

Sub-Council Area Population and Household Projections (2012-based) - Summary of User Feedback Survey Responses

Background

In March 2016, National Records of Scotland (NRS) published 2012-based sub-council area population and household projections as a one-off release. The projections were classed as Experimental Statistics: data being developed and were published to involve users and stakeholders in their development, and to build in quality and understanding at an early stage. In December 2016, NRS issued a survey to members of the Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee asking for feedback on the projections.

Overview

A total of 31 responses to the survey were received. The responses have helped NRS to better understand how the sub-council area projections have been used and to explore ongoing demand for projections. Specific points raised by consultees are briefly reviewed by the survey questions in the following section.

Summary of responses to the survey questions

Question 1

Please select the option which best represents the company, organisation or profession that you are from.

The vast majority of respondents were from local government representing 25 of the total 31 survey respondents (81%). Two respondents (6%) were from National Records of Scotland (NRS), and one respondent was from a government agency. A further three responses (10%) came from those in the 'Other' category, with two from the NHS and one individual who was an academic and consultant for the government. There was full participation in this survey question.

Question 2

Did you receive pre-release access to the sub-council area projections prior to publication on 23 March 2016?

Prior to the publication of the sub-council area projections, NRS provided pre-release access for quality assurance purposes to representatives from councils who expressed an interest in the project. There was a roughly even split of survey

participants reporting on whether or not they received pre-release access prior to the publication date of 23 March 2016. However, a slight majority of 16 survey participants (53%) reported that they had not received pre-release access; with 14 survey participants (47%) reporting that they had. There was a 3% non-response rate with only one participant skipping this question.

Question 3

Overall, how satisfied were you with the level of engagement from NRS prior to the publication of the projections?

General satisfaction with the level of engagement from NRS prior to the publication is positive, with 62% of respondents reporting they were satisfied and the remaining 38% reporting that they were very satisfied. There were no neutral or negative responses to this question. Only the 14 participants who had received pre-release access were asked this question, with 2 respondents (14%) skipping this question.

Question 4

Have you used, or do you plan to use, the sub-council area projections in your work?

The large majority of participants have used, or plan to use, the sub-council area projections in their work. Most participants are interested in both household and population projections representing 61% of the survey participants. Additionally, 21% report they have only been interested in using the population projections in their work and a further 4% have used, or plan to use, only household projections. Together these make up a total of 86% of survey participants using or planning to use the sub-council projections. There was a low non-response rate to this question (10%) with a count of only three non-responses.

Question 5

If yes, then please describe how you have used them or plan to use them below.

There were a wide range of reasons for participants having used or planning to use the sub-council area projections. Some of these included:

- informing policy, updating councillors, and preparing briefings for various audiences
- using the projections as part of locality profiles
- for education colleagues in forecasting school provision
- in preparation of the City Development Plan
- as a second opinion and comparatively against independent projections made
- for education estate planning
- for housing and social work, including the planning of services to the elderly
- for Housing Need & Demand Assessment calculations
- profiling local settlement areas, locality planning, education planning, local development planning, wards, service planning, strategy documents etc.
- informing local service planning

Question 6

How familiar are you with the POPGROUP software that was used to produce the projections?

Most of the survey participants were unfamiliar with the software used to calculate the projections, accounting for 60% of the total respondents. A small minority of 8% reported that they were very familiar with the POPGROUP software and 32% reported that they were somewhat familiar. There was a low non-response rate for this question with 81% of participants providing a response.

Question 7

Should it become available, would you be interested in receiving training or instruction in using the POPGROUP software?

Stemming from the previous question on familiarity with the POPGROUP software, the majority of participants intimated that they would be interested in receiving training and/or instruction on the software in the future. Of those interested, 10 (40%) declared a definite interest and 12 (48%) indicated a possible interest in training. Three participants (12%) reported that they would not be interested. Similarly to the previous software question, there was a low non-response rate for this question with 81% of participants providing a response.

Question 8

Are you aware that NRS has made available the input files for the projections on request?

NRS has made the input files for the projections on request, however, only 10 survey respondents (40%) were aware of this. 60% of respondents were not aware of this availability.

Question 9

Would you be interested in receiving these input files?

Of the 60% of the respondents who were not aware of the availability of input files for the projections being available, two thirds of respondents were interested in receiving these for use.

Next Steps

NRS is a collaborating institution for a PhD in small area demographic forecasting at the University of St Andrews. This is likely to explore some of the issues encountered by NRS whilst producing the sub-council area projections

Additionally, training in the POPGROUP software used to produce the sub-council area projections is being organised for PAMS members, local government and other interested parties by NRS, with the training being administered by staff from the University of St Andrews. The aim of the course is to provide attendees with the skills required to produce local area projections. Updated POPGROUP input files will

also be made available by NRS to enable projections to be produced using the latest data.