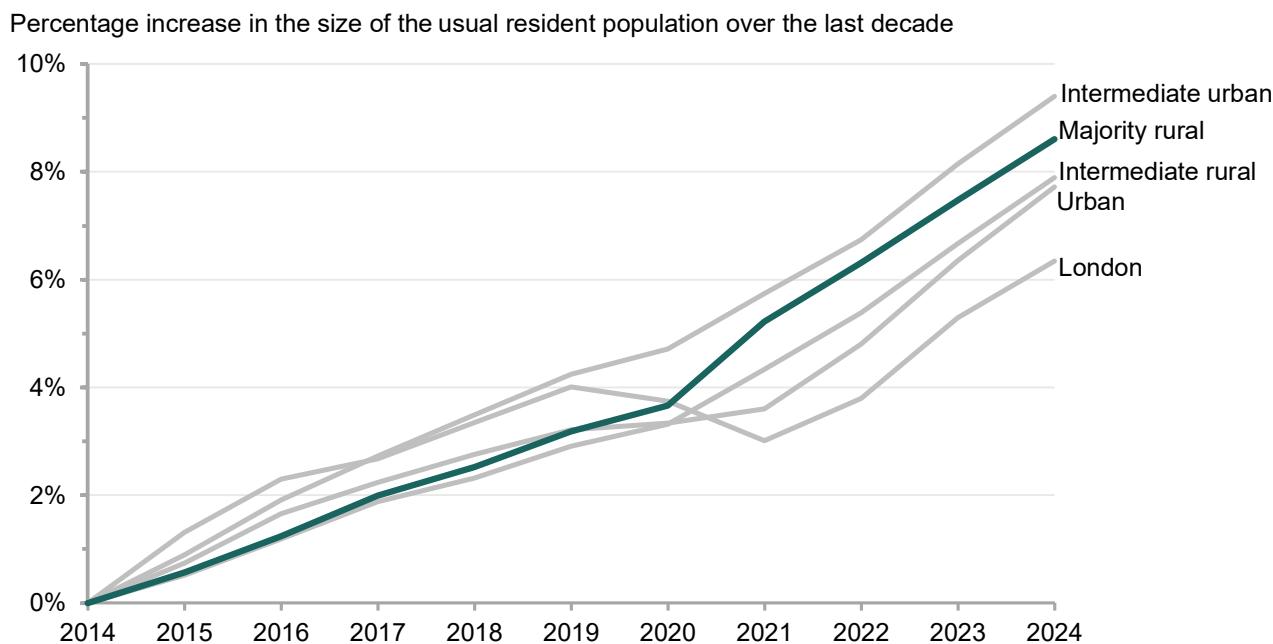
Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Rural-urban classification 2021	2014	2019	2024
Majority rural	5,510,200	5,685,800	5,984,300
Intermediate rural	6,655,500	6,849,400	7,180,900
Intermediate urban	6,495,600	6,771,200	7,106,400
Urban (excluding London)	27,161,900	28,033,900	29,258,800
London	8,547,200	8,889,700	9,089,700
England	54,370,300	56,230,100	58,620,100

The line chart in Figure C-1 shows the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of England, based on the 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities, from mid-2014 to mid-2024. Lines with higher gradients (i.e., “steeper” lines) indicate faster population growth.

Figure C-1: Line chart showing the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population of England, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024

‘Majority rural’ is the only coloured line to draw focus. ‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the population of the specified authority type had increased by 1% since mid-2014.



Between mid-2014 and mid-2020, population growth in majority rural authorities was consistent. This population saw proportionally smaller increases than in London and in intermediate urban authorities between mid-2014 and mid-2020, although growth in majority rural authorities was similar to intermediate rural authorities and urban authorities outside of London.

Population growth was affected between mid-2019 and mid-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the population living in majority rural authorities increased, which was likely due to migration from other authority types.

Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, the population living in majority rural authorities grew faster than most other authority types, except for urban authorities, where the population grew slightly more rapidly.

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note C-5. Table C-4 shows the change in the usual resident population of majority rural authorities in England at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024.

Table C-4: Usual resident population, based on mid-year estimates and proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population living in majority rural local authorities in England at 2014, 2019 and 2024 (Note C-1)

Data are rounded to the nearest 100 people.

Proximity to a major town or city	2014	2019	2024
Majority further from	2,099,900	2,148,800	2,228,300
Majority nearer to	3,410,200	3,537,000	3,756,000
Majority rural	5,510,200	5,685,800	5,984,300

Table C-4, which shows the usual resident population of majority rural authorities in England by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024, can be described as follows:

- In mid-2014, 2.1 million people lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city. By mid-2019, the population living in these authorities had increased by 2%. By mid-2024, the population in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from a major town or city had increased by a further 4% (up to 2.2 million), resulting in an overall increase of 6% since mid-2014.
- In mid-2014, 3.4 million people lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city. By mid-2019, the population living in these authorities had increased by 4%, up to 3.5 million. By mid-2024, the population in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to a major town or city had increased by a further 6% (up to 3.8 million), resulting in an overall increase of 10% since mid-2014. This indicates that within majority rural authorities, the population living nearer to major towns or cities has grown faster than the population living further away.

Population projections

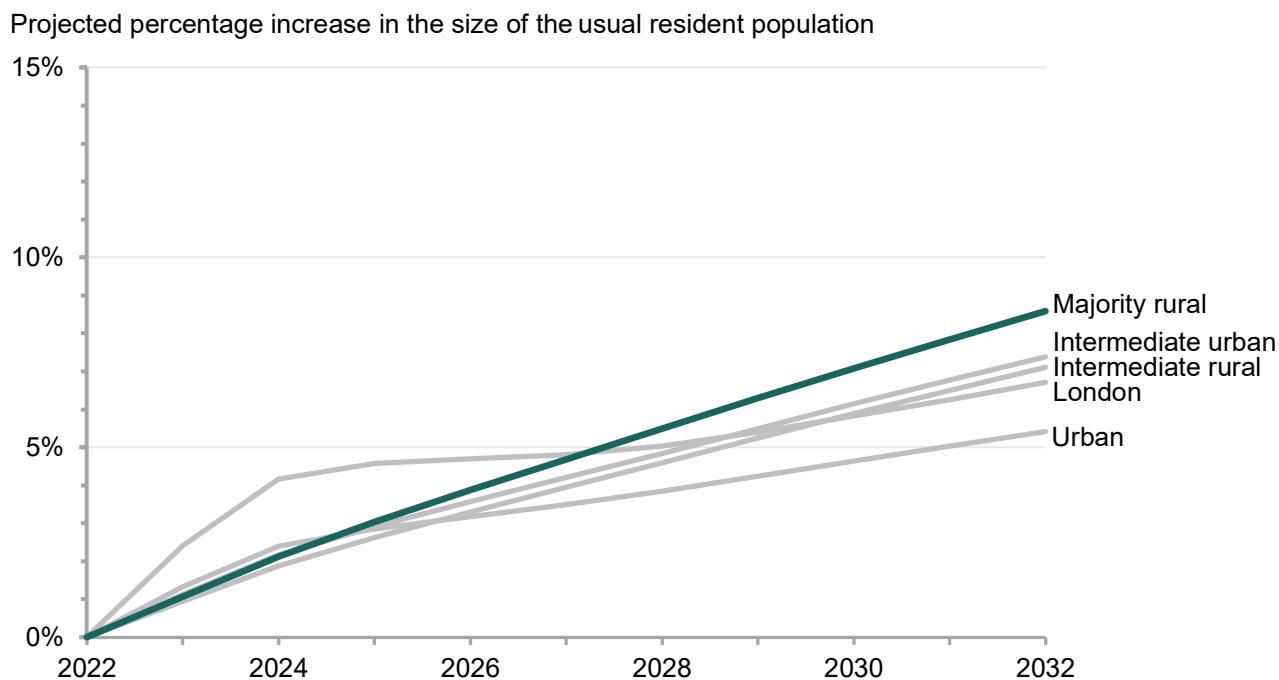
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish [population projections](#) for England, the latest of which are 2022-based. This report explores the subnational population projections based on the 2022 data up to 2032, although projections extend to 2047; however, uncertainty grows the further one projects into the future, and so a 10-year projection limit has been chosen for this publication.

The ONS issue the following warning regarding the use of population projections:

“Subnational population projections are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict potential changes in international migration. There is uncertainty over future directions and levels of international migration. At the local level, population change is influenced by economic development and housing policies, factors that are not included in these projections.”

Figure C-2: Line chart showing the projected percentage increase in the population, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities, based on mid-year estimates, 2022 to 2032

‘Majority rural’ is the only coloured line to draw focus. ‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the population of the specified authority type is projected to increase by 1% from mid-2022.



The line chart in Figure C-2 highlights the projected percentage increase in the population between mid-2022 and mid-2032 by 2021 rural-urban classification. Between mid-2022 and mid-2032, the population living in majority rural authorities is expected to grow faster than all other authority types. In mid-2022, 5.9 million people lived in majority rural authorities; by mid-2032, this is projected to have increased by 9% to 6.4 million people. However, population growth in majority rural authorities was not consistently projected to be greater than other authority types; between mid-2022 and mid-2027, the population living in majority rural authorities is projected to grow at a slower rate than in London.

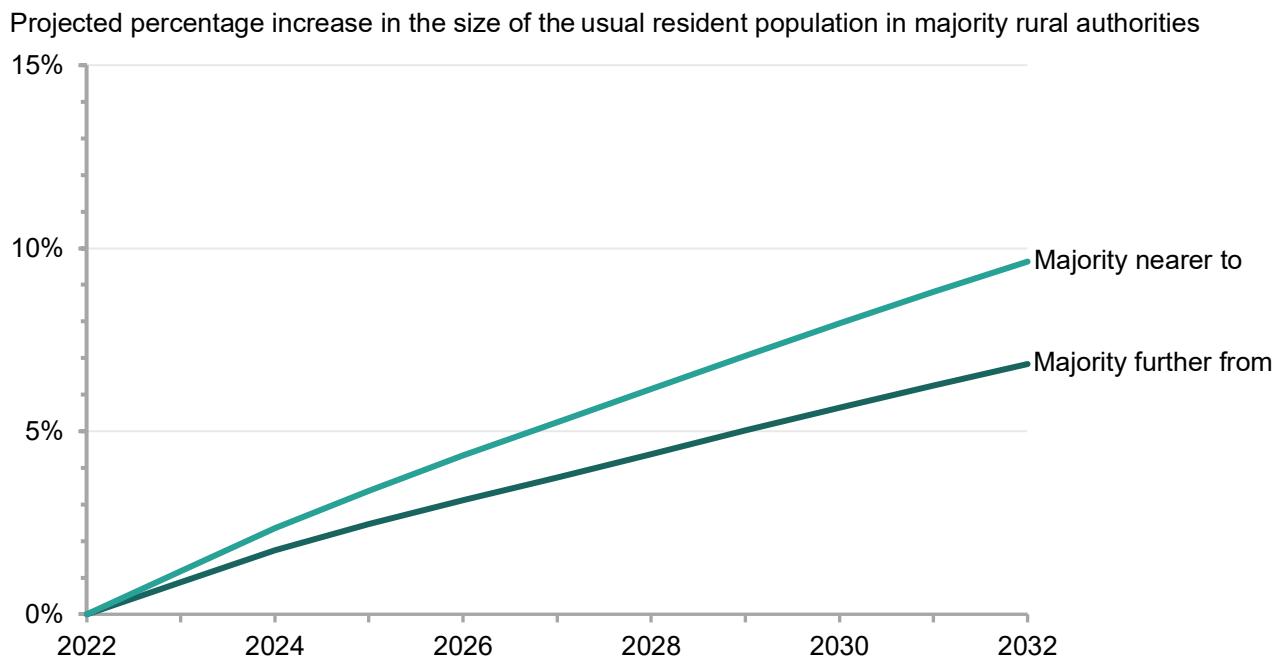
Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note C-5. The line chart in Figure C-3 highlights the projected percentage increase in the number of people living in majority rural authorities in England between mid-2022 and mid-2032, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population.

In majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to major towns or cities, the population is projected to increase by nearly 10% in the 10 years to 2032, from 3,663,000 to 4,016,000 people. In comparison, in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population

live further from major towns or cities, the population is projected to see a smaller rate of growth, increasing by around 7% (from 2,195,000 to 2,345,000 people).

Figure C-3: Line chart showing the projected percentage increase in the size of the population of majority rural authorities in England, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, based on mid-year estimates, 2022 to 2032

A value of 1% would indicate that the number of households in the specified authority type is projected to increase by 1% from mid-2022.



Population age profile

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year population estimates by five-year age band; this makes it possible to compare the distribution of ages between populations.

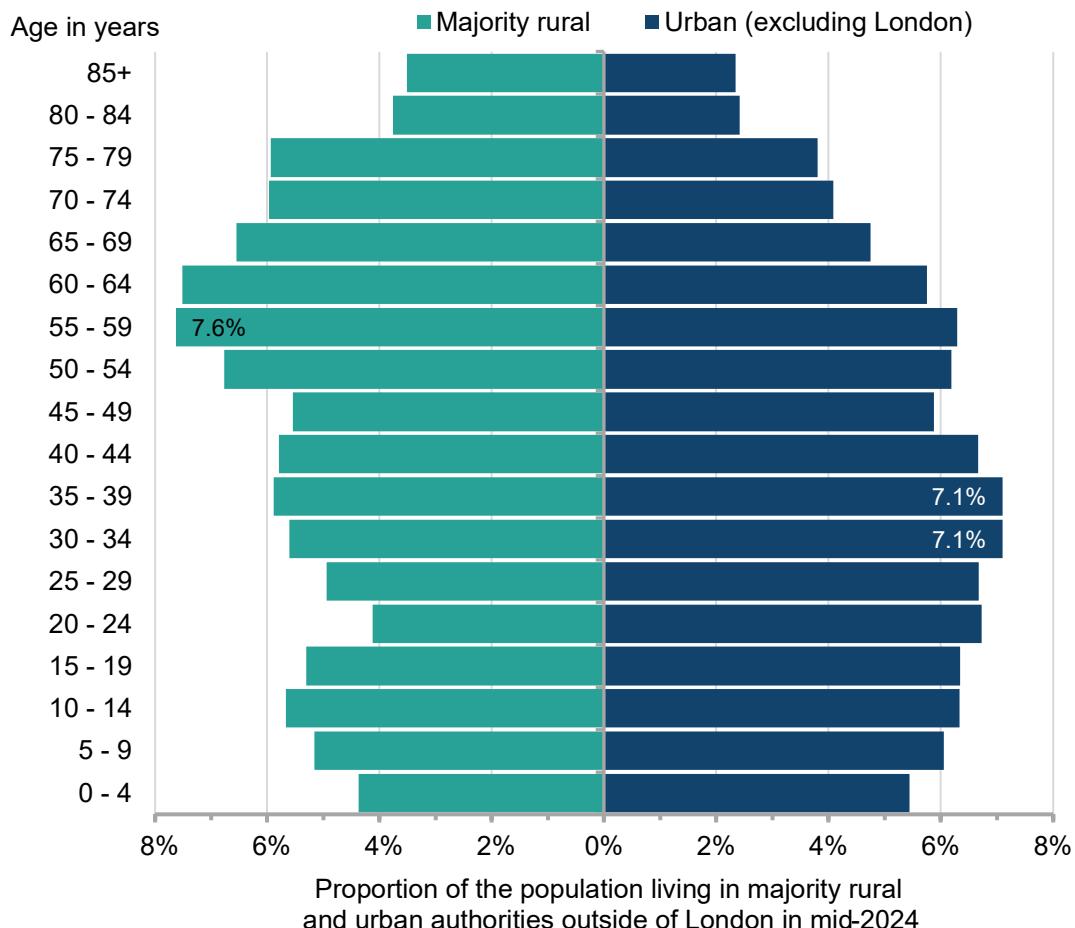
Population estimates can also be found by single year of age, from which it is possible to calculate the average age of a population.

Population by age

Figure C-4 is a population pyramid showing the proportion of the population living in majority rural and urban authorities outside of London within each five-year age band. It is structured as a bar chart with a central vertical axis and majority rural data to the left of this central axis and urban data to the right. Overall, Figure C-5 shows that the population in majority rural authorities had a higher proportion of older people compared with urban areas.

Figure C-4: Population pyramid showing the percentage of population within five-year age bands, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England, based on 2024 mid-year estimates

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



In mid-2024, the largest five-year age group for majority rural authorities was people aged 55 to 59, making up 7.6% of the population. For urban authorities outside of London, the largest five-year age group was people aged 30 to 34 (closely followed by those aged 35 to 39).

The smallest age group in both authority types was people aged 85 and over. 3.5% of the population living in majority rural authorities were aged 85 or above in mid-2024; this compares to 2.3% in urban authorities outside of London.

The five-year age group with the largest difference in proportional share of each population was people aged 20 to 24; in majority rural authorities, this age group represented 4.1% of the population, compared to 6.7% in urban authorities outside of London.

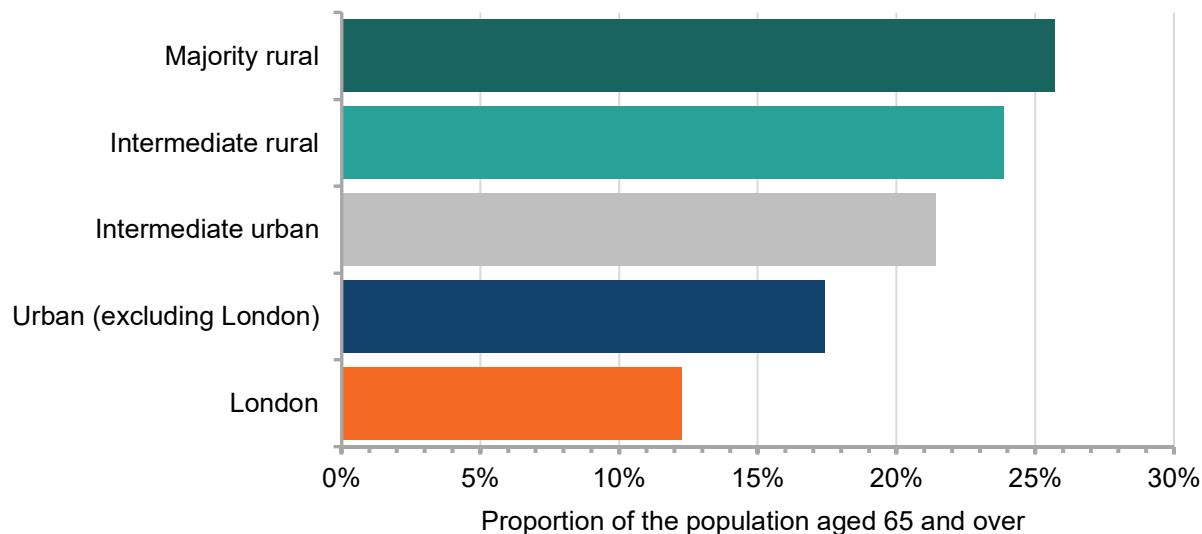
When combining multiple age bands, proportionally fewer people were aged 0 to 49 years in majority rural authorities (52%) than in urban authorities outside of London (64%). Therefore, the proportion of the population aged 50 and above was greater in majority rural authorities, indicating an older population in these authorities compared to urban authorities outside of London.

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note C-5. In mid-2024, proportionally

more people were aged between 60 to 79 years in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived further from major towns or cities, compared to where the majority lived within a 30-minute drive of these built-up areas. Conversely, proportionally more people were aged between 40 and 49 years in authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to major towns or cities. All other age groups saw similar population shares between majority rural authorities where the majority of the population lived nearer to major towns or cities, and those where the majority lived further away. A complete table showing the proportional population share of each five-year age band can be found within the [supplementary data tables](#).

There were just under 11 million people aged 65 and above in England in mid-2024, of which 1.5 million lived in majority rural authorities. 26% of the population living in majority rural authorities were aged 65 and above. The bar chart in Figure C-5 shows the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, based on the mid-2024 population estimates, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England.

Figure C-5: Bar chart showing the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England, based on 2024 mid-year estimates



In mid-2024, the more rural the authority type, the greater the proportion of the population aged 65 and above. Majority rural authorities had the largest share of their population being aged 65 and over (26%) compared to other authority types in England, whilst London had the smallest share (12%; equivalent to 1.1 million people).

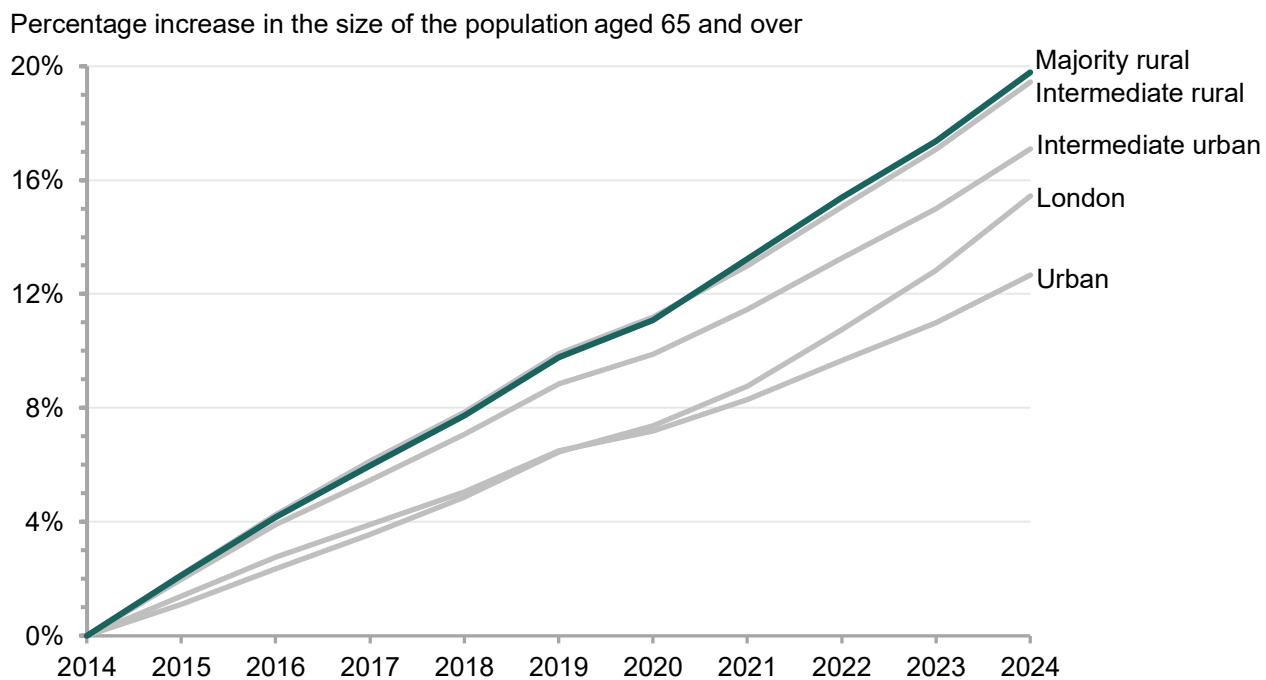
In intermediate rural authorities, 24% of the population were aged 65 and over in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 1.7 million people. In intermediate urban authorities, 21% of the population were aged 65 and over in mid-2024; this is equivalent to 1.5 million people. In urban authorities outside of London, 17% of the population were aged 65 and over; this is equivalent to 5.1 million people.

Of the 1.5 million people aged 65 and over in majority rural authorities, 0.9 million lived in authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city, and the remaining 0.6 million people lived in authorities where the majority live further away. This means that the proportion of the population aged 65 and over in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city was similar to authorities where the majority live nearer to a major town or city, at 26% and 25% respectively. Whilst this is not shown in Figure C-5, the relevant data can be found in the [supplementary data tables](#).

The more rural the authority, the higher the proportion of the population aged 65 and over in the 10 years to mid-2024. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over was consistently highest in majority rural authorities between mid-2014 and mid-2024. In all authority types, the population aged 65 and over has increased over time, although this has typically been greatest in majority rural authorities; this is shown in the line chart in Figure C-6.

Figure C-6: Line chart showing the percentage increase in the size of the usual resident population aged 65 and above, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024

‘Majority rural’ is the only coloured line to draw focus. ‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the population aged 65 and over in the specified authority type had increased by 1% since mid-2014.



Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the population aged 65 and over living in majority rural authorities saw the fastest rate of growth of all authority types, although growth in intermediate rural authorities was similar. In majority rural authorities, the proportion of the population aged 65 and overall increased from 23% in mid-2014 to 26% in mid-2024; in absolute terms, the number of people aged 65 and over in majority rural authorities increased by around 20%, from around 1.3 million to more than 1.5 million.

Median age of the population

The average age of the population is affected by birth rate, [mortality rate](#), and [migration](#). The median is used as an average instead of the mean as the median is less affected by very young or very old ages, giving a better indication of the ‘typical’ age. Table C-5 shows the median age of the population at mid-2014, mid-2019, and mid-2024, by rural-urban classification of local authorities.

In mid-2024, the median age for majority rural authorities was higher than for other authority types in England, at 46.9 years. In comparison, the median age for London was the lowest, at 34.7 years; this is 12.2 years lower than for majority rural authorities.

In mid-2014, the median age for majority rural authorities was 45.2 years; this means that between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the median age increased by 1.7 years. This was the greatest increase of all authority types. The smallest difference was for urban authorities outside of London, where there was little or no change between mid-2014 and mid-2024.

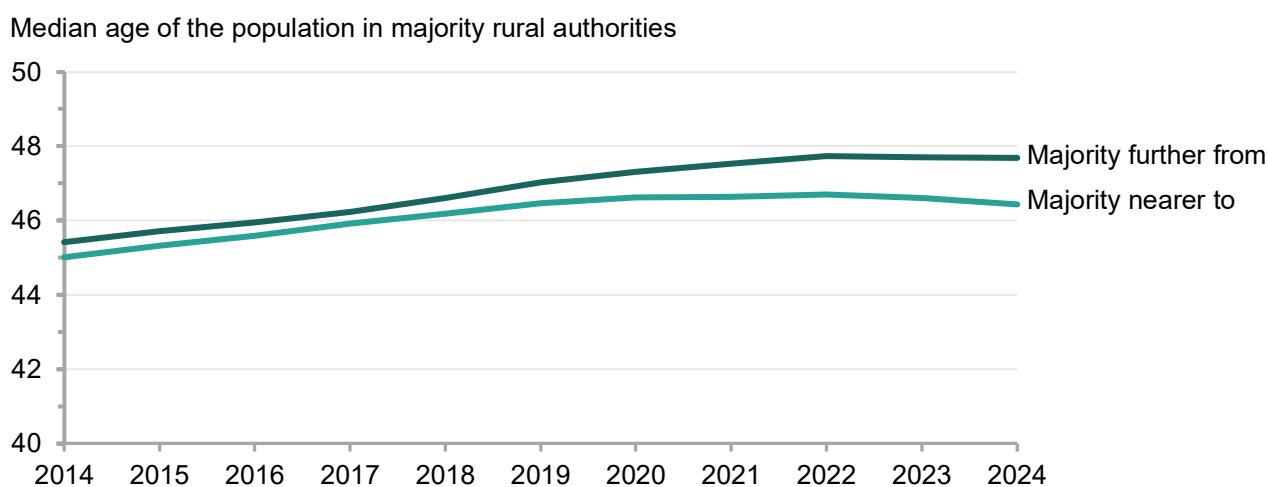
Table C-5: Median age, based on mid-year estimates and the 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England at 2014, 2019 and 2024 (Note C-1)

Data are rounded to the nearest 0.1 years.

Rural-urban classification 2021	2014	2019	2024
Majority rural	45.2	46.7	46.9
Intermediate rural	43.6	44.9	44.6
Intermediate urban	42.0	42.4	42.2
Urban (excluding London)	37.6	37.8	37.7
London	33.4	34.4	34.7
England	38.8	39.1	39.2

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note C-5. The line chart in Figure C-7 shows the change in the median age of the population living in majority rural authorities between mid-2014 and mid-2024, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population.

Figure C-7: Line chart showing the change in the median age of the population living in majority rural authorities, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, mid-year estimates, 2014 to 2024



Between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the median age in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city has been higher than authorities where the majority live nearer to a major town or city, and in recent years, the gap between the median ages has been widening. In mid-2014, the median age in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to a major town or city was 45.0 years; by mid-2022, this peaked at 46.7 years, but then fell to 46.4 years in mid-2024. In majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from a major town or city, the median age was 45.4 years in mid-2014, and peaked at 47.7 years in mid-2022. Following this, the median age saw little or no change.

Household projections

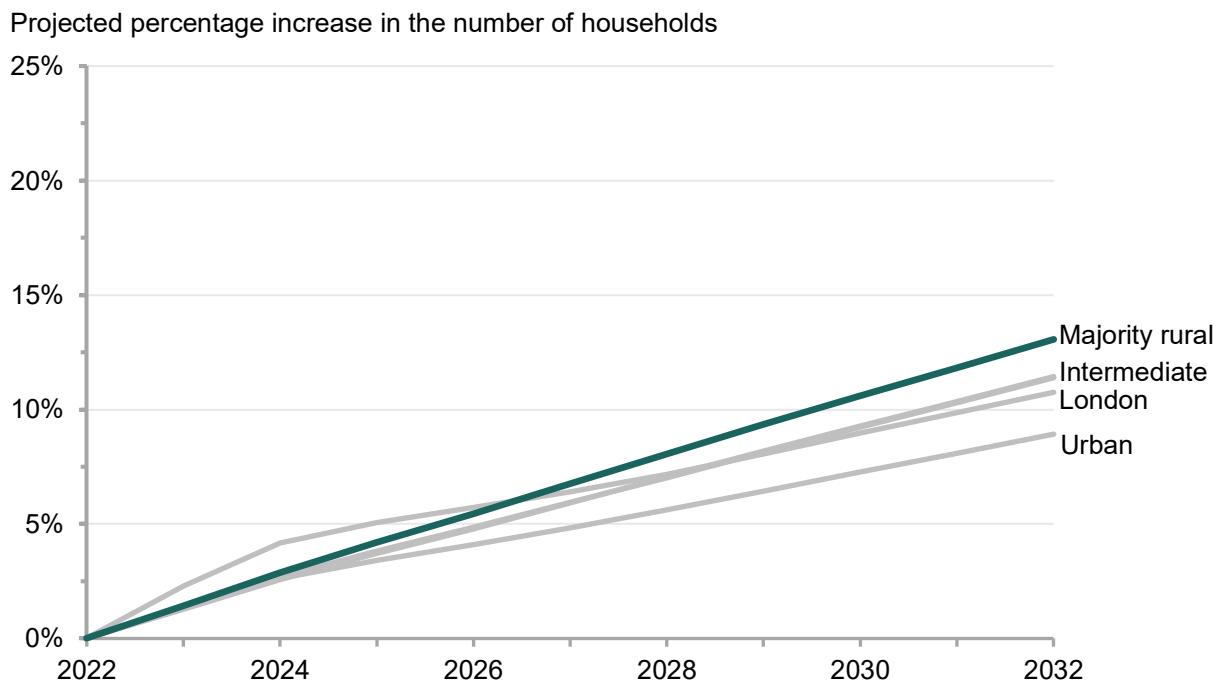
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish [household projections](#) for England, the latest of which are 2022-based and reflection population projections and household formation rates. This report explores the household projections based on the 2022 local authority-level data up to 2032, although projections extend to 2047; however, uncertainty grows the further one projects into the future, and so a 10-year projection limit has been chosen for this publication. Analysis of households provides context to other areas of the Digest publication (such as [affordable housing delivery](#) or [residential crime rates](#)), where we may refer to a ‘per household’ measure. The ONS issue the following warning regarding the use of household projections:

“Household projections are not a prediction or forecast of how many houses should be built in the future. Instead, they show how many additional households would form if assumptions based on previous demographic trends in population growth and household formation were to be realised. At the local level, household change is influenced by economic development and housing policies, factors that are not included in these projections.”

The line chart in Figure C-8 highlights the projected percentage increase in the number of households in England between mid-2022 and mid-2032 by 2021 rural-urban classification.

Figure C-8: Line chart showing the projected percentage increase in the number of households in England, by 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities, based on mid-year estimates, 2022 to 2032

‘Majority rural’ is the only coloured line to draw focus. ‘Urban’ excludes London. A value of 1% would indicate that the number of households in the specified authority type is projected to increase by 1% from mid-2022. The lines representing intermediate rural and intermediate urban authorities overlap and are therefore represented under the single label ‘Intermediate’.



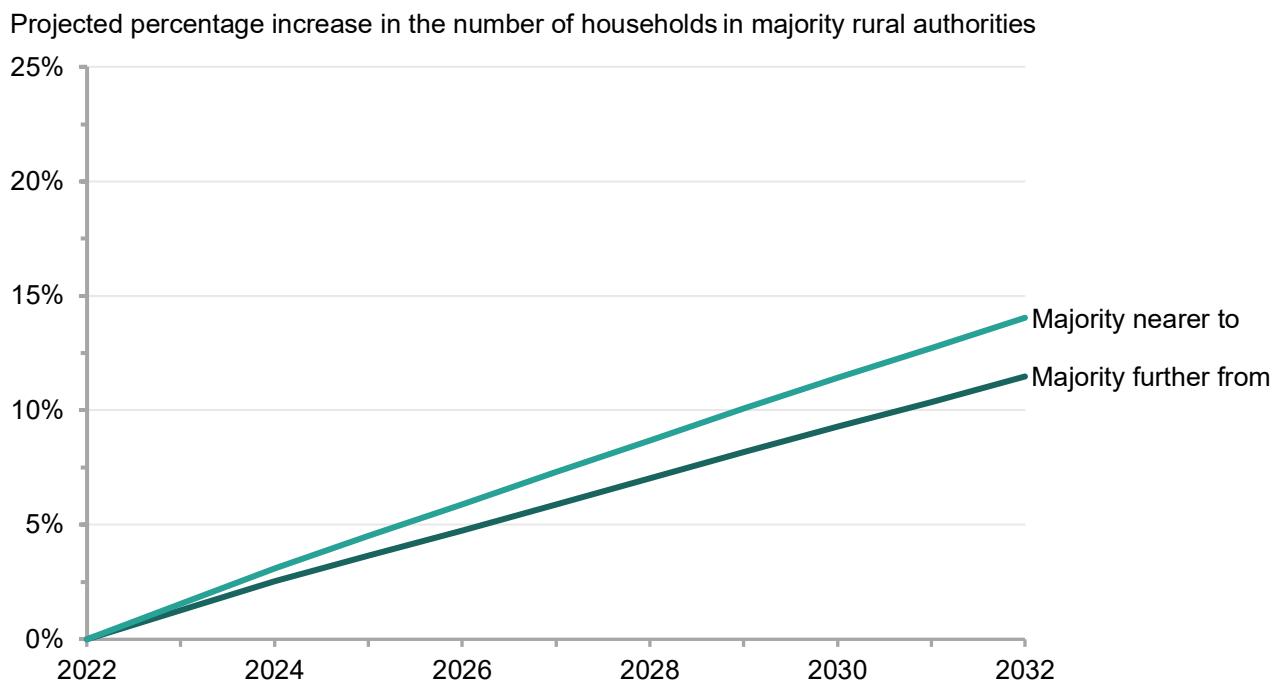
Between mid-2022 and mid-2032, the number of households in majority rural authorities is expected to increase at a faster rate than all other authority types. There were 2.6 million households in majority rural authorities in mid-2022; by mid-2032, this is projected to have

increased by 13% to 2.9 million households. However, growth in the number of households in majority rural authorities was not consistently projected to be greater than other authority types; between mid-2022 and mid-2026, the number of households in majority rural authorities is projected to increase at a slower rate than in London.

Proximity to major towns and cities has been considered in the 2021 rural-urban classification. For more information about the relative access measure, see Note C-5. The line chart in Figure C-9 highlights the projected percentage increase in the number of households in majority rural authorities in England, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the resident population, between mid-2022 and mid-2032.

In the 10 years to 2032, the number of households in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live nearer to major towns or cities is projected to increase by 14%, from 1.6 to 1.8 million households. In comparison, in majority rural authorities where the majority of the population live further from major towns or cities, the number of households is projected to see a smaller rate of growth, increasing by around 11% (from 1.0 to 1.1 million households).

Figure C-9: Line chart showing the projected percentage increase in the number of households in majority rural authorities in England, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, based on mid-year estimates, 2022 to 2032
A value of 1% would indicate that the number of households in the specified authority type is projected to increase by 1% from mid-2022.



Population: Local Authority-based - 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.

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 C-2**

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

- **Note C-3**

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

- **Note C-4**

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 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). 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. 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.

Key findings – Internal migration

More people move into majority rural authorities than move out

- In year ending June 2023, 339,000 people moved into majority rural authorities, and 278,400 people moved out from majority rural authorities.
- As a result, there was a net inflow of 60,500 people into majority rural authorities in year ending June 2023.

Net inward migration to majority rural authorities, except for 15 to 19 year olds

- In year ending June 2023, there was net migration into majority rural authorities for every age band except for those aged between 15 and 19 years; this age group instead had a net outwards migration (i.e. moving out of majority rural authorities) of 13,750 people.
- In majority rural authorities, the largest net inwards migration in year ending June 2023 was for 30- to- 39-year-olds, where 15,600 people moved into these 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

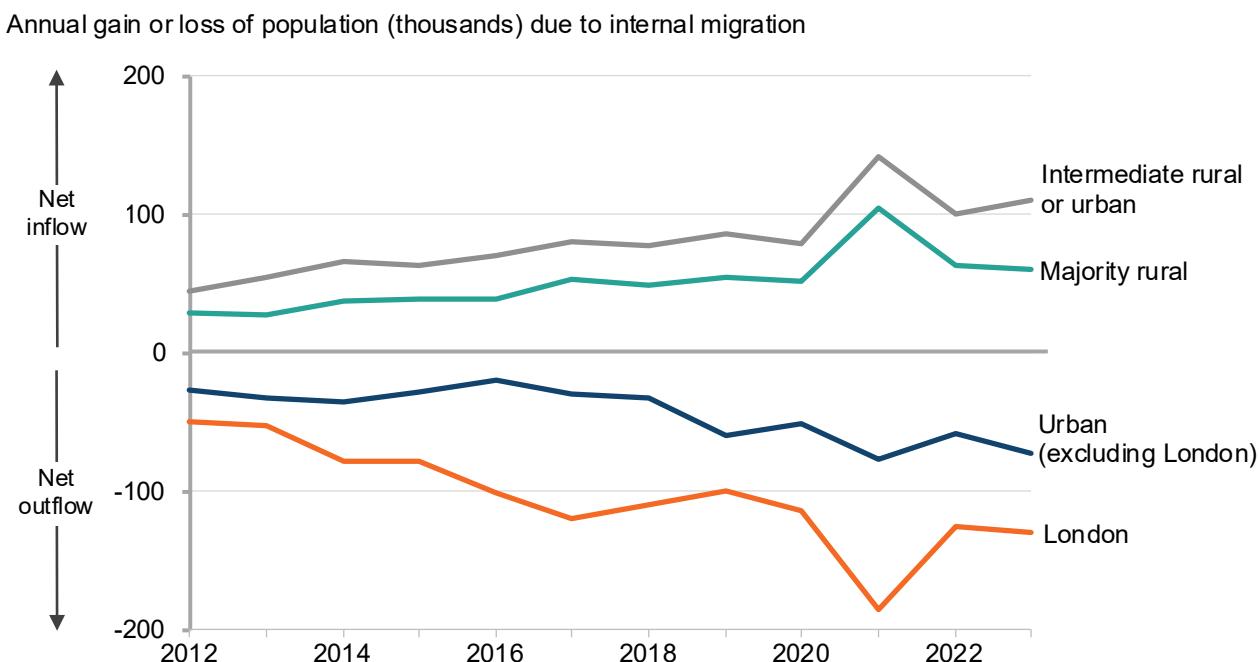
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual mid-year data on internal migration moves. In our analysis “internal migration” means population moving between Local Authorities within the UK. The Census 2021-based rural-urban classification – hereafter referred to as RUC21 – was published in 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 D-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 D-1 shows the internal migration trends from year ending June 2012 to year ending June 2023, by Local Authority rural-urban classification. In majority rural authorities, there was a net inwards migration of 60,500 people in year ending June 2023; this was a result of 339,000 people moving into majority rural authorities, and 278,400 people moving out.

Figure D-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.



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).

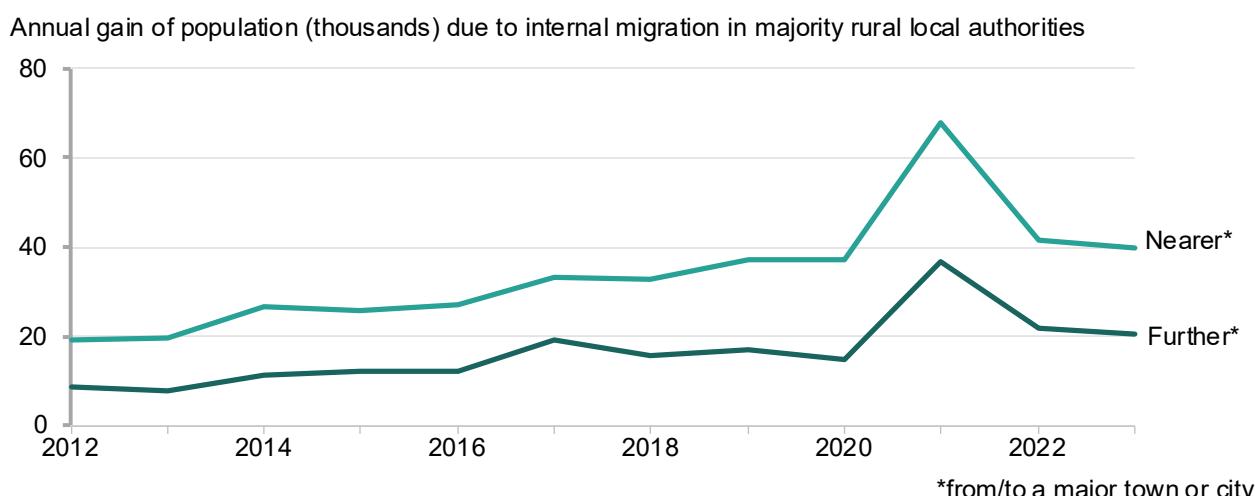
In intermediate rural or intermediate urban authorities, the population increased by 1.1 million between 2012 and 2023 (from 13.0 million to 14.1 million); 6% of this increase was due to internal migration (+65,000).

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 D-2 shows the internal migration trends in majority rural local authorities by proximity to a major town or city. It 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 live nearer to a major town or city (based on the inflow being 21% larger than the outflow).

Figure D-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 D-5)

Chart commentary is rounded to the nearest 100 people.



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 D-1, whilst the net migration is shown in Table D-2.

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

Table D-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	235.0
Out: intermediate	95.2	[z]	324.6	61.1	33.3	514.2
Out: urban (e)	160.8	405.4	[z]	180.4	64.4	811.0
Out: London	28.5	106.6	251.8	[z]	17.9	404.8
Out: rest of UK	13.8	24.6	54.3	19.5	[z]	112.1
Total inflow	298.3	614.6	752.6	279.0	132.7	2,077.1

Table D-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 D-1 and Table D-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 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 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 D-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 D-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 D-5)
 Migration is presented in thousands. Positive values represent net inwards migration; negative values represent net outwards migration.

Net migration between majority rural authorities with the majority of the population residing further from a major town or city, and:	
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
Total net migration for majority rural authorities	-19.6

Table D-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 D-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 D-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 D-5)

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

Net migration between majority rural authorities with the majority of the population residing nearer to a major town or city, and:	
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
Total net migration for majority rural authorities	-43.6

Table D-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 D-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).

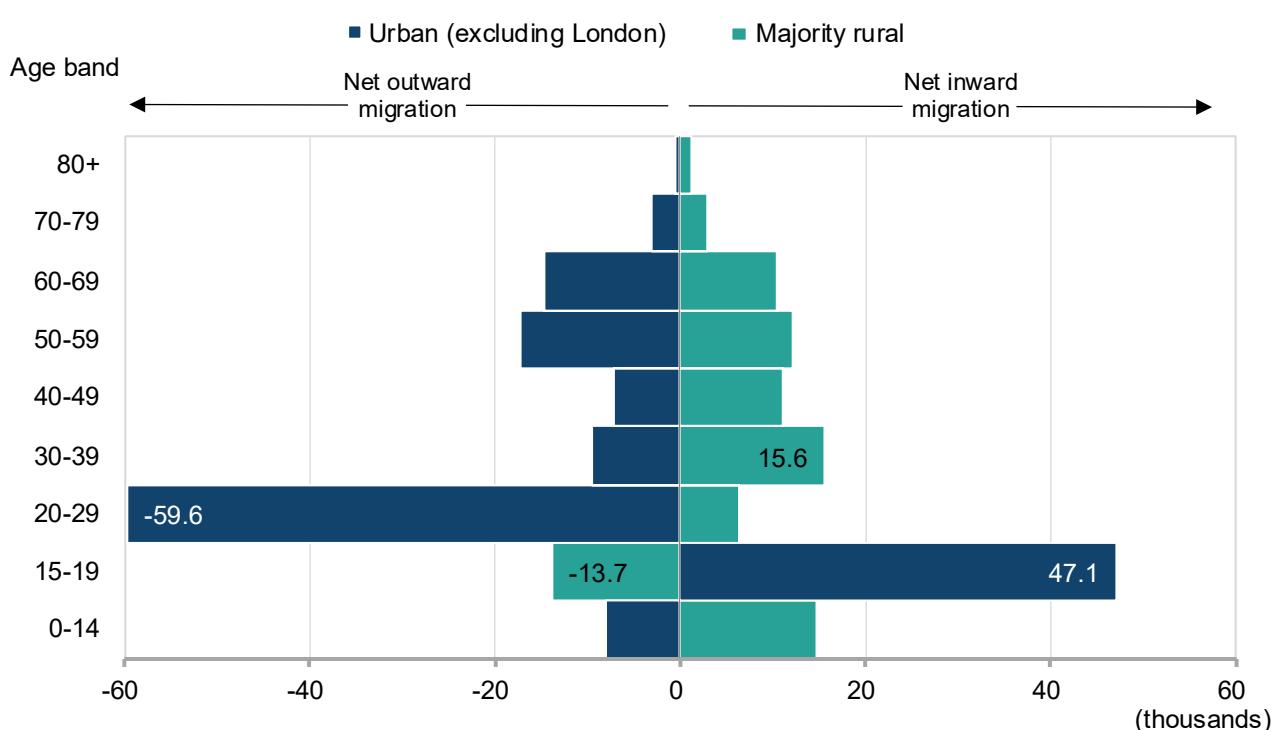
In majority rural authorities, the largest net inwards migration was for 30- to- 39-year-olds, where 15,600 people moved into these authorities; this is based on the inflow (58,500 people) being 36% larger than the outflow (42,900 people). In urban authorities outside of London, there was a net outward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

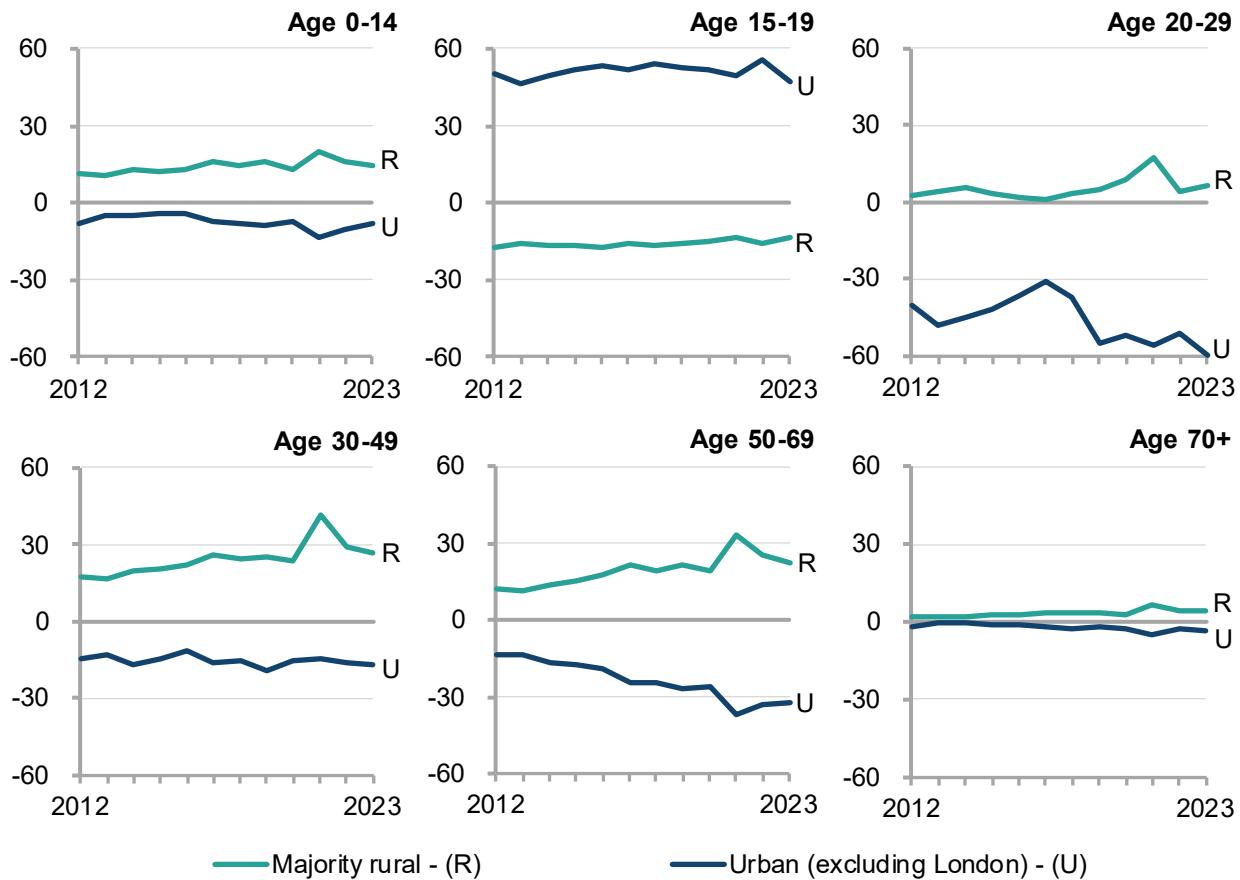


These internal migration patterns can be analysed over time, as shown in the six time series charts in Figure D-4. Age bands have been combined where data were similar, and therefore the age bands are not all of equal size.

Figure D-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 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.

- **Note D-2**

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

- **Note D-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 D-4**

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

- **Note D-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](#)

E. Census 2021: Population

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

Key findings – Census 2021: Population

17% of the population lived in rural settlements at Census 2021

- At Census 2021, 4.9 million people lived in smaller rural settlements in England, equivalent to nearly 9% of the population.
- At Census 2021, 4.6 million people lived in larger rural settlements in England, equivalent to 8% of the population.

Just 2% of the rural population lived in remote settlements at Census 2021

- At Census 2021, 67% of the rural population lived in rural settlements that were within a 30-minute drive of a major town or city. A further 19% lived in rural settlements that were within a 30-minute drive of a medium-sized urban area with at least 30,000 residents. 12% lived in rural settlements that were within a 30-minute drive of a small urban area with at least 10,000 residents.
- This means just 2% of the rural population lived in rural settlements that were at least a 30-minute drive from any sized urban area, and were therefore considered ‘remote’.

More than half of one-person rural households were over 65 years

- In smaller rural settlements, 55% of one-person households were over 65 years at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 14% of all households in smaller rural settlements.
- In larger rural settlements, 53% of one-person households were over 65 years at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 16% of all households in larger rural settlements.

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 on their own; 70% were households consisting of one family. More than half of the people living on their own were over 65 years. In larger rural settlements, a larger proportion of all households were just one person living on their own 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 Westminster Parliamentary Constituency-level data: At Census 2021, 6.4 million people lived in majority rural constituencies, and 5.1 million people lived in intermediate rural constituencies. 6.7 million people lived in intermediate urban constituencies, and 38.2 million people lived in urban constituencies (including London). More people lived in majority rural constituencies where the majority of the population resided nearer to a major town or city (4.0 million) than those where the majority of the population resided further from a major town or city (2.5 million).

In majority rural constituencies, 29% of all households were one-person households at Census 2021, more than half of which were over 65 years. 66% of households in majority rural constituencies consisted of a single family at Census 2021.

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.

In majority rural authorities, 29% of all households were one-person households at Census 2021, more than half of which were over 65 years. 52% of households in majority rural authorities consisted of a single family at 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 did not occur. Similarly, many students moved back to their home address due to the closure of university campuses and the provision of education online.

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: Small areas (Output Areas)

Latest population estimates

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 (Note E-1).

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
Rural	9,520,400	16.9
Urban (excluding London)	38,170,200	67.6
London	8,799,800	15.6
Urban	46,969,900	83.1
England	56,490,300	100.0

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 provides 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. It can be described as follows:

- 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).

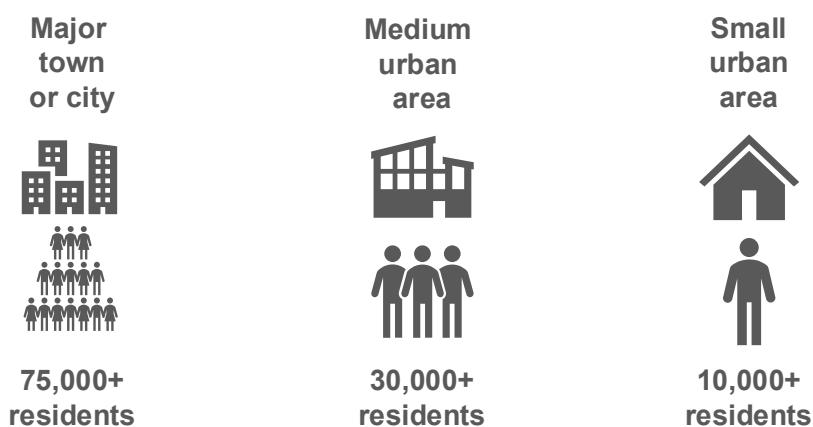
Table E-2 (Census 2021): Proportion of the population within rural settlements, by proximity to a major town or city, by 2021 OA rural-urban classification (Note E-3)

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
Rural: Further from a major town or city	3,157,100	5.6
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
Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	6,363,300	11.3
England	56,490,300	100.0

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.

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

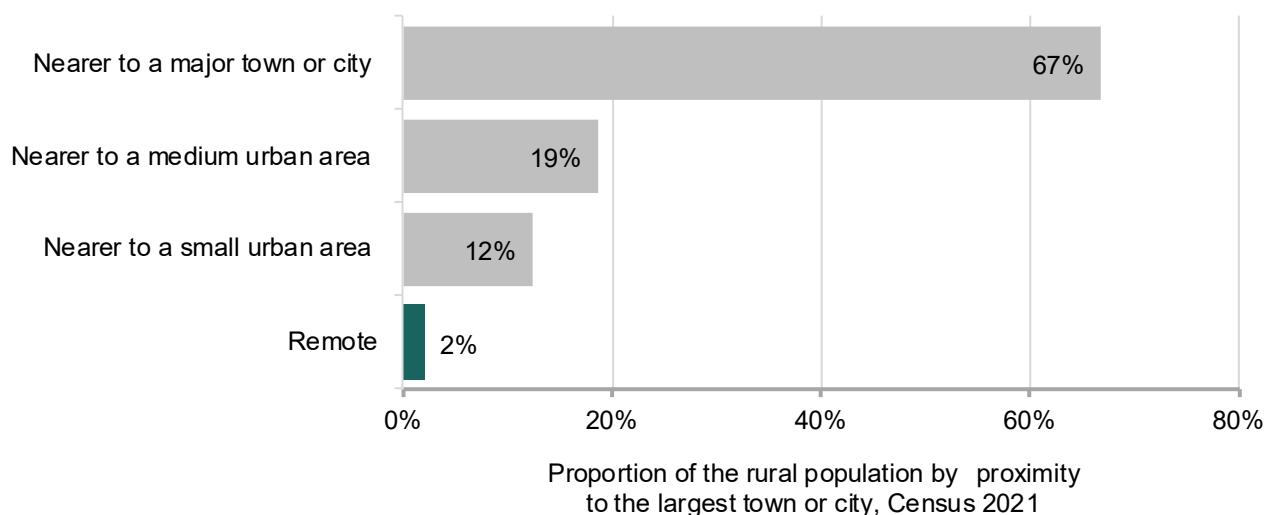


A remote settlement is defined as one from which it is not possible to reach the nearest small urban area within a 30-minute drive.

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 to 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.

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.

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.

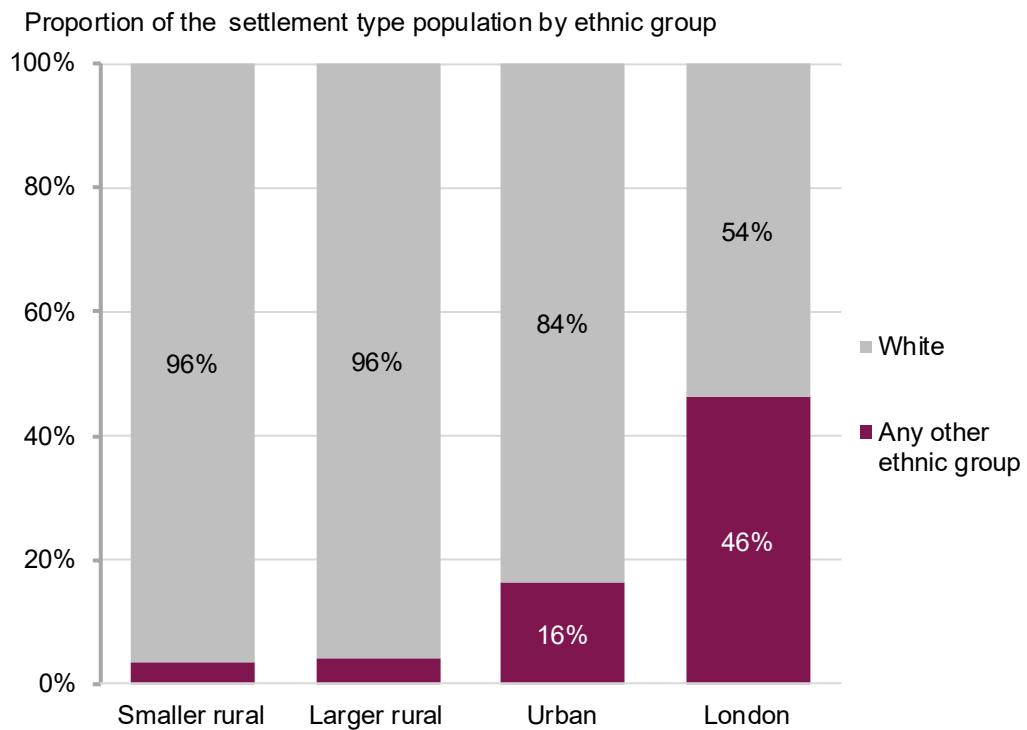


Table E-3 presents the proportion of the rural population identified as belonging to each ethnic group in more detail. Detailed statistics for other settlement types can be found within the [Population supplementary data tables](#). The table can be described as follows:

- 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
Total: all usual rural residents	9,520,300	100.0	16.9

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 slightly 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(such as [affordable housing delivery](#) or [residential crime rates](#)), 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	2,043,800
Larger rural	607,400	1,342,900	75,300	2,025,600
Urban (excluding London)	4,939,600	9,993,700	1,009,100	15,942,500
London	1,002,200	1,986,900	435,900	3,425,000
England	7,051,800	14,763,900	1,621,300	23,436,900

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.

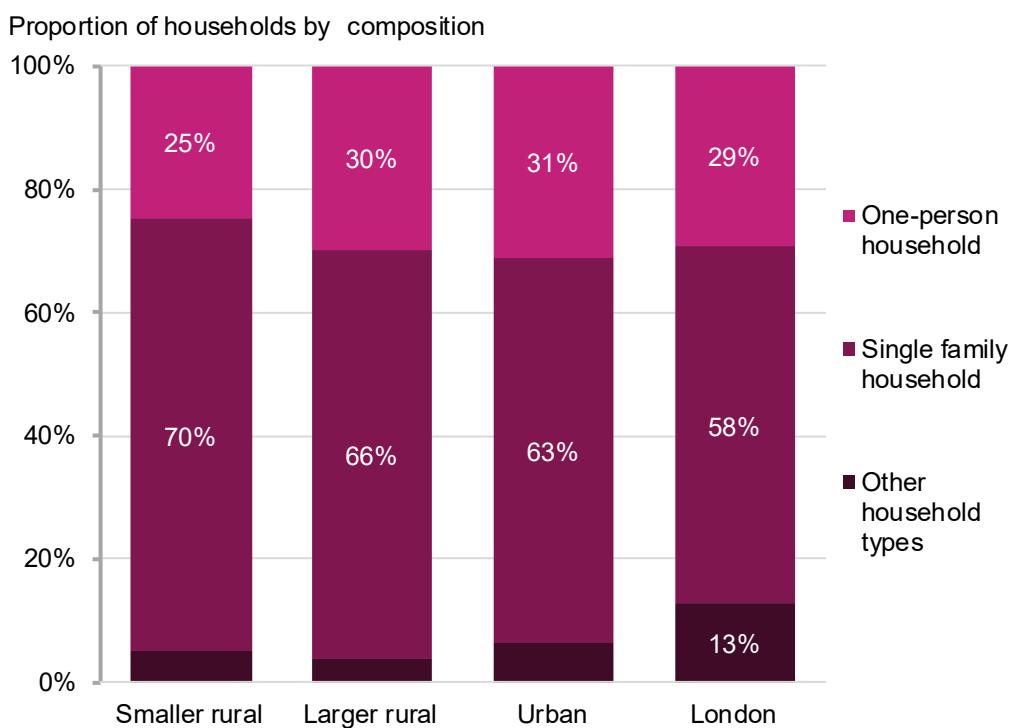


Table E-4 and Figure E-4 can be described as follows:

- 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 on their own (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 on their own (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 on their own (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 on their own (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 over 65 years. In smaller rural settlements, 55% of one-person households were over 65 years; 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 over 65 years; this was equivalent to 16% of all households in larger rural settlements. In urban areas outside of London, 42% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 13% of all households in urban areas outside of London. In London, 31% of all one-person households were over 65 years; this was proportionally lower than any other settlement type, and was equivalent to 9% of all households in London.

RUC21 provides 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.

Population: Small areas (Lower Super Output Areas)

Latest population estimates

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); it 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).

Table E-5 (Census 2021): Proportion of the population within each settlement type described in the 2021 LSOA rural-urban classification (Note E-1)

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
Rural	9,374,400	16.6
Urban (excluding London)	38,315,800	67.8
London	8,799,800	15.6
Urban	47,115,600	83.4
England	56,490,100	100.0

RUC21 provides 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
Rural: Further from a major town or city	3,105,800	5.5
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
Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	6,268,700	11.1
England	56,490,100	16.6

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: Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies

Latest population estimates

The 2021 rural-urban classification was released in March 2025, with the classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies (as of July 2024) published later in the year; see the [rural-urban classification](#) for more information. As a result, it is possible to present population statistics in England from the 2021 Census. However, it should be noted that the constituency boundaries have been retrospectively applied to the data, as they were not current at the time of data collection.

20% of England's population lived in majority or intermediate rural parliamentary constituencies – where at least 35% of the population live in rural areas - at Census 2021. Table E-7 shows the usual resident population at Census 2021 for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies as at July 2024. It can be described as follows:

- 11.6 million people lived in majority or intermediate rural constituencies at Census 2021; this consisted of 6.4 million people living in majority rural areas (11% of the total population of England), and 5.1 million people living in intermediate rural areas (9% of the total population).
- 6.7 million people lived in intermediate urban constituencies at Census 2021, equivalent to 12% of the total population of England.
- 38.2 million people lived in urban constituencies, including London, at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 68% of the total population of England, meaning around 2 in every 3 people lived in an urban area at Census 2021.

Table E-7 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within each constituency type described in the 2021 rural-urban classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies (Note E-1)

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	6,433,300	11.4
Intermediate rural	5,134,600	9.1
Intermediate urban	6,733,800	11.9
Urban	38,188,300	67.6
England	56,490,000	100.0

RUC21 provides 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 constituencies (RUC21) by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population, as at Census 2021. It can be described as follows:

- 2.5 million people lived in majority rural constituencies where the majority of the resident population lived further from a major town or city at Census 2021; this was equivalent to around 4% of the total population of England.

- 4.0 million people lived in majority rural constituencies where the majority of the resident population lived nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021; this was equivalent to 7% of the total population of England.

Table E-8 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population living within majority rural constituencies as described in the 2021 rural-urban classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies, by proximity to a major town or city for the majority of the population (Note E-3)

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

Proximity to a major town or city (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority further from	2,472,600	4.4
Majority nearer to	3,960,700	7.0
England	56,490,000	100.0

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 (such as [affordable housing delivery](#) or [residential crime rates](#)), where we may refer to a 'per household' measure. Table E-9 shows the number of households in England, by composition and constituency type for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies (as of July 2024); this table provides context to the bar chart in Figure E-5.

Table E-9 (Census 2021): Number of households in England, by composition and constituency type as defined within the 2021 rural-urban classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies (Note E-6)

Values are rounded to the nearest 100 households.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	One-person	Single family	Other	All households
Majority rural	810,200	1,856,000	130,400	2,796,500
Intermediate rural	633,000	1,436,700	116,200	2,185,900
Intermediate urban	842,200	1,898,100	144,700	2,885,100
Urban (excluding London)	3,764,900	7,459,400	920,400	12,144,700
London	1,002,000	1,928,700	493,200	3,423,900
England	7,052,200	14,579,000	1,804,900	23,436,100

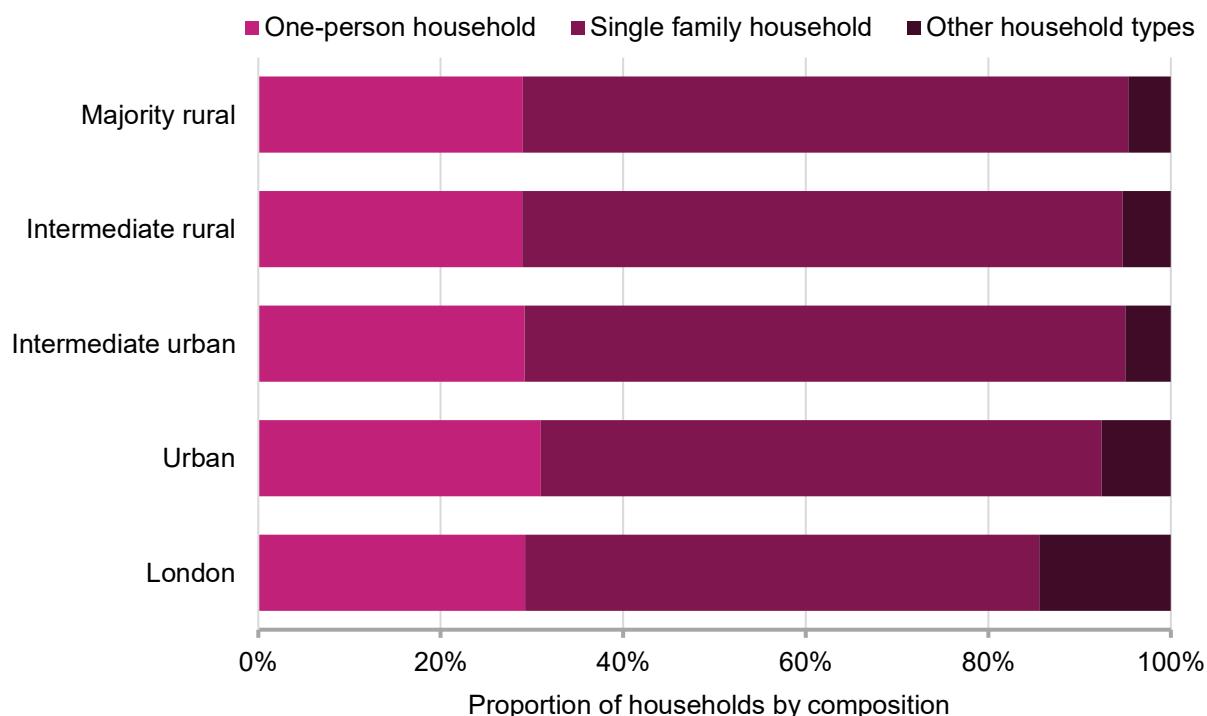
In England, single family households were the most common composition at Census 2021, whilst "other household types" - such as multiple family households - were the least common. 29% of all households were just one person living on their own in all constituency types except for urban outside of London, where this group represented 31% of all households. In majority rural, intermediate rural, and intermediate urban constituencies, 66% of all households were single families. In urban constituencies outside of London, this group represented 61% of households. In London, this group represented 56% of households. In majority rural, intermediate rural, and

intermediate urban constituencies, 5% of all households were classed as ‘other’, such as student households and non-family households (e.g. ‘roommates’). In urban constituencies outside of London, this group represented 8% of households. In London, this group represented 14% of households.

Figure E-5: (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the proportion of households in England, by composition and constituency type as defined within the 2021 rural-urban classification of Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars.

“Urban” excludes London.



Of the one-person households in England, there were many which were people aged over 65 years. In majority rural constituencies, 53% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was proportionally higher than any other constituency type, and was equivalent to 15% of all households in majority rural constituencies. In both intermediate rural and intermediate urban constituencies, 49% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 14% of all households in both intermediate rural and intermediate urban constituencies. In urban constituencies outside of London, 41% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 13% of all households in urban constituencies outside of London. In London, 31% of all one-person households were over 65 years; this was proportionally lower than any other constituency type, and was equivalent to 9% of all households in London.

RUC21 provides 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 the majority of the population. Data regarding the proportion of households by proximity to a major town or city can be found within the [supplementary data tables](#).

Population: Local Authorities

Latest population estimates

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-10 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within each authority type described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification shows the usual resident population at Census 2021 for 2021 local authorities. It 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.

Table E-10 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within each authority type described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification (Note E-1, Note E-4)
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
England	56,490,000	100.0

RUC21 provides information regarding the areas' proximity to a major town or city to indicate relative access. Table E-11 (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) 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:

- 2.6 million people lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the resident population lived further from a major town or city at Census 2021; this was equivalent to nearly 5% of the total population of England.
- 3.2 million people lived in majority rural authorities where the majority of the resident population lived nearer to a major town or city at Census 2021; this was equivalent to nearly 6% of the total population of England.

Table E-11 (Census 2021): Proportion of the usual resident population within majority rural authorities as described in the 2021 local authority rural-urban classification, by proximity to a major town or city (Note E-3, Note E-4)

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

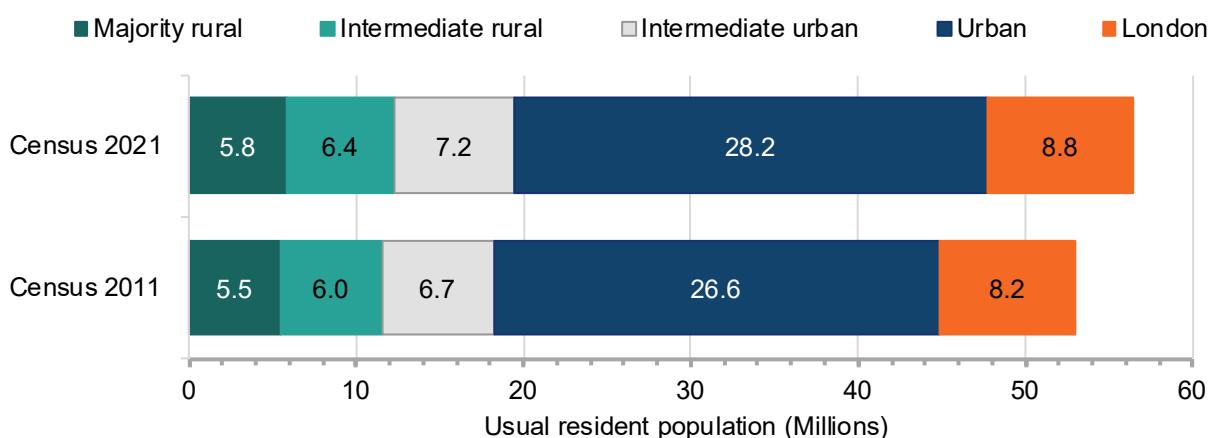
Proximity to a major town or city (Census 2021)	Population	Proportion (%)
Majority further from	2,619,500	4.6
Majority nearer to	3,218,400	5.7
England	56,490,000	100.0

Population change over time

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-6 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-6 (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 (Note E-4)

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.



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).

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 (such as [affordable housing delivery](#) or [residential crime rates](#)), where we may refer to a ‘per household’ measure.

Table E-12 shows the number of households in England, by composition and authority type; this table provides context to the bar chart in Figure E-7.

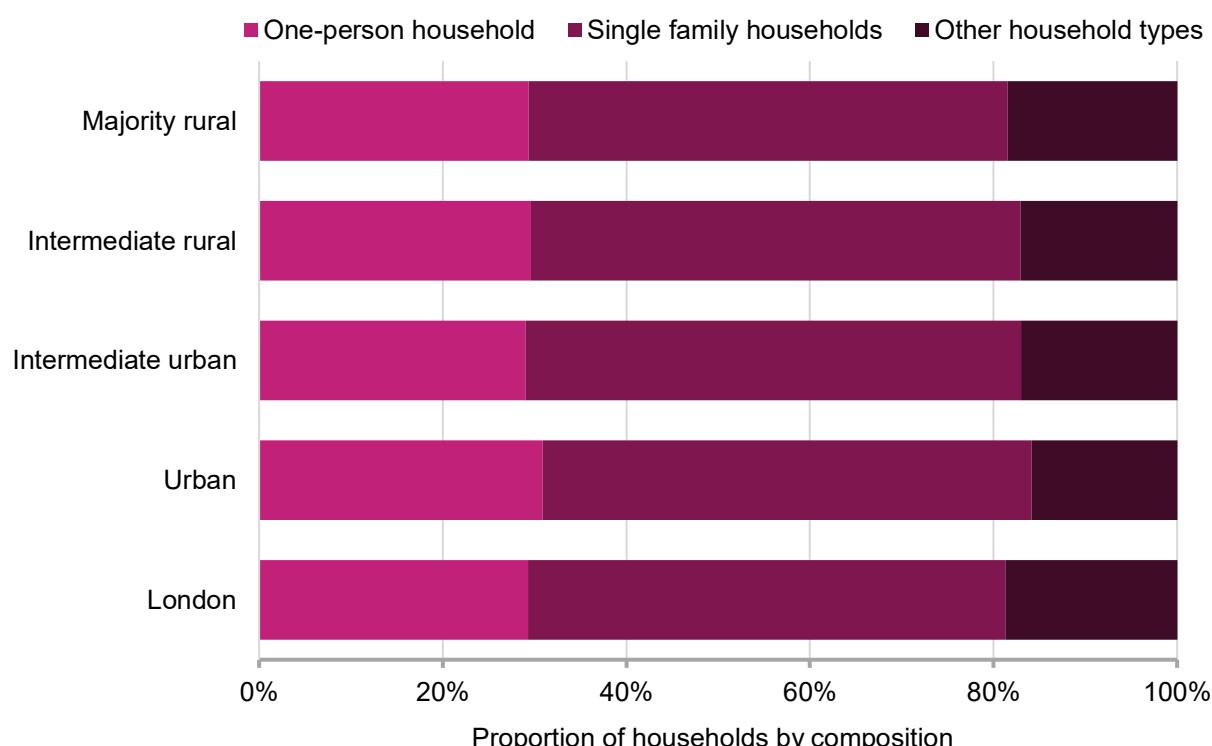
Table E-12 (Census 2021): Number of households in England, by composition and constituency type as defined within the 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities
Values are rounded to the nearest 100 households.

Rural-urban classification (Census 2021)	One-person	Single family	Other	All households
Majority rural	747,700	1,328,200	469,100	2,545,000
Intermediate rural	819,800	1,474,800	473,300	2,767,900
Intermediate urban	888,300	1,649,700	521,000	3,058,900
Urban (excluding London)	3,594,500	6,200,400	1,845,400	11,640,300
London	1,002,000	1,780,500	641,400	3,423,900
England	7,052,200	12,433,700	3,950,200	23,436,100

Figure E-7: (Census 2021): Bar chart showing the proportion of households in England, by composition and authority type as defined within the 2021 rural-urban classification of local authorities in England (Note E-4)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks of bars.

“Urban” excludes London.



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. 29% of all households were just one person living on their own in majority rural and intermediate urban constituencies, as well as in London. In intermediate rural authorities, this group represented a similar proportion of households. However, the highest proportion of households being one person living on their own was in urban authorities outside of London (31%).

In majority rural authorities, as well as those in London, 52% of all households were single families. This was a smaller proportion than in intermediate rural authorities and urban authorities outside of London (53%). However, the highest proportion of households being single families was in intermediate urban authorities (54%).

In majority rural authorities, 18% of all households were classed as 'other', such as student households and non-family households (e.g. 'roommates'). This was proportionally more than in both intermediate rural and intermediate urban authorities (17%), as well as proportionally more than in urban authorities outside of London (16%). However, there were proportionally more 'other' households in London (19%).

Of the one-person households in England, there were many which were people aged over 65 years. In majority rural authorities, 52% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was proportionally higher than any other authority type, and was equivalent to 15% of all households in majority rural authorities. In intermediate rural authorities, 49% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 15% of all households in intermediate rural authorities. In intermediate urban authorities, 47% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 14% of all households in intermediate urban authorities. In urban authorities outside of London, 41% of one-person households were over 65 years; this was equivalent to 13% of all households in urban authorities outside of London. In London, 31% of all one-person households were over 65 years; this was proportionally lower than any other authority type, and was equivalent to 9% of all households in London.

RUC21 provides 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 the majority of the population. Data regarding the proportion of households by proximity to a major town or city can be found within the [supplementary data tables](#).

Census 2021: Population - 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](#)

- **Note E-6**

Westminster parliamentary constituencies (as of July 2024) that are 'in London' can be defined in two different ways: 1) just constituencies in 'Inner London', or 2) constituencies in both 'Inner London' and 'Outer London'. For the purposes of this publication, constituencies 'in London' refers to only those in 'Inner London'. This is all 'London-area' constituencies, minus those in the 'Outer London-area', as given in the [IPSA guidance from the 5 July 2024 General Election](#). Included 'London' constituencies are listed within the [supplementary data tables](#).

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: Small area-based
- B. Population: Constituency-based
- C. Population: Local Authority-based
- D. Internal migration
- E. Census 2021: Population

2. Housing

- A. Housing stock: age and type
- B. Housing stock: additions and affordable housing
- C. Housing market
- D. Second and empty homes
- E. Homelessness
- F. Land use change for housing
- G. 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. Index of Multiple Deprivation
- B. English Indices of Deprivation
- C. Poverty due to low income
- D. Household expenditure
- E. Police recorded crime and outcomes
- F. Crime surveys: local police and businesses
- G. Feelings about the local neighbourhood

5. Connectivity and Accessibility

- A. Broadband
- B. Mobile coverage
- C. Travel behaviours
- D. Access to personal transport
- E. Access to services
- F. 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. Unemployment-related benefits
- 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. Central heating
- E. Energy Consumption
- F. Estimated carbon dioxide (CO₂) 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.