

Population Estimates by Ethnic Group: Important Note on Reliability of Estimates for Subnational Areas

These estimates are "experimental" statistics and have not yet received formal National Statistics status. They should therefore be used with appropriate caution and awareness of their limitations. Users are advised to be cautious in interpreting estimates for subnational areas, particularly in areas with high internal migration flows for the following reasons.

Comparison with other data sources, such as the Annual Population Survey (APS), and user feedback suggests that the Population Estimates by Ethnic Group (PEEGs) may have drifted from the true values for some subnational areas between 2001 and 2009. At the regional level, the difference between the PEEGs and the APS is evident in the estimates for London, where the 2009 PEEGs estimate that the White British group makes up 60% of the population of London while the APS estimates the proportion as 51%.

Whilst these differences between the PEEGs and the APS cannot be explained definitively using currently available data sources, one plausible cause is that the estimated propensity of each ethnic group to move within England and Wales - or more precisely, the estimated relative propensities of each ethnic group to migrate from a particular Local Authority District to elsewhere in England and Wales - do not accurately represent the true values. There is a risk that the existing methodology could introduce a systematic over-estimate, or under-estimate, of the internal migration flows for that ethnic group in an area, and thus a bias in the population estimate for that group in that area.

We are conducting an assessment of the methods used to produce the PEEGs. This assessment will also review the accuracy of the estimates, and the assumptions underlying them, by comparing with the results of the 2011 Census. Please note that we will not be publishing any further sets of PEEGs until this work is complete. In view of the substantial user interest in the estimates, we are continuing to make past PEEGs available. However, users are advised to be cautious in interpreting estimates for subnational areas, particularly in areas with high internal migration flow.

Population Estimates by Ethnic Group Team June 2011

Contact:

Email: epe@ons.gov.uk
Tel: 01329 444690