

Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (Scotland)**Minutes 18 May 2021 13.00 – 15:30 Online meeting**

Present	Organisation
Joseph Adams	NRS
Mike Atkinson	Highland Council
Andrew Ballingall	Fife Council
Lindsay Bennison	NRS
Megan Bowers	ONS
Daniel Burns	NRS
Esta Clark	NRS
Cara Connachan	
Rosie Convey (Minutes)	NRS
Joseph Coombey	
Frank Dixon	NRS
Michelle Duncan	Falkirk Council
Bethanie Fenney	NRS
Alan Ferrier	NRS
Emma Fitzpatrick	East Dumbartonshire Council
Xander Flatt	Edinburgh City Council
Kerry Gadsdon	ONS
Harvey Gibson	Cogent Strategies International
Heidi Goodship	Scottish Borders Council
William Howes	NRS
Kenneth Humphrey	NRS
Heather Johnston	NRS
Hugh Mackenzie	NRS
Elizabeth Mann	NRS
Lesley Mann	North Lanarkshire Council
Natalie McAfee	
Christopher McCrum	NRS
Tom McIntyre	NRS
Pedar Morgan	Bord na Gaidhlig
Steve Morley	North Ayrshire Council
Graeme Muir	East Ayrshire Council
Sarah Nodwell	Scottish Water
Rich Pereira	ONS
Alex Prichard	NRS
Julie Ramsay	NRS
Jack Reid	NRS
Rihan Middleton	
Esther Roughsedge	NRS
David Rowley	NRS
Ryan Scott (Chair)	NRS

Kathleen Shirkie	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
David Sim	NRS
Heather Smith	Highland & Islands Enterprise
Sandy Taylor	NRS
Sandra Thomson	Perth & Kinross Council
Sara Townsend-Cartwright	Scottish Water
Fiona Tweedie	Church of Scotland
Peter Whitehouse	NRS
Sarah Wood	NRS

1. Introductions/feedback – Ryan Scott

Ryan Scott gave welcomes and invited attendees to introduce themselves.

Ryan Scott: After feedback we made the decision last year to give people more time with the papers in order for them to respond at their leisure. Thanks for the feedback, it was really helpful and constructive. Looking to build on that feedback today.

2. Scotland's Census 2022

a) General update – Esta Clark, Sarah Wood

Esta Clark presented a general update on Scotland's Census 2022. Areas outlined were:

- timelines
- design
- enumeration strategy
- wave of contact model
- question and questionnaire design
- National Statistics Accreditation
- legislation
- Census Coverage Survey
- stakeholder engagement.

Sarah Wood gave more detail on communications. She explained that NRS will be holding a meeting with Local Authorities later this month, which will be the start of regular meetings. These meetings will provide updates on things like communications, marketing, and education. There will be a different agenda each time, and a chance to ask questions and work cooperatively. As part of this stakeholder engagement virtual events will be held.

Hard to reach groups will be targeted. There will be community engagement, and a team of people who will be going out into the community as COVID restrictions lessen.

Sarah explained that research shows case studies are key to illustrating the use of census, so case studies will be used in this work. She highlighted that it would be good to get case studies around islands, mental health facilities, planning etc, so if

anyone has an example of a use of census data, the team would very much like to hear about this.

Sarah posted in the chat: *Please get in touch with the Census Communications Team - scotlandscensus@nrscotland.gov.uk if you have a case study of how you have used census data. In particular, we are looking for examples around mental health services, community service development, island community examples and job creation/planning or locating factories etc.*

b) Statistical Methodology – Esta Clark

Esta Clark explained that NRS have been working on statistical methodology. She outlined the peer review process, which is internal across NRS as well as the external methodology assurance panels (EMAP). Esta explained that methods papers and panel reports are published on the Census website and welcomed any comments on the methodology or general comments. No questions or comments were given.

Tricia Couper was not on the call to take questions on a paper provided in advance of the meeting on the Census Address Register, Esta asked for any questions to take back to her but none were given.

c) Administrative data population estimates (ABPEs) – Lindsay Bennison

Lindsay Bennison presented on creating ABPEs. She gave an outline of:

- published work
- governance
- datasets used
- separation of functions, which are very strict as individual data is used
- business rules.

Lindsay explained that when looking at results, they are looking at things like differences by age and sex; urban/rural; and council areas. This is used for research: looking into the reasons why we see what we see in the data.

Lindsay highlighted that it is useful to keep in mind that admin data sets are collected for another purpose. Lindsay asked for any questions or suggestions to be emailed over to the team.

Heather Smith: *This is interesting, especially for our area, council areas around highlands and islands, can we have a copy of the presentations?*

Lindsay explained that the research is all in the links provided, and that interactive charts would be good for seeing data for individual Council Areas.

Kenneth Humphreys: *How do you reconcile inconsistent date of birth across datasets?*

Lindsay Bennison: *That's in the methodology paper, we are able to cope with things like that. We have to deal with this and we have a sophisticated methodology to deal with this. The link to this is in the first slide.*

David Rowley: *We have prioritization between datasets. National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) is prioritized first.*

d) QA of Census Data – Will Howes

Will Howes explained that for Statistical Quality Assurance (SQA) there are two main elements: Assurance of Processes (AoP), and Validation of Population Estimates (VoPE). SQA check that census data is as accurate as possible.

Statistical Quality Assurance as a team looked into, but are not conducting, the Census Quality Survey (CQS). Instead they are doing an in depth and extensive programme of QA, but welcome views from PAMS members on this.

An overview AoP was given, it was explained that the team will be performing QA at each stage. The use of dashboards was outlined. An overview of VoPE was given, which involves making sure statistics are plausible and the use of topic-based analysis. It was explained that SQA are planning QA panels with Local Authority representatives.

Lindsay Bennison added: *One of the improvements is that individual data is used to check that what we expected from the census is coming through. We ensure thorough data governance. We are improving the quality of outputs. This is new work, and we have been vigorous with our methodology.*

Will highlighted that the team are not using CQS, instead they are using other additional statistical checks. No questions were asked.

e) Outputs Website – Chris McCrum

Christopher McCrum introduced the new census outputs website, and provided a live demonstration.

Chris gave an outline of the approach to user research which led to the decision to change the website. Points included were the dissemination of outputs, and alignment with the census programme. The aim of this work was to make sure that dissemination was done well. Chris noted that census data is important as it is used to inform policy, private organisations, charities and more.

Research on the website update was done from a business and a user perspective. Chris explained that they used the Digital First Service Standard, research findings, did user engagement, and made sure that the website was designed with users and not for users.

Information from customer services was considered. The current website resulted in calls from users who couldn't find information which was available, because the user wasn't able to navigate the website to find it. Users were requesting data tables,

which required resources to create. Thus for the new website the team looked into a flexible table builder (FTB) tool. When researching user needs, the team gained feedback that the website could be unclear. It was therefore appropriate to develop a new census website.

Some things which were changed based on user feedback were shown in the website demo:

- dark mode for accessibility
- select/search for Local Authority on an interactive map
- choose/search topic
- prioritisation of table name over code (with additional option to search codes)
- a variety of ways to download a table
- area overviews
- summary statistics of a selected area, which one can also view visually so that the data is accessible
- comparing data against another area or year
- metadata

Chris asked, if people were interested, to please give the beta FTB tool a try and provide some feedback.

No questions or comments were given.

Ryan Scott: *We are organising some user events so that's another chance to get some more detail on some of this work. More detail on the flexible table builder tool for more advanced users, I'm sure that includes a lot of people in this group.*

3. Demography

a) Statistics Engagement and Promotion – Joe Adams

Joe Adams asked for feedback on the corporate website:

[Statistics & Data | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://nrscotland.gov.uk)

Joe explained that NRS want these statistics to reach a wide audience. He asked that people please get in to contact about improvements for this work.

Other work outlined by Joe was an interactive dashboard, used to support a ministerial taskforce. Joe provided a Demo of the dashboard: the user can select council areas and look at how the data updates.

Joe explained that they are looking to tidy up the statistics section of the NRS website. He noted the importance of statistics dissemination, and data access.

Ryan Scott noted that the team are keen to hear feedback on the corporate NRS website, where NRS put demographics. They would like to hear from users, and work in a similar way to how the update of the census website was conducted.

b) Population and Migration Statistics – Esther Roughsedge

Esther Roughsedge explained that she has taken over from Denise Patrick, and that it is an interesting time to be working in population and migration statistics, partly because of the impacts of the pandemic, Brexit, and the end of freedom of movement.

Esther explained that there is also a lot going on in terms of data sources, particularly on international migration. This work is led by ONS, with input from NRS and other UK departments. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) has previously been used to estimate Long Term International Migration (LTIM) at Scotland level. However, in March 2020 the IPS was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic so there is no LTIM estimate for March to June 2020. ONS have been researching alternative data sources including [using statistical modelling to estimate UK international migration](#) over this period.

Because of COVID restrictions, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is done by letter/telephone rather than face-to-face, and this has reduced the response rate. They therefore increased the sample size, but there are some issues, for example people living in the Private Rented Sector are less likely to complete telephone surveys, which affects figures for people who come from other countries as they are more likely to rent. The survey is currently being re-weighted, to account for this issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have affected people contacting their GP to update their address.

There are some delays in publications. Mid-year population estimates, migration figures and household estimates will all be published on 25th June. Population projections will be published in December, and will just be a single set of projections for Scotland, with no variant projections. There are no plans for sub-national population projections or household projections for this set of projections.

Esther recommended [A Scotland for the Future](#) paper. This is a national population strategy, framing the diverse and cross-cutting demographic challenges that Scotland faces at national and local level, and setting out a programme of work to address these challenges and harness new opportunities.

Esther asked to what extent Scottish councils use the Knowledge Hub, and if this is good place to post up relevant links for people to look at. Emma Fitzpatrick assured Esther that the majority are on that group so it is a good place to put things.

Andrew Ballingall: *Population projections are only at Scotland level - is this because of the data? The reliability of it? Is it not helpful to do this at a lower level?*

Esther answered that producing a 2020 set of projections is challenging, and there is a lot of uncertainty around the input data.

Andrew Ballingall: Will they will not be available again until 2023?

Esther Roughsedge: *2021-based projections will be published in late 2022. This will be a full set of projections including variant projections, and followed by subnational population projections and household projections, published in 2023. After that the plan is to return to a 2-yearly cycle.*

Ryan Scott: *There is a lot going on that we need to balance - the focus is quality data that users can have confidence in.*

c) Household Statistics – Sandy Taylor

Sandy Taylor provided an update on what the household statistics team had been working on. The latest (mid-2020) household/ dwelling estimates are due to be published on the 25th June. This release will also include the small area estimates at data zone level. Sandy noted that the timing of the next set of household projections will depend on when the next set of population projections is compiled. He also mentioned the two summary electoral statistics publications that had been released this year. Finally, Sandy flagged up the link within the update paper to a blog article which detailed work on the impact of COVID on some aspects of the housing scene.

d) Vital Events – Julie Ramsay

Julie Ramsay talked about the publication of deaths involving COVID, explaining that NRS are continuing to publish reports with breakdowns, and monthly reports with other breakdowns and more analysis, including things like pre-COVID conditions. There are no plans to stop publishing the weekly analysis but the team recognise that the numbers are getting lower.

For the 2020 deaths data, there are some delays due to delays in toxicology. The team had been hoping to catch up for 2020 deaths, however this is looking increasingly unlikely. Julie couldn't give a definitive publication date but explained that it is unlikely that this would be in July. The publication of the rest of the Vital Events Reference Tables remained scheduled for the 29th of June, but this publication would not include chapter 6 which is causes of death.

Julie explained that NRS are also going to publish on suicides and alcohol related deaths, which was previously online. On the Homeless deaths published at end of February, Julie noted that she was looking at ways to improve methodology, and welcomed any thoughts on how to get better data.

For the baby names publication, most recently rather than doing a provisional report the team waited until March to do a full publication. Julie thought that that worked well and suggested that this should continue – she asked for members' feedback. No comments were made.

4. AOB?

The date of next meeting was suggested to be November as meetings are on a six month cycle.