



*from the Registrar General*

**PAMS (02) 02**

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18 February 2002  
Our Ref: 601/4/1

Dear Reader

## **REGISTRAR GENERAL'S ANNUAL REPORT - CHANGES TO CONTENT AND STYLE**

I am writing to let you know of changes we are planning for future Annual Reports and to seek your views on the content and presentation of the new-style Report. My aim is to produce a shorter, better-focussed Report, which will enable a better understanding of demographic issues in Scotland, while continuing to make available mainly in electronic form the detailed statistics which previous Annual Reports have contained.

### **Proposed change to content and style**

The Registrar General's Annual Report has not varied much in format for many years. It contains a wealth of detailed data (over 150 pages of tables) on recent demographic trends in Scotland. The Report in its current format is not an effective means of encouraging a better understanding of current demographic issues among the media, opinion formers and the public. I plan to move the focus of my Report away from detailed information to a shorter easier to read report, with additional commentary and charts, designed to draw out and highlight key demographic changes and put these into a historical and international context. I believe these changes will help to focus attention on the important demographic trends affecting modern Scotland.

I attach at Annex A, a draft outline of the planned content of the new-style Annual Report.

The main changes are:

### ***Content***

- Better summaries of population change, highlighting important issues such as the significant geographical and age shifts which are occurring;
- Better focus on the components of population change in modern Scotland, for example bringing out that the main factor in the continuing decline of Scotland's population is now an excess of deaths over births, rather than net emigration;
- A reduction in the number of detailed statistical tables (for example, less on cause of death data, which currently takes up 65 pages of the Report). The Annual Report will continue to contain some information and commentary on causes of death, and

detailed cause of death statistics will be available in electronic form. Detailed commentary will also continue to appear in the Chief Medical Officer's Report;

- More comparisons with other countries in the UK and internationally to help put Scottish trends in context. For instance, it is of interest that Scotland now has the lowest birth rate and highest death rate of any of the countries in the UK.

### *Style*

- The new report will concentrate on more user-friendly text and charts with fewer tables containing less detail;
- The new report will be considerably shorter than its predecessor (probably fewer than 50 pages compared with 185 pages in last year's report);
- Colour will be introduced into the report for the first time;
- To reflect the change in content and style, I plan to change the title of the report to 'Scotland's Population – the Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends'.

The content outline provided at Annex A is still quite general. We plan to develop this further over the next few months. **I would appreciate any comments you may have on the detailed content of the new Report or its presentation.**

### **Topic articles**

To keep the publication fresh and topical, future copies of the Report (after this year's) will also contain articles on specific subjects of interest. For example, the Report might start with an in-depth article examining recent trends in fertility, possible causes for the declining birth rate, and the impact this is likely to have on future population structure. We are keen to collaborate with others (e.g. on local and central government and the academic world) in preparing these articles. **Users are asked to provide their views on this proposal, suggest possible topics for future Reports and register an interest in future collaboration.**

### **Detailed statistics**

One of the key changes proposed is a significant reduction in the amount of detailed statistics available in the Report. I recognise that these detailed figures are important to a considerable number of users. I therefore plan to continue to produce the detailed tables currently available, and to publish these electronically on the GROS website as "Supplementary Tables". For users who wish paper copies, we will provide a less glossy paper copy on request.

In the longer term, we are considering how best to make this more detailed information available, particularly detailed cause of death trends. A possibility might be to provide a more complete dataset which would let the user define the information required. This could be supplied either over the Internet or locally, through a CD-ROM or equivalent.

**Users are asked to let us know if the proposals above for the handling of more detailed statistics are satisfactory and will continue to meet your needs for this information.**

**Timing**

The first issue of the new-style Annual Report (relating to calendar year 2001) will be published in September 2002. Detailed supplementary tables will be made available at the same time. This is later than the normal July publication date because of the need this year to incorporate 2001 Census results, the first of which will become available in August 2002. Although this year's Report will be slightly later than usual, we will be publishing on the GROS website in March 2002 a preliminary return giving provisional figures for vital events registered during 2001. If you would like to receive notification of when this is available or receive a paper copy, please register your interest with Customer Services on 0131 314 4243 or email: [customer@gro-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:customer@gro-scotland.gov.uk).

**Conclusions**

I hope you will agree that the proposals set out above will result in an Annual Report which will enable an improved understanding of demographic issues in Scotland, while continuing to meet the needs of current users. Any comment you or your organisation may wish to make would be most welcome, particularly on: the content and presentation planned for the new-style Annual Report as set out in Annex A; suggestions for future articles; and the continued provision of detailed statistical tables. **Please send your comments by Friday 12 April 2002 to: GROS Customer Services, Ladywell House, Ladywell Road, Edinburgh EH12 7TF, e-mail: [customer@gro-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:customer@gro-scotland.gov.uk).**

Yours sincerely

J N RANDALL

ANNEX A

DRAFT CONTENT OUTLINE

SCOTLAND'S POPULATION -  
THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF  
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

- 1 INTRODUCTION (1 page)**  
RG's message
- 2 OVERVIEW (3 pages)**  
Summary of following sections  
*Should contain an easy-to-read summary of key trends described in the following sections placed in a historical and international context.*
- 3 POPULATION SIZE AND STRUCTURE (8 pages)**  
Section summary  
*Should describe recent changes in a historical context, variations within Scotland, projected trends and some brief commentary on UK and international comparisons.*  
Paragraph headings  
*Scotland today*  
*Population trends*  
*Changes within Scotland*  
*Age structure*  
*Changes since 1991*  
*Projected changes to 2016*  
*Components of change*
- 4 BIRTHS (5 pages)**  
Section summary  
*Should describe recent changes in a historical context, variations within Scotland, projected trends and some brief commentary on UK and international comparisons.*  
Paragraph headings  
*Live births in 2001*  
*Birth Trends*  
*About the mother*  
*Marital status of parents and type of registration*  
*Regional variations*
- 5 DEATHS (8 pages)**  
Section summary  
*Should describe recent changes in a historical context, variations within Scotland, projected trends and some brief commentary on UK and international comparisons.*  
Paragraph headings  
*Deaths in 2001*

*Age standardised deaths*  
*Death trends*  
*Standardised mortality ratios*  
*Life expectancy*  
*Infant deaths*  
*Cause of death*

**6 MIGRATION (5 pages)**

Section summary

*Should describe recent changes in a historical context, variations within Scotland, projected trends and some brief commentary on UK and international comparisons.*

Paragraph headings

*Migration in 2000-01*  
*Migration trends*  
*Migration within Scotland*  
*Migration within the UK*  
*International migration*

**7 MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES (5 pages)**

Section summary

*Should describe recent changes in a historical context, variations within Scotland and some brief commentary on UK and international comparisons.*

Paragraph headings

*Marriages and divorces in 2001*  
**Marriage trends**  
*Age at marriage*  
*Marriages by method of celebration*  
*Grounds for divorce*  
*Trends in divorce*  
*Duration of marriage*  
*Age at divorce and marriage*

**8 COMPARISONS WITH REST OF THE UK AND OTHER COUNTRIES (5 pages)**

Section summary

*Should present the key points of the earlier material in an international context.*

Paragraph headings

*Population size and structure*  
*Components of population change*  
*Projected population*  
*Trends in fertility*  
*Trends in mortality*  
*Trends in migration*  
*Marriages and divorces*

**APPENDIX (1 page)**

Further information and contact points