



Research Note

August 2025

2022-based Population Projections for Sandwell

National and Sub-National Population projections are produced periodically by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Sub-national projections provide an estimate of the future size and age structure of the population of local authorities in England and are used as a common framework for informing local policy and planning as they are produced in a consistent way across the country.

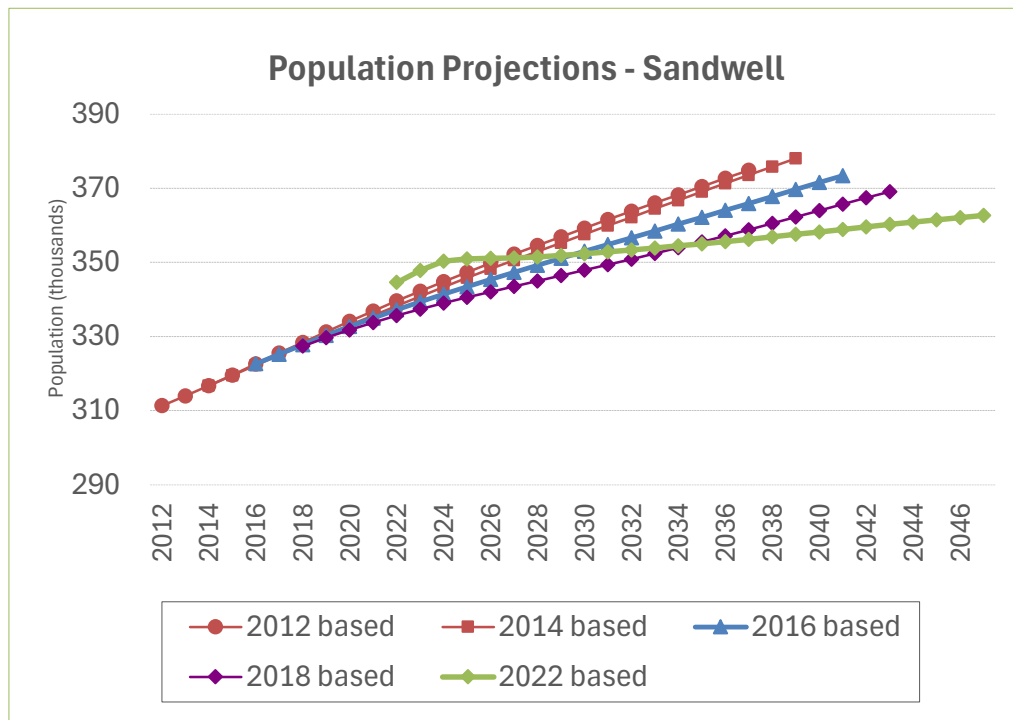
They cover a 25-year projection period and the latest (2022 based) provide estimates of the future population by age and gender, based on local trends in fertility, mortality and migration over the last five years, constrained to the assumptions made for the national projections. They give an indication of what the future population size and age and sex structure might be if recent trends continued. They are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict the impact that future government or local policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors might have on demographic behaviour or the capacity of an area to accommodate a change in population.

Please note – according to the 2024 mid-Year Population Estimates, Sandwell's population has already exceeded the figure suggested for 2032 in these Projections.

Headline Summary

The projections show an increase in the population of Sandwell of 18,064 between 2022 and 2047, from 344,582 to 362,646, a rise of 5.2%. Over the first 10 years 2022-2032, they show an increase of 8,687 (+2.5%), to 353,269.

After starting above the level of previous projections, the rise in the 2022 based figures is much less pronounced than previously suggested. By 2035 the 2022 based projections are 500 lower than the previous set, and at 2042 they are 7,900 lower.

Figure 1

At +5.2%, Sandwell has the lowest rate of projected increase to 2047 of the Black Country Boroughs and also the lowest in the whole of the West Midlands conurbation (along with Birmingham). The projected increase is the 6th lowest in the Region.

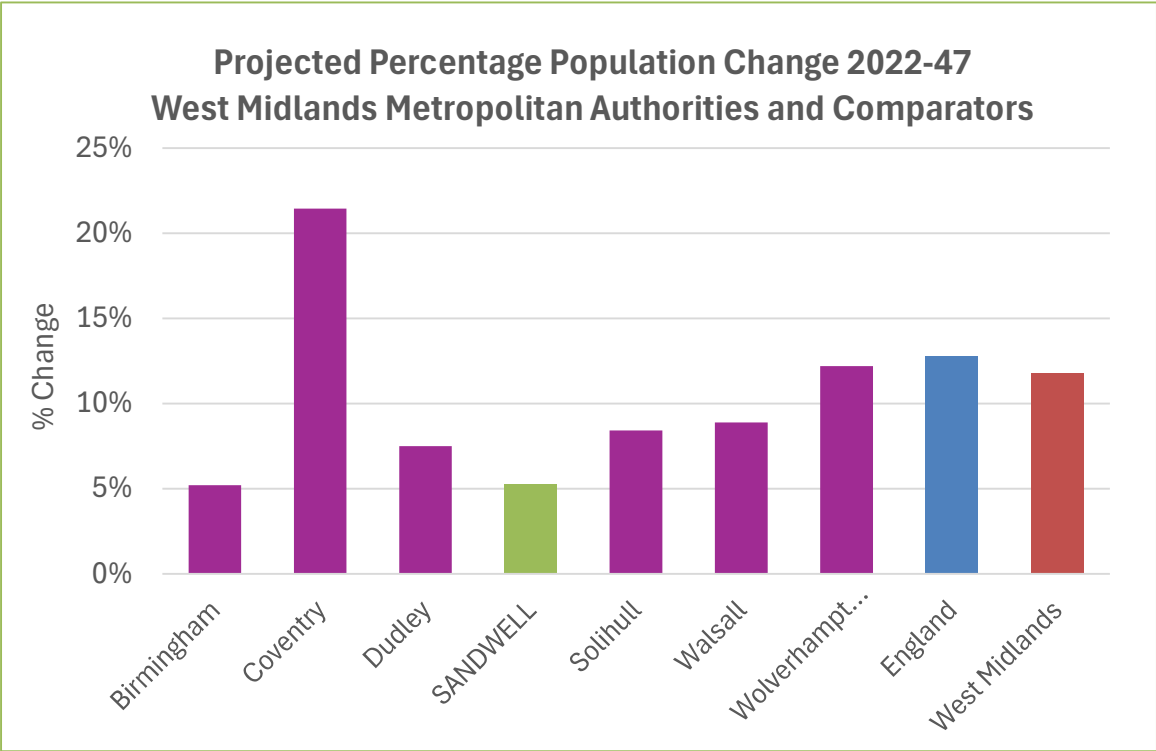
Sandwell has a projected increase that is lower than that for England (+12.7%) and the West Midlands region (11.8%).

In total, seventeen local authorities in the West Midlands region have a projected rate of increase higher than that for England as a whole, the highest being Stratford-on-Avon (+35.9%) and Rugby (+26.0%).

The projected increase to 2032 for Sandwell (+2.5%) is the lowest in the West Midlands conurbation, and compares to +6.4% for England and +5.9% for the West Midlands region.

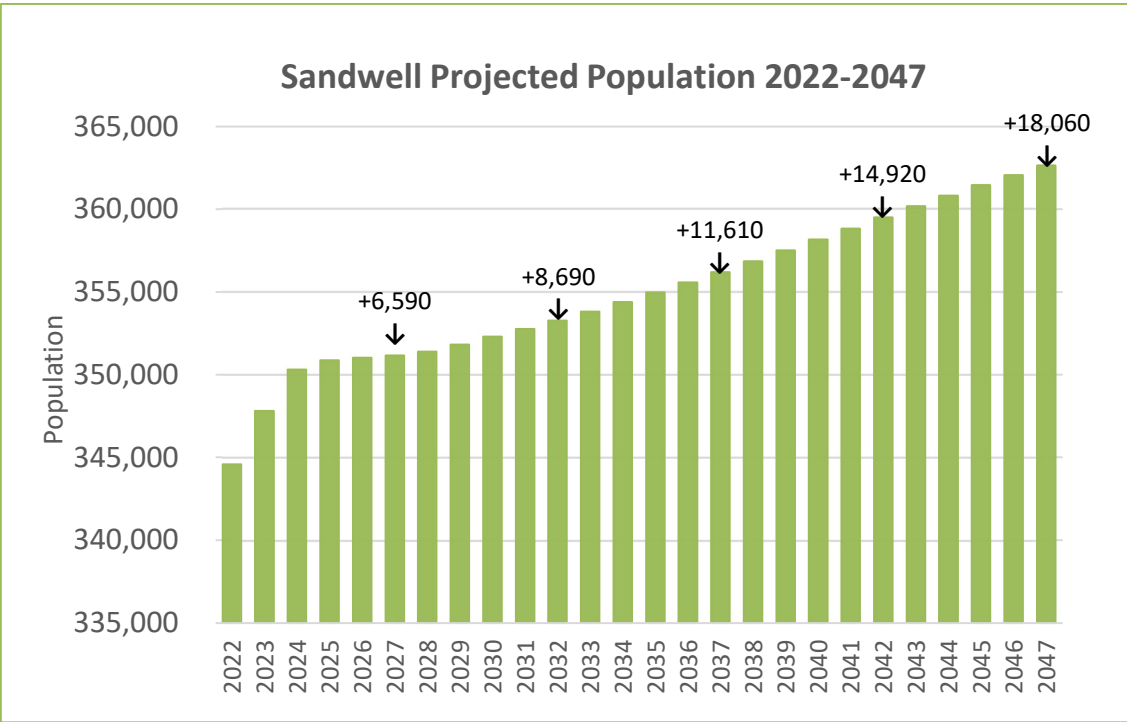
Overall, all but seven local authorities in England are projected to grow by mid-2032.

Figure 2



The projected change at 5 year intervals through the total 25 year projection period is shown in the chart below. The average annual increase is 723. In the first 10 years, the population is projected to increase by 2.5% in Sandwell, compared with a projected growth for England of 6.4% over the same period.

Figure 3



Projections by Age Group

Sandwell has a relatively young age profile compared with England as a whole. International immigration has contributed to this; there have been significant increases in young families; almost 30% of the population aged 25-34 were born outside the UK and nearly 60% of births in the Borough in 2024 were to parents where either one or both were born outside of the UK.

At the same time there have been large proportional increases in the very elderly, aged 85+. These increases in both children and the elderly have significant implications for the council in terms of service demand.

The median age in Sandwell is projected to rise from 37 years in 2022 to 38 years in 2032. In England, the median age is projected to be 41 years in 2032.

Over the first 10 years of the projection period, the greatest projected increases are in people aged 65-69, 70-74 and 20-24 as the current age cohorts are rolled forward. There are decreases in the under 15 age groups and also those aged 50-59 years. In 2032, 23% of people are projected to be aged 18 years and under, down from 26% in 2022. This is above average for England in 2032 (20%).

Over the full 25 year period, all age groups over 25 years show an increase. The greatest numerical increases are among older people, particularly the age groups 75-79 and 80-84. There are also large increases in the number of 65-69 year olds and 45-49's. The greatest percentage increases are in the very elderly age groups. All groups aged under 25 show a decline, with the largest numerical and percentage fall in the 10-14 year age group.

The population pyramids in Figure 4 show the change over the first 10 years and the full 25 years.

Figure 4



A comparison with the equivalent pyramids for England (below) illustrates Sandwell’s current younger age profile with their wider bases. The pyramids on the right, showing the projected growth by 2047, show the decline in the younger age groups is more marked in Sandwell than England, with increases in the older age groups for both Sandwell and nationally.



Children

There has been a steady number of births in Sandwell in recent years, although 2024 has seen a rise to numbers last seen in 2017. In 2021, there were 4,230 births, by 2024 this has increased to 4,670. In 2022 there were more 10-14 year olds than any other of the 5 year age bands shown in the population pyramids, which reflects higher birth rates 10 years ago.

The projected change over the first 10 years shows falls in the numbers of children aged under 15 (-8,920), with the largest fall in the number aged 5-9. The projected number of births is fairly consistent across the projection period, with a slight decline to just below 4,000 towards the end of the projection period (although the numbers of births used in the projections are lower than the actual figures we have seen in Sandwell in the last few years).

Over the full 25 year projection period the number of children (aged 0-14) is projected to continue to fall with a decrease of 10,680 over the 25 years. This is a decline of 14.9% compared with a fall of 7.2% for England.

Working Age

There is a projected increase of 14,230 (+6.5%) people of approximate working age (16-64) over the 25 year period. The working age population as a proportion of the total population is projected to increase slightly from 63.2% in 2022 to 64.7% in 2032, with a fall again to 64.0% in 2047.

Older People

By 2047, there is projected to be an additional 15,150 older people (aged 65+) living in Sandwell, an increase of 30%. Older people are projected to increase as a proportion of the total population from 14.7% to 18.1%.

The greatest proportional increases are among the elderly. The population aged 80-84 is expected to increase by 47%, whilst the number aged 85+ is expected to increase by 43.7% over the projection period.

Components of Population Change

The assumptions made in the calculation of these projections result in international migration being the main contributor to the population increase in Sandwell from 2022 to 2047. International migration into Sandwell is assumed to fall slightly after the first 3 years to an annual inflow of 3,950. Outflow falls after the first 7 years to a level of 1,672. Internal migration (from or to other parts of England), both in and out of Sandwell is projected to result in a net decline in

population numbers, while cross border migration (to or from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) is assumed to remain stable (but with a net decline). Natural change (births minus deaths) results in an increase in population, but at a much lower level than international migration.

However, migration assumptions are the major source of uncertainty for long-term population projections. Future international migration is more difficult to project than fertility and mortality because migration flows are typically affected by sudden changes in economic, social, or political factors which are hard to predict or quantify.

It's worth noting that, at the local level, population change is also influenced by economic development and housing policies, factors which are not included in these projections.

Conclusions

The 2022 based population projections for Sandwell indicate an increase of 18,064 (+5.2%) between 2022 and 2047 to 362,646. Sandwell has the lowest rate of projected increase of the Black Country boroughs and also the lowest in the whole of the West Midlands conurbation (along with Birmingham).

The change in population follows a similar pattern to that nationally across the age groups, although with much greater percentage decreases in children and less pronounced increases in the very elderly. The increases in elderly people will place further pressure on council services, particularly on adult social care, whilst the fall in the number of children will have impacts on Education and Children's Services, together with implications for future population growth in the Borough.

The biggest factor in this population change is net international migration, which will increase the population by 27,178 people by 2032. This is different to the majority of areas in England, where net internal migration is projected to be the biggest factor in population change. However, migration patterns are difficult to predict and are the main source of uncertainty for long-term projections.

Source: Subnational population projections for England from Office for National Statistics – Migration category variant 2022

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