



Declining numbers of children in London

Background briefing

14 October 2025

■ Key points

- Number of children grew rapidly and is now falling again
- Trends are product of births and domestic migration
- Past growth was driven by migration and financial crisis
- Declines are part correction, part global trend
- Steeper Inner London decreases likely reflect affordability
- Pandemic accelerated trends
- Boroughs managing excess school capacity built during boom



Contents

- Population and pupil trends
- Drivers of trends
 - Births and fertility
 - Domestic migration
- Current projections

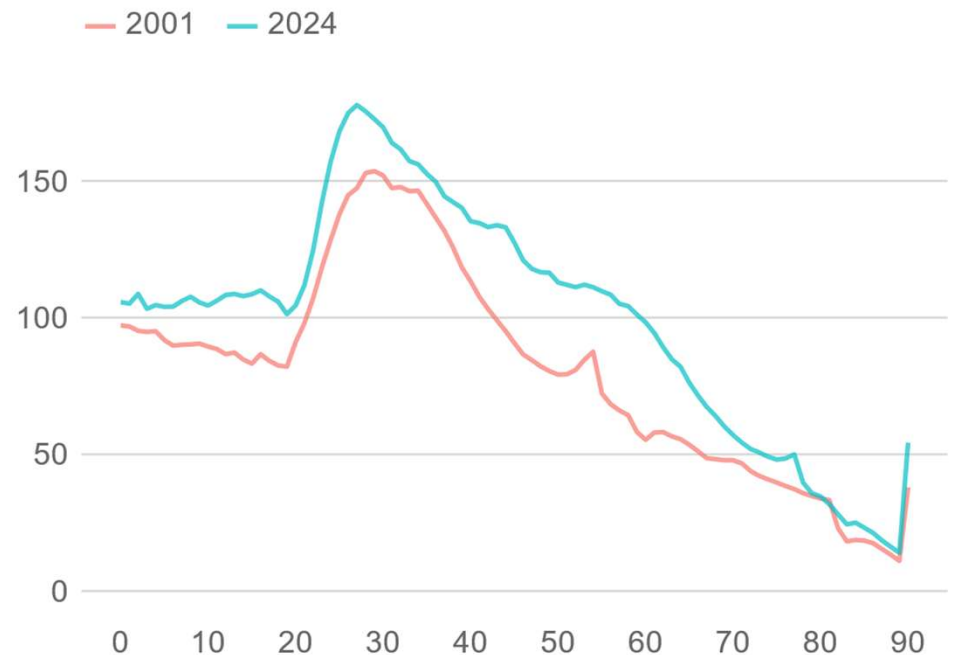


Population and pupil trends

Population trends

- Since 2001 London has grown by 1.8 million residents
- Number under-18 has grown by almost 300 thousand

London - population by age
(thousands)



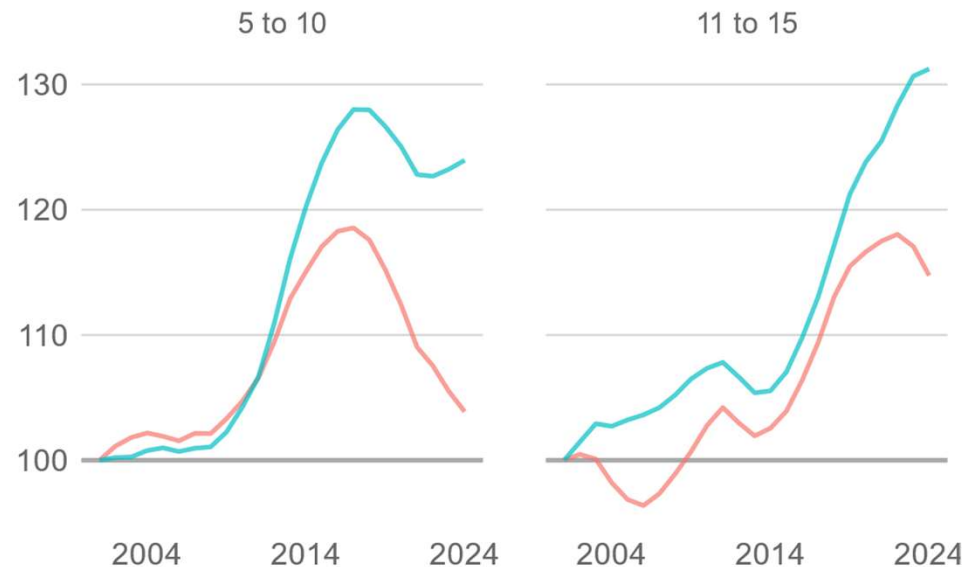
Population trends

- Since 2001 London has grown by 1.8 million residents
- Number under-18 has grown by almost 300 thousand
- After a decade of rapid growth, numbers now falling

Population by age - indexed

100 = 2001 value

— Inner London — Outer London



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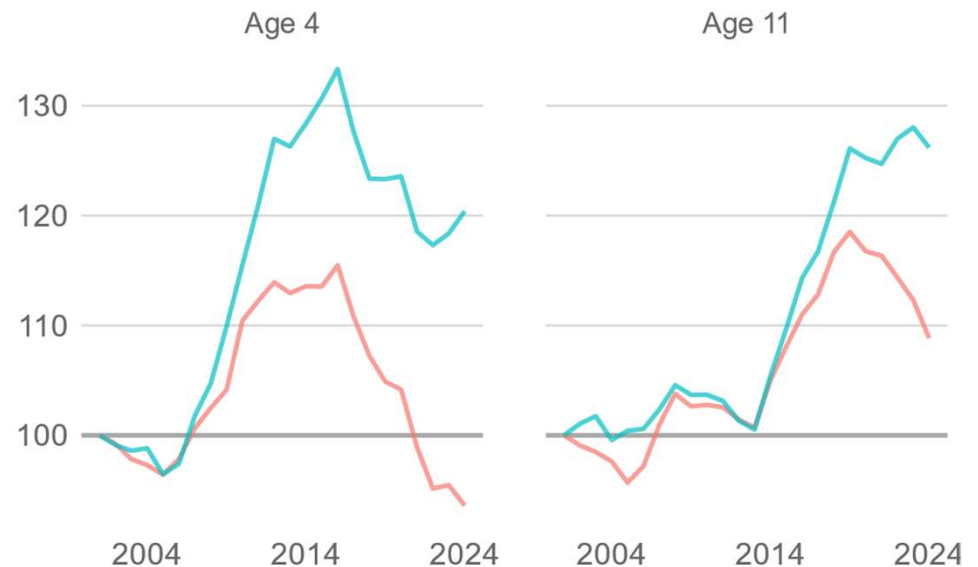
Population trends

- Since 2001 London has grown by 1.8 million residents
- Number under-18 has grown by almost 300 thousand
- After a decade of rapid growth, numbers now falling
- Change in trends sharpest in Inner London

Population by age - indexed

100 = 2001 value

— Inner London — Outer London



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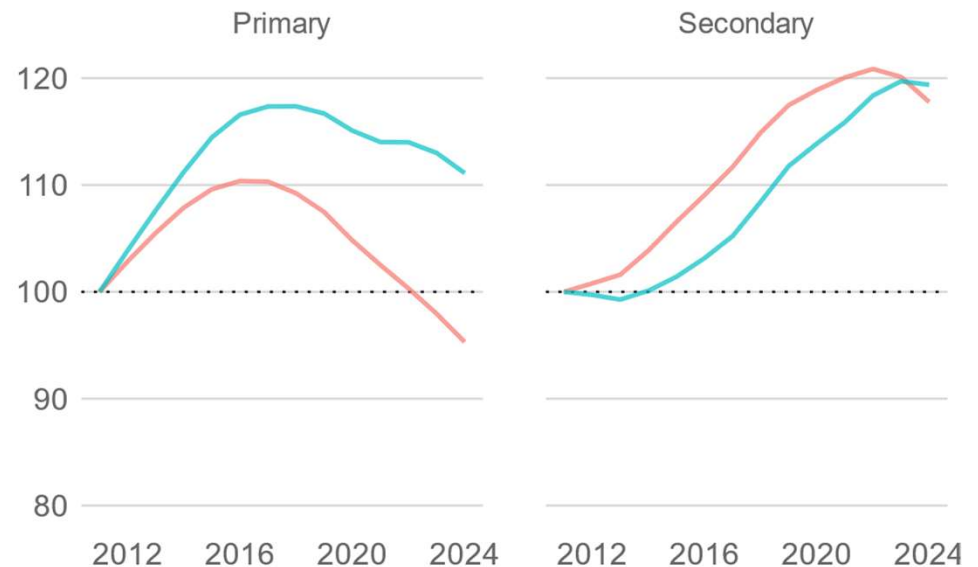
Pupil trends

- Increases in the number of children translated into a need for more school places
- Provision of places expanded across London

Pupils in state-funded schools - indexed

100 = 2011/2012 value

— Inner London — Outer London



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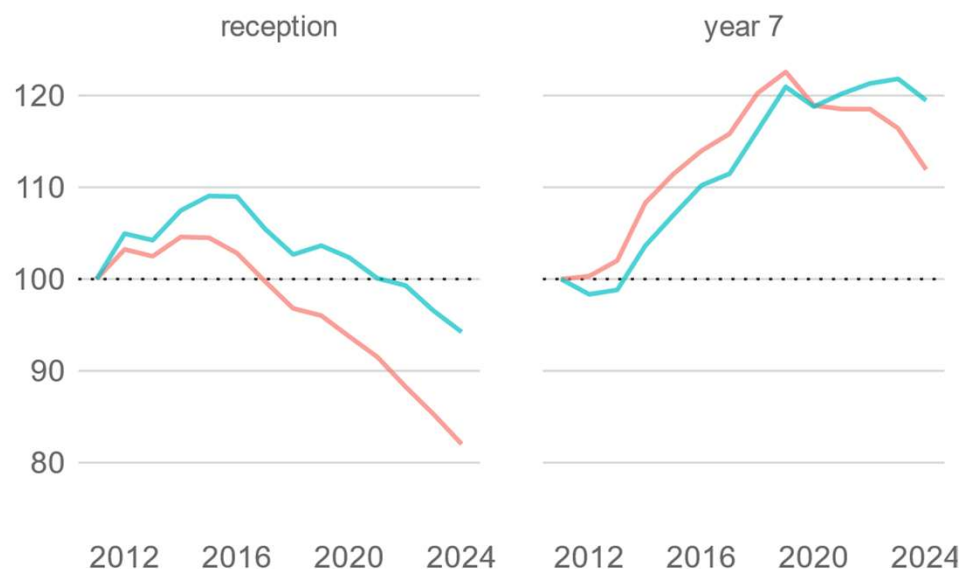
Pupil trends

- Increases in the number of children translated into a need for more school places
- Provision of places expanded across London
- Boroughs now managing falling demand for places

Pupils in state-funded schools - indexed

100 = 2011/2012 value

Inner London Outer London



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Births and fertility

Annual births

- Annual births in London fell by >20% in a decade

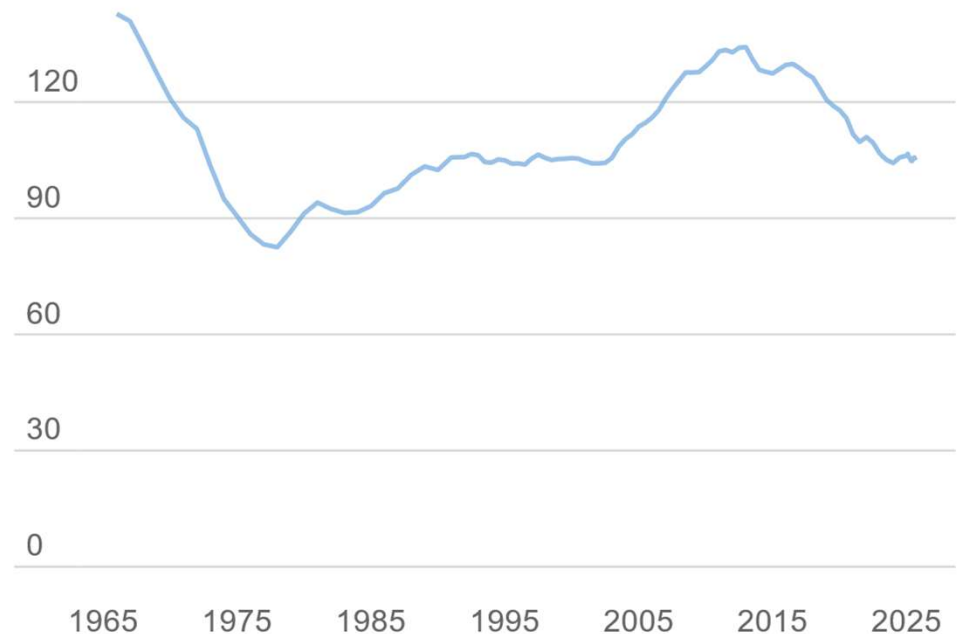
London - annual live births
(thousands)



Annual births

- Annual births in London fell by >20% in a decade
- But remain above pre-boom levels

London - annual live births
(thousands)



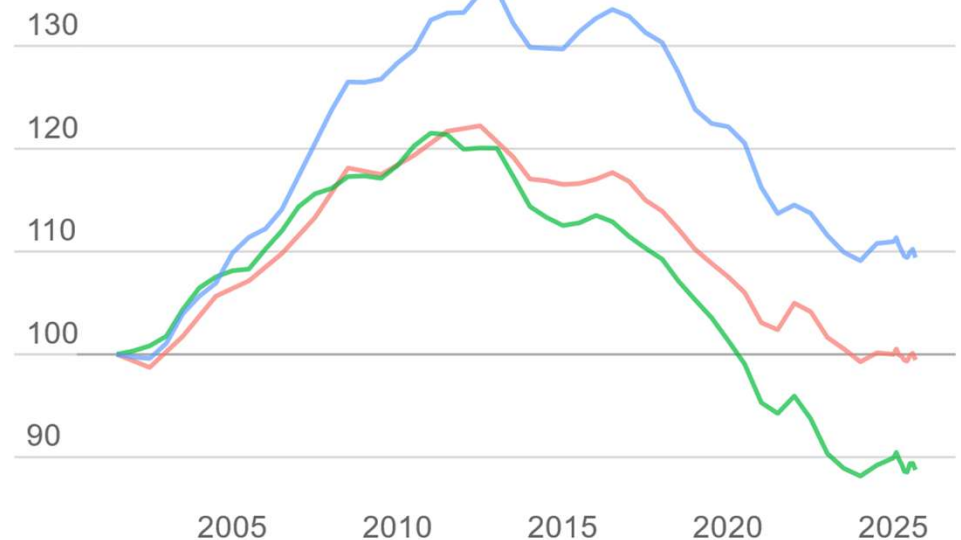
Annual births

- Annual births in London fell by >20% in a decade
- But remain above pre-boom levels
 - Inner 10 percent below
 - Outer 10 percent above

Annual live births - indexed

100 = mid-2001 value

— England — Inner London — Outer London



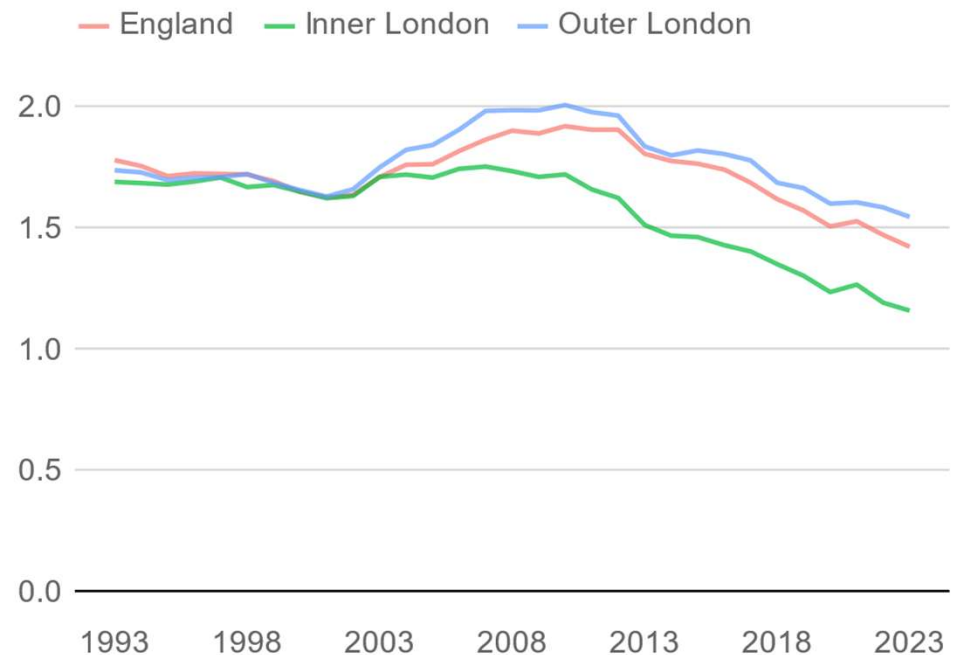
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Fertility rates

- Population has been rising
- Decline in births since 2012 due to falling fertility rates

Total Fertility Rate

births per woman



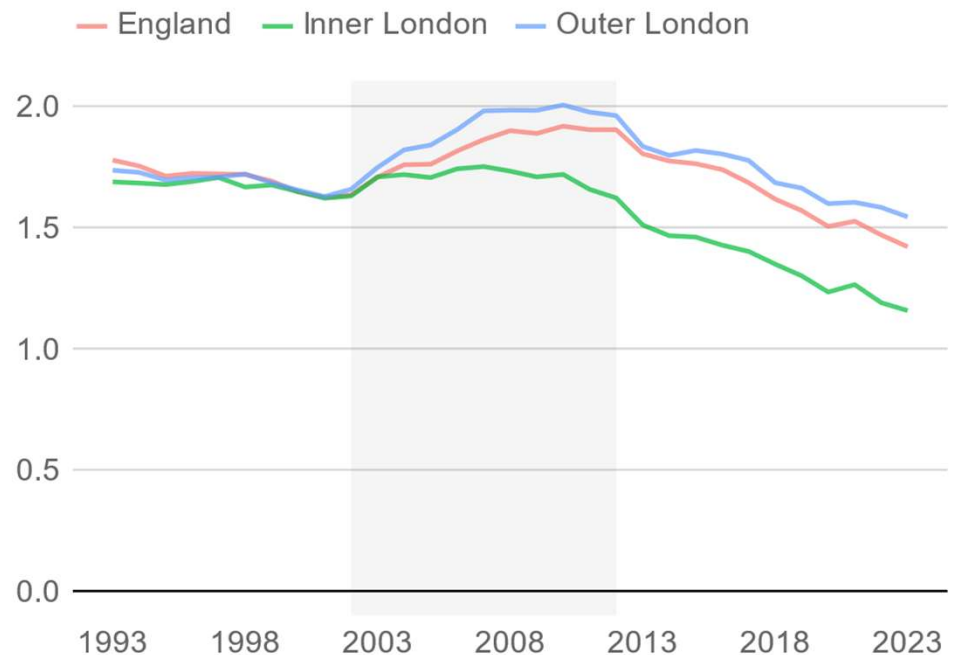
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Fertility rates

- Population has been rising
- Decline in births since 2012 due to falling fertility rates
- Was the boom an anomaly?
- Subsequent falls a correction?

Total Fertility Rate

births per woman



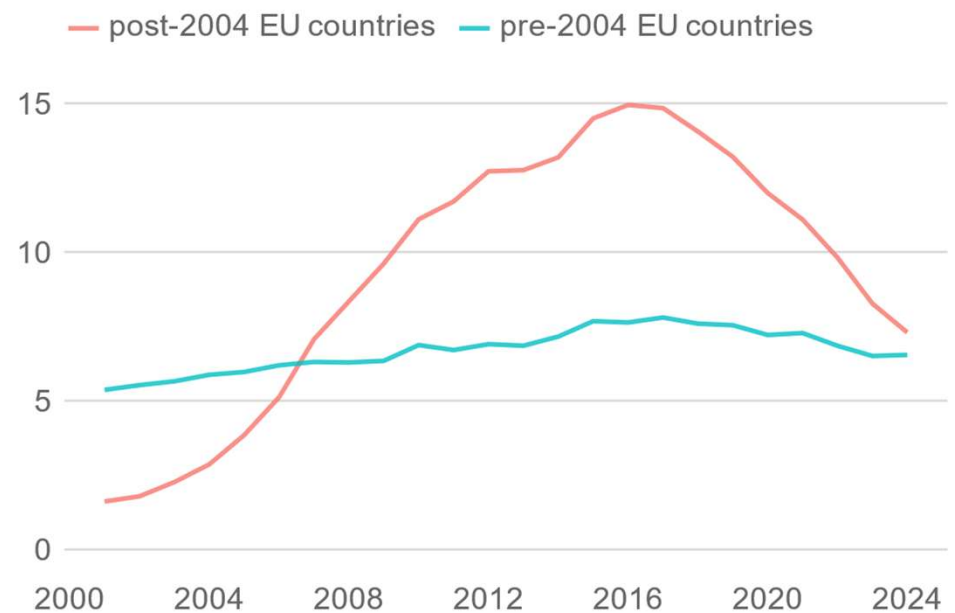
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Fertility rates

- Birth boom was partly driven by migration

Births by mother's country of birth

London (thousands)



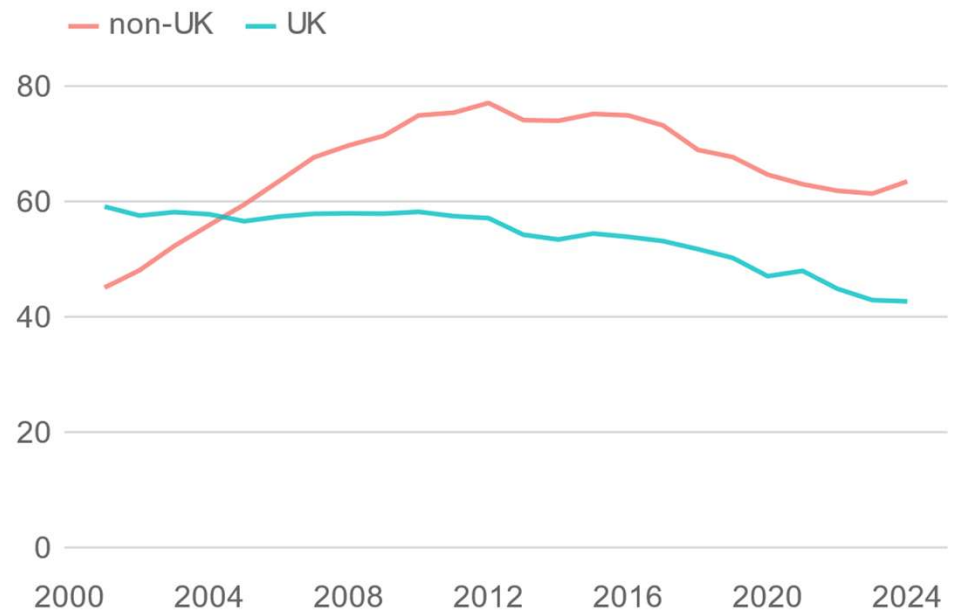
Source: ONS parents' country of birth

Fertility rates

- Birth boom was partly driven by migration
- Migration patterns have since changed
- Births to non-UK born mothers have been falling

Births by mother's country of birth

London (thousands)



Source: ONS parents' country of birth

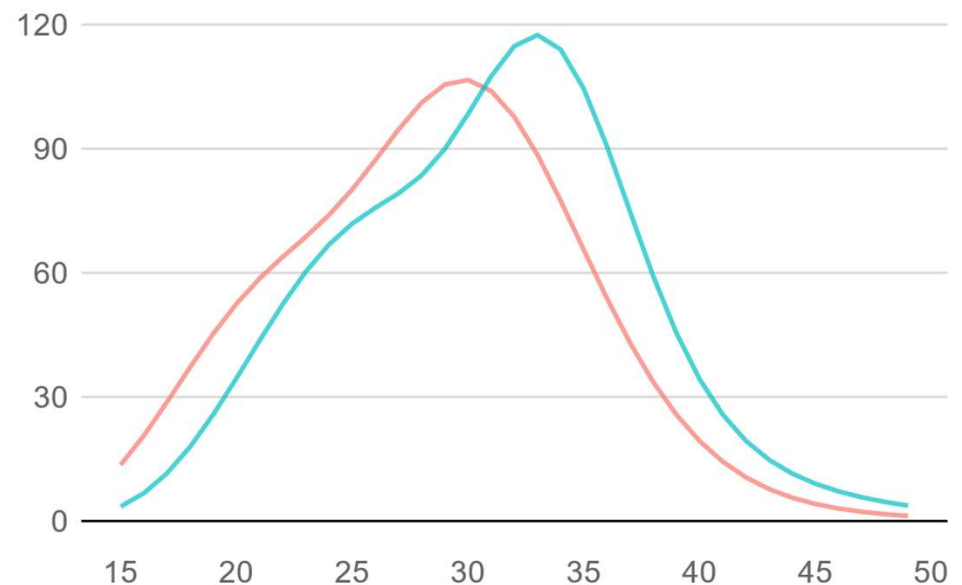
Age Specific Fertility Rates

- Some of rise accounted for shift to having children later in life

London - fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

— 1993 — 2012



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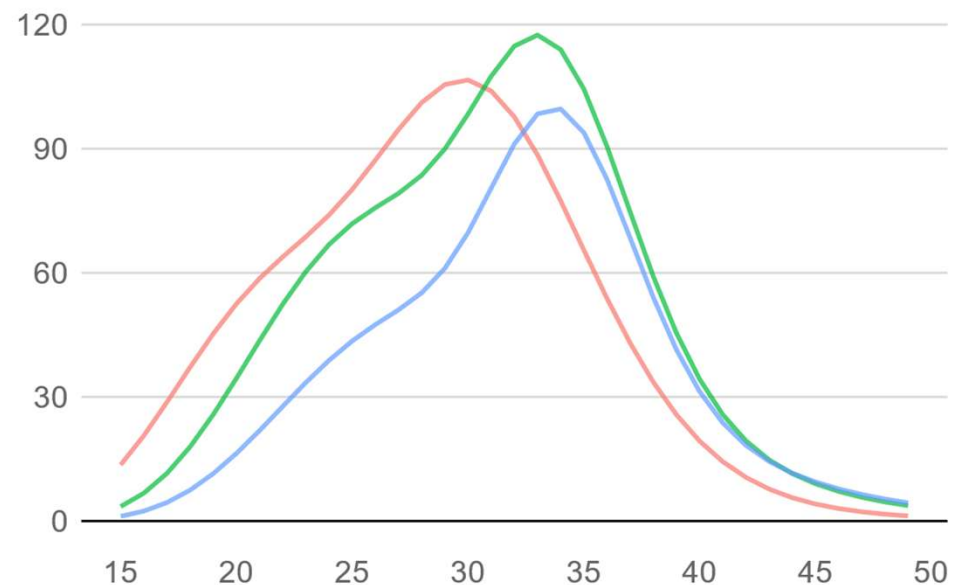
Age Specific Fertility Rates

- Some of rise accounted for shift to having children later in life
- Rates at younger ages have continued to fall
- Increases at older ages have stalled

London - fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

— 1993 — 2012 — 2023

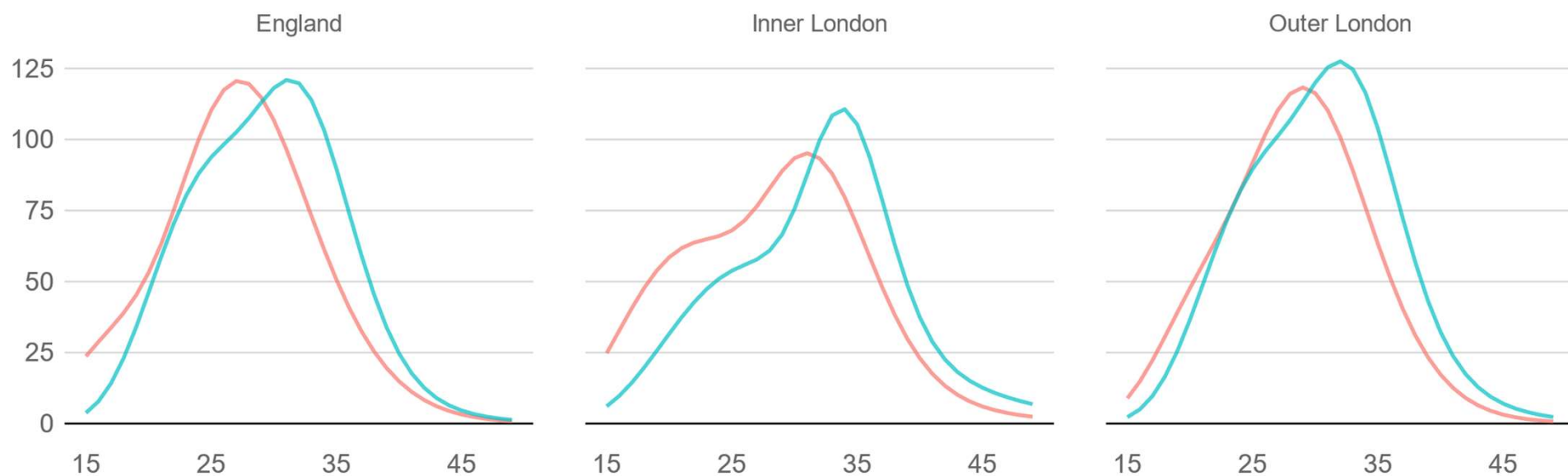


Age Specific Fertility Rates

Fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

— 1993 — 2012

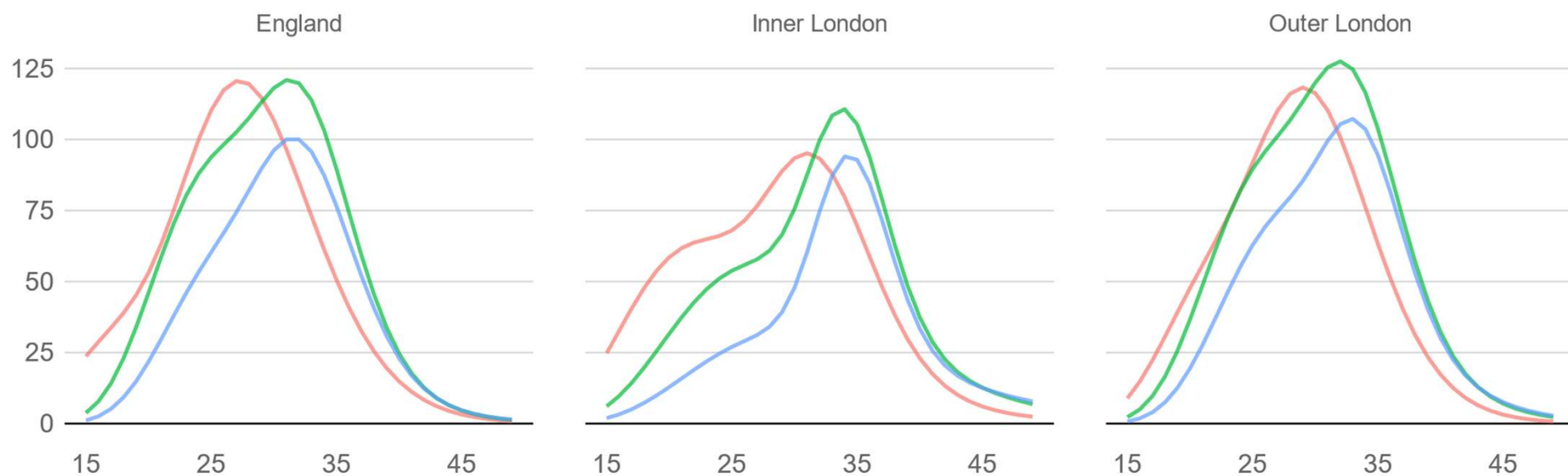


Age Specific Fertility Rates

Fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

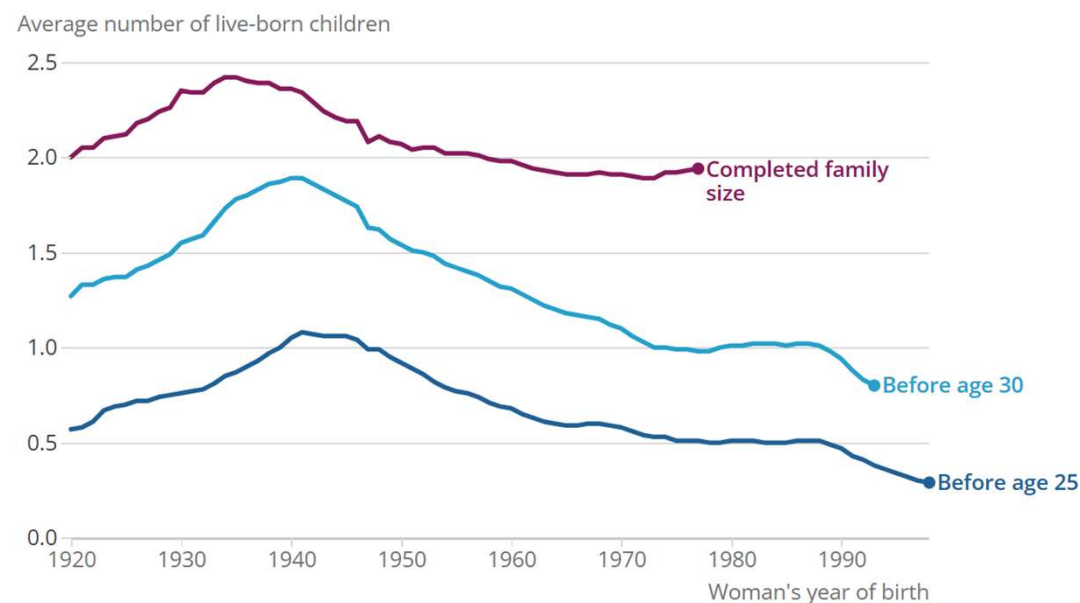
— 1993 — 2012 — 2023



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Age Specific Fertility Rates

- Some of rise accounted for shift to having children later in life
- Rates at younger ages have continued to fall
- Increases at older ages have stalled
- Will this lead to decreases in completed family size?

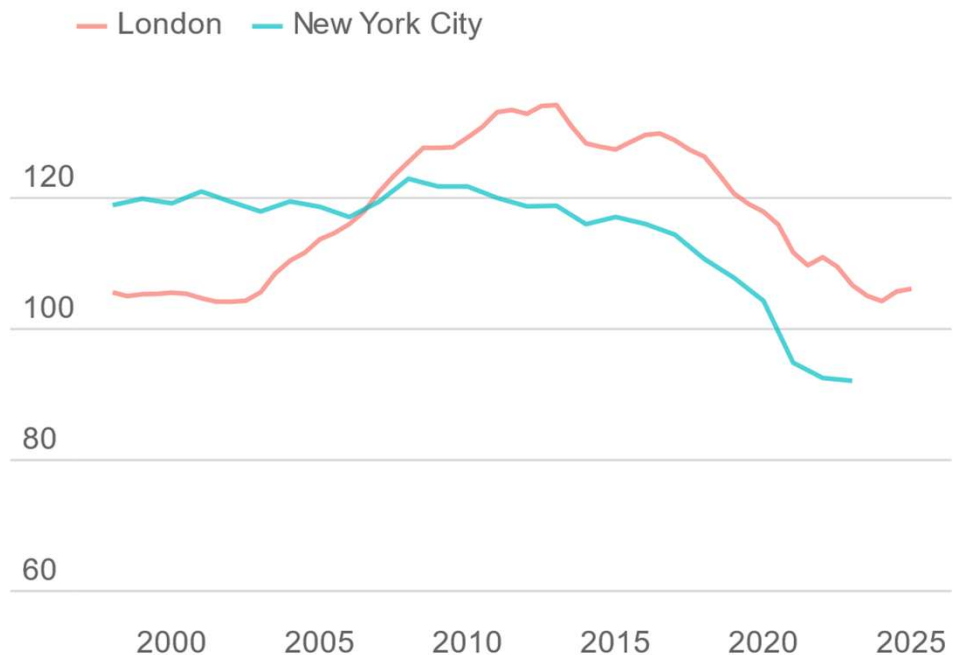


Source: Birth registrations from the Office for National Statistics

Comparisons with New York City

- NYC has also seen births fall over the last decade

Annual live births
(thousands)

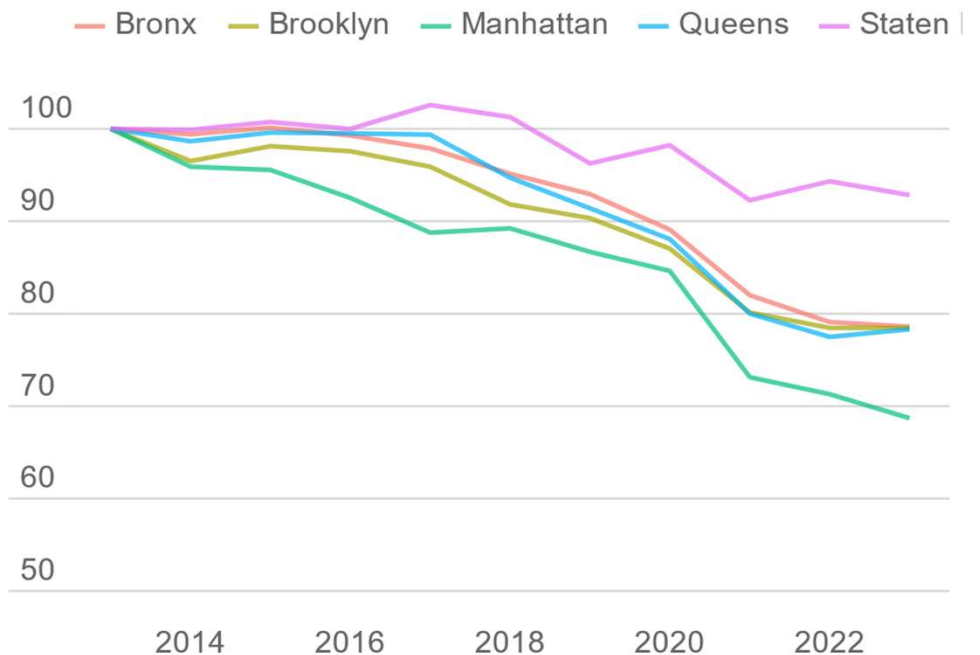


Comparisons with New York City

- NYC has also seen births fall over the last decade
- Biggest proportional drop in Manhattan

Annual live births - indexed

100 = 2012 value



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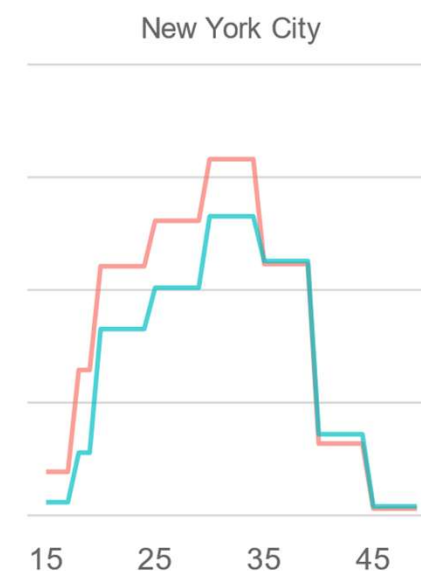
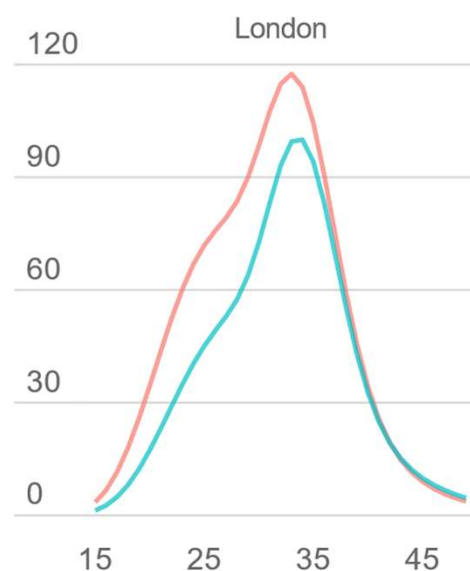
Comparisons with New York City

- NYC has also seen births fall over the last decade
- Biggest proportional drop in Manhattan
- Also seeing falling fertility rates at younger ages

Fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

— 2012 — 2022



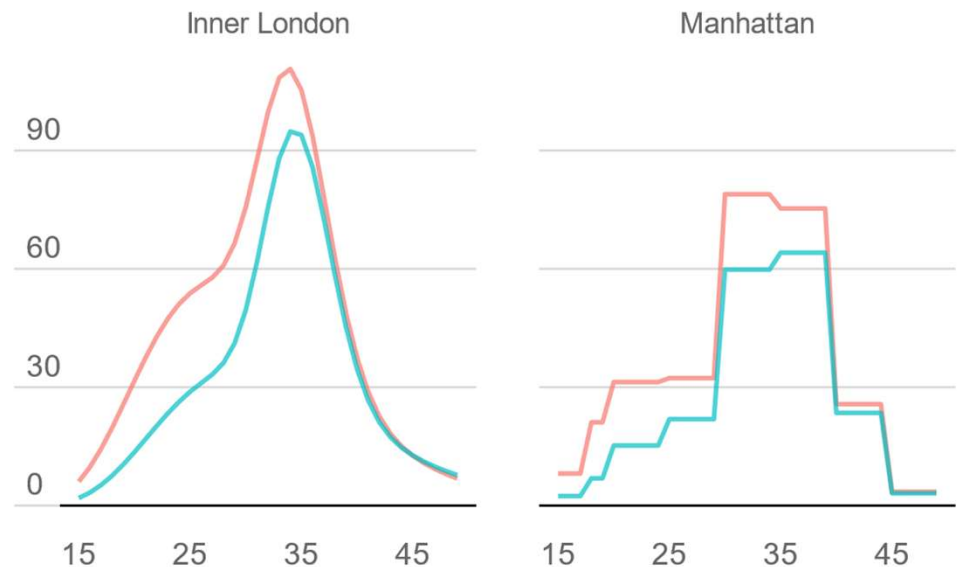
Comparisons with New York City

- NYC has also seen births fall over the last decade
- Biggest proportional drop in Manhattan
- Also seeing falling fertility rates at younger ages
- Trends in Manhattan look like those in Inner London

Fertility rates by age

births per 1,000 women

— 2012 — 2022



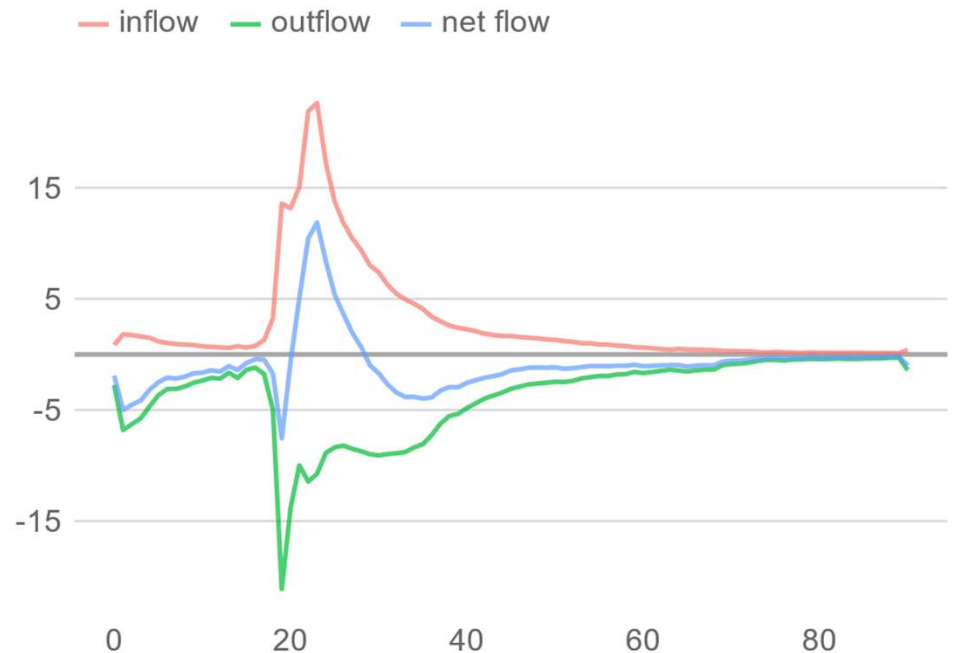


Domestic migration

Domestic migration

- London sees net inflows of people in their 20s
- Net outflows of every other age group

London - domestic migration by age
year to mid-2015 (thousands)



Domestic migration

- London sees net inflows of people in their 20s
- Net outflows of every other age group
- The proportion of children leaving highest at younger ages
- Outflow rates fall once children begin school

Domestic outflow rates by age

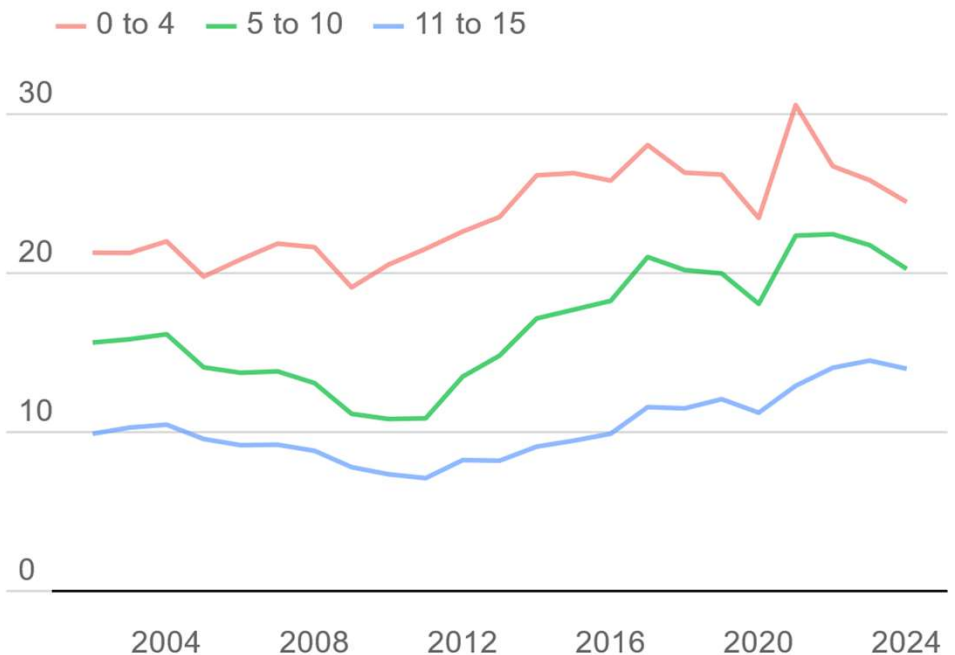
year to mid-2015, moves per 1,000 children



Domestic migration

- **Flows** of children out of London have increased over last decade
- But population of children has also been increasing

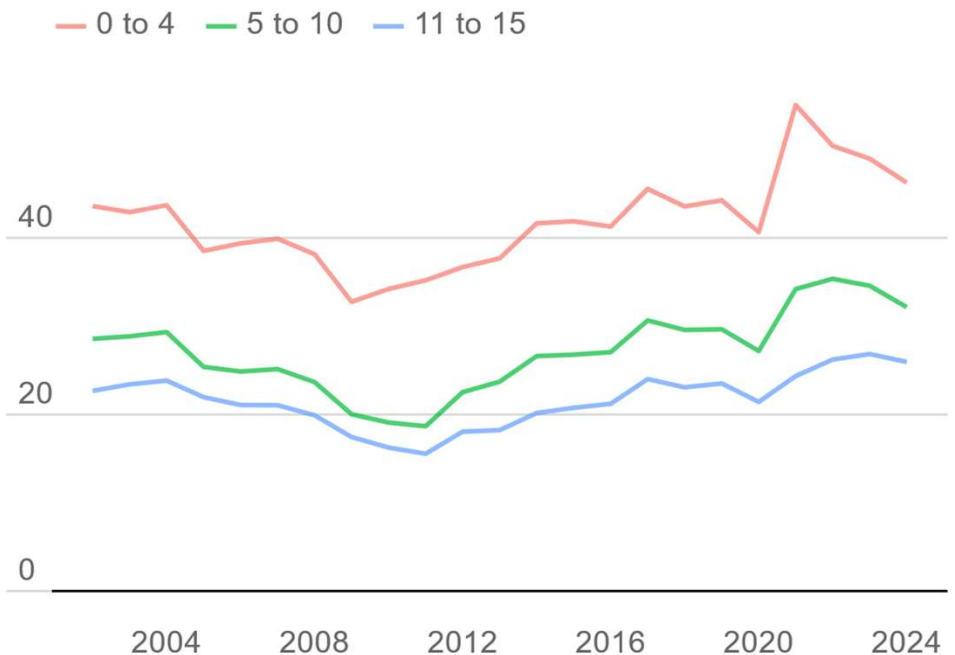
London - domestic outflows by age
(thousands)



Domestic migration

- **Flows** of children out of London have increased over last decade
- But population of children has also been increasing
- Outflow **rates** give better view of changing behaviours

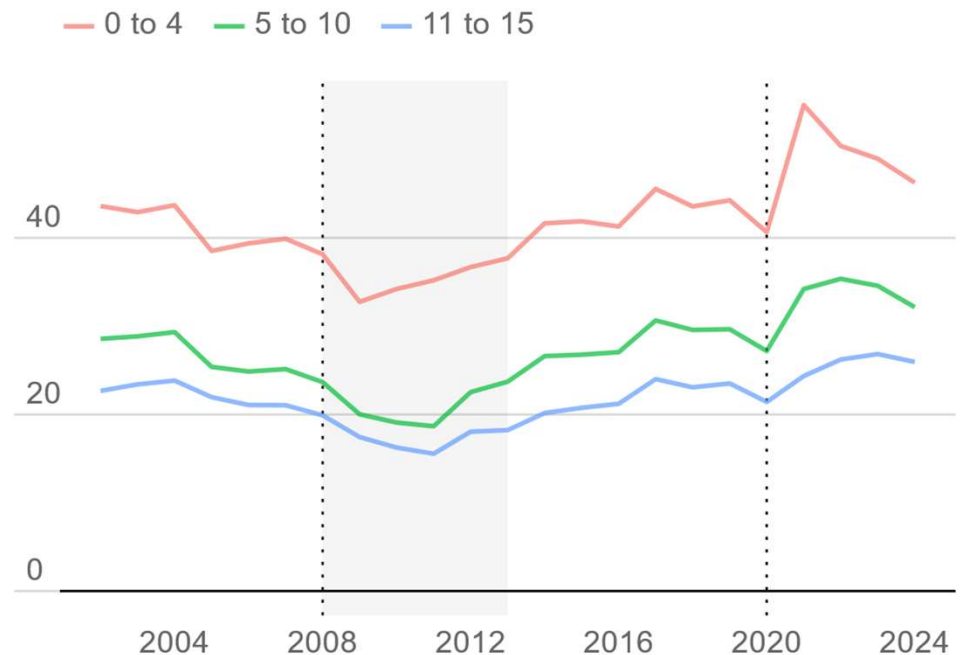
London - domestic outflow rates by age
moves per 1,000 children



Domestic migration

- 2008 Financial Crisis triggered a drop in domestic migration
- Pandemic triggered an increase
 - Desire for green space
 - Increased remote working
 - Rising private rents

London - domestic outflow rates by age
moves per 1,000 children

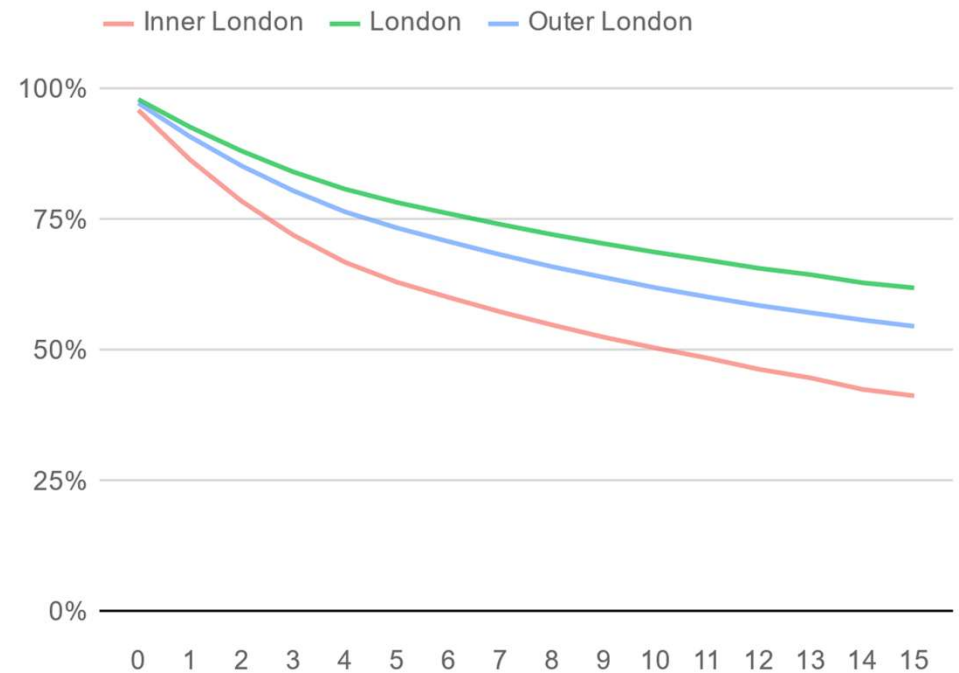


Domestic migration

- Summary measure of outflow rates for a given year

Probability remain in area from birth

If experiencing all rates for year to mid-2015

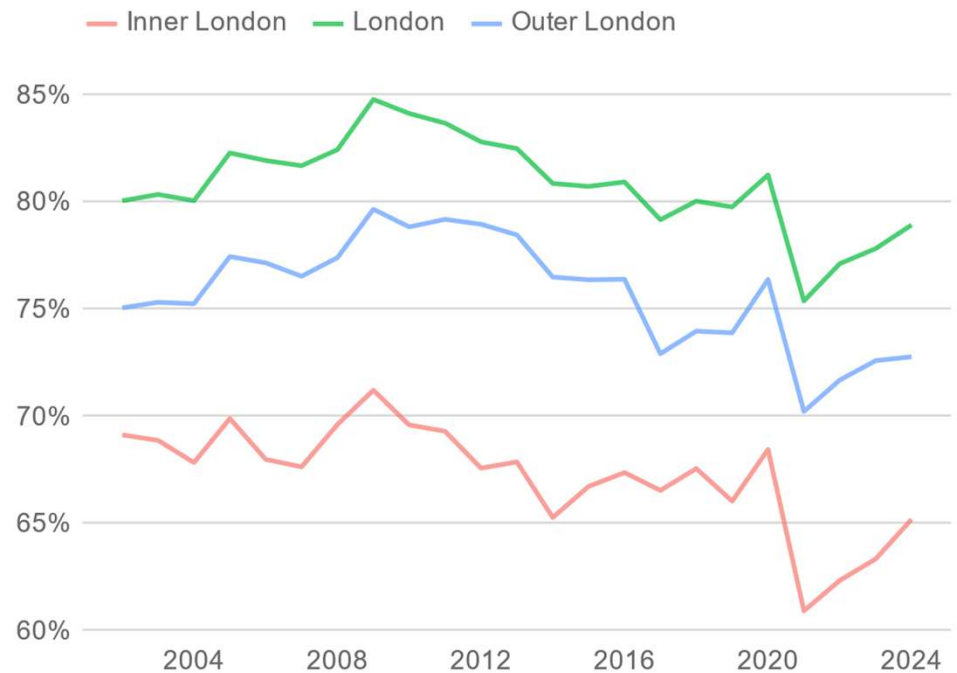


Domestic migration

- Summary measure of outflow rates for a given year
- Easier to see overall trends
- Pandemic impacts are clear

Probability remain from birth to age 4

If experiencing all rates for given year



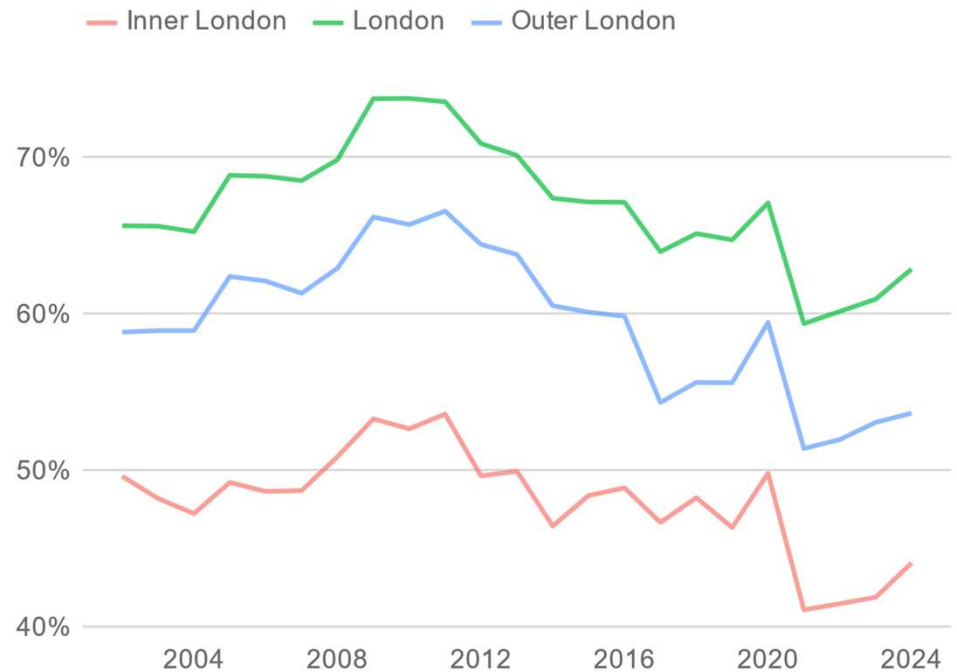
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Domestic migration

- Summary measure of outflow rates for a given year
- Easier to see overall trends
- Pandemic impacts are clear
- Temporary or structural?

Probability remain from birth to age 11

If experiencing all rates for given year



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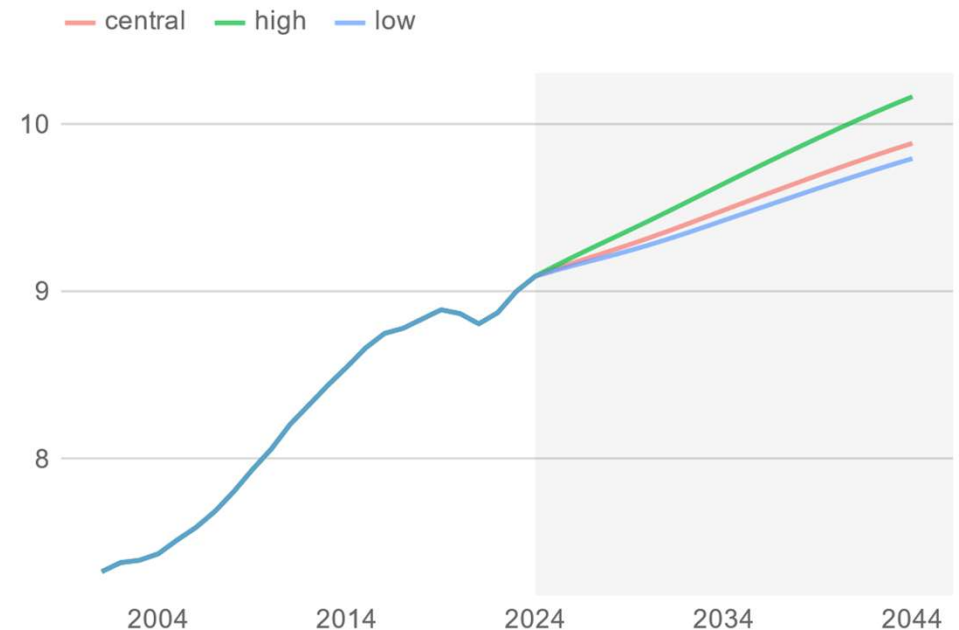


Projections

Population projections

- GLA produces annually updated population projections
- Variants based on range of migration, fertility, and mortality assumptions

London - total population
(millions)



Source: GLA draft 2024-based population projections

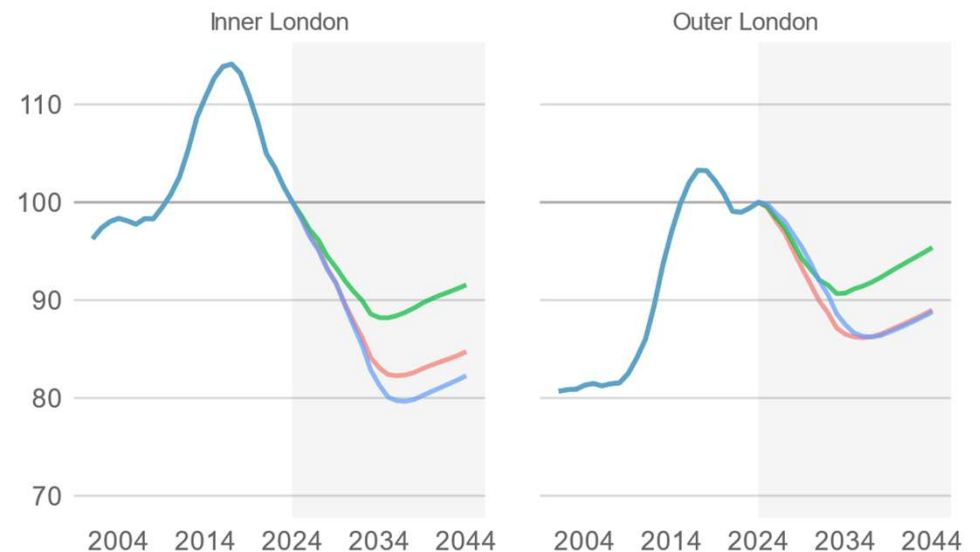
Projected population

- Population of children set to fall back from recent highs
 - Inner London below early 2000s levels,
 - Outer London above

Population age 5 to 10 - indexed

100 = 2024 population

— central — high — low



Source: GLA draft 2024-based population projections

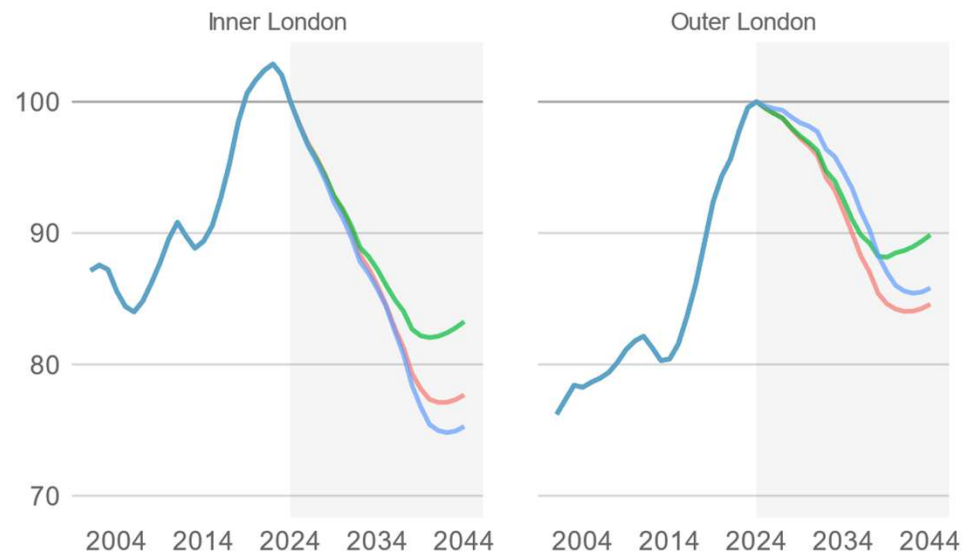
Projected population

- Population of children set to fall back from recent highs
 - Inner London below early 2000s levels,
 - Outer London above
- Managing excess school capacity will continue to be a challenge over next decade

Population age 11 to 15 - indexed

100 = 2024 population

— central — high — low



Source: GLA draft 2024-based population projections

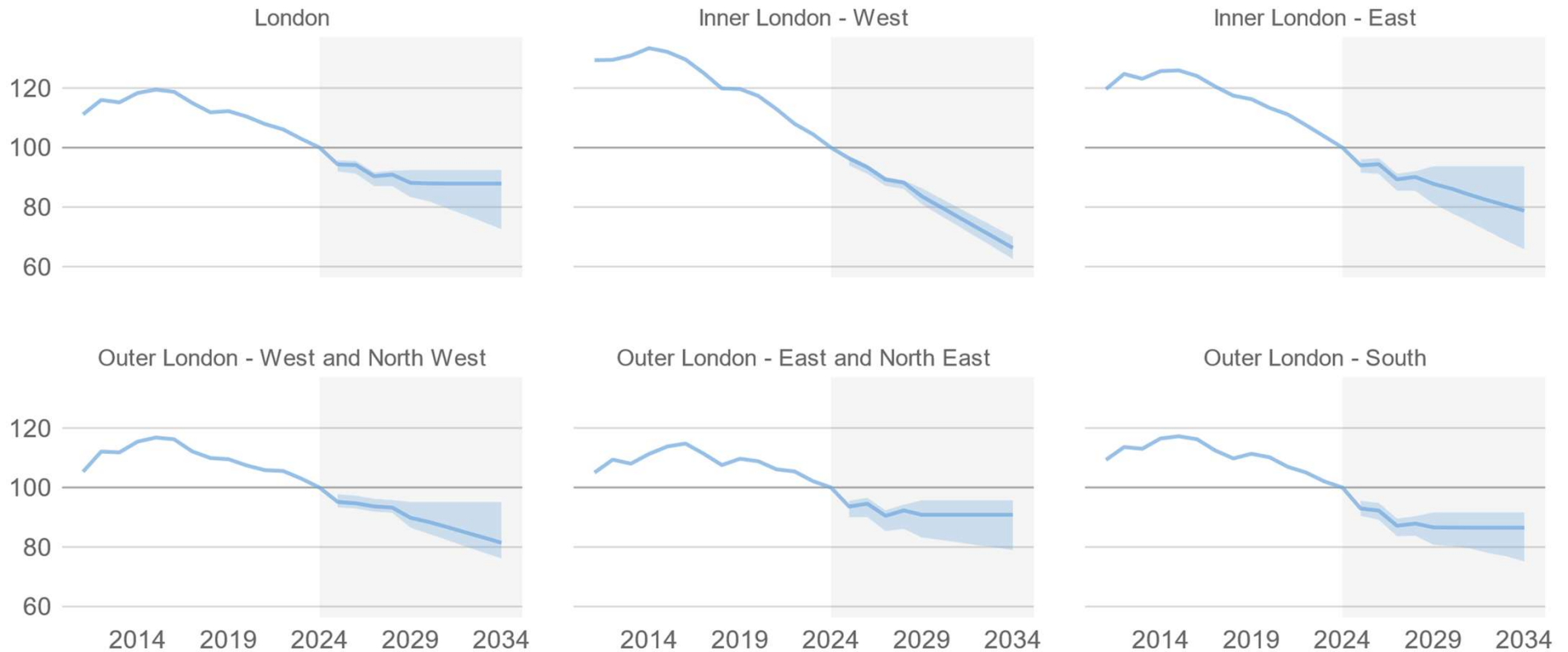
Projected pupils

- GLA began publishing new series of pupil projections this year
- Probabilistic model based on relationship between pupils on roll on past births
- Outputs available for all English subregions

Projected pupils

Reception pupils - indexed

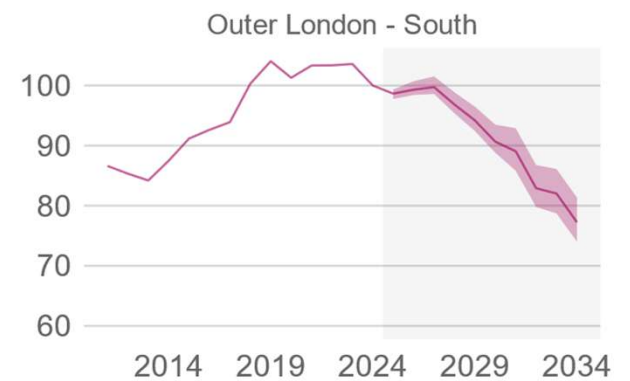
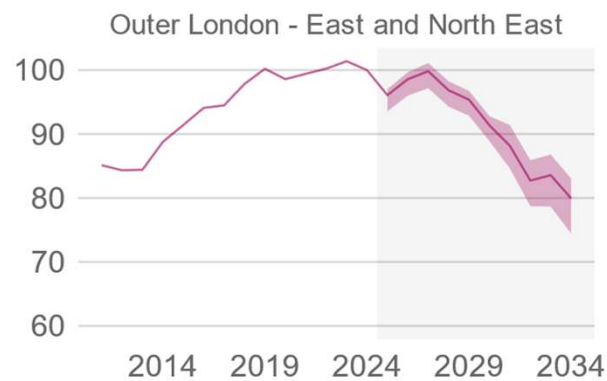
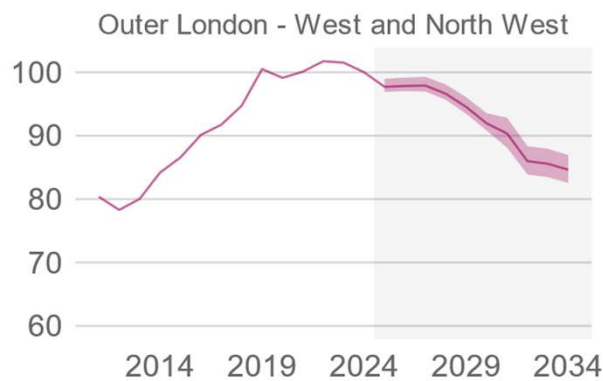
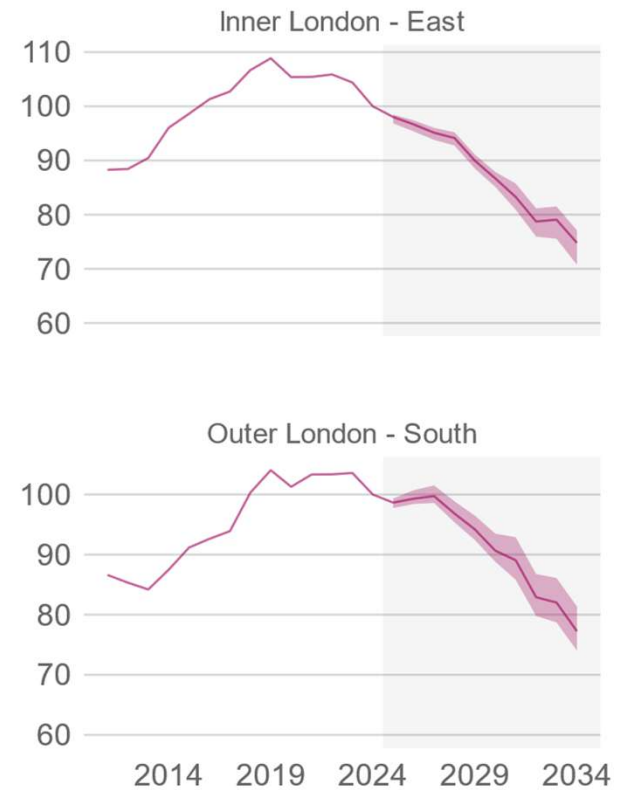
100 = 2024/25 pupils



Projected pupils

Year 7 pupils - indexed

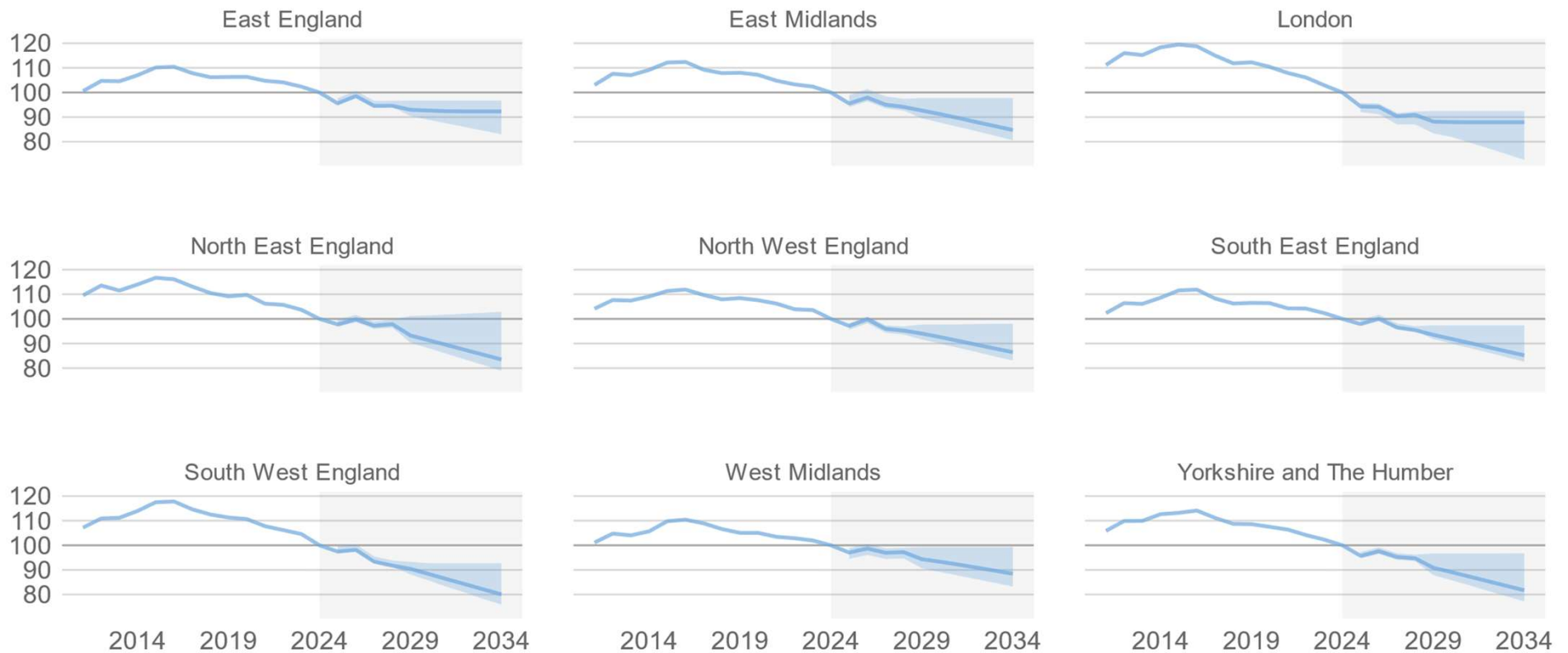
100 = 2024/25 pupils



Projected pupils

Reception pupils - indexed

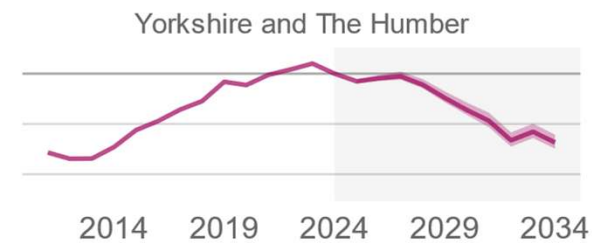
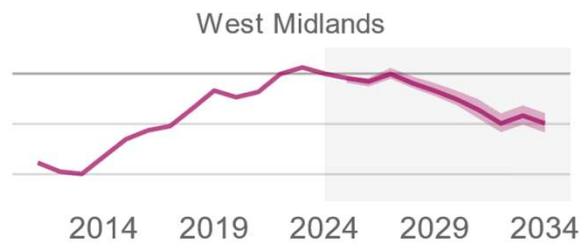
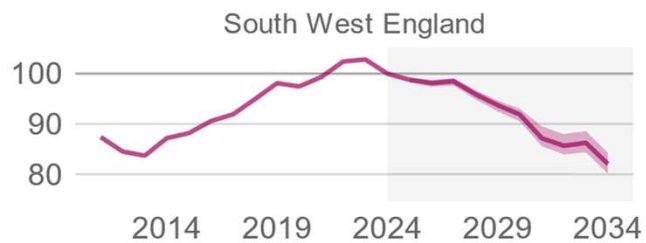
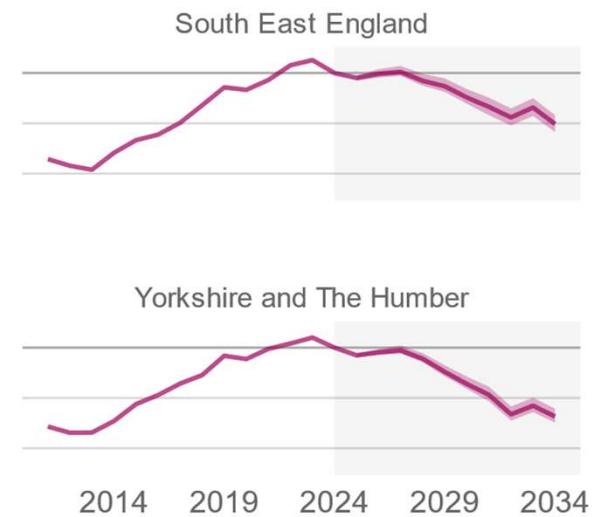
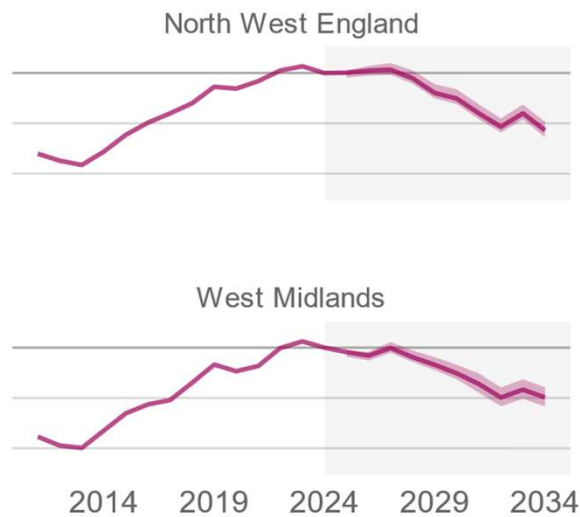
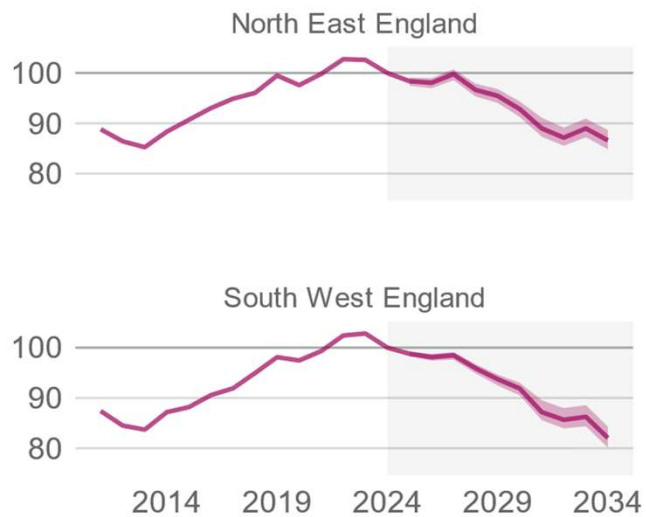
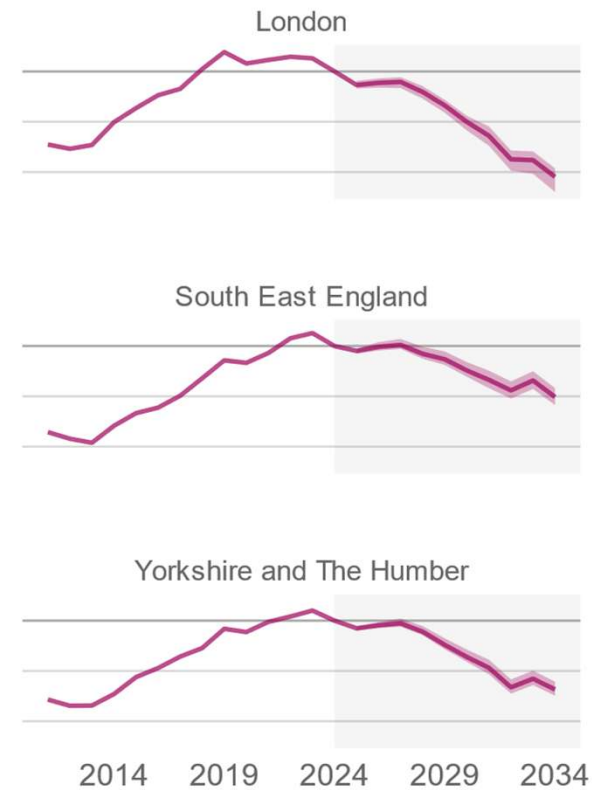
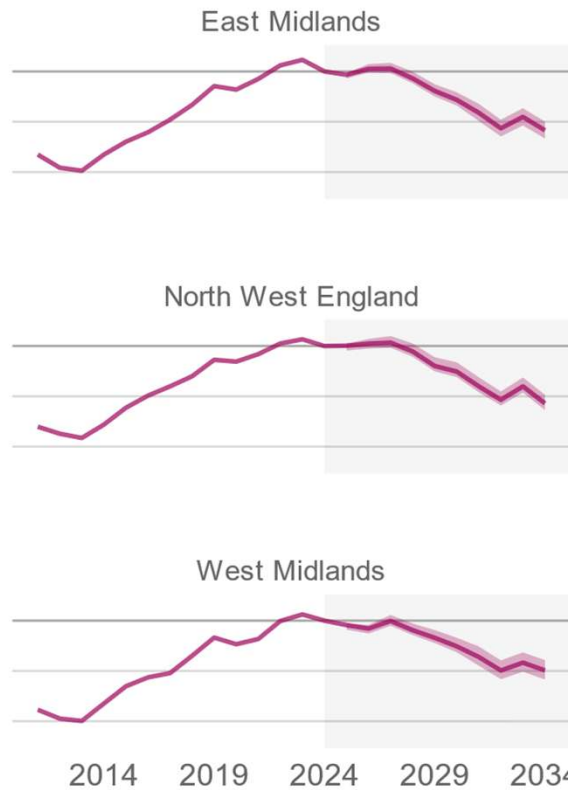
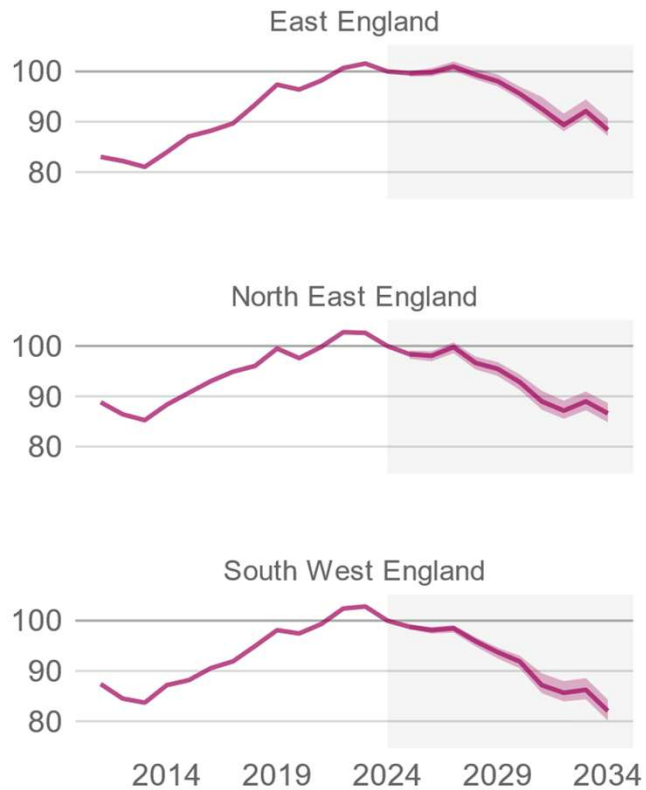
100 = 2024/25 pupils



Projected pupils

Year 7 pupils - indexed

100 = 2024/25 pupils





Conclusions

Conclusions - 1

- Number of children in London grew rapidly from the mid-2000s and is now falling again
- Trends driven by births and domestic migration
 - Births boomed between 2002 and 2012
 - Outflows fell after 2008 Financial Crisis – more children stayed
- Births peaked in 2012 and have fallen since
- Outflows from London recovered over following decade..
- ..sharply increased after pandemic

Conclusions - 2

Overall decline in numbers over the past decade both:

- a 'correction' following a period of unusual growth and
- a reflection of national and international trends

The steeper falls seen in Inner London are likely the consequence of:

- falling housing affordability
- a shift in patterns following the pandemic

Conclusions - 3

- Falls in children and pupils projected to continue
- Overall numbers in London set to return to pre-boom levels
 - Outer above, Inner below
- Expansion of provision during the boom years leaves local authorities to manage excess school capacity
 - Demand seems unlikely to return to past levels
 - But schools difficult to replace if closed



Links

Links

- Sub-regional pupil projections - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/sub-regional-pupil-projections>
- Draft 2024-based population projections - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/demographic-projections---research-outputs/>
- London Population Projections Explorer - <https://apps.london.gov.uk/population-projections/>
- Nowcast birth estimates - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/modelled-estimates-of-recent-births>
- Report: London's population of young children - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-s-population-of-young-children---current-and-future/>
- Report: Population change in London during the pandemic - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/population-change-in-london-during-the-pandemic>
- Births by mother's country of birth - <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/births-by-mothers-country-of-birth-in-london/>
- ONS report on changing fertility - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/articles/howisthefertilityratechanginginenglandandwales/2024-10-28>
- Age specific fertility rates by local authority, 1993 to 2023 – <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/age-specific-fertility-rates-vd4q4/>



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