This article gives an overview of the development of European Union (EU) population statistics, detailing the two components of population change: natural population change and net migration plus statistical adjustment. More information on net migration is provided within an article on migration and migrant population statistics.

**EU-28 population continues to grow**

The current demographic situation in the EU-28 is characterised by continuing population growth. While the population of the EU-28 as a whole increased during 2018, the population of 10 EU Member States declined. The latest information available is also of interest, as 2018 is the second consecutive year (since the series began in 1961) when there is a natural decrease in the EU-28. The population change (positive, with 1.1 million more inhabitants) is therefore due to net migration.

On 1 January 2019 the population of the EU-28 was estimated at 513.5 million inhabitants, which was 1.1 million more than a year before. The increase in population numbers during 2018 was similar to that recorded during 2017.

Over a longer period, the population of the EU-28 grew from 406.7 million in 1960 to 513.5 million in 2019, an increase of 106.8 million people (see Figure 1). The rate of population growth has slowed gradually in recent decades: for example, the EU-28's population increased, on average, by about 1.4 million persons per year during the period 2005–19, compared with an average increase of around 3.3 million persons per year during the 1960s.
In 2018, deaths outnumbered live births in the EU-28 (for the second consecutive year), resulting in the aforementioned natural decrease in the population. The increase in population recorded during 2018 for the EU-28 was therefore due to net migration and statistical adjustment; there were however variations in the patterns observed in the EU Member States as shown below. In 2018, net migration and statistical adjustment accounted for an increase of almost 1.5 million persons, more than in 2017 (1.2 million); since 1992, net migration and statistical adjustment has been the main determinant of population growth in the EU-28 (see Figure 2 for rates per 1 000 persons).
Net migration in the EU-28 increased considerably from the mid-1980s onwards, while the number of live births fell, and the number of deaths increased. The gap between live births and deaths in the EU-28 narrowed considerably from 1961 onwards (see Figure 3). In recent years, the difference between births and deaths (the natural change in population) has been very low and — as noted above — a natural decrease in population numbers was recorded in 2015, 2017 and then again in 2018 when the number of deaths passed the number of births. Since the number of deaths is expected to increase as the baby-boom generation continues to age, and assuming that the fertility rate remains at a relatively low level, negative natural population change (more deaths than births) could well continue. In this case, the EU-28’s overall population decline or growth is likely to depend largely on the contribution made by migration.
Population change at a national level

The population of individual EU Member States on 1 January 2019 ranged from 0.5 million in Malta to 83.0 million in Germany. Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy together comprised more than half (54 %) of the total EU-28 population on 1 January 2019 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic balance, 2018(thousands)Source: Eurostat (demo_gind)

The population of the EU-28 increased during 2018 by 1.1 million people. Population growth was unevenly distributed across the EU Member States: a total of 18 Member States observed an increase in their respective populations, while the population fell in the remaining 10 Member States. Malta, Luxembourg, Ireland, Cyprus
and Sweden recorded the highest population growth rates in 2018, with increases above 10.0 per 1,000 persons, almost five times the EU-28 average of 2.1 per 1,000 persons (see Table 2). Among these five EU Member States with the highest rates of population growth, the fastest expansion in population was recorded in Malta with an increase of 36.8 per 1,000 persons. The largest relative decreases in population were reported by Latvia (-7.5 per 1,000 persons), Bulgaria and Croatia (both -7.1 per 1,000 persons).

Table 2: Crude rates of population change, 2016-18 (per 1,000 persons) Source: Eurostat (demo_gind)

Analysing the two components of population change in the national data, eight types of population change can be identified, distinguishing growth or decline and the relative weights of natural change and net migration — see Table 3 for the full typology. During 2018, the highest crude rate of natural increase of population was registered in Ireland (6.1 per 1,000 persons), followed by Cyprus (4.1) and Luxembourg (3.2). A total of 15 EU Member States had negative rates of natural change, with deaths outnumbering births the most in Bulgaria (-6.6 per 1,000 persons), Latvia (-4.9), Lithuania (-4.1), Croatia, Hungary and Romania (all -3.9). In relative terms, Malta (35.3 per 1,000 persons), Luxembourg (16.3), Cyprus (9.3) and Ireland (9.0) had the highest crude rates of net migration in 2018, while Croatia (-3.3 per 1,000 persons), Romania (-2.8), Latvia (-2.5) and Lithuania (-1.2) recorded the largest negative crude net migration rates.

Table 3: Contribution of natural change and net migration (and statistical adjustment) to population change, 2018 Source: Eurostat (demo_gind)

Among the 18 EU Member States where the population increased in 2018, 12 recorded both a natural increase and net migration contributing to their population growth. In Germany, Estonia, Spain, Slovenia and Finland, the positive net migration was the sole driver of population growth, as natural population change was negative.
Of the 10 EU Member States that reported a reduction in their level of population during 2018, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Portugal recorded a decline in the population solely due to negative natural change, while net migration was positive. In Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania the decrease in the level of population was mostly driven by a negative rate of natural population change, supplemented by a negative rate of net migration.

Source data for tables and graphs

- Population and population change statistics: tables and figures

Data sources

The demographic balance provides an overview of annual demographic developments in the EU Member States; statistics on population change are available in absolute figures and as crude rates.

Population change — or population growth — in a given year is the difference between the population size on 1 January of the given year and the corresponding level from 1 January of the previous year. It consists of two components: natural change and net migration plus statistical adjustment. Natural population change is the difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths. If natural change is positive then it is often referred to as a natural increase. Net migration is the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants. In the context of the annual demographic balance, Eurostat produces net migration figures by taking the difference between total population change and natural change; this concept is referred to as net migration plus statistical adjustment.

Context

Statistics on population change and the structure of population are increasingly used to support policymaking and to provide the opportunity to monitor demographic behaviour within political, economic, social and cultural contexts. In particular, this concerns demographic developments that focus on a likely reduction in the relative importance of the working-age population and a corresponding increase in the number of older persons. These statistics may be used to support a range of different analyses, including studies relating to population ageing and its effects on the sustainability of public finance and welfare, the evaluation of fertility as a background for family policies, or the economic and social impact of demographic change.

Other articles

- Fertility statistics
- Migration and migrant population statistics
- Mortality and life expectancy statistics
- Population structure and ageing

Main tables

- Population (t_demo_pop)

Database

- Population , see:

  Population (demo_pop)

  Regional data (demopreg)
Dedicated section

- Population (demography, migration and projections)

Publications

- Demography report — 2015 edition
- Towards a 'baby recession' in Europe? — Statistics in focus 13/2013
- Highly educated men and women likely to live longer — Statistics in focus 24/2010
- Demographic outlook

Methodology

- Fertility (ESMS metadata file — demo_fer_esms)
- Mortality (ESMS metadata file — demo_mor_esms)
- Population (ESMS metadata file — demo_pop_esms)

External links

- European Commission — Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs — Demographic developments and projections

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_and_population_change_statistics