

# Population change in Gloucestershire

## Mid-2014 to Mid-2024<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All data in this report is sourced from the Office for National Statistics Population Estimates,  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

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# Population change in Gloucestershire between Mid-2014-2024

In Mid-2024 the population of Gloucestershire stood at 669,380 people, an increase of 58,049 (+9.50%) compared to 10 years previously in Mid-2014 when the population was 611,331. In the 10-year period, the population grew by an average of 5,804 people a year. Gloucestershire's population growth between Mid-2014-2024 was higher than both the South West (8.62%) and England and Wales (7.59%).

*Table 1: Mid-population estimates in Gloucestershire and its districts, 2014-2024*

	2014	2024	Absolute change 2014-2024	Percentage change 2014-2024
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	<b>611,331</b>	<b>669,380</b>	<b>58,049</b>	<b>9.50%</b>
Cheltenham	117,094	121,739	4,645	3.97%
Cotswold	84,656	91,661	7,005	8.27%
Forest of Dean	83,377	89,753	6,376	7.65%
Gloucester	126,167	138,598	12,431	9.85%
Stroud	115,211	125,680	10,469	9.09%
Tewkesbury	84,826	101,949	17,123	20.19%
South West	5,422,159	5,889,695	467,536	8.62%
England	54,370,319	58,620,101	4,249,782	7.82%
England and Wales	57,444,107	61,806,682	4,362,575	7.59%

All of Gloucestershire's districts had a higher population in Mid-2024 compared to Mid-2014. Tewkesbury had the greatest increase with an additional 20.19%, equivalent to an additional 17,123 people, this growth is 10.33 percentage points higher than the next highest district growth rate of 9.85% in Gloucester. Cheltenham had the lowest population growth rate between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024 with an increase of 3.97%, equivalent to an additional 4,645 people. All of the districts, except for Cheltenham, had a higher rate of population growth than England and Wales.

## District growth ranks

Figure 1 shows where the districts ranked for each year's population growth between Mid-2014-2015 and Mid-2023-2024, when compared to all 318 district and unitary authorities in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>. The graph indicates that there has been vast fluctuation in the district rankings over the 10-year period. Overall, Tewkesbury has experienced the highest rankings for population growth, and between Mid-2018-2019 it had the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest population growth in England and Wales. Furthermore, since Mid-2014-2015, Tewkesbury's

<sup>2</sup> 2023 boundaries

population growth has been ranked in the top 10% of authorities six times, and within the top 10-20% twice. In contrast, Cotswold was in the bottom 10% of authorities for population growth in the period Mid-2022-2023, and Cheltenham was in the bottom 10% of authorities in Mid-2019-2020.

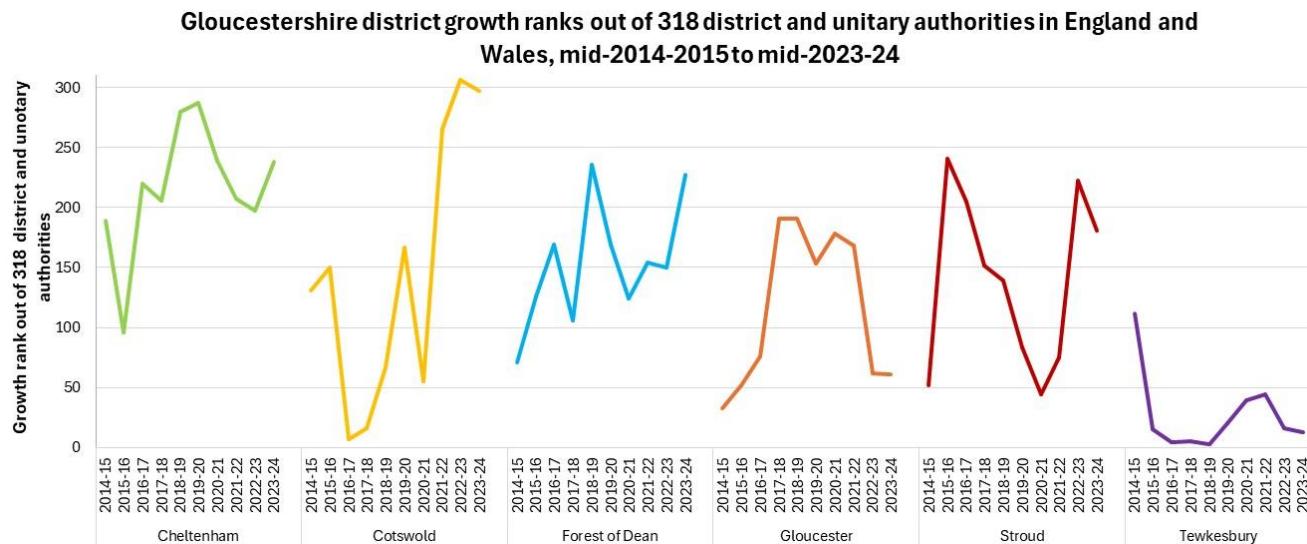
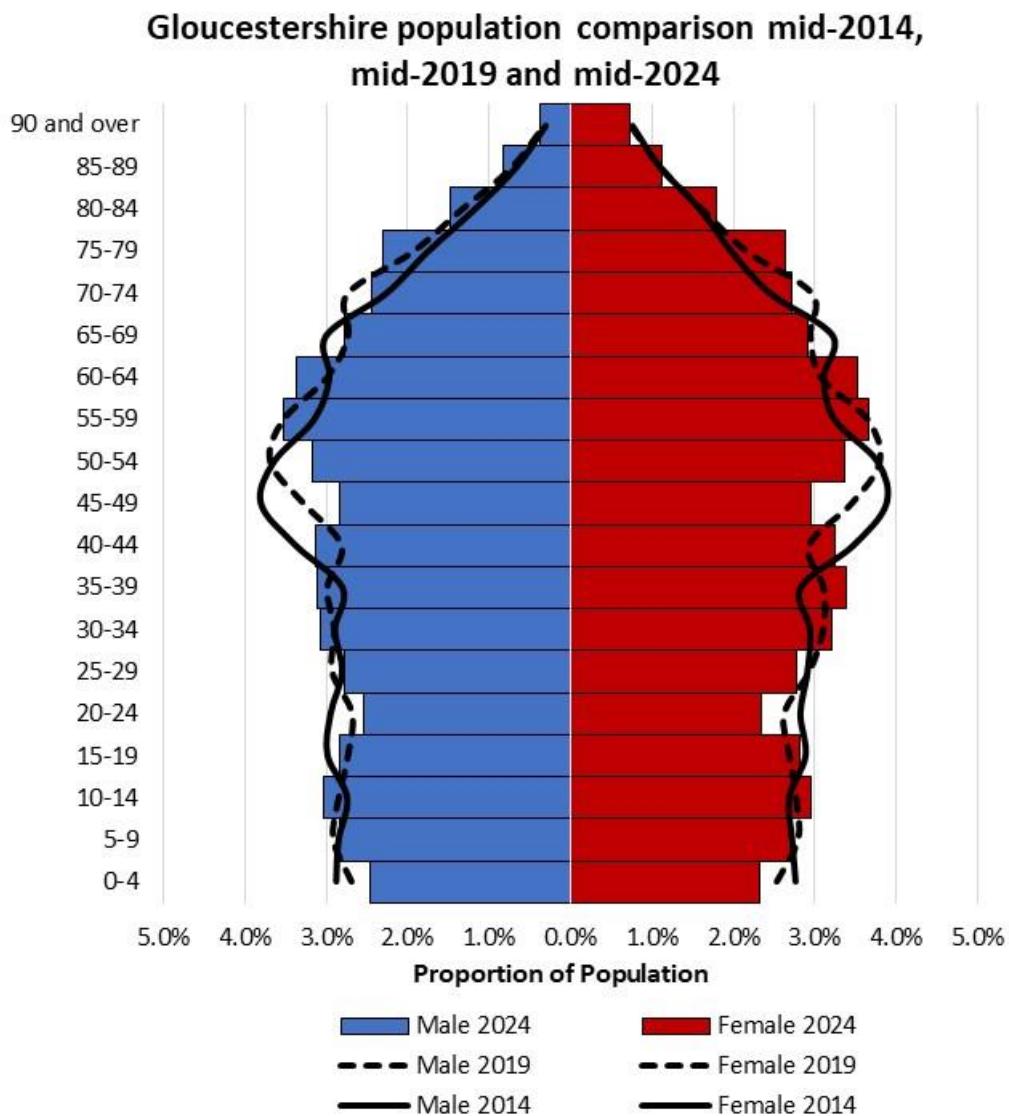


Figure 1: District growth rank, out of 318 district and unitary authorities in England and Wales

## Changes in population composition between Mid-2014-2024

The population pyramid in Figure 2 shows the change in the age structure of Gloucestershire's population between Mid-2014, Mid-2019 and Mid-2024 as well as the distribution by sex. There has been a reduction in the percentage of the population aged between 0-4, 20-24 and 45-54. However, there has been an increase in the proportion of people in most of the 5-year age groups over 55. There has also been an increase in young people aged between 10-14 and between 30-39. Gloucestershire's population pyramid is indicative of an ageing population due to the increasing proportion of older people, particularly in the 75-79 age groups.

In Mid-2014, the sex balance was equal to 48.97% males and 51.03% females, had minimally changed by Mid-2024 (+/-0.11 percentage points).



*Figure 2: Age pyramid of Gloucestershire showing the changes in age groups between Mid-2014, Mid-2019 and Mid-2024*

Table 2 illustrates the percentage change in broad age groups. Compared to the South West and England and Wales, Gloucestershire saw a greater increase in the over-65 population, with an increase of 19.76% between Mid-2014-2024 (South West 17.24% increase, England and Wales 15.39% increase). Gloucestershire also had a greater increase in its 0-15 population (7.68%) than the South West (3.76%) and England and Wales (4.69%). Furthermore, Gloucestershire had a slightly smaller increase in the working-age population (6.67%) than the South West (7.04%) but a slightly greater increase than England and Wales (6.29%).

*Table 2: Percentage change in broad age groups between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024 in Gloucestershire and its districts*

	Mid-2014			Mid-2024			Percentage change between Mid 2014-Mid 2024		
	0-15	16-64	65+	0-15	16-64	65+	0-15	16-64	65+
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	<b>108,743</b>	<b>378,975</b>	<b>123,613</b>	<b>117,092</b>	<b>404,252</b>	<b>148,036</b>	<b>7.68%</b>	<b>6.67%</b>	<b>19.76%</b>
Cheltenham	20,085	76,050	20,959	21,139	76,476	24,124	5.25%	0.56%	15.10%
Cotswold	13,854	50,296	20,506	14,419	52,068	25,174	4.08%	3.52%	22.76%
Forest of Dean	13,803	50,381	19,193	14,424	52,360	22,969	4.50%	3.93%	19.67%
Gloucester	25,209	81,159	19,799	26,459	88,748	23,391	4.96%	9.35%	18.14%
Stroud	20,595	69,941	24,675	21,389	74,295	29,996	3.86%	6.23%	21.56%
Tewkesbury	15,197	51,148	18,481	19,262	60,305	22,382	26.75%	17.90%	21.11%
South West	944,819	3,333,261	1,144,079	980,311	3,568,027	1,341,357	3.76%	7.04%	17.24%
England	10,255,533	34,610,320	9,504,466	10,768,248	36,870,761	10,981,092	5.00%	6.53%	15.54%
England and Wales	10,807,823	36,519,801	10,116,483	11,314,609	38,818,477	11,673,596	4.69%	6.29%	15.39%

Between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024, Cotswold had the largest increase in its 65+ population, (22.76%), followed by Stroud (21.56%), Tewkesbury (21.11%), and the Forest of Dean (19.67%). All four rural districts had a higher percentage growth in their 65+ population than both the South West (17.24%) and England and Wales (15.39%). For the 0-15 and 16-64 age groups, Tewkesbury has seen significantly higher growth than other parts of the county, it has seen five times higher growth in 0–15-year olds than the next highest district (Cheltenham), and almost twice the rate of growth in 16-64 year olds than the next highest district growth (Gloucester). Only Tewkesbury had higher growth in the 0-15 age group than the overall county growth, whilst Gloucester and Tewkesbury had higher growth than the Gloucestershire average in the 16-64 age group.

The more detailed age structure changes in Gloucestershire's districts between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024 are shown in Figure 3. All the districts show signs of ageing, with increases in the proportion of the population in the older age groups. However, Cheltenham and Gloucester are at a less advanced stage of ageing than the four rural districts.

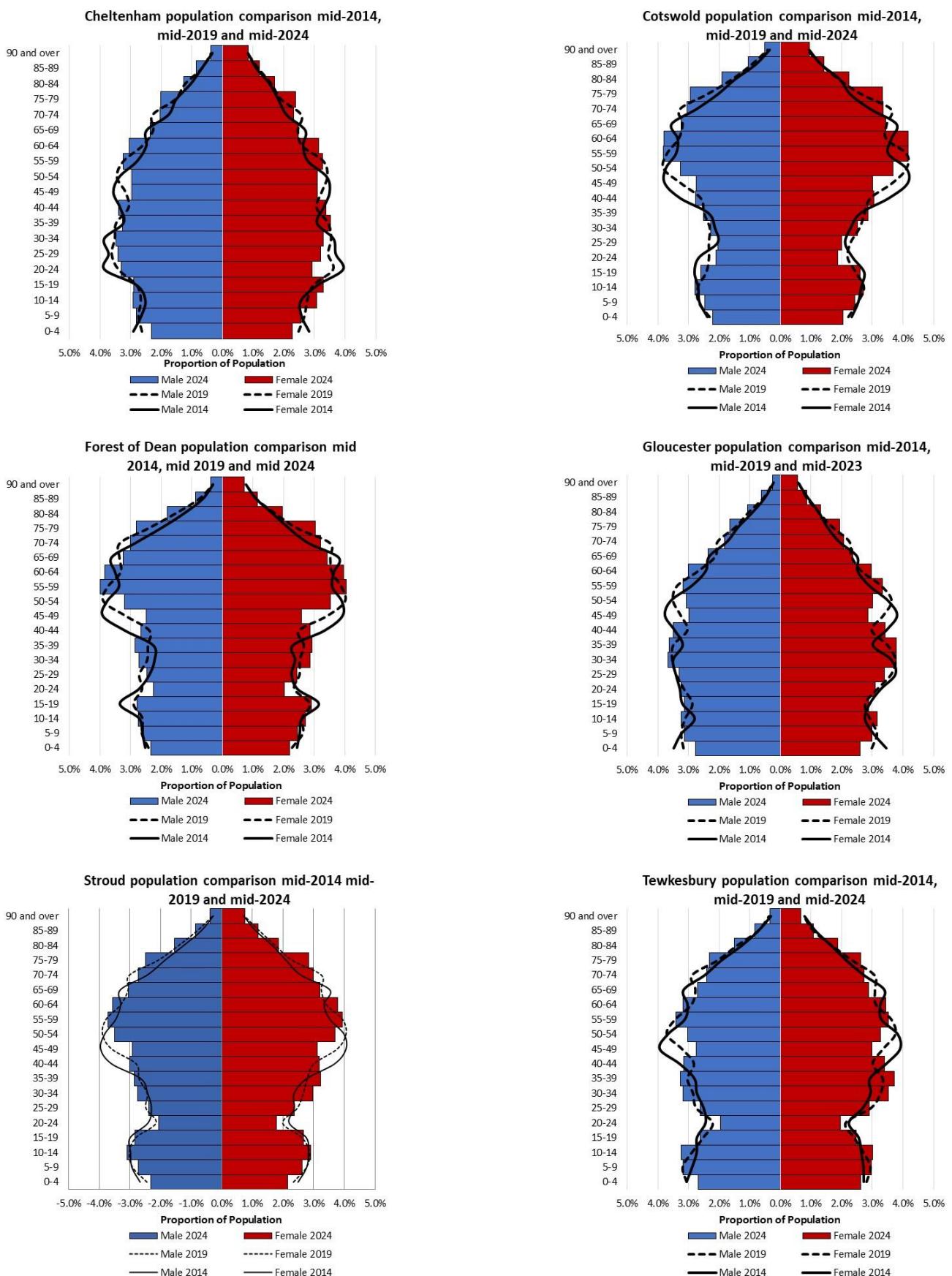


Figure 3: District population pyramid comparison between Mid-2014, Mid-2019 and Mid-2024

## Dependency ratios

Dependency ratios<sup>3</sup> are a measure that indicate the level of support that needs to be provided by the working age population (aged 16-64) to the younger (aged 0-15) and older population (aged 65+). A low dependency ratio indicates that there is a sufficient ratio of the working age population to the dependent population. In contrast, a high dependency ratio indicates there may be more financial burden on the working age population to support the dependent population.

Between Mid-2014-2024, Gloucestershire's dependency ratio increased from 0.61 to 0.66. In Mid-2014 for every 100 people of working age there were 61 people dependent on them. However, in Mid-2024 it had increased to 66 dependents per 100 working-age people. In both Mid-years, Gloucestershire had a higher dependency ratio than England and Wales. In Mid-2014 it had a lower dependency ratio than the South West, however by Mid-2024 the Gloucestershire dependency ratio was higher than the South West ratio. By comparing the youth and old-age dependency ratios in Table 3 it can be inferred that the increase in the overall dependency ratio in Gloucestershire, between Mid-2014-2024, was driven by an increase in the proportion of people aged 65+, with the youth dependency ratio seeing no change.

*Table 3: Dependency ratio change between 2014-2024 in Gloucestershire and its districts*

	2014			2024		
	Dependency Ratio	Youth DR	Old age DR	Dependency Ratio	Youth DR	Old age DR
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.37</b>
Cheltenham	0.54	0.26	0.28	0.59	0.28	0.32
Cotswold	0.68	0.28	0.41	0.76	0.28	0.48
Forest of Dean	0.65	0.27	0.38	0.71	0.28	0.44
Gloucester	0.55	0.31	0.24	0.56	0.30	0.26
Stroud	0.65	0.29	0.35	0.69	0.29	0.40
Tewkesbury	0.66	0.30	0.36	0.69	0.32	0.37
South West	0.63	0.28	0.34	0.65	0.27	0.38
England	0.57	0.30	0.27	0.59	0.29	0.30
England and Wales	0.57	0.30	0.28	0.59	0.29	0.30

\* In the 2024 columns, red text indicates an increase, green text indicates a decrease, and black text indicates there has been no change compared to 2014

<sup>3</sup> Dependency ratios only provide a rough indication of the level of support needed to sustain the dependent population and should not be used on its own. As the retirement age increases, the dependency ratio should change.

Looking at Gloucestershire's districts, Cotswold had the highest dependency ratio in Mid-2014 (0.68) and Mid-2024 (0.76). Cheltenham had the lowest dependency ratio in Mid-2014 at 0.54, but Gloucester had the lowest in Mid-2024 at 0.56. Furthermore, Cotswold had the highest increase in its dependency ratio between Mid-2014-2024, which can be attributed to the increase in the old-age dependency ratio.

## Median age

The average median age in Gloucestershire increased year-on-year between Mid-2014 and Mid-2019, from 43.4 years to 44.1 years, an increase of 0.7 years. Between Mid-2019 and Mid-2022 the average median age plateaued, since Mid-2022 it has declined, falling from 44.2 years to 43.8 years in 2024, a fall of 0.4 years. In comparison, the average age of a person living in the South West in Mid-2024 was 43.7 years and 40.3 years in England and Wales, both lower than Gloucestershire. The South West and England and Wales have both followed a similar trend to Gloucestershire, with a drop in median age in the most recent years.

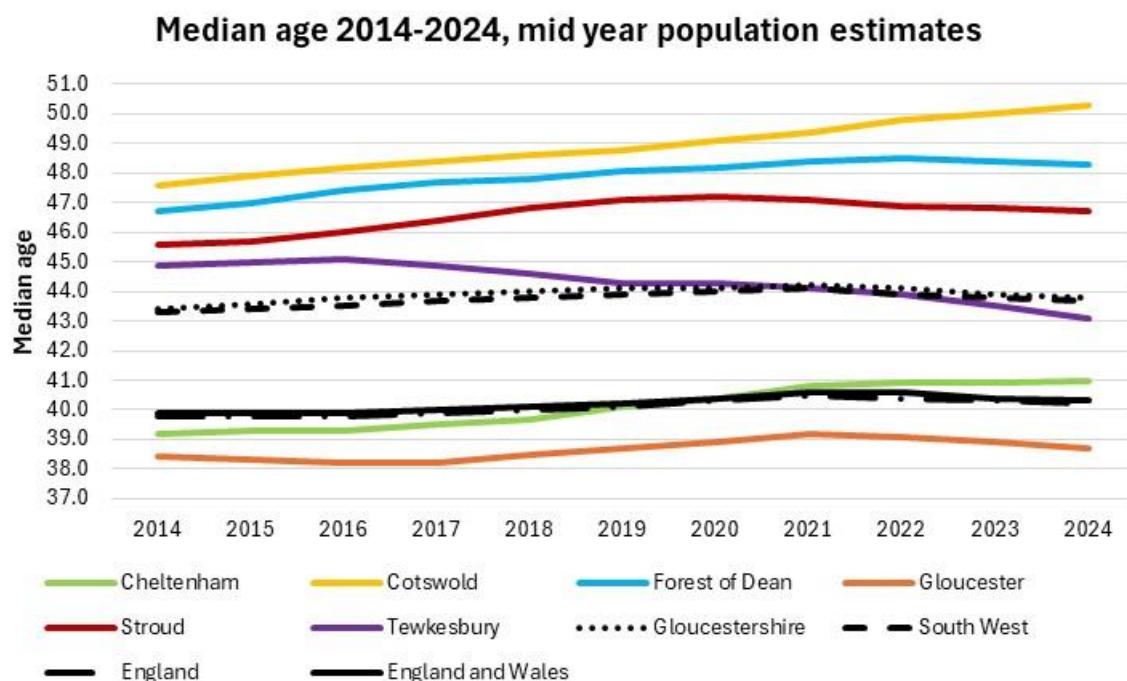


Figure 4: Median age 2014-2024, mid year population estimates

Figure 4 demonstrates that most of the districts have had an increasing trend in the median age overall since 2014, the exception being Tewkesbury which has seen a decline. The picture in more recent years is mixed. Cheltenham and Cotswold saw an increase in median age between Mid-2022 and Mid-2024 of 0.1 years and 0.5 years, respectively. Stroud and the Forest of Dean saw a moderate decline of 0.2 years in the median age between Mid-2022 and Mid-2024, while Gloucester and Tewkesbury saw a greater decline

of 0.4 years and 0.8 years respectively during the period. Throughout the period Mid-2014 and Mid-2024, Cotswold has consistently had the highest median age while Gloucester has had the lowest median age.

## Population density

In Gloucestershire, the number of people per square kilometre increased by 22 people, from 230 to 252 between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024, an increase of 9.57%. In comparison, the population density in the South West increased by 20 people from 227 to 247 people per square kilometre, and in England and Wales, it increased by 29 people from 380 to 409 people per square kilometre, as shown in Table 4.

*Table 4: Population density change between Mid-2014-2024 in Gloucestershire and its districts*

	Land area (sq km)	Population per sq.km		
		2014	2024	% increase 2014-2024
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	<b>2,652</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>9.57%</b>
Cheltenham	47	2,513	2,613	3.98%
Cotswold	1,164	73	79	8.22%
Forest of Dean	526	159	171	7.55%
Gloucester	41	3,111	3,418	9.87%
Stroud	461	250	273	9.20%
Tewkesbury	414	205	246	20.00%
South West	23,836	227	247	8.81%
England	130,310	417	450	7.91%
England and Wales	151,047	380	409	7.63%

Between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024 all districts experienced an increase in population density. Gloucester continues to have the highest population density and had an increase of 307 people per square kilometre between Mid-2014-Mid-2024, from 3,111 to 3,418 people per square kilometre. In contrast, Cotswold continues to have the lowest population density which increased from 73 to 79 people per square kilometre between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024. Tewkesbury experienced the highest percentage increase in population density with a 20.00% increase whereas, Cheltenham experienced the lowest increase at 3.98% between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024.

## Components of change

The change in population size between two periods is calculated by adding the number of births and deaths, net internal migration, net international migration, and any special adjustments<sup>4</sup> to the previous year's population figure.

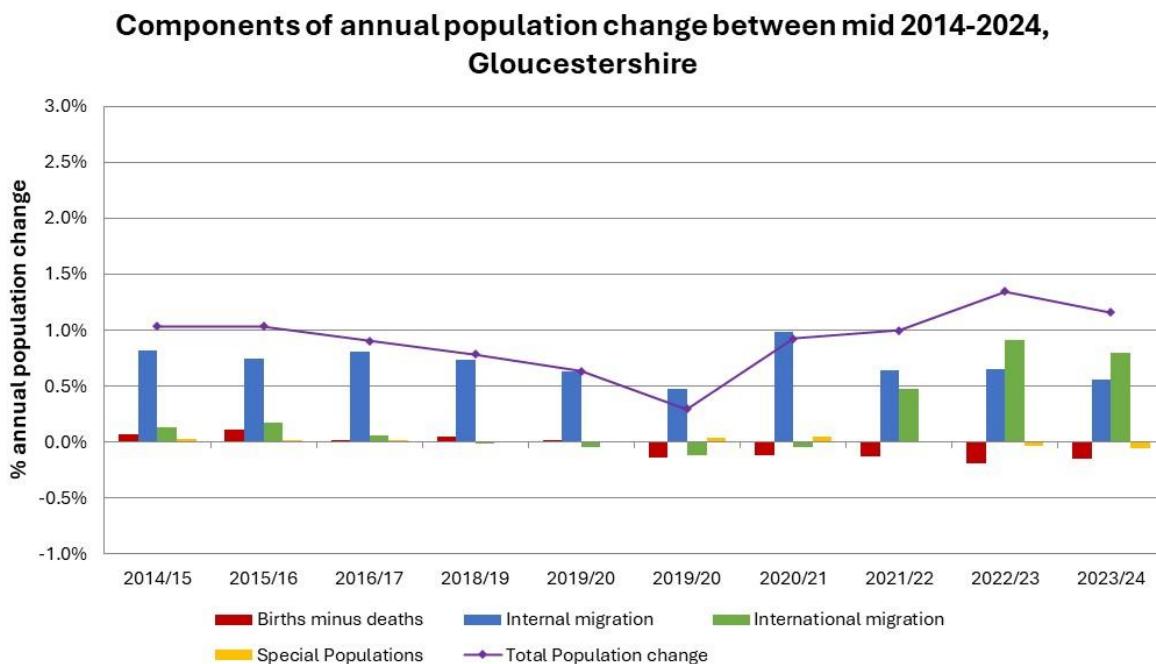
The main driver of population growth in Gloucestershire between 2014-2024 was internal migration, people moving to Gloucestershire from other parts of the UK. This increased Gloucestershire's population by 7.3%. Internal migration was also the main driver of growth at a regional level and in the four rural districts of Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud, and Tewkesbury. In Cheltenham and Gloucester, the main driver of population growth was international migration, internal migration had a negative impact in these districts, with more people moving from the districts than to them.

*Table 5: Components of population change, Mid-2014-2024, Gloucestershire and its district*

Components of population change 2014-2024					
	% population change	% Natural change (births minus deaths)	% Internal Migration	% International Migration	% Special Population
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	9.5%	-0.5%	7.3%	2.5%	0.1%
Cheltenham	4.0%	-0.3%	-0.9%	3.4%	0.1%
Cotswold	8.3%	-3.1%	10.0%	0.9%	0.3%
Forest of Dean	7.6%	-2.5%	9.9%	1.0%	-0.4%
Gloucester	9.9%	2.8%	-1.1%	6.7%	0.1%
Stroud	9.1%	-2.1%	11.2%	0.5%	0.0%
Tewkesbury	20.2%	1.0%	20.6%	0.7%	0.3%
South West	8.6%	-1.1%	6.4%	3.5%	0.1%
England	7.8%	1.7%	-0.3%	6.4%	0.0%
England and Wales	7.6%	1.5%	-0.2%	6.3%	0.0%

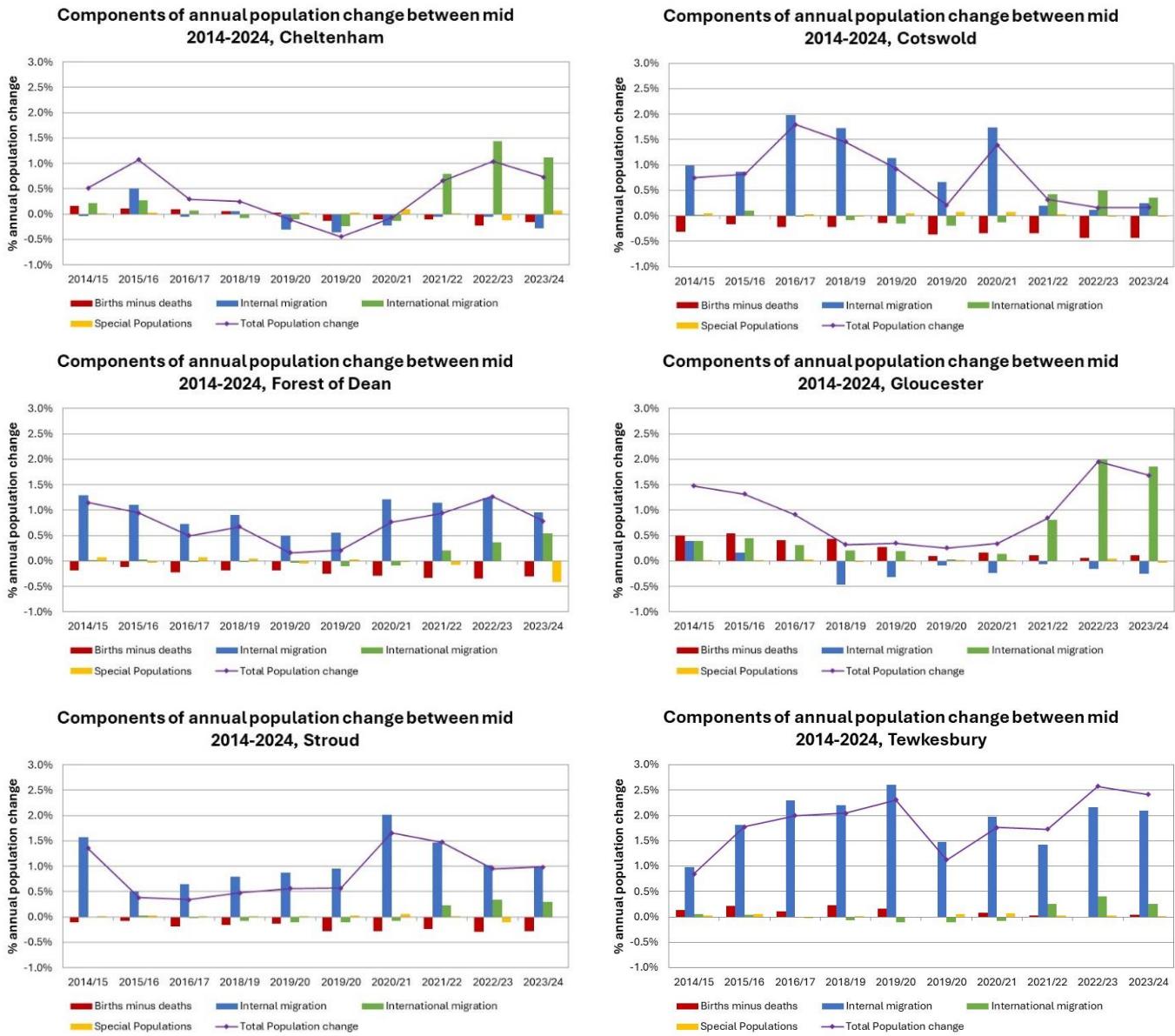
Figure 5 shows the trend in the role of the components of change in driving population growth each year between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024. Interestingly since 2021/22 international migration has replaced internal migration as the main driver of population growth in Gloucestershire, this has also been reflected at a regional level. Natural change, which is the relationship between births and deaths, had a positive impact on the population of Gloucestershire between 2014/15 and 2019/20, with births outnumbering deaths. Since 2020/21 natural change has had a negative impact on the county's population with deaths outnumbering births, this has also been reflected at a regional level.

<sup>4</sup> Adjustments to the population estimates are made for some special population groups that are not captured by the usual internal or international migration estimates: members of the armed forces and prisoners. These populations have specific age structures, which remain fairly constant over time so are not aged on with the rest of the population.



*Figure 5: Components of annual population change between Mid 2014-2024, Gloucestershire*

Figure 6 shows the trend in the role of the components of change in driving population growth each year between Mid-2014 and Mid-2024 for each district. Across all areas the impact of international migration has increased since 2020/21, reflecting the trend seen at a county level. In the Forest of Dean, Stroud and Tewkesbury, internal migration is the main driver of population growth throughout the period Mid-2014 and Mid-2024. However, in Cheltenham, Cotswold and Gloucester, international migration has become the main driver of population growth in recent years.



**Figure 6: Components of annual population change between Mid 2014-2024, Gloucestershire districts**

## Population growth since 1991

The focus of this report has been on the 10 year period Mid-2014 to Mid-2024, however, data is also available over a longer time period. At a national level there is comparable population data going back to the 1800's, at a local level we have consistent data going back to 1991.

Between Mid-2022 and Mid-2023 the population of England and Wales increased by almost 821,210 (1.36%), this is the largest annual numerical increase in at least 75 years. The population estimate for England and Wales increased by 1.5 million in the year to Mid-1948, 75 years before Mid-2023. The very high level of population change in Mid-1948 reflected the continued return of armed forces personnel following the end of World War 2, as well as a high number of births. Population estimates that cover the two world wars exclude the large numbers of armed forces serving overseas.

Between Mid-2022 and Mid-2023 the population of Gloucestershire increased by 8,786 people (1.35%), this is the largest annual numerical increase since at least 1991. The second largest annual increase occurred between Mid-2023-Mid-2024 when the population of Gloucestershire increased by 7,656 people (1.16%), showing in recent years the county has been seeing record growth. At district level there is some variation, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, and Tewkesbury saw the largest numerical increases in population in the 1990s, while Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud saw the largest increase in the last decade.

*Table 6: Largest numerical increase in population since Mid-1991 in Gloucestershire and districts*

	Time period with largest numerical increase in population	Largest numerical increase in population
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	<b>Mid-2022-Mid-2023</b>	<b>8,786</b>
Cheltenham	Mid-2015-Mid-2016	1,260
Cotswold	Mid-1992-Mid-1993	2,712
Forest of Dean	Mid-1996-Mid-1997	1,300
Gloucester	Mid-2022-Mid-2023	2,612
Stroud	Mid-2020-Mid-2021	1,982
Tewkesbury	Mid-1996-Mid-1997	3,213
South West	Mid-2022-Mid-2023	61,098
England	Mid-2022-Mid-2023	788,075
England and Wales	Mid-2022-Mid-2023	821,210

Looking at the overall period Mid-1991-Mid-2024, the population of Gloucestershire has grown by 24.89%, equivalent to an increase of 133,398 people, (535,982 people in Mid-1991, 669,380 people in Mid-2029). In comparison, the South West saw an increase of 25.63% and England and Wales saw an increase of 22.44%.

Figure 7 shows that in Mid-1991 Cheltenham had the largest population in the county; however, its population size has since been overtaken by Gloucester and Stroud. Cheltenham currently has the third largest population, Stroud the second largest and Gloucester the largest. In Mid-1999, Gloucester overtook Cheltenham to have the largest population in the county and it has stayed that way, Stroud then overtook Cheltenham in Mid-2020. Until Mid-2011 Tewkesbury had the smallest population out of the six districts however, its population has grown to become the 4<sup>th</sup> largest, overtaking Cotswold and the Forest of Dean.

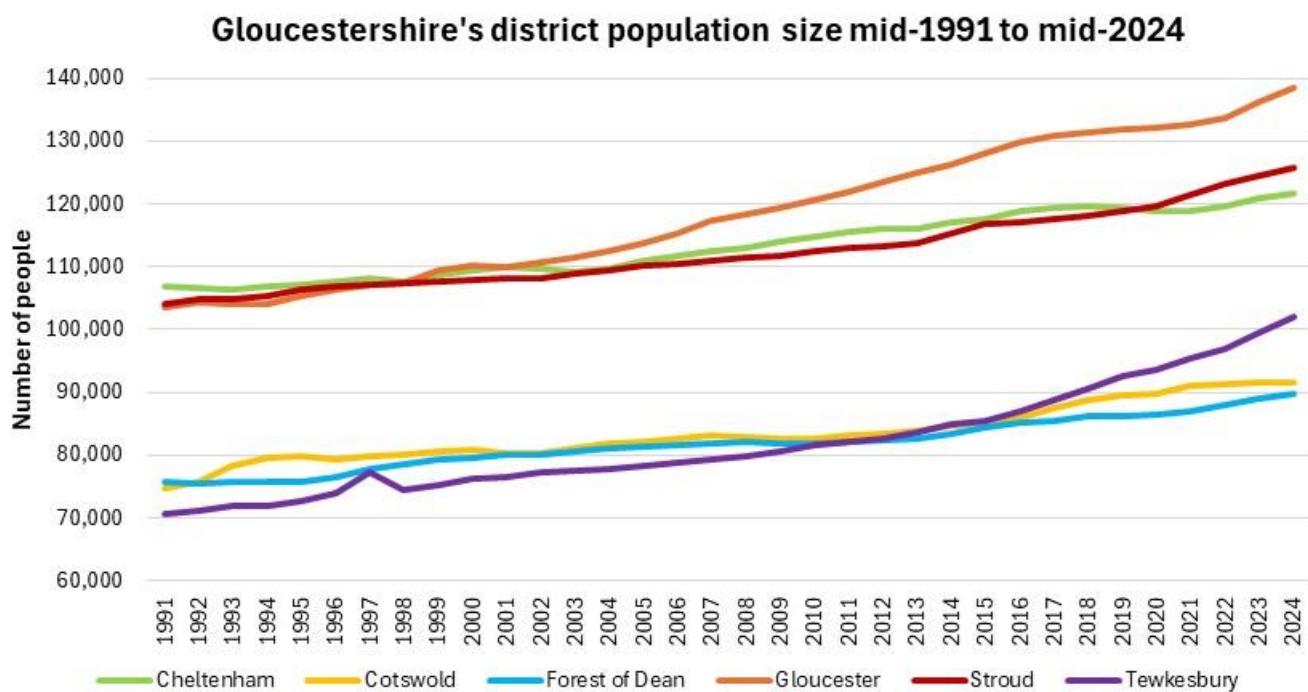


Figure 7: Population size in Gloucestershire and its districts between Mid-1991 to Mid-2023