

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

POPULATION STATISTICS – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

1. With the main results of the 2001 Census having been published and population estimates having been re-based, this is an appropriate time to take stock of future needs for population statistics.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

2. GROS have argued for some time that the International Passenger Survey is a less than ideal source of international migration data for Scotland. The findings from the 2001 Census tend to confirm concerns about the accuracy of the intercensal measurement of migration to and from Scotland. A National Statistics Quality Review of International Migration has been conducted. An overview of the recommendations is at Annex A. The full report can be reviewed at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/quality_review/population.asp
3. ONS plan to publish further information about implementing the recommendations within the next few weeks. The short term change which is likely to be most significant for Scotland is how it is planned to implement the recommendation for “Expanded use of existing survey and administrative data sources for UK Geography of Migration”. This brings the prospect of using information other than the International Passenger Survey and is likely to lead to less volatile estimates of international migration for Scotland.
4. Other aspects of the implementation plan will also be interesting, particularly if there are proposals for improved estimation of emigrants, even if this is not likely to be feasible in the short term.

PAMS is invited to note the NS Quality Review of international migration; to welcome the summary of recommendations as far as they go and to request GROS to continue to press for longer term improvement in the measurement of emigration.

PAMS is invited to comment further on the review.

DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS SERVICE FOR 21ST CENTURY

5. ONS have produced a report for England and Wales entitled “A demographic statistics service for the 21st century”. An article summarising this review was published in Population Trends 113 and is attached as Annex B. The full report can be viewed at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/PT113.pdf
6. Although the report is by ONS and for England and Wales a cover note says that it may be relevant to the rest of UK. Within the report ONS also say that they will work closely with GROS and NISRA and that we will be considering the implications for our respective countries and that ONS will be working closely with us to ensure that population statistics for the UK as a whole remain as consistent as possible.
7. I will be asking Garnett Compton’s successor to study the report and plan Scottish reaction to it. It will be helpful to have PAMS reaction to key elements. For example, it will be helpful to identify whether the main demographic changes, policy impacts and statistical impacts identified in the paper, extend to Scotland and whether the key issues and actions would apply equally to Scotland or whether there should be a different emphasis. A couple of issues are illustrative.

Usual Residence

To what extent do annual population estimates based on usual residence really meet the needs of Scottish users? Does the decennial Census information provide adequate information to adjust usual residence data to daytime populations? Is the extent to which usual residence is not a clear concept for people, eg because they have no real usual residence or multiple residences for different purposes, a significant issue for Scotland now or is it likely to become so in the short term? Even if it is important is it feasible to measure different population bases on a continuing basis?

Quality Measures

How important is it to improve the measures of quality that apply to population data?
Will wider confidence intervals really affect the uses made of the data?

PAMS is invited to note the ONS report “A demographic statistics service for the 21st century” and to advise GROS about a Scottish response. In particular PAMS should indicate what further consultation it requires on this subject.

PAMS should not limit its interests to matters identified in the ONS report but should feel free to express a wish for any developments in Scottish population statistics that it feels are necessary.

GROS