

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

Household estimates and projections branch update

Household estimates

1. GROS published local authority household estimates in March. They are available from the household estimates and projections pages of the GROS website (<http://www.gros-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/household-estimates-statistics/index.html>).
2. Key trends were:
 - The steady increase in the number of households in Scotland has continued, and average household size continues to fall.
 - In every local authority area, the number of households has remained constant or increased over the last year, and over the last five years.
 - Up to 2002, the number of vacant properties and second homes increased each year. Since then, it has fallen each year. This may have been influenced by the change in Council Tax policy which gave councils discretion to reduce the Council Tax discount for second homes and long term empty properties.

Small area dwelling counts

3. 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 May. This includes information on the number of dwellings in each Council Tax band, and density of housing (number of dwellings per hectare). For the first time, we were also able to publish new data on type of dwelling and number of rooms, as well.
4. The Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website was re-launched earlier this year, and should now be more user-friendly. For example, it now allows users to view a map with all data zones within a local authority area, and it is possible to download all the data for a particular area or indicator, or the geographic lookups, names and codes, and boundaries, in order to carry out their own analysis.

Small area household estimates

5. 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 city regions and national parks), based on aggregations of these data.
6. The first, pilot, data collection was carried out in September 2006. GROS compared the results with those from the Scottish Executive's CTAXBASE return, and has been working with the local authority finance departments, and the software suppliers, to resolve any discrepancies. The first full data collection will be carried out in September 2007.

7. The main information collected will be the number of occupied dwellings (which is approximately equivalent to the number of households) and the number of vacant properties and second homes. In addition, information will be collected on dwellings entitled to a single occupancy discount (mainly dwellings with just one adult, or one adult with children), and dwellings which are occupied but exempt from paying Council Tax, such as all-student properties, and barracks.
8. The pilot data were presented and discussed at a meeting of HARG (the Household Analysis Review Group) in March. If PAMS members from other local authorities are interested in seeing the pilot data for their area, for quality assurance purposes, they should contact the GROS Household estimate and projections branch.
9. At the last PAMS meeting, and the HARG meeting, there was some discussion about the best date for this data collection. Household estimates are currently carried out as at September, in line with data collected by the Scottish Executive. There has been some discussion about moving the date forward to June, however, at the HARG meeting it was agreed to keep to September. This will provide more consistency with previous years – and it was noted that it can take some time for Council Tax information on discounts and exemptions to be updated.

Future developments

10. Most of the statistics described above are based on information from Council Tax systems. The local authority and small area household estimates are directly based on information from the administrative systems used by local authorities to administer Council Tax. And the dwelling counts are based on the Assessors' Portal, which is also used for administering Council Tax.
11. The new Scottish Administration has a policy to abolish Council Tax and replace it with a local income tax. This would have a knock-on effect on the branch's statistics. In response to this, we are developing a strategy to develop different sources of statistics to replace the information that could be lost.
12. There are two main approaches to producing small area household estimates:
 - a) Housing data** - find a source of information on all dwellings in Scotland, and a source of information on unoccupied dwellings, to estimate the number of occupied dwellings (which are approximately equivalent to households). Unlike the population data approach, this will also provide information about the total housing stock.
 - b) Population data** – find a source of data on all people in Scotland, along with their address or Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN), then aggregate the data by address or UPRN to estimate the number of households. This should also tell us something about the size of the household, and perhaps other information such as the age and gender of the household members.

13. Possible options for both approaches are listed below:

a) Housing data

- **DNA-S** (the Definitive National Address project for Scotland) brings together a single Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) for each council area. This provides a source of information on all dwellings in Scotland. The CAGs include both residential and non-residential properties, and at present it is not easy to identify residential properties separately. However, over the next six months a 'residential' flag will be added to the CAGs, so it will be possible to separately identify just the residential properties. In addition, Forth Valley GIS will take over custodianship for each local authority's CAG, which should ensure greater consistency across Scotland.
- The current proposal is that **second homes** and, presumably, **vacant properties**, will be taxed under the non-domestic rates system. When combined with dwellings data (e.g., from DNA-S), this could allow us to estimate the number of occupied and unoccupied dwellings.

b) Population data

- **NHS-CR** (National Health Service Central Register) - this is a list of everyone registered with NHS GPs. It is being re-designed and will include Unique Property Reference Numbers. In principle, this could allow us to aggregate the figures for each UPRN to produce estimates of the number of households, with some information on size and type (e.g., households with one adult, 2 adults with children, etc), for small areas.
- **Electoral Register** – this just includes number of adults who are registered to vote, but it would, in principle, provide another way of producing estimates of the number of households at small area level.
- **Child Benefit** data from DWP – this only includes information on households with children, but this may be a useful addition to another source.

14. All of these sources would require further investigation, and comparisons with the existing household estimates, in order to understand how useful they are likely to be for this purpose, and any potential gaps/duplications etc. The household estimates and projections branch is planning to take this comparisons work forward and we will provide updates on our findings at future PAMS and HARG meetings.

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