

Older People's Day 2009



Date: 30th September 2009

Coverage: United Kingdom **Theme:** Population; ageing

The UK marks Older People's Day on 1 October 2009. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) show that there are increasing numbers of older people in the population. They are increasingly taking an active part in the labour market and have increasing levels of pension income. While people are living longer, the extra years may not necessarily be in good health.

Older people in the population

The UK population is growing older. Over the last 25 years the population aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million (an increase from 15 per cent in 1983 to 16 per cent of the population by 2008). The fastest population increase has been in the number of those aged 85 and over. Since 1983, the number of people aged 85 and over has more than doubled from 600,000 in 1983 to 1.3 million people in 2008.

From the 1950s onwards, the number of centenarians (people aged 100 and over) in England and Wales has increased at a faster rate than any other group to reach 9,600 in 2008. The major contributor to this rise has been an increase in survival of those aged between 80 and 100. Probable factors driving this increase are improvements in medical treatment, housing, living standards, and nutrition.

As a result of increases in the number of older people, the median age of the UK population is increasing. Over the past 25 years, the median age increased from 35 years in 1983 to 39 years in 2008. In 2008, the median age for women, at 40 years, was higher than that for men, at 38 years. This is because on average, women live longer than men.

Local variations

The age profile of the UK population varies geographically. West Somerset had the oldest median age in the UK in 2008, at 52 years. Other local authorities with a high median age are located on the south coast of England and include Christchurch, Rother, East Dorset and also North Norfolk, on the East coast. The South West had the highest total migration (combined internal and international) of people aged 60 and over moving in to the region (in-migration) of all English

regions in 2008. This distribution reflects the tendency for older people to choose coastal areas to retire.

Oxford had the lowest median age of 29 in the UK in 2008. The number of higher education institutions in the city has increased the population of young adults, reducing the average age. Other areas highly populated by students and many inner London boroughs also have low median ages. The ten least aged local authorities, each with less than 10 per cent of their total population aged 65 and over, are all London boroughs with Tower Hamlets having the smallest percentage of people aged 65 and over (8 per cent). London also has the highest out-migration of people aged 45 and over among the English regions but the highest in-migration of people aged 20 to 29.

To improve understanding of regional variations in the ageing population, ONS today launched a new mapping tool. This can be found at www.statistics.gov.uk/ageingintheuk/default.htm. This allows the user to analyse the age structure of the population at the Local Authority (LA) level more easily. The indicators in the tool include median age and percentage of the population by different age breakdowns such as 65 and over, and 85 and over.

Increases in life expectancy

The increase in the size of the older population has largely been driven by increases in life expectancy. Life expectancy at birth in the UK has reached its highest level on record for both males and females. A newborn baby boy could expect to live 77.2 years and a newborn baby girl 81.5 years if mortality rates remain the same as they were in 2005–07. Women continue to live longer than men, but the gap has been closing. Although both sexes have shown annual improvements in life expectancy at birth, over the past 25 years the gap has narrowed from 6.0 years to 4.3 years. Based on mortality rates in 1980–82, 26 per cent of newborn males would die before age 65; this had reduced to 16 per cent based on 2005–07 rates. The equivalent figures for newborn females were 16 per cent in 1980–82 and 10 per cent in 2005–07. Life expectancy at age 65 – the number of further years someone reaching 65 in 2005–07 could expect to live – is also higher for women than for men. Based on 2005–07 mortality rates, a man aged 65 could expect to live another 17.2 years, and a woman aged 65 another 19.9 years.

While the population has been living longer, the extra years have not necessarily been in good health or free from illness or disability. In Great Britain life expectancy, healthy life expectancy (the expected years of life in good or fairly good health) and disability-free life expectancy (the expected years of life without a limiting illness or disability) all increased between 1981 and 2004–2006 for both men and women. However life expectancy increased at a faster rate than healthy life expectancy.

Life expectancy is higher for women than for men. However, the gap in healthy life expectancy between men and women is smaller than for total life expectancy. In the UK in 2004–2006, healthy life expectancy at birth was 68.2 years for men and 70.4 years for women, a gap of 2.2 years. The gap in disability free life expectancy between men and women is also smaller than for total life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. In 2004–2006, disability-free life expectancy at birth was 62.4 years for men and 63.9 years for women, a gap of 1.5 years.

Older people in the labour market

The employment rates of men and women aged between 50 and state pension age (SPA) in the UK were 72 per cent and 71 per cent respectively in May to July 2009, compared with 66 per cent and 59 per cent in 1992. Over the same period, the percentage of people aged SPA and over in employment has increased from 8 per cent to 12 per cent.

Pensions and income

In the UK average gross pensioner incomes increased by 42 per cent in real terms between 1994/95 and 2007/08, ahead of the growth in average earnings. In 2007/08, pensioner couples received an average gross income of £546 per week, single men received £288 per week and single women £247. The largest source of income for pensioners is state 'benefit income', which includes state pension income and benefits. Occupational pensions are also a significant source of income, particularly for couples.

Average incomes conceal considerable variations between poorer and richer pensioners. When incomes are ranked and divided into five equal groups (quintiles), pensioner couples in the highest quintile in 2005/08 received median net income 3.7 times that of those in the lowest income quintile; and single pensioners in the highest quintile received median net income 3.1 times that of those in the lowest quintile.

In 2007, the average weekly expenditure of households headed by someone aged 65 to 74 was £321, of which over 30 per cent was spent on food, domestic energy bills, housing and council tax. For households headed by someone aged 75 or over, average expenditure was £218 per week, of which almost 40 per cent was spent on food, energy bills, housing and council tax. This was before the increases in gas and electricity prices in 2008.

Analysis and data related to the older population

ONS carries out a wide variety of research and analysis related to the older population. ONS has today launched 'Ageing Times' to bring together the latest news and information on this topic.

This can be accessed at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=12348>

Background Notes

1. Further information on older people can be found on the ONS website at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/olderpeople/>. This includes the mapping tool and the newsletter 'Ageing Times'. Information relating to Pensions Trends can be found at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pensiontrends/>
2. Population estimates for the UK and England & Wales can be found at: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106 . Mid-2008 population estimates for Scotland are published by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and can be found at: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/population-estimates/index.html>. Mid-2008 population estimates for Northern Ireland are published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and can be found at: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>
3. Information on the centenarians can be found at : <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15003>
4. Latest life expectancy figures for the UK can be found at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14459> . All life expectancy figures are 'period' life expectancies. This is the average number of additional years a person would live if he or she experienced the age-specific mortality rates of the given area and time period for the rest of their life. Therefore it is not the number of years someone in the area in that time period is actually likely to live, both because the death rates of the area are likely to change and because people may live in other areas for at least part of their lives. Life expectancies that allow for actual or projected changes in mortality during a person's lifetime are known as 'cohort' life expectancies. The period life expectancy figures are taken from the Interim Life Tables. These are produced annually for the UK and its constituent countries. Each table is based on the population estimates and deaths for a period of three consecutive years.
5. Latest information on healthy life expectancy and disability free life expectancy can be found at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=12964>
6. Latest information on the labour Market can be found at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=1944>
7. Pensioner income figures come from the Pensioners' Income Series of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which measures the income of 'pensioner benefit units', defined as 'a single adult over state pension age or married or cohabiting pensioners where one or more are over state pension age'. http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/pensioners_income_arc.asp#PI_Prev
Expenditure figures come from the Expenditure and Food Survey (ONS), published in Family Spending 2008 <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=361>
8. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Relations Office.

9. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
© Crown copyright 2009.
-

Next publication to coincide with Older People's Day – autumn 2010

Issued by: Office for National Statistics, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport NP10 8XG

Media contact:

Tel **Media Relations Office 0845 6041858**

Emergency on-call 07867 906553

E-mail **press.office@ons.gsi.gov.uk**

Statistical contact:

Tel **Chris Smith 01329 444683**

E-mail **ageing@ons.gov.uk**

Website:

www.ons.gov.uk