Household estimates and projections update

General

1. Paula Lopez left GROS in October, and she has been replaced by Thomas Robertson. Another Assistant Statistician, Sharon Meighan, has also joined the branch (working jointly with the Population and Migration Statistics branch). Sharon will be comparing the Census Test address lists with DNA-S and Assessors’ Portal addresses, to gain an understanding of the quality of these address lists.

Household projections

   - Between 2004 and 2024, the overall population of Scotland is projected to increase by just 1%, but the number of households is projected to increase by around 13% - an average of 14,800 new households per year.
   - Most of the projected increase is due to changes in household structure, with more people living alone or in smaller households
   - The ageing population is having a significant impact. Households headed by someone aged 60 or over are projected to increase by around a third over the next 20 years, whereas households headed by someone aged under 60 are projected to increase by just 2%
   - Older people are more likely to live in one- or two-person households, whereas younger people are more likely to live in larger households. Therefore, the increase in the number of older people is contributing to the increase in the number of smaller households, and therefore the overall number of households.
   - Until their mid-50s, men are more likely to live alone than women. From the age of 55 onwards, women are more likely to live alone than men, and the figures increase with age. This is influenced by the fact that women’s life expectancy is greater than men’s, and they tend to marry men who are older than them. Over half of women aged 75 or over live alone.
   - Men’s life expectancy is now increasing faster, so we are seeing greater increases in the number of two-adult household in the older age groups, and more older men living alone.
   - There are wide geographic variations in the household projections. The greatest projected increases are in Aberdeenshire and the areas around Edinburgh. There are more one-person households in the cities, and more households with children in the local authorities surrounding the main cities.
3. For the next set of household projections, we hope to use survey data to update the information on household type between Censuses, and update the information on communal establishments.

2. For future projections, we will be required to produce projections for new geographies (as well as local authority areas). The Planning etc. (Scotland) Bill (http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/51-planning/index.htm) is likely to get Royal Assent by the end of this year, with secondary legislation to follow. Following this, strategic development plans will be required for the four main city regions (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow), instead of structure plan areas. The Edinburgh strategic area, for example, is expected to include parts of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders councils. The development planning provisions are likely to come into force around summer 2008, and the new Strategic Development Planning Authorities would then have three months to submit a proposed boundary to Scottish Ministers. In order for the Planning Authorities to then produce plans for these areas, GROS will have to produce population and household projections for these new areas.

PhD on household projections

3. The SE and ESRC are collaborating on a joint scheme to fund PhD students, who will be based in an academic institution but working on a policy-relevant topic put forward by the SE. The aim is to produce useful research, while also developing closer links between Government and academia, and developing a cohort of academic researchers who have the skills and experience necessary to carry out policy-relevant research.

4. GROS put forward a proposal for a PhD topic on understanding future household and family composition and change, with the aim of improving the evidence base on which the GROS household projections are made. The PhD will be carried out by Ashley McCormick, based at Liverpool University, and supervised by Paul Williamson. Ashley’s research will include using dynamic microsimulation to project household and family formation for Scotland, and investigating alternative headship definitions to those currently used. Ashley is currently undertaking Liverpool University’s MRes in population studies (which he started in September 2006), and he will begin his PhD research next year. He will spend each September of his PhD working in GROS.

Small area dwelling counts

2. GROS published information on the number of dwellings in each data zone in Scotland on the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website (www.sns.gov.uk) in July. This includes information on the number of dwellings in each Council Tax band, and density of housing (number of dwellings per hectare). An illustration of this data, for North Edinburgh, is shown in the Annex. Next year, we are hoping to be able to include information on type of dwelling and number of rooms, as well.

Small area household estimates

3. GROS has set up a new data collection to obtain data zone information on the number of occupied and vacant dwellings, from Council Tax systems. This will allow far more detailed local information to be produced than is currently the case, and it will also enable us to produce household projections for different geographies (such as the city regions described above), based on aggregations of these data.
4. There are five software suppliers providing different councils with their Council Tax software. GROS produced a data specification for the software suppliers to produce a report to extract the information we need. The data are aggregated to data zone level before being sent to GROS by the councils. The first data collection was carried out in September, with the aim of producing data which could be validated against the CTAXBASE return used by the SE Local Government Finance Statistics branch, which the local authority household estimates are based on. We now have data from around two thirds of councils, and we are working to compare the two sets of data. In a number of cases, we have found differences between the two sets of figures, and we are working with the councils and software suppliers to find the reasons for this. We are planning to delay the publication of the local authority household estimates until we understand the reasons for these discrepancies.

5. To identify the correct data zone, we need an accurate postcode for each dwelling on Council Tax lists. Most records do have a postcode, and GROS is working with the councils to improve the quality of the postcode information. However, it is likely that most councils will have a small percentage of records with no accurate postcode information (under 1%), and in such cases we will probably have to record these dwellings as being 'unallocated'.

6. We also need to decide which date to choose for future data collections. Early September was chosen for the first data collection as this matches the CTAXBASE return, which allows us to validate our data. However, this date is not ideal as students are not normally at their term-time address then, so the figures are likely to over-estimate the number of unoccupied dwellings in student areas. Collecting the data as at 30 June would allow the figures to tie in with the mid-year population estimates (which would be useful for the household projections) – but again, students are not necessarily at their term-time address at this date. Any suggestions would be welcome for the most suitable data to choose for this data collection.

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Annex: Illustration of dwelling counts data produced by GROS

Percentage of dwellings in Council Tax bands A-C, in North Edinburgh

Source: www.sns.gov.uk