

Community and society in England in 2025 and 2050

A Young Foundation/Demos report for *Tomorrow's England*
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Section 1: Key trends in 2025 and 2050:

The key trends affecting the structure and fabric of England's communities are: population trends (ageing; migration etc) and the economy (with related strengths and vulnerabilities). Each of these trends will increasingly play a powerful role in shaping economic and social change. Many of these trends are happening at the moment – but evidence suggests that they will increase in decades to come.

*** Most of the data in this report applies to the whole of the UK – as government and private sector statistics do not normally differentiate and/or produce data for England alone.

1. Population Trends:

The population of the UK is **projected to increase** from 59.6 million in 2003 to 65.7 million by 2031, with the greatest proportion of this growth occurring in England. The increase in population assumes net migration of 3.6 million migrants in the period up to 2031.¹ Most of these migrants are expected to be younger adults². During the same period, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase to 23 per cent of the population³.

Mobility: (trends that is related to climate change)

Climate change will have severe effects on the creation of strong push factors for migrants in developing and less developed countries.

Climate-related security risks will affect some governments more than others. Three types of nation are particularly vulnerable: the least-developed, weak states and undemocratic countries. The **poorest countries** are the most likely to suffer. They lack the economic, governance or technical capabilities to adapt. They lack the capacity to prevent or react to humanitarian disasters such as floods. **Weak states** - those with weak institutions of government, poor control over their borders, repressed populations or marginal economies - also run a high risk of being destabilised by climate change. Such **failed or failing states** have almost no capacity to respond to climate change or prevent it from triggering a large-scale humanitarian disaster. This is for

¹ GAD assumes an annual net inward migration to the UK of 130,000 people.

² GAD, 2003 principal projections.

³ GAD, 2003 principal projections.

example what happened in Somalia where drought, crop failure and subsequent state failure led to tens of thousands of deaths in the 1990s. Similar reactions will be expected in 2025 – but even more so by 2050.

By 2025 it is estimated that 3 billion people could be living in water stressed countries and 14 countries will move from a position of water stress to water scarcity.

Increasingly, conflict over resources will become an issue in undemocratic and also in poor countries around the world. In India and Bangladesh for example floods in the Ganges caused by melting glaciers in the Himalayas are wreaking havoc in Bangladesh leading to a rise in illegal migration to India. This has prompted India to build an immense border fence in attempt to block newcomers. Some 6,000 people illegally cross the border to India every day. This is likely to become a reality of many countries where livelihoods are destroyed by climate change – creating conflicts and increasing the number of displaced people and individuals/families seeking asylum elsewhere.

England is very likely to see an increase in asylum application from the poorest countries or countries with old/new conflicts (mainly countries in Africa and the Middle East – i.e. Iraq; Iran; Zimbabwe. South Africa will be an interesting one to observe) as well as an increase in economic migrants (from China for example) coming to Britain looking for better opportunities. As a result of flows, it is likely that the number of undocumented migrants will also rise.

Alongside this kind of immigration, Britain is also likely to see high levels of mobility in and out of cities.

City living is likely to become too hot and hectic for many – particularly as the population ages⁴. As a result, it is likely that there will be a movement of young families and pensioners out of the cities – to the countryside. The countryside could see a further boom in second home ownership (as a consequence, this may boost the housing market in rural ‘honey pots’ – making it unaffordable for many rural residents in places like Devon, Cornwall, Wales, Somerset, Dorset, Surrey and Kent).

In parallel, cities are likely to become more powerful – many have suggested that the future would see the future rise of ‘megacities’. By 2025 and 2050 cities like London, but also Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, York will become increasingly central to English life and economy. Skilled workforce is likely to move to cities to take up jobs – contributing to rising strength of cities and a depletion of skill elsewhere. This is likely to be established by 2050.

⁴ As the Tyndall Centre suggests, “cities also create what is known as an “urban heat island” whereby the heat given off by the city itself (and its effect on airflow patterns) means that it can be a couple of degrees warmer at the centre of the city than at its edges. This phenomenon is likely to mean that the inhabitants of cities will be more vulnerable to deaths related to heat stress and low air quality” (Tyndall Centre, 2004. A Briefing for Climate change and cities, British Council: briefing sheet 30).

Ageing: (trend that is not related to climate change)

The trend towards ageing is steadily taking shape in England (despite being more developed in other European countries, like Germany and Italy) and is likely to strengthen further.

By 2025, it's likely that many of England's smaller communities will be composed of pensioners. In 2000, the median (or most common) age was 37.4 years while it is estimated that by 2025 it will be 46.7 years. In 2000 an estimated 39.0% of the UK population was aged 45 and over. By 2025, it is projected that this age group will make up 46.7% of the UK's population.⁵

The ageing process will be particularly serious in the countryside where many pensioners will move to in order to escape the heat of cities. This movement may happen in parallel to a movement of young people from the country to the city, in search for better jobs and opportunities. Currently, some 18 per cent of people in rural areas are 65 and over, compared with 15 per cent in urban areas. The migration of older people to rural areas is expected to continue over the next few decades.⁶

One of the consequences of ageing will be a rise in chronic illness (which is already happening in England). The likelihood of reporting a chronic medical condition increases with age, for example, the prevalence of long standing disabilities or infirmities increased from 14% of those under 5 to 64% of those aged 75 or over (General Household Survey, 2000). Also according to the Alzheimer's society in the next 25 years from now there is likely to be a steady (but not dramatic) increase in the number of people with dementia. The Dementia UK report (2007) estimates that in less than 20 years nearly a million people will be living with dementia – this will soar to 1.7 million people by 2050.⁷

However life expectancy will also rise (meaning that more people will leave longer lives managing chronic illness). Older people today can expect to live longer than those in the past, and future generations can expect to live longer still. An average man aged 65 today can expect to live a further 19 years. By 2051, his counterpart can expect to live a further 21 years, almost double the life expectancy of a 65-year-old man a century earlier. By 2051, projected life expectancy at birth will have risen to 84 years for males and 88 years for females (by 2050 there will be 160,000 centenarians in the UK versus 9000 now).

⁵ ONS

⁶ Rural Strategy (2004) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

⁷ Dementia UK (2007): a report into the prevalence and cost of dementia prepared by the Personal Social services research Unit of the LSE and the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London for the Alzheimer Society.

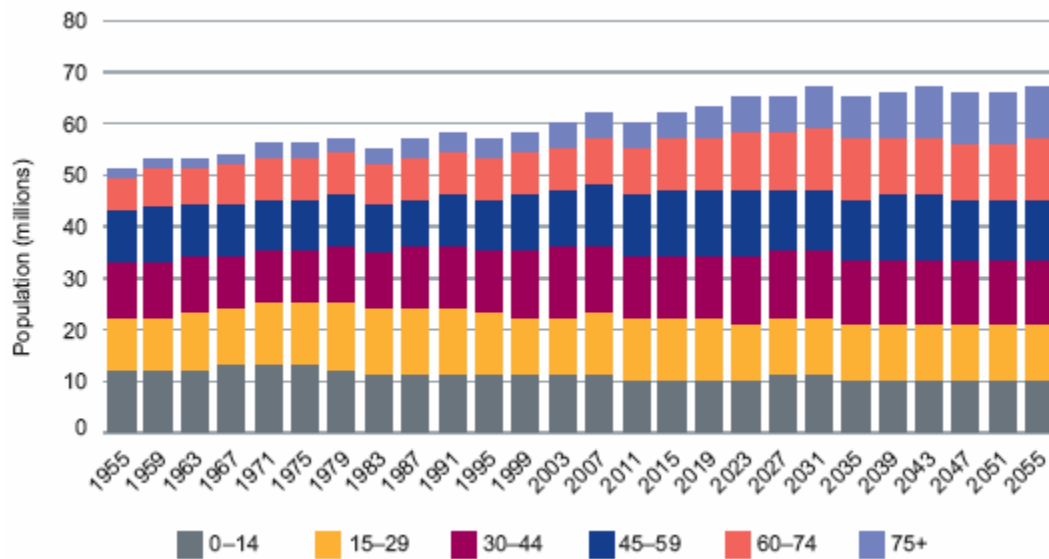


Figure 1: Government Actuary's Department (GAD), 2003 principal projections and Office for National Statistics (ONS)

This may mean that while migration will be needed to stabilise the average age of the workforce – politically, the issue of work and pensions may result in a negative response to immigration by the public.

In general studies have confirmed the likelihood of these trends by arguing that London and the south east are, in general, forecast by 2020 to continue seeing the greatest change, due to the region's capacity to create jobs. Professor Rees argued that there may be signs of movement among ethnic minority groups from the less vigorous economies of northern cities to southern ones. There are also signs of net shifts to suburban and metropolitan rings in the London area. He forecasts that the Black population of Inner London will decline, and that by 2020, Outer London will take over from the central part of the capital as the most important region for ethnic minorities.

In general known trends show that between now and 2020 the White ethnic group will be growing only a little, due to continuing low fertility rates and smaller numbers of women of child-bearing age, along with higher deaths as the population ages.⁸

England is likely to become older and wealthier in the countryside with larger and growing inequalities between rich and poor (also, as chronic illness becomes a reality for many, access to health services in remote areas will become more of an issue particularly as – with climate change worries – cars will need to become more redundant and public transport links will have to improve).

The cities are going to become larger. And migration will probably increase – both in terms of conflict related migration (asylum) and economic migration to the city. It is possible that the trends of migration

⁸ Titled 'Globalisation, population mobility and impact of migration on population', the booklet brings together work done by Professors John Salt, of University College, London, and Phil Rees, of the University of Leeds, as well as statistics and analyses produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

of UK citizens to Spain and other countries will also increase – unless concerns with air travel become more dominant than their will to retire to another country.

Health (partially related to climate change)

- Health will become problematic in years to come – not just in terms of STDs or chronic illness (all on the rise currently, and likely to rise further) but also in terms of mental health.
- Heat related illness will become more problematic - particularly in cities.⁹
- As work becomes more of a central part of peoples lives and as competition for resources becomes a daily occurrence (i.e. particularly in relation to city workers and vulnerable economies and livelihoods in rural areas), stress, anxiety and mental illness may become more significant. Currently one in six adults experience neurotic disorders. By 2020, mental health conditions are expected to be the most common type of impairment.

2. Economic Trends:

The economy and work

By the year 2050 PWC estimates that the E7 economies (China, Brazil, Russian, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey) will have outstripped the current G7 – US, Japan, UK, Germany, France, Italy and Canada – by between 25% when comparing GDP using market exchange rates to around 75% when using purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates. But this could create major market opportunities for the UK allowing companies in the established OECD economies to specialise in areas of comparative advantage while their consumers benefit from low cost imports from the emerging economies.

What this and the mobility trends highlighted above mean for England in the future is that it may see:

The intensification of cross border economic competition, with new opportunities for growth as the balance of international economic activity shifts toward emerging markets such as China and India.

The rapid pace of innovation and technological diffusion which will continue to transform the way people live and open up news ways of delivering public services.

⁹ Heat-related deaths may rise from 800 to 2800 a year (around 250 in the East of England concentrated into a very small number of very hot days). This suggests around 730 people hospitalised in the East of England on each very hot day in 2050 according to Cambridgeshire county council.
(<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/DE65C9A9-47CC-4DF3-BF8A-C0D53AFC9985/0/OCYPS.pdf>)

- Continues global uncertainty with ongoing threats of international terrorism and conflict and the continued imperative to tackle global poverty.
- Increasing pressures on our natural resources and global climate requiring action by governments, business and individuals to maintain prosperity and improve environmental care.
- Tourism booming – it may be likely that a major part of the rural economy will become highly dependant on tourism (seaside towns etc) while decline in rural economies (fishing, agriculture etc)¹⁰.

Section 2: What does this mean for society?

- We may witness a movement towards the notion of the **common good**, emphasis on common problems and common solutions – particularly at the local level when it comes to coping with weather changes for example (storms, livelihoods under threat, floods etc).
- It is likely that in the shorter term – in 2025 – England will be characterised by growing inequalities both in the countryside and in the city.
- In the shorter term adaptation to climate change might still be at very initial stages and not yet entrenched in cultures and behaviours.
- Society at that stage could still be characterised by high levels of individualism and low community engagement – particularly in sprawling cities, new suburbia and new towns. ‘Nimby-ism’ may still be preponderant in both rural and urban areas as population moves and communities become more diverse – quickly.
- In the longer term, in 2050, it may be the case that cultures and behaviours will change. The recognition that climate change is happening and it is not only something that affects far away places but has a day to day impact on our lives will increase personal responsibility and the awareness that individual and community action can make a difference.

Attitude towards community cohesion and change

- At the local level, it’s likely that there will be a steady movement towards common activities – recycling, campaigning for alternative energies, etc.
- However this move might– in the first instance – apply mainly to those neighbourhoods and communities with high levels of neighbourliness and community engagement.¹¹
- The Henley Centre Headlight vision recently argued that communities with higher levels of community engagement are those where there are

¹⁰ Because of changing rainfall patterns are likely to increase soil erosion and subsidence, and profoundly affect water availability and quality. Drier soils will change the type and yield of crops.

¹¹ As shown in a recent survey – while three quarters of people in the UK believe that climate change is having an impact on Britain right now, less than half of us are currently doing anything to reduce energy use (www.est.org.uk; Energy Saving Trust’s green Barometer). This however is likely to increase in the near future.

wealthier residents. This is mainly because of choice – wealthier residents can ‘choose’ where to live and can choose their neighbours. Wealthier residents are also those who at the moment are more concerned with climate change, green technologies, green/ sustainably sources/ fair trade products, electric cars etc.

However, by 2025 this trend will possibly start in other neighbourhoods – not just because of community awareness but thanks to NGOs and the better regulation and advice of local and national government.

By 2050 it is possible that this will become much more entrenched in cultures and behaviours as the impact of climate change is more universally acknowledged and recognised (when it become a ‘truth’ something that scientists are clear about and that people take for granted)

The effect that issues to do with climate change could have is to ‘unite’ people in the longer term. While it may cause considerable strain on community cohesion in the shorter term (i.e. 2025) in terms of a difficulty in coping with diversity, asylum & migration (particularly when combined with pressures on housing market, schools, jobs and NHS), and vulnerable livelihoods, in the longer term common good is likely to prevail. Particularly, at the very local level (neighbourhoods and local authorities).

In 2004 Mori showed that two fifths of young people aged 11-16 want to be involved in changes to the area in which they live¹². These young people will be young adults in 2025 – hopefully engaged in their local areas.

Evidence shows that areas that have a higher turnout at the ballot box, are areas where residents are most concerned with local issues. This may apply in the case of climate change. As climate change becomes something ‘affecting the everyday lives of people’, mobilisation will start to happen and people may start cooperating for their own and for the common good. **It often takes a crisis to re-unite a community.**

Particularly in cities, people may spend more time outdoors – increasing the chances for encounters and neighbourliness. And given that in 2050 there will be a significant elderly population it is likely that the effect of climate change on neighbourliness may actually increase bonding and reduce loneliness.

However:

We know that today fear and loneliness are big issues in British society. While loneliness is likely to be fought in areas where there are increases in local action, life in sprawling cities may become indeed become more lonely & isolated – particularly for young professionals and the elderly.

MORI recently showed that global warming is seen as the most serious threat to the future wellbeing of the world – more than terrorism and wars¹³. As the impacts of climate change become more visible, this

¹² Research carried out by MORI Social Research Institute for CABE Education.

¹³ Base 1002 GB residents aged 16+.

fear may also become more significant, creating instability and anxiety for many.

Tolerance, solidarity, discrimination

England will become more diverse. This diversity will be the result of the current presence of BME communities across England as well as migration which will take place between now and 2025 and 2050. This is already the case in London (where more than 200 languages are spoken by the city's schoolchildren today) and other cities across England – but is likely to increase.

As highlighted in previous sections, it is likely that an element of segregation will worsen particularly in cities as poor white working class and poor migrant or ethnic minority communities remain/ become marginalised in specific areas of English cities.

This may give rise to conflict – as resources will probably be strained, as diversity increases and as cities become bigger, tensions are likely to strengthen in cities like Birmingham¹⁴ (and others) giving rise to conflicts.

Currently discrimination levels are high in already segregated areas and I would not expect that this would be dramatically different in the future (as migration may put pressure on housing and schools and hospitals in vulnerable areas).

Politically, we will probably witness a more significant presence of far right parties like the BNP or national Front. They are likely to place the race and immigration card (as diversity and asylum increases due to conflicts abroad and climate change). This may be a shorter term adjustment to change and likely to take place between now and 2025. The disruptive presence of far right parties at the local (and perhaps national level) may intensify tensions and conflicts.

In the longer term, it is likely, however, that solidarity will slowly replace intolerance. This could be in partly due to an emphasis on bigger and common problems (climate change); to more positive and sympathetic portrayal of immigration and refugee flows by the local and national media etc.

Tolerance may eventually be aided by an inevitable increase in mixed marriages and mixed race children. Currently, Inter-ethnic marriages form a very small proportion of all marriages in England and Wales as a whole - 2 per cent.¹⁵ There were 10.3 million married couples in England and Wales on census day in 2001. The vast majority of these marriages, 98 per cent, were between people from the same ethnic background, where ethnic background is defined as White, Mixed,

¹⁴ Birmingham is a good example of a city where tensions are high at the moment (culminated in 2005 by the riots/conflicts between Asians and Afro Caribbean communities in the Lozells area of the city). Some areas of Birmingham already have a majority Pakistani population (Lozells and East Handsworth 82%; Sparkbrook 79% Pakistani). With time it is possible that the growth of the city, unemployment and some levels of spatial segregation may exacerbate existing fears – in Birmingham as in other cities like Bradford, Leicester, Stoke on Trent.

¹⁵ Office of National Statistics data.

Asian, Black, Chinese, or Other ethnic group. As England becomes more diverse and segregation breaks down, mixing will become more acceptable and frequent.

Social Networks and social capital:

Recent research by the Young Foundation¹⁶ shows that the importance of family and close friendships is central to people's lives. This is not likely to change in 2025 and 2050. Perhaps migration and movement in and out of England will slow down (as travel becomes more expensive and as awareness of the impact of air travel grows) reducing the fragmentation of families across borders. People are likely to spend more time in England, travel more by public transport and spend more time in their neighbourhoods. This may actually have the effect of reinforcing bonds between residents.

This may be further reinforced by home working, which is strongly likely to become a reality for many people.

As pressure on the housing market grows, however, it may become increasingly more difficult for people to be able to buy houses near their families – particularly in the English countryside.

The internet across the whole of England will be an essential source of information, support and networking. Rural 'notspots'¹⁷ will be addressed and exchanges, encounters, correspondence as well as dating will become more of a reality in 2025 and more so in 2050.

Law and Order

- In recent years, crime rates have decreased while fear of crime has increased. Many have argued that this is because of an increase in perception of danger alongside a breakdown of social capital, neighbourliness and community spirit.
- By 2025 and 2050 I don't think that fear of crime will be so different.
- 2025 will probably be characterised by similar or slightly worse rates of crime and fear of crime – particularly given that it is possible that inequality and gap between rich/poor will worsen in the first instance (enhanced by migration etc)
- In the short term (2025), adapting to new inequalities in rural and urban England will be hard. These are likely to have a big impact on crime, fear and personal security. Like with any change, trust is likely to decrease.
- **However** I expect that adaptation to change as well as the possible reconstruction of a sense of community in many parts of England (due to the need to face a common danger together) will help reducing fear of crime in the longer term and the ability of people to deter crime in their local areas by working together.
- It is also possible that in the long term legislation will be aided by strong and active local activity against anti social behaviour to ensure order.

¹⁶ Geoff Mulgan and Alessandra Buonfino, Mapping Britain's needs, 2006

¹⁷ See recent Alessandra Buonfino's unmet rural needs report, The Young Foundation, 2007.