

**Population And Migration Statistics (PAMS)
Committee (Scotland)**

Feedback on National Records of Scotland (NRS) outputs

1. We are seeking feedback on our outputs – our publications, data and data visualisations / infographics.

Publications

2. A lot of our [statistics publications](#) are very long. An example is the recent publication [Population projections for Scottish areas](#), which is 67 pages long and is published in PDF format. It contains a short summary at the beginning, some background information, detailed analysis (including differences at council level), detailed descriptions of the methodology, tables, charts and maps.
3. One reason our publications are so long is to try to meet the needs of a range of users. There is a short summary at the start for those who just want a quick overview, and more details are there for people who need them. However, we are aware that such long publications can be off-putting. Some other statistical organisations are looking at ways of simplifying their publications.
4. For example, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have developed a new format for their publications which is HTML-based, and a lot shorter. An example is the [ONS sub-national population projections for England](#), which is just 10 pages long, compared to 67 pages in the Scottish equivalent (refer to the link above). In this case, the analysis they publish is much shorter, the datasets are published separately, and some other information is published separately, such as a methodology document, and a question and answer document. Note that changing the structure of a publication doesn't necessarily change the overall length of it (and could even increase it). However, ONS have shortened their overall publications as well as changing the structure. For example, many NRS publications contain a lot of commentary on charts and tables, including geographic variation, whereas ONS have replaced much of this commentary with shorter descriptions and interactive visualisations within the publication.
5. Most of the NRS Vital Events publications have a different structure to the population and households publications. Several consist of web sections (this is a number of web pages that have been linked together) – for example [Alcohol-related Deaths](#) and [Probable Suicides](#).

6. **Questions for PAMS members:** What do PAMS members think of our statistical publications? Do you read them all, or just look for specific things? Can you suggest any ways which we could shorten / improve them? For example, does the analysis of figures by council area add much value? Is there any benefit to continuing to include the tables at the back of the PDF document of the publication?

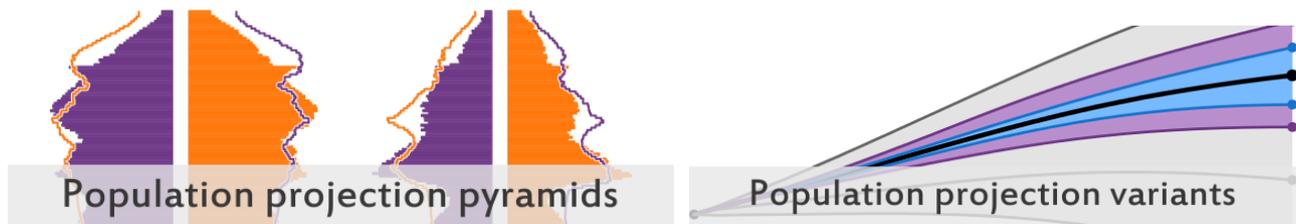
7. Note that any changes we make will be dependent on factors such as available resources, various requirements in terms of Open Data and accessibility, and the needs of different kinds of users.

Data

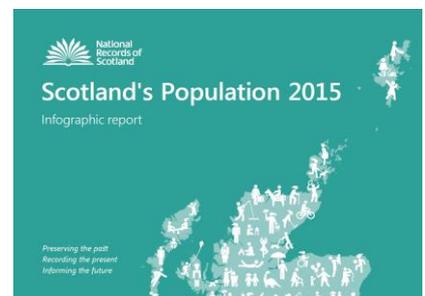
8. Currently, we make the data from our statistical publications available in a number of ways:
 - a. All the tables are included at the end of the Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) publication.
 - b. An Excel workbook containing all the tables is published.
 - c. Each table is published separately, in Excel, Comma Separated Value (CSV) and PDF format.
 - d. We are working on getting our data added to statistics.gov.scot, though it is not all there yet.
 - e. In addition, we sometime publish data in other ways, for example more detailed tables.
9. The main reason for publishing data in so many formats is to increase accessibility. However, it does lead to a lot of extra work, and it may confuse some users. Many of the individual CSV and PDF tables on our website are never viewed.
10. In order to meet 3* [Open Data standards](#), we have to make our data available in a non-proprietary open format (for example CSV as well as Excel). We already make our tables available in CSV format, but in most cases these tables are replicas of the tables we include in our publications, which means they are not machine-readable without some editing.
11. For the latest [sub-national population projections](#), we tried producing the CSV tables in machine-readable format. Table 1 illustrates the difference between the Excel version and the CSV version. The Excel version has a format and layout which is easier for a person to read and understand, but it would normally have to be edited before being processed further (for example to remove blank rows). The CSV version is easier for reading into analytical software for further analysis. Any formatting, comments, metadata, and aggregate statistics intended to make the information easier for people to read is removed. An alternative machine-readable version would be to have one row for each combination of area and age, which can be easier for some forms of analysis, but far harder for a person to read without this additional analysis.
12. We are thinking of making all our tables available in machine-readable CSV files, for future publications, in a similar way to the sub-national population projections shown in paragraph 11 above.
13. **Questions for PAMS members:** What format(s) of tables do you find most useful? Do you have any views on what formats we should publish? Do you have any views on us making our CSV tables available in machine-readable format, for future publications?

Data visualisations / infographics

14. We are continuing to publish a range of [infographics and interactive data visualisations](#), to help increase our reach and impact by getting our messages across in a way that is very easy to understand.
15. Our most recent interactive data visualisations are [two new visualisations of the population projections](#) – one showing population pyramids for different council areas, and one showing the population projections variants for any council area.



16. We have produced an [infographic booklet](#) which is published alongside 'Scotland's Population' (the Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends). It illustrates the main trends in Scotland's population in a way which is very easy for non-experts to read and understand. We have some printed copies of this, which we will bring to the PAMS meeting. If anyone would like some more printed copies, let us know.



17. We are continuing to use Twitter to highlight our news releases, infographics and key messages. You can follow us on Twitter at @NatRecordsScot <http://twitter.com/NatRecordsScot>.

18. **Questions for PAMS members:** Do you use our infographics and/or data visualisations? If so, do you find them useful? Do you have any suggestions for things we can do or ways we could make them more useful?

NRS
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