

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

HOUSEHOLD ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS UPDATE

Introduction

1. The household estimates branch was set up in October 2004, taking over responsibility for household estimates and projections, from the Scottish Executive's housing statistics branch. The Household Analysis Review Group (HARG) has met on 21 February and 24 May. Papers and minutes from HARG meetings, containing more details of the work described in this paper, are available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/14635/400>.

Household estimates

2. The HARG group has been reviewing the methodology for producing household estimates. In February, the group considered three alternative approaches:

- a. A stock-based approach. This approach has been used in the past, and involves updating the number of households identified at the most recent Census, based on information about changes in the housing stock (new builds, demolitions and conversions). The figures are adjusted to account for changes in the number of vacant properties in the public sector, and assumptions are made about trends in the number of vacant properties in other sectors.
- b. A population-based approach, applying information on household formation from the last two Censuses, to the population projections.
- c. A Council Tax based approach. This approach is based on Council Tax information supplied to the Scottish Executive's Local Government Finance Statistics branch. The number of occupied dwellings is estimated by subtracting the number of unoccupied dwellings and second homes, from the total number of dwellings.

3. HARG members preferred the Council Tax based approach. It has the advantage that the figures would be more timely, and information on vacant dwellings will be updated annually, rather than relying on information from the Census, for private sector housing. In addition, these statistics will tie in with the small area household estimates being developed (see below). It was agreed that GRO(S) should write to each PAMS local authority member, describing these proposals, providing the figures for the council, and asking for comments on the proposal.

4. At the HARG meeting on May 24th, we discussed the responses received. The majority of councils were in favour of basing household estimates on Council Tax figures. A number of councils had additional comments and suggestions. GRO(S) has responded to each concern raised, and agreed to the following:

- a. HARG will monitor any administrative changes to Council Tax systems, and the potential impact on household estimates.
- b. GRO(S) will send local authorities draft figures each year for quality assurance purposes, before publishing the household estimates.
- c. The publication will describe how the figures are compiled, and factors that may affect the figures (such as delays in information being updated on dwellings entitled to a second home or long-term vacant discount).
- d. The figures will be anchored to the Census, to account for differences between the number of occupied dwellings, as recorded in Council Tax systems, and the number of households recorded in the Census.

5. In addition, some councils had specific questions about the figures for their council. These have been resolved, with the exception of one council, which is currently attempting to resolve discrepancies with their own household estimates.

6. Assuming that no further problems are identified, we propose to publish revised household estimates, based on this approach, in August.

Small area dwelling counts and household estimates

7. The Scottish Assessors' Portal was launched in 2004, and contains information on every residential property in Scotland. GRO(S) has used data from the Portal, to publish estimates of the number of dwellings at neighbourhood level, broken down by council tax band. These figures were published on the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website (www.sns.gov.uk) on April 19th. In the future, it may be possible to publish additional information on the number of rooms and type of dwelling (flat, detached house etc), from the same source.

8. GRO(S) is contacting councils to investigate the potential to develop small area estimates of occupied and vacant dwellings, which will be based on information from Council Tax systems.

Household projections

9. GRO(S) is carrying out a review of the household projections methodology. We have started by comparing the results of previous household projections with the 2001 Census, to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current projections. There are a number of ways in which the current methodology may be changed, which we plan to investigate:

- a. Inclusion of new sources of information on household composition, such as the Scottish Household Survey, to provide more up-to-date information on changes in household composition between Censuses.
- b. Different methods of deriving household composition information from the Censuses.
- c. Modifying the projections methodology
- d. Inclusion of age cohort effects
- e. Evaluating the household types and age groups that are used.
- f. Updating the information on communal establishments (see below)

10. Whatever approach is adopted, we will require figures that are reliable and comparable across Scotland, and this must be considered when comparing different methodologies. Some initial adjustments to the methodology will be made ahead of the next household projections, to be published in Spring 2006, with further changes made ahead of the following set of projections, to be published in 2008.

Communal Establishments

11. The GRO(S) household estimates and demography branches are working together to develop a more up-to-date source of information on communal establishments, for use in population statistics, household projections and Census planning. This will be based on a number of data collections of different types of communal establishment, carried out by the Scottish Executive and NHS Scotland. The main gap identified has been for students, so we are considering setting up a new data collection in this area.

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