

PhD on household projections

1. Purpose

1.1 To inform HARG members about a PhD project being carried out at Liverpool University, on incorporating social trends into sub-national household projections.

2. Background

2.1 The Scottish Executive (SE) is sponsoring a number of PhD 'Case' studentships. The aim of the PhDs will be to produce research which helps to inform policy delivery, and build closer links between the academic sector and the SE. The SE outlined a number of potential projects, with a named policy and analytical sponsor, which potential PhD supervisors could bid for, outlining how they would propose to meet the project's aims. The student would be based at a University, and supervised there, but they would spend each September working in the SE, and have regular meetings with the policy and analytical contact (along with the PhD supervisor).

2.2 We felt that there would be a good case for a studentship based on understanding future household and family composition and change, to improve the evidence on which our household projections are based. Paul Williamson, who is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography at Liverpool University, successfully bid for this project, and we have since recruited a PhD student, Ashley McCormick.

2.3 Ashley's PhD format is '1+3' - the first year involves undertaking the MRes in Population Studies at Liverpool University. He started this in September 2006, and is covering topics such as demographic theory and analysis, and data analysis. In May 2007, he will start a dissertation which is likely to contain a literature review on household projections, and some new research on detailed changes in household composition in Scotland, e.g., broken down by ethnic group, social class and urban/rural indicators. He will investigate whether there are significant differences in the household composition of different groups, and whether they are changing in different ways. He will spend September 2007 in Edinburgh, based in GROS, and it may be possible to arrange a HARG meeting for that month, which would give Ashley an opportunity to discuss his results with HARG members.

2.4 Once his dissertation is complete, Ashley will start work on the rest of his PhD (a further three years). The PhD will involve using dynamic microsimulation to project household and family formation – this will have the advantage of including the factors driving household and family formation. This approach requires a great deal of data, so it is proposed that dynamic microsimulation at a national level will be combined with our current headship-based projections at a sub-national level. A more detailed description, taken from Paul Williamson's application, is attached as an Annex to this paper.

GROS household estimates and projections branch
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