

**HOUSEHOLD ANALYSIS REVIEW GROUP: FORMAT FOR REVISED
HOUSEHOLD ESTIMATES PUBLICATION****Purpose**

1. At the last HARG meeting in February, HARG members agreed that GRO(S) should write to each council, proposing to publish revised household estimates based on Council Tax figures. Paper HARG 2005(6) describes the responses received.
2. If HARG members are happy for us to proceed with this approach, we would hope to publish revised household estimates in August. This paper illustrates examples of tables which we may wish to consider including in the publication.
3. HARG members are asked to comment on the proposed publication tables, and state what information they would like to be included in the publication.

Background

4. In the past, household estimates were based on changes in housing stock since the last Census. The household estimates publication was very simple – a brief description of the methodology used, and a single table showing the overall household estimates for each council, from 1991 onwards. A copy of the latest publication is attached in Annex A.
5. We could publish the revised household estimates using the same format, with an Annex to explain the reasons for the change in methodology. However, there is scope to include additional information, such as information about the total number of dwellings, vacant/unoccupied dwellings, and information on changes in household structure from the Scottish Household Survey. This information could be useful for the purposes of developing housing strategies, and service provision. This paper shows what information could be included, as illustrated in Annex B, to allow HARG members to agree a proposed format for the publication.

Council Tax based figures

6. Tables that could be included:

6.1 Table 1: All dwellings.

This table simply records the total number of dwellings recorded on the Council Tax valuation list each year. It includes all vacant/empty dwellings and second homes. These figures do not fluctuate greatly, and each council has had an increase in the total number of dwellings between 1996 and 2004. On average, the number of dwellings in Scotland increased by around 18,000 (around 1%) per year.

6.2 Table 2: Empty/vacant dwellings (including second homes).

This includes:

- Unoccupied dwellings that are exempt from Council Tax
- Dwellings subject to second home or long-term empty property discount

On average, there was an increase of 1,200 vacant dwellings (2%) per year. However, these figures fluctuate more than the total number of dwellings (Table 1). This may be partly explained by variations in the time when the information on vacancy is updated. In addition, self-catering accommodation will be included if it is let for less than 140 days a year. If it is let for more 140 days per year, it would instead be included on the non-domestic rates valuation roll. Therefore, properties can yo-yo back and forth between council tax and NDR. In both cases, they would be excluded from the occupied dwelling counts (Table 3), but it can cause the figures in this table to fluctuate.

It would be possible to separate this table into two, with unoccupied exemptions shown separately from long-term vacants/second homes. However, there doesn't seem to be much advantage to this, unless HARG members can identify a need for it.

6.3 **Table 3: Occupied dwellings**

This is simply the results of Table 1 (all dwellings) minus the results of Table 2 (unoccupied dwellings). The figures are not adjusted to the Census. On average, the figures increase by 16,200 dwellings (1%) per year. These figures should correspond to the small area estimates that are being developed (HARG 2005(8)).

6.4 **Table 4: Household estimates** (adjusted to the 2001 Census)

The occupied dwelling counts (Table 3) do not exactly match the number of households recorded in the 2001 Census. This can be due to differences in the way that certain types of dwellings are treated, including some communal establishments, self-catering accommodation and shared dwellings. In addition, there may be lags in the information on Council Tax systems being updated.

To account for these differences, the difference between the 2001 Census and the number of occupied dwellings in 2001 (Table 3) is subtracted from each year's figures, to obtain household estimates that are anchored to the 2001 Census.

This is the minimum amount of information that could be included in the household estimates publication.

6.5 **Table 5: Single discounts**

In addition to the above tables, it would be possible to include a separate table on the number of dwellings entitled to a single discount – i.e., single adults, or an adult living with children. This may be of interest for the purpose of planning housing need and service provision.

These households make up 40% of all occupied dwellings across Scotland. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of dwellings entitled to single discounts, by 17,700 (2%) per year. This reflects changes in household structure and reduction in the average household size. In some councils, the figures have fluctuated a certain amount between years.

6.6 Table 6: Occupied exemptions

Occupied exempt dwellings include those which are the sole residence only of people aged under 18, severely mentally impaired persons, dwellings only occupied by students, trial flats used by registered housing associations and armed forces' accommodation.

The councils with the highest figures tend to be those with large numbers of students, or members of the armed forces. There is a reasonable amount of fluctuation in the figures, between years,

7. Although there could be benefits to including each of these tables, there are also some potential disadvantages. For example, it may be confusing to include one table that is anchored to the Census (Table 4) along with tables that are not (all the other tables). In addition, there are some tables where the figures fluctuate between years, which could make it more difficult to interpret the figures.

Scottish Household Survey results

8. Previous household estimates publications have not included any information about household type. In contrast, household projections do contain information about future projections of households by type, but no information is published on past trends in household type.

9. It would be possible to include a table on household type, based on the results of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS), as illustrated in Table 7. The SHS is a sample survey of around 15,000 households across Scotland each year. Comparisons with the Census have shown that the SHS tends to under-represent younger adults and over-estimate older adults. However, it is possible to account for this by using the SHS to estimate the percentage change in each type of household, since the 2001 Census.

10. Since 2001, the SHS has included questions on whether the respondent is looking to form a separate household/home, how long they have been looking for, and whether they would prefer to rent or buy. The information is illustrated in Table 8. Although figures are only available for Scotland as a whole, and the sample size is quite small, it provides some information about unmet housing need.

Summary: Action required

11. **HARG members are asked to consider what information they would like to see included in the 2004 Household Estimates publication.** The following tables are suggested for consideration:

Table 1: All dwellings

Table 2: Vacant/exempt dwellings

Table 3: Occupied dwellings

Table 4: Household estimates adjusted to the Census results (the minimum information that could be included)

Table 5: Dwellings entitled to a single discount

Table 6: Occupied exemptions

Table 7: SHS results on changes in household type

Table 8: SHS results on people looking to form a new household.

12. In addition, we need to consider whether to publish the figures as at September of each year, when the figures are collected, or to adjust them to June, to tie in with the population estimates. This would make the figures more comparable, and aid the production of household projections which use both sources. However, the results may be misleading, as household estimates may be different in June and September due, for example, to students moving between home and term-time addresses.

13. Is there any other information that could be included, or do you have any other comments on the proposed publication?

GROS: Household estimates branch
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