

Older People's Day 2011

Coverage: **UK**

Date: **29 September 2011**

Geographical Area: **UK and GB**

Theme: **Population**

Key Points

- Life expectancy in the UK has reached its highest level on record for both males and females, 78.1 years at birth for males and 82.1 years at birth for females (2008-2010)
- The number of centenarians in the UK in 2010 was estimated to be 12,640; almost a five fold increase on the 1980 estimate of 2,500
- At 4.1 years, the UK has the smallest gap between male and female life expectancy across the EU-27 countries

Older People's Day

UK Older People's Day is held on 1st October each year to celebrate the contributions of older people to society. This statistical bulletin is released to coincide with the event. It includes the latest government statistics on the UK ageing population, [estimates of the very elderly](#) and [life expectancy](#).

[Quality Reports](#) for data in this statistical bulletin are available.

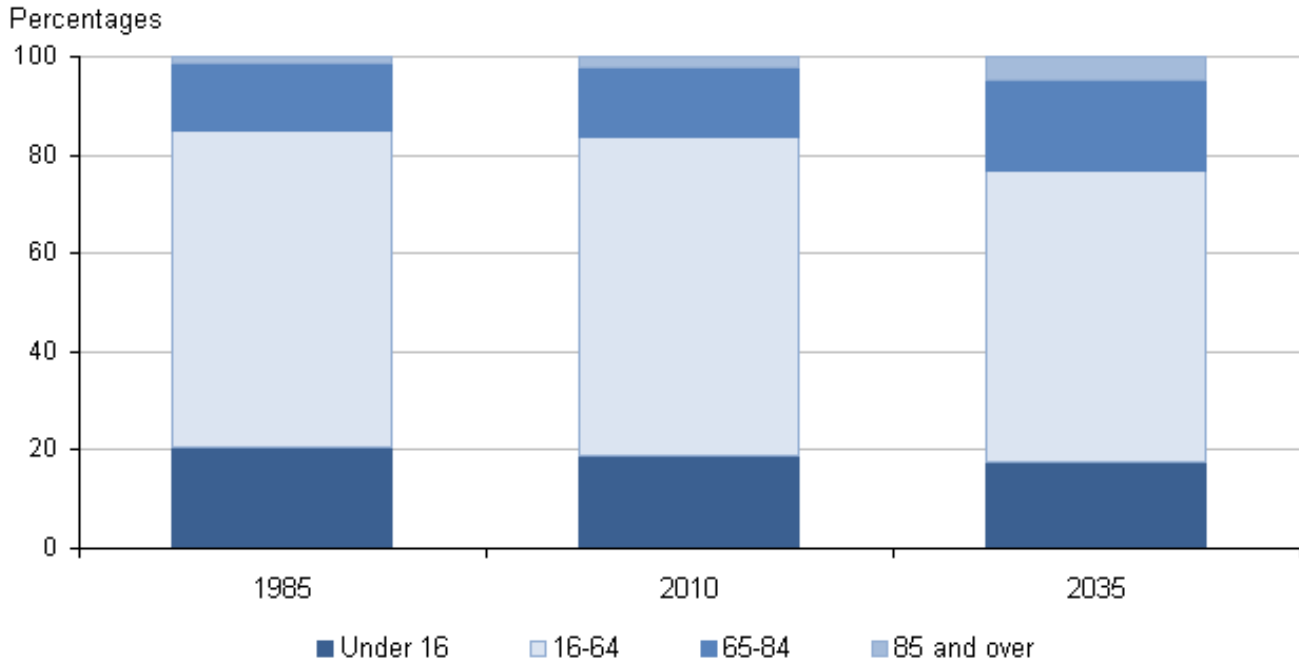
Older people in the UK

The population of the UK is ageing. Over the last 25 years the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 15 per cent in 1985 to 17 per cent in 2010, an increase of 1.7 million people in this age group. Over the same period, the percentage of the population aged under 16 decreased from 21 per cent to 19 per cent. This trend is projected to continue. By 2035, 23 per cent of the population is projected to be aged 65 and over compared to 18 per cent aged under 16.

Not only is the population ageing, but there has been progressive ageing of the older population itself. Most striking has been the increase in the number and proportion of the "oldest old". In 1985, there were around 690,000 people in the UK aged 85 and over, accounting for 1 per cent of the population, (Figure 1). Since then the numbers have more than doubled reaching 1.4 million in 2010, (2 per cent of the UK population). By 2035 the number of people aged 85 and over is projected to be

2.5 times larger than in 2010, reaching approximately 3.6 million and accounting for 5 per cent of the total population.

Figure 1: Population by age, UK, 1985, 2010 and 2035



Notes:

1. Source: Office for National Statistics; National Records of Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.
2. Population projections for 2035 are ONS National Population Projections (NPP) 2008-based.

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Population estimates of the very elderly for mid-2010 are published today. The number of centenarians (people aged 100 years or more) is estimated to be 12,640, over three and a half times more than the 1985 estimate of 3,420 and a five fold increase on the 1980 estimate of 2,500.

This includes an estimated 10 supercentenarians, (people aged 110 or more). Current population projections suggest the number of centenarians in the UK will be approximately 100,000 by 2035, almost eight times the 2010 estimate.

The ratio of women to men at older ages is falling. In 1985 there were 154 women aged 65 and over for every 100 men of the same age, compared to the current sex ratio of 127 women for every 100 men. By 2035 it is projected that the 65 and over sex ratio will have fallen still further to 118 women for every 100 men.

The ratio of female to male centenarians has also started to fall in recent years. In 2000 there were approximately nine female centenarians for every male centenarian. In 2009 there were six female

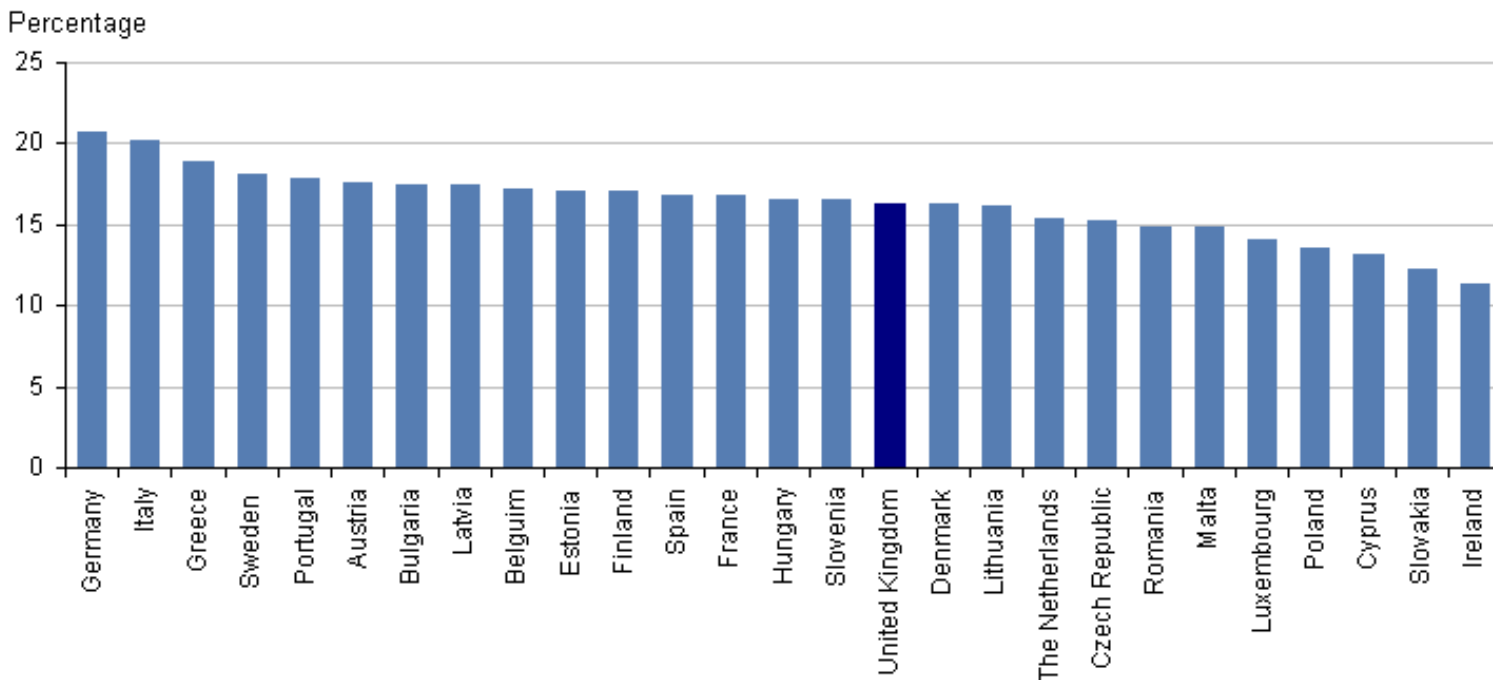
centenarians for every male centenarian. By 2010 this had reduced to five. The falls in the ratios of women to men at older ages are mainly due to recent improvements in male mortality.

Notes

1. Latest on [population estimates](#) for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
2. Latest on [national population projections](#).
National population projections are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict the impact that future government policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors (whether in the UK or overseas) might have on demographic behaviour. They simply provide the population levels and age structure that would result if the underlying assumptions about future fertility, mortality and migration were to be realised.
3. Percentages given in the text are calculated using unrounded figures.
4. [Guide to the methodology](#) for calculating estimates of the very elderly (including centenarians).
5. Latest on [estimates of the very elderly](#) (including centenarians).
6. 65 and over population estimates for EU-27 countries are available from Eurostat. Also published in their publication [Demography report 2010](#): older, more numerous and diverse Europeans, Luxembourg, [Eurostat](#), April 2011.
7. 65 and over population estimates for other countries are from the individual National Statistics Institutes:
[Australia Bureau of Statistics](#) [Statistics Canada](#)
[Statistics New Zealand](#)
[US Census Bureau](#)
[National Bureau of Statistics of China](#)
[Statistics Bureau and the Director-General for Policy Planning of Japan](#)
8. 65 and over projections for Brazil and India are from [United Nations](#) Department of Economic and Social affairs (2007-based)

Ageing in Europe and internationally

Population ageing is a global demographic trend. Despite the increase in the numbers and proportion of older people over the last 25 years, population ageing in the UK has not been as rapid as for some comparable countries, (Figure 2). As a result, the UK has gone from being one of the most aged countries in Europe in 1985 to one of mid-ranking in 2010.

Figure 2: Percentage of the population aged 65 or older, EU-27, 2010**Notes:**

1. Source: Eurostat
2. Data relates to 1 January 2010 except for UK, which relates to 30 June 2009.

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One factor contributing to this fall was relatively high fertility in the UK compared to countries in central, southern and eastern Europe over the last decade. Within the EU-27, Germany and Italy, both with consistently low fertility, are the countries with the highest proportion of their population aged 65 and over in 2010, (at 21 and 20 per cent respectively); Slovakia, Cyprus and Ireland are the least aged with 13, 12 and 11 per cent of their populations aged 65 and over respectively.

Outside of Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States are all less aged than many of the EU-27 countries. In 2010, 14 per cent of the populations of both Canada and Australia were aged 65 and over, while in both New Zealand and the United States¹ those aged 65 and over accounted for 13 per cent of the populations of these countries, respectively.

Countries with more recently emerging economies such as China¹, Brazil and India² are notably less aged. In 2010, those aged 65 and over accounted for 8, 7 and 5 per cent of their populations respectively. The world's most aged country was Japan³ with 23 per cent of the population aged 65 and over. Africa is the least aged region of the world owing both to higher fertility and much lower life expectancy. Even in relatively aged populations, centenarians account for only a very small percentage of the total population.

Table 1: Population aged 100 years and over, selected countries.

	Total number of centenarians	Number of centenarians per 100,000 of the total population
Australia (2010)	3,700	17
France (2010)	16,790	26
Japan (2009)	48,000	38
Spain (2010)	8,080	18
UK (2010)	12,640	20
US (2010)	53,360	17

Table notes:

1. Source: Office for National Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (France), National Statistics Institute (Spain), US Census Bureau and Statistics Bureau Japan.

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The UK has nearly nine thousand more centenarians than Australia, but over forty thousand less centenarians than the US, (Table 1). The number of centenarians per 100,000 of the population allows for better comparisons of the number of centenarians between countries. There are 38 centenarians for every 100,000 people in Japan. The US, which has large total numbers of centenarians, has only 17 centenarians per 100,000 people. France, which has a similar size population as the UK has 6 more centenarians per 100,000 people compared to the UK.

(1) US and China figures are for 2009.

(2) Brazil and India figures are 2010 projections (United Nations, 2007-based).

(3) Japan figure is for 2011.

Life expectancy

National Interim Life Tables for 2008-2010 are published today. They show that 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 78.1 years and a newborn baby girl 82.1 years if mortality rates remain the same as they were in 2008-10⁴.

Females continue to live longer than males, but the gap has been closing. Although both sexes have shown annual improvements in life expectancy at birth, since 1980-82 the gap has narrowed from 6 years to 4.1 years.

Based on 2008–10 mortality rates, a man aged 65 could expect to live another 17.8 years, and a woman aged 65 another 20.4 years. The difference between male and female life expectancy in the UK at age 65 has decreased from 4 years in 1980-82 to 2.6 years in 2008-10.

Within the UK, life expectancy varies by country (Table 2). England has the highest life expectancy at birth, 78.4 years for males and 82.4 years for females, while Scotland has the lowest, 75.8 years for males and 80.3 years for females.

England also has the highest life expectancy at age 65 and Scotland the lowest for both men and women.

Table 2

Life expectancy at birth and at age 65, UK and constituent countries, 2008-2010

	At birth		At age 65	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
United Kingdom	78.1	82.1	17.8	20.4
England	78.4	82.4	18.0	20.6
Wales	77.5	81.7	17.5	20.1
Scotland	75.8	80.3	16.6	19.2
Northern Ireland	77.0	81.4	17.3	20.1

Table source: Office for National Statistics

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Across the EU-27 countries, in 2009⁵ the UK was ranked joint 6th for male life expectancy and 17th for female life expectancy, (Table 3). The country with the highest male life expectancy was Sweden at 79.4 years and the country with the highest female life expectancy was France at 85.0 years.

Table 3: Life expectancy at birth, EU-27 countries, (2009)

	Male		Female	
	Life expectancy	Country ranking	Life expectancy	Country ranking
Austria	77.6	12	83.2	8
Belgium	77.3	14	82.8	(Joint) 11
Bulgaria	70.1	23	77.4	(Joint) 26
Cyprus	78.6	5	83.6	4
Czech Republic	74.2	19	80.5	19
Denmark	76.9	15	81.1	18
Finland	76.6	16	83.5	(Joint) 5
Estonia	69.8	(Joint) 24	80.2	20
France	78.0	8	85.0	1
Germany	77.8	(Joint) 9	82.8	(Joint) 11
Greece	77.8	(Joint) 9	82.7	(Joint) 13
Hungary	70.3	22	78.4	24
Ireland	77.4	13	82.5	16
Italy	79.1	2	84.5	3
Latvia	68.1	26	78.0	25
Lithuania	67.5	27	78.7	23
Luxembourg	78.1	(Joint) 6	83.3	7
Malta	77.8	(Joint) 9	82.7	(Joint) 13
The Netherlands	78.7	(Joint) 3	82.9	10
Poland	71.5	20	80.1	21
Portugal	76.5	17	82.6	15
Romania	69.8	(Joint) 24	77.4	(Joint) 26
Slovakia	71.4	21	79.1	22
Slovenia	75.9	18	83.0	9
Spain	78.7	(Joint) 3	84.9	2
Sweden	79.4	1	83.5	(Joint) 5
The United Kingdom	78.1	(Joint) 6	82.1	17

Table notes:

1. Source: Eurostat

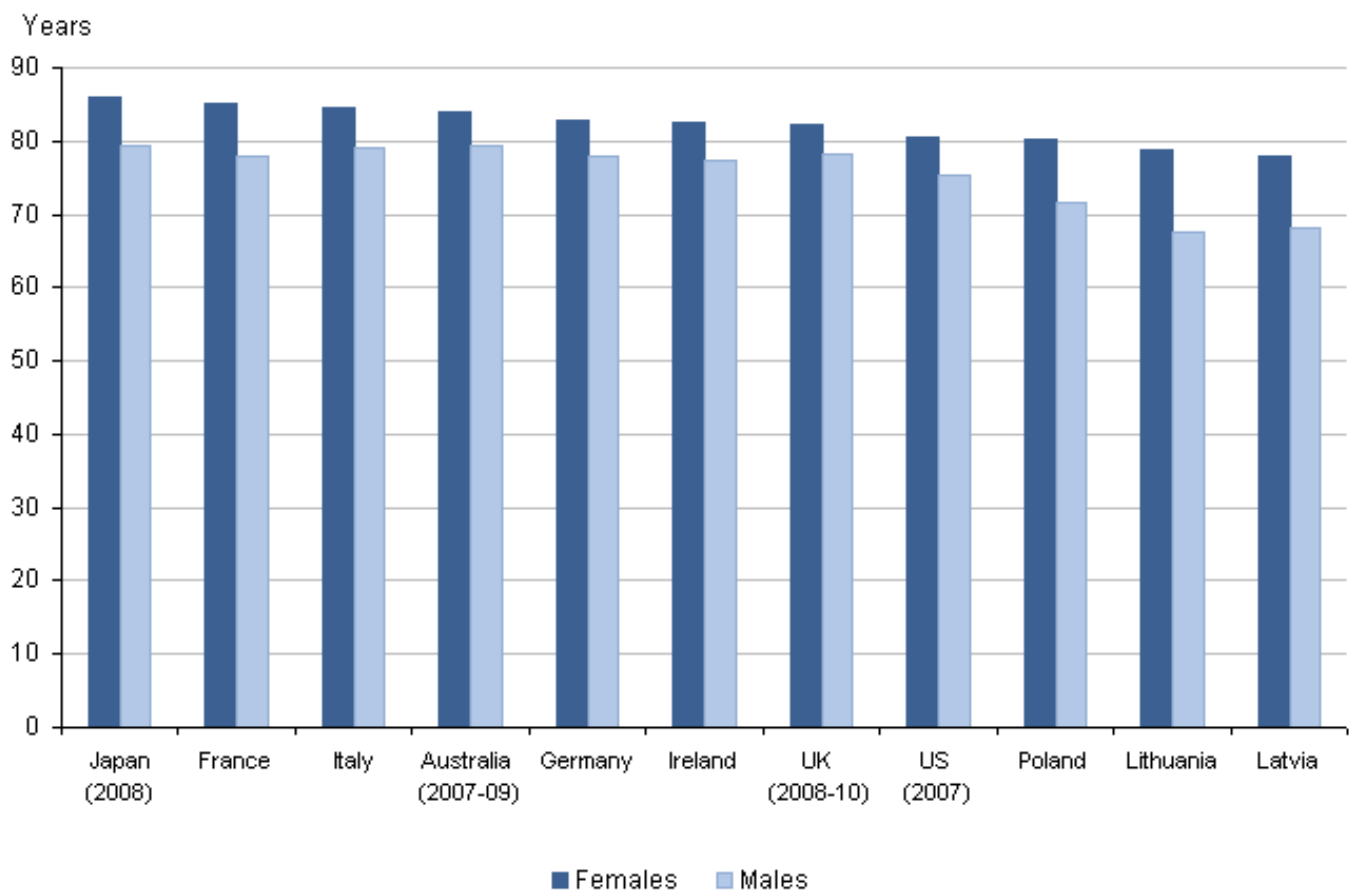
2. Data from the UK is from 2008-10; Italy figure is 2008.

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The difference between male and female life expectancy across the EU-27 varies greatly. Gender differentials in 2009 were largest in the Baltic States (Latvia 9.9 years, Estonia 10.4 years and Lithuania 11.2 years). The country with the smallest gap in male and female life expectancy (4.1 years) was the United Kingdom.

Figure 3: Life expectancy at birth, selected countries, 2009



Notes:

1. Source: Office for National Statistics, Eurostat, Australian Bureau of Statistics, US National Center for Health Statistics, Statistics Bureau Japan.

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Life expectancy for selected EU and other developed countries are shown in Figure 3. Japan has the highest female life expectancy at birth at 86.1 years. Male life expectancy at birth is second highest in Japan and Australia at 79.3 years, behind Sweden at 79.4 years. The US has a low

difference between male and female life expectancy at birth (5 years) but both life expectancy figures are quite low compared to the other countries shown.

(4) These figures make no allowance for any future changes in mortality.

(5) Latest available comparative figures.

Figures in Table 2 and Table 3 are rounded to one decimal place.

Notes

1. Period life expectancy 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. 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.
2. Life expectancy figures for the EU-27 countries are available from [Eurostat](#) and the European Commission, 2011. Also published in their publication [Demography report 2010: older, more numerous and diverse Europeans](#), Luxembourg, Eurostat, April 2011
3. Life expectancy for other countries available from the individual National Statistics Institutes:
 - [Australia Bureau of Statistics:](#)
 - [US National Center for Health Statistics](#)
 - [Statistics Bureau Japan](#)

Health expectancies

Health expectancies add a dimension of the quality of life expectancy, providing a summary measure of the time spent in favourable and unfavourable health states. The ONS publishes two types of health expectancy; healthy life expectancy (HLE) defined as the number of years an individual can expect to spend in very good or good general health, and disability-free life expectancy (DFLE), defined as the number of years an individual can expect to spend free from a limiting chronic illness or disability. They provide a useful guide in the assessment of healthy ageing.

Table 4: Life expectancy, healthy life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy for males and females at birth and at age 65, UK, 2007-2009

	MALES			FEMALES		
	Life	Healthy life	Disability-free life	Life	Healthy life	Disability-free life
	expectancy	expectancy	expectancy	expectancy	expectancy	expectancy
At birth	77.7	63.0	63.4	81.9	65.0	65.1
At age 65	17.6	9.9	10.2	20.2	11.5	11.2

Table source: Office for National Statistics

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The most recent healthy life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy figures for the UK are for the period 2007-09, (Table 4). These show that, as for life expectancy, HLE and DFLE are higher for females than males at birth and at age 65. However, the gap between male and female LE is larger than the gender gap in HLE and in DFLE at both birth and age 65. As a result, the proportion of life spent in very good or good general health (HLE), or free from chronic limiting illness or disability (DFLE), tends to be greater for males than for females.

Notes

1. Since 2006-08 estimates of healthy life expectancy (HLE) are exclusively based on the general health question used in the Minimum European Health Module of the European Union (EU) Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.
2. Latest on [Health expectancy at birth and at age 65 in the UK](#).

Local variations

As a result of increases in the number and proportion of older people, the median age of the UK population is increasing⁶. Over the past 25 years the median age increased from 35 years in 1985 to 39.7 years in 2010. It is projected to continue to increase over the next 25 years, rising to 42 by 2035.

However, the age profile of the UK population varies considerably geographically. In 2010 West Somerset had the highest median age in the UK, at 52.7 years, with the next highest North Norfolk at 51.5 years. Other areas with high median ages were located on the south coast of England and included Christchurch, Rother and East Dorset, all with median ages just over 50 years. The coastal area of Berwick-upon-Tweed in the North East also had a high median age at 50.4 years.

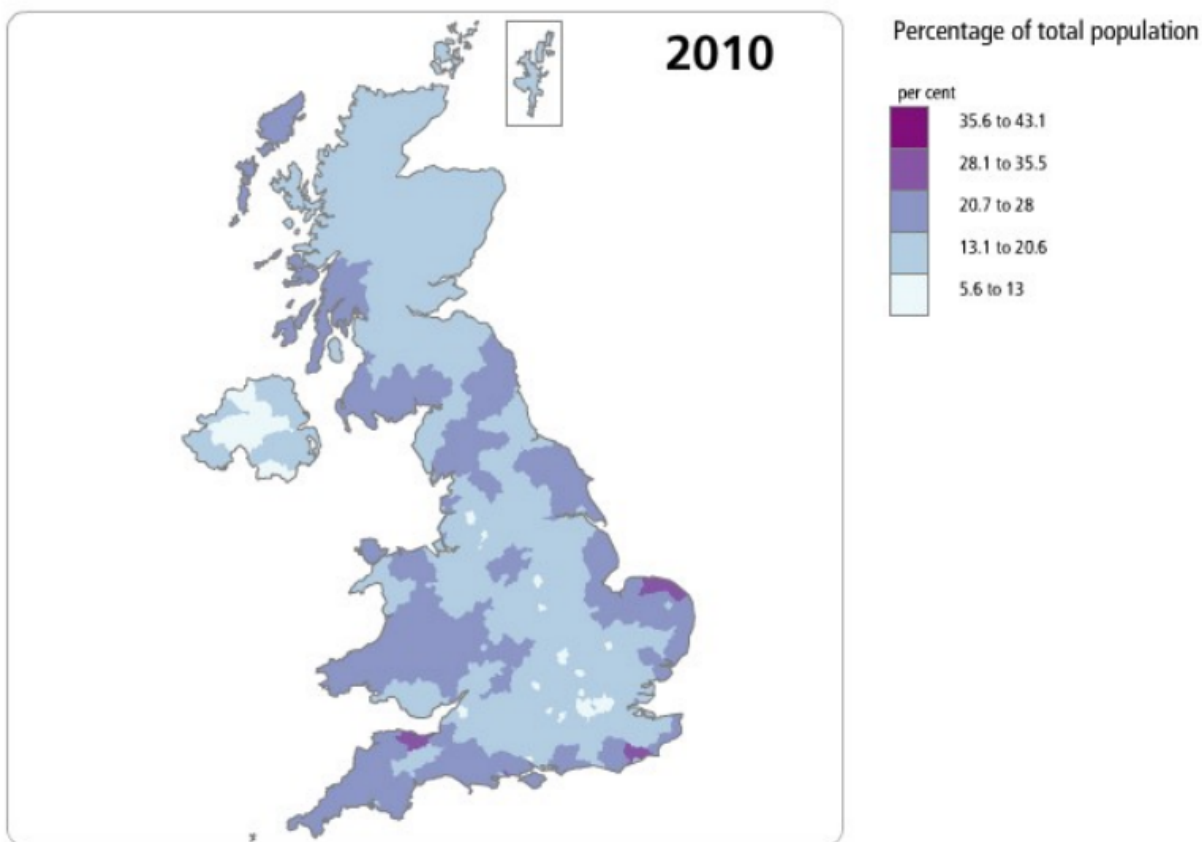
Oxford, Manchester, Cambridge and Nottingham had the lowest median ages in 2010, at 29.2, 29.4, 29.5 and 29.8 respectively. Southampton, Leicester and Norwich also ranked amongst the ten local authorities with the lowest median ages in the UK at around 32 years. Higher education institutions in these areas increase the population of young adults, reducing the average age.

Many inner London boroughs also have low median ages, reflecting relatively high proportions of young adults in their populations and low proportions of older adults. The ten local areas with the smallest proportions of their populations aged 65 and above (with less than ten per cent in this age group) in 2010 were all inner London boroughs; Tower Hamlets had the smallest percentage of people aged 65 and over (7 per cent)

During the year ending June 2010, London had the highest net internal out-migration of people aged 65 and over of all English regions but the highest net internal in-migration of people aged 20-29.

The ten areas with the highest percentages of people aged 65 and over were all located on the east or south coast, reflecting a tendency for people to retire to these areas.

Figure 4: The Ageing of the United Kingdom: Population aged 65 and over, 2010.



Source:ONS, WG, NRS, NISRA. Data: Population estimates 1992-2010; 2008-based National and Subnational projections 2011-2033. Graphic by ONS Data Visualisation Centre. © Crown copyright and database rights 2011. Ordnance Survey 100019153

In the UK in 2010 there were 79 men aged 65 and over for every 100 women of the same age; however this sex ratio varies by local area. Glasgow had the lowest sex ratio of people aged 65 and over in 2010 (64 men per 100 women of the same age) and Luton had the highest (93 men per 100 women). In fact, four out of the five local areas with the lowest sex ratio of men to women aged 65

and over were located in Scotland; the other was Belfast in Northern Ireland. The five local areas with the highest sex ratio of men to women aged 65 and over were located in the East Midlands and East of England, all with sex ratios above 87 men for every 100 women.

More information on population ageing at a local level is readily accessible using the ONS ['Ageing in the UK'](#) mapping tool.

⁽⁶⁾ Median age is the age at which half of the population are younger and half are older.

Notes

1. Population at local areas refers to local and unitary authorities in England and Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government district areas in Northern Ireland.

2. Sub-national population projections for the constituent countries of the UK:

[2008 based sub-national population projections for England](#)

[2008 based sub-national population projections for Wales](#) [2008 based sub-national population projections for Scotland](#) [2008 based sub-national population projections for Northern Ireland](#)

3. Latest on [internal migration within the UK](#).

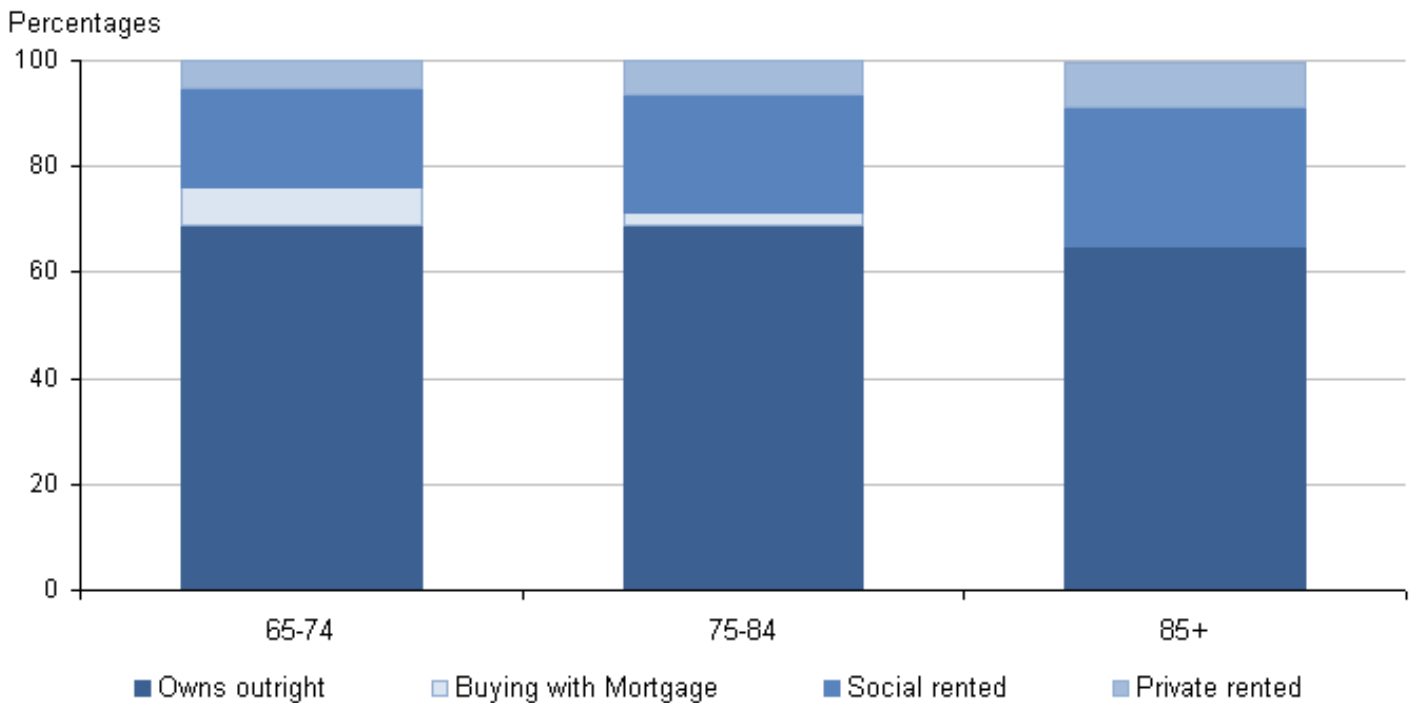
4. ['Ageing in the UK': Interactive mapping tool](#)

Housing tenure and living arrangements

Older women are more likely than older men to live alone and the percentage increases with advancing age. In 2009 in Great Britain, 32 per cent of women aged 65-74 lived alone compared to 22 per cent of men in this age group; for those aged 75 and over the proportion living alone increases to 60 per cent for women compared to 36 per cent for men.

In 2009, 73 per cent of older people households in the UK (where the household reference person was someone aged 65 or over) were owner occupied and of these the vast majority owned their homes outright, with only 6 per cent overall being bought with a mortgage or loan. Within the 65 and over age group, there is a decrease in owner occupation with age: 76 per cent of those aged 65 to 74 owned their own homes compared to 65 per cent of those aged 85 and over.

The percentage of older people households living in rented accommodation increases with age. In 2009, 19 per cent for those aged 65-74 were in social rented accommodation compared to 26 per cent for those aged 85 and over. Relatively small proportions of people aged 65 and over live in privately rented accommodation; however, this also increases with age, from 5 per cent for those aged 65-74 to 8 per cent for those aged 85 and over.

Figure 5: Housing tenure by age of Household Reference Person (HRP), Great Britain, 2009

Source: General Lifestyle Survey - Office for National Statistics

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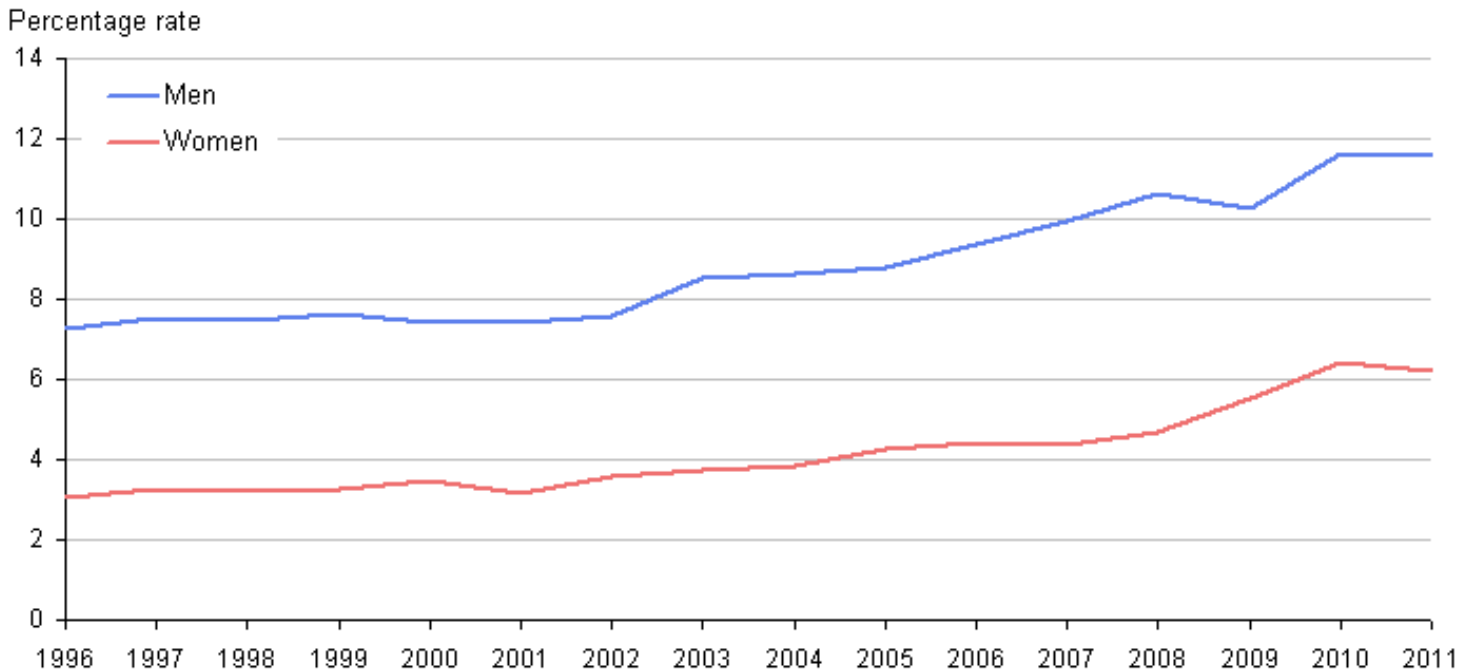
Notes

1. Housing tenure and living arrangements estimates are from the [ONS General Lifestyle Survey, 2009](#)

Labour market

The number and proportion of older people in the labour force has increased over the last fifteen years. In May to July 1996, 65.9 per cent of men and 49.5 per cent of women aged 50 – 64 were employed; by May to July 2011 this had risen to 70.7 per cent and 59.4 per cent respectively.

The employment rate of men and women aged 65 and over also increased over this period (Figure 6). In May to July 1996, 7.3 per cent of men and 3.0 per cent of women in this age group were employed; by May to July 2011 this had risen to 11.6 per cent and 6.2 per cent respectively. In all there were a total of 862,000 persons aged 65 and over in employment, comprising 3 per cent of all persons aged 16 and over in employment.

Figure 6: Older people (aged 65 and over) in employment 1996 to 2011, UK

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Each year on the chart refers to a three month period from May to July.

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Notes

1. Latest [labour market statistics](#) for employment rates of older people.

Income and poverty

In the UK average gross pensioner incomes increased by 50 per cent in real terms between 1996/97 and 2009/10, ahead of the growth in average earnings.

In 2009/10, pensioner couples⁷ received an average gross income of £607 per week, single male pensioners received £320 per week and single female pensioners £274. The largest source of income for pensioners is 'benefit income', which includes state pension income and benefits. Occupational pensions are also a significant source of income.

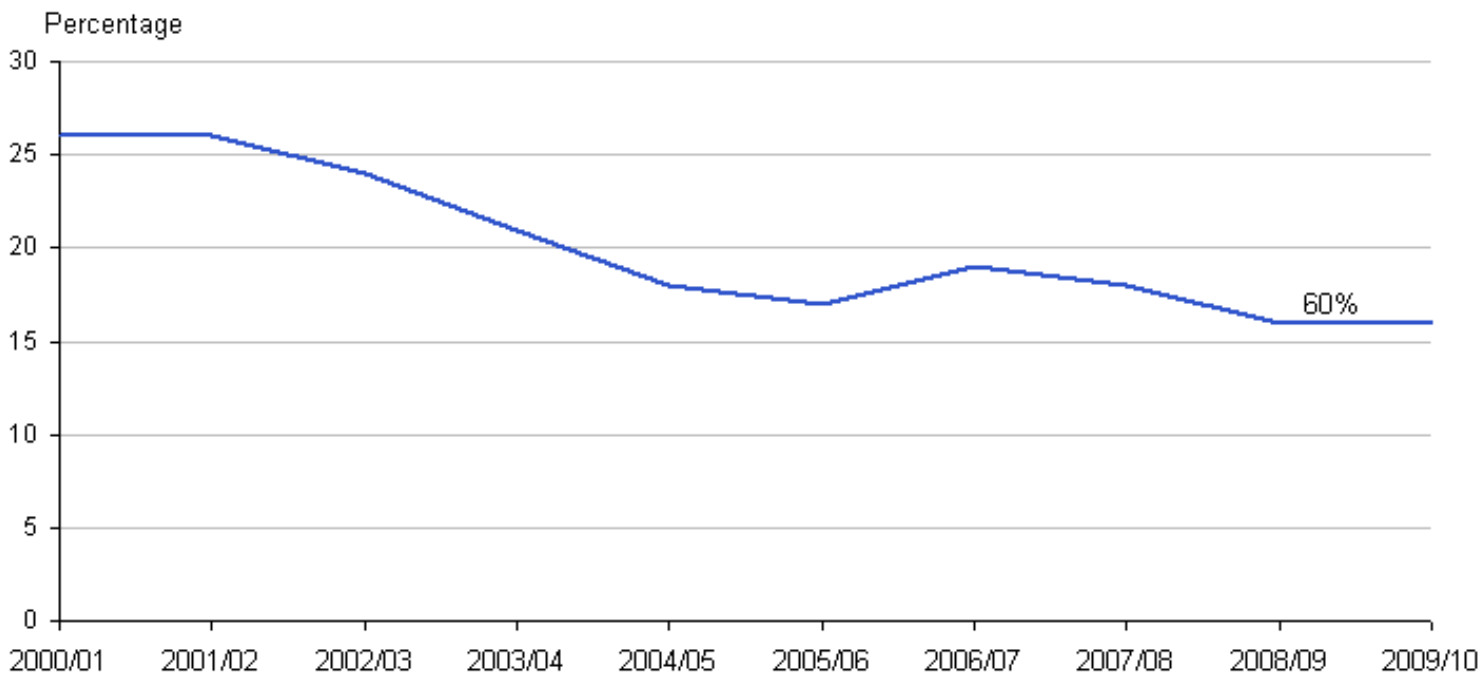
Average incomes conceal considerable variations between poorer and richer pensioners. When incomes are ranked and divided into five equal groups (quintiles), pensioner couples in the highest quintile in 2007-10 received a median net income 3.8 times that of those in the lowest income

quintile. Single pensioners in the highest quintile received a median net income 3.1 times that of those in the lowest quintile.

On average, older pensioners have lower incomes than younger pensioners and male pensioners have higher incomes than female pensioners. In 2009/10 couples where the household head was aged 75 or over had an average gross income of £491 a week compared with £653 for those with a household head aged under 75; single male pensioners aged 75 and over had an average gross income of £315 per week compared to £325 per week for single male pensioners aged under 75; and single female pensioners aged 75 and over had an average gross income of £255 per week compared to £297 per week for single female pensioners aged under 75.

Despite increases in pensioner incomes over the last fifteen years, in 2009/10, the incomes of an estimated 1.8 million pensioners in the UK (16 percent) fell below the most commonly used official measure of relative poverty (less than 60 per cent of equivalised⁸ contemporary median income after housing costs). Two-thirds of these pensioners were women.

Figure 7: Percentage of pensioners falling below 60 per cent threshold of equivalised contemporary median household income, After Housing Costs (AHC), UK



Notes:

1. Source: Households Below Average Income (HBAI), Department for Work and Pensions
2. Pensioners are defined as individuals above state pension age and results for couples exclude partners of working age.

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Relative poverty also varies by housing tenure. 13 per cent of pensioners owning their own homes live in households with less than 60 per cent of equivalised contemporary median income after housing costs compared to 27 per cent of those renting in the social sector and 31 per cent privately renting.

Overall, the number of pensioners in relative poverty has declined over the last decade, from an estimated 2.7 million (26 per cent) in 2000/2001, (Figure 7)

⁽⁷⁾ Pensioner couples: married or cohabiting pensioners where one or more are over state pension age. Single pensioners: people over state pension age (65 for men or 60 for women in 2009/10)

⁽⁸⁾ Equivalisation involves adjusting households' incomes depending on household size, to better reflect their needs.

Notes

1. 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 of state pension age'
2. National statistics on [Households Below Average Income \(HBAI\)](#) are produced by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Background notes

1. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Relations Office.

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The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated the 'Interim Life Tables' and 'Estimates of the Very Elderly' as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

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