

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Past trends

Whereas the total fertility rate increased steadily from the 1950's level of 2.18 children per woman to 2.81 in 1960-1965, this trend reversed in the decades afterwards, and fertility fell continuously to 1.78 in 1990-1995. At the same time, life expectancy increased during the entire period of 1950-1995 from 69.2 to 76.2 years for both sexes. Hence, the proportion of the population aged 65 years or older increased over the same period of time from 10.7 per cent to 15.9 per cent.

At the beginning of the 20th century, at a time when both fertility and mortality were higher, the potential support ratio was 13.3 persons aged 15-64 for each person aged 65 or older. The ratio had declined to 6.2 in 1950, and declined further to 4.1 in 1995.

Scenario I

Scenario I, which is the medium variant of the 1998 United Nations projections, assumes a total of 1.2 million net migrants between 1995 and 2050. From 1995 to 2025, 40,000 persons would enter Britain annually and none after 2025. The overall population of the United Kingdom would increase from 58.3 million in 1995 to 59.9 million in 2025 and thereafter decline to 56.6 million in 2050 (The results of the 1998 United Nations projections are shown in the annex tables). The population in working-age, aged 15-64 years, would increase from 37.8 million in 1995 to 39.2 million in 2010; afterwards there would be a continuous decline to 33.4 million in 2050. By that date 1.9 per cent of the total population would be post-1995 migrants or their descendants. The population aged 65 or over, on the other hand, would increase from 9.2 million (15.9 per cent) to 14.1 million (24.9 per cent) in 2050. As a result, the potential support ratio would drop from 4.09 in 1995 to 2.37 in 2050.

Scenario II

Scenario II, which is the medium variant with zero migration, is based on the fertility and mortality assumptions of the medium variant of the 1998 United Nations projections, but without any migration to the United Kingdom after 1995. The overall population would decrease to 55.6 million in 2050, one million less than in scenario I; the population aged 15-64 years would decrease to 32.7 million, 700,000 less than in scenario I. The elderly population (aged 65 or older) would increase to 13.9 million in 2050 and the potential support ratio would be at 2.36. In general, there are only slight differences between scenarios I and II regarding the population trends of the country.

Scenario III

Scenario III keeps the population in the United Kingdom constant at its maximum of 58.8 million people in 2020. In order to do so, the United Kingdom would have to receive 2.6 million migrants between 2020 and 2050. In 2050, 5.5 per cent of the total population would be post-1995 migrants or their descendants. This influx would result in a population of labour-force age of 35 million in 2050, and the population aged 65 or older would reach 14 million in 2050, 24 per cent of the total population. The potential support ratio would be 2.5.

Scenario IV

Scenario IV keeps the age group between 15-64 years constant at its maximum of 38.9 million from 2010 on. In order to do that a total of 6.2 million immigrants would be needed between 2010 and 2050, which would increase the overall population to 64.3 million in 2050. By that date 13.6 per cent of the total population would be post-1995 migrants or their descendants. The proportion of the elderly would be 22.9 per cent, and the potential support ratio 2.6 in 2050.

Scenario V

Scenario V keeps the potential support ratio at its 1995 level of 4.09. Keeping this ratio would require 59.8 million migrants between 1995 and 2050, slightly more than one million migrants a year on average. The overall population would reach 136 million in 2050, of which 80 million (59 per cent) would be post-1995 migrants or their descendants.

Discussion

Net migration in the United Kingdom amounted to 660,000 persons between 1990 and 1998, an average of 73,000 persons per year. In 1990, the proportion of the total population who were foreign-born was 6.5 per cent. This is comparable to the numbers needed to keeping the total population constant, 88,000 migrants per year, and to the proportion of the total population in 2050 who would be post-1995 migrants or their descendants, 5.5 per cent. However, the numbers of migrants needed to keep the population in working-age constant are about twice the level of the past decade. Figure IV.16 shows, for scenarios I, II, III and IV, the population of the United Kingdom in 2050, indicating the share that are post-1995 migrants and their descendants. Scenario V, keeping the potential support ratio constant, would demand more than one million immigrants annually. This would greatly exceed immigration rates that the country experienced in the past.

In absence of migration, the figures show that it would be necessary to raise the upper limit of the working-age to about 72 years in order to obtain in 2050 the same potential support ratio observed in 1995 in the United Kingdom, i.e. 4.1 persons of working-age per each older person past working-age.

TABLE IV.18. POPULATION INDICATORS FOR UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND BY PERIOD FOR EACH SCENARIO

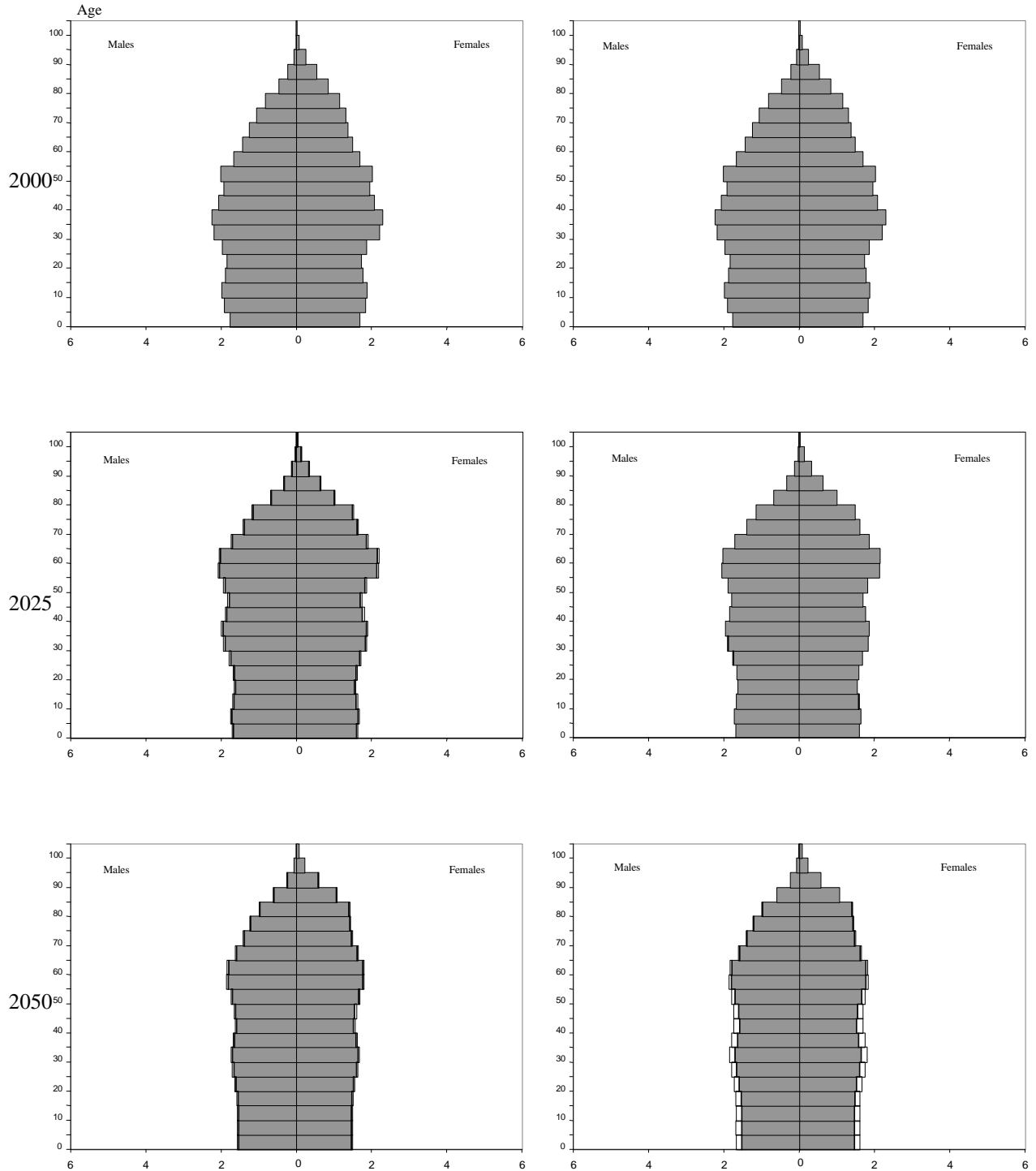
<i>Scenario</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>
<i>Period</i>	<i>Medium variant</i>	<i>Medium variant with zero migration</i>	<i>Constant total population</i>	<i>Constant age group 15-64</i>	<i>Constant ratio 15-64/65 years or older</i>
<i>A. Average annual number of migrants (thousands)</i>					
1995-2000	40	0	0	0	11
2000-2025	40	0	2	121	947
2025-2050	0	0	103	129	1 441
2000-2050	20	0	53	125	1 194
1995-2050	22	0	48	114	1 087
<i>B. Total number of migrants (thousands)</i>					
1995-2000	200	0	0	0	55
2000-2025	1 000	0	61	3 025	23 687
2025-2050	0	0	2 572	3 222	36 035
2000-2050	1 000	0	2 634	6 247	59 722
1995-2050	1 200	0	2 634	6 247	59 775
<i>C. Total population (thousands)</i>					
1950	50 616	-	-	-	-
1975	56 226	-	-	-	-
1995	58 308	-	-	-	-
2000	58 830	58 600	58 600	58 600	58 655
2025	59 961	58 768	58 833	62 248	86 856
2050	56 667	55 594	58 833	64 354	136 138
<i>D. Age group 0-14 (thousands)</i>					
1950	11 306	-	-	-	-
1975	13 121	-	-	-	-
1995	11 241	-	-	-	-
2000	11 069	11 033	11 033	11 033	11 048
2025	10 071	9 872	9 890	10 796	17 174
2050	9 153	8 968	9 775	10 759	26 299
<i>E. Age group 15-64 (thousands)</i>					
1950	33 881	-	-	-	-
1975	35 261	-	-	-	-
1995	37 811	-	-	-	-
2000	38 328	38 207	38 207	38 207	38 246
2025	37 166	36 465	36 510	38 873	55 979
2050	33 406	32 745	35 009	38 873	88 239
<i>F. Age group 65+ (thousands)</i>					
1950	5 429	-	-	-	-
1975	7 844	-	-	-	-
1995	9 256	-	-	-	-
2000	9 433	9 360	9 360	9 360	9 362
2025	12 724	12 431	12 433	12 578	13 703
2050	14 107	13 881	14 048	14 722	21 600
<i>G. Potential support ratio 15-64/65+</i>					
1950	6.24	-	-	-	-
1975	4.50	-	-	-	-
1995	4.09	-	-	-	-
2000	4.06	4.08	4.08	4.08	4.09
2025	2.92	2.93	2.94	3.09	4.09
2050	2.37	2.36	2.49	2.64	4.09

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Figure IV.15. Age-sex structures by scenario for 2000, 2025 and 2050
(Population in millions)

Medium variant

Constant total population



■ Population without migration after 1995 □ Migrants plus descendants

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Figure IV.15 (continued)

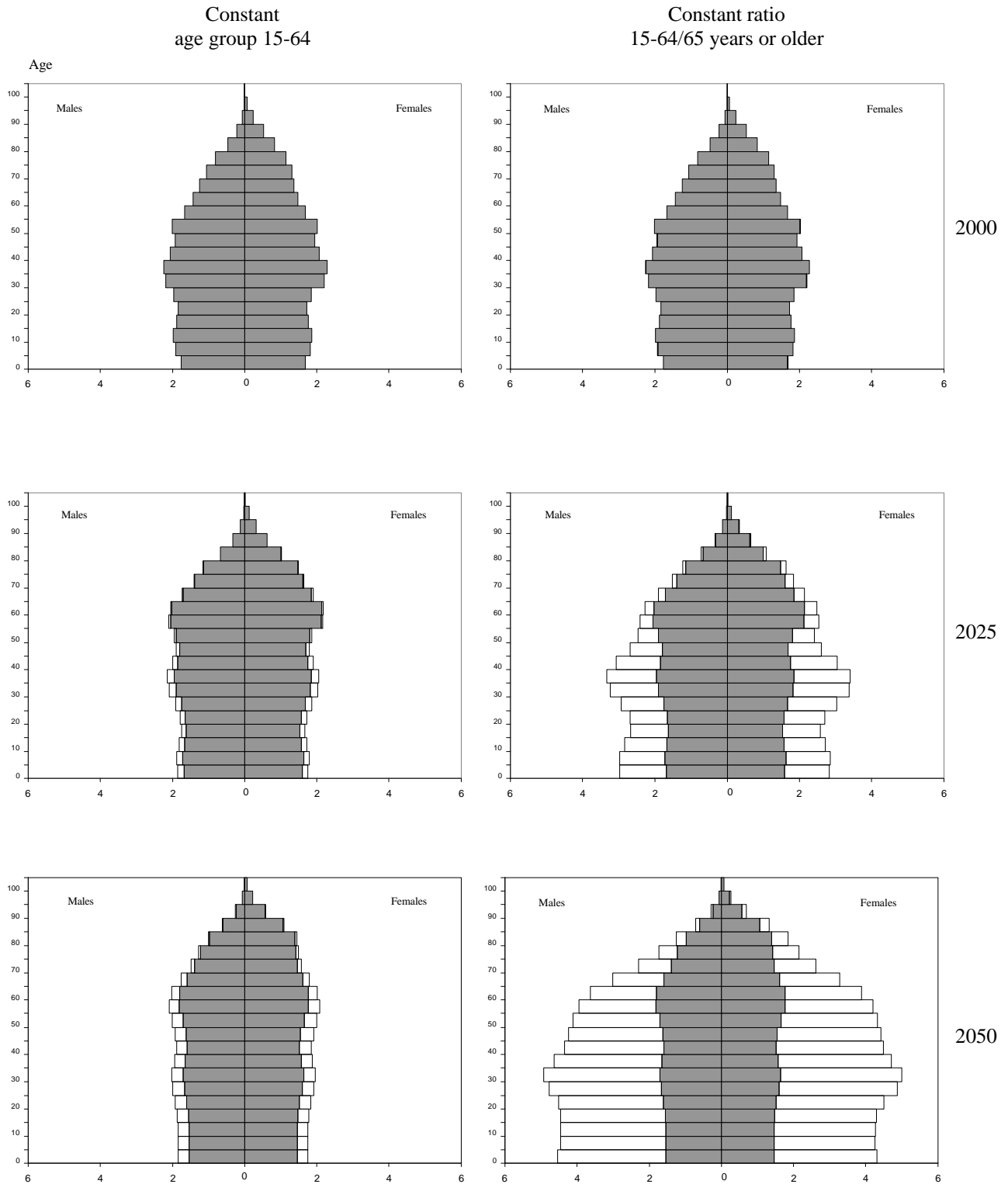


Figure IV.16. Population of the United Kingdom in 2050, indicating those who are post-1995 migrants and their descendants, by scenario

