

MINUTES OF THE POPULATION PROJECTIONS WORKING GROUP
4 October 2010, General Register Office for Scotland (GROS)
Ladywell House, Edinburgh

Present:

Alasdair Anthony	GROS
Andrew Ballingall	Fife Council
Jenny Boag	Falkirk Council
Jonathan Bryson	Fife Council
Chris Carr	Argyll & Bute Council
Esta Clark	GROS (Chair)
Allison Craig	North Ayrshire Council
Paul Davison	Stirling Council
Jan Freeke	Glasgow City Council
Alistair Harvey	City of Edinburgh Council
Jos Ijpelaar	NISRA (audio link)
Allan Lambie	South Lanarkshire Council
Andrew Macartney	Scottish Government
Fred Nimmo	Grampian Health Board
Thomas Robertson	GROS
Harvey Snowling	GROS (Minutes)
Cameron Thomas	Highland Council
Adele Trainer	North Lanarkshire Council
Dorothy Watson	GROS

1. Introduction

1.1 The group members were welcomed to the meeting and everybody introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2008

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 26 June 2008 were approved and it was reported that the two action points from the meeting had been completed.

3. Review of the short-term migration assumption setting process for the subnational projections – PPWG (10) 02

3.1 Esta Clark introduced this paper and went through the various options that had been investigated for calculating short-term migration assumptions. She highlighted the problems with scaling negative numbers. The investigation concluded that the best method is to scale the in and out flows separately and she recommended using this methodology and asked the group for their views.

3.2 It was suggested that the short-term assumptions were quite arbitrary and that some form of modelling using other sources of data might be preferable. Esta replied that GROS had looked at some other sources of migration data, such as the Workers Registration Scheme, but that there are difficulties developing a methodology as you are constrained with what you can do given that the

assumptions have to be consistent with the national assumptions, and the method needs to be easily repeated for each set of population projections.

3.3 There was a request that future consultations on migration assumptions should give local authorities the opportunity to comment on short-term assumptions, as well as long-term assumptions. Esta agreed that this could be done as part of the long-term assumption consultation.

3.4 It was reported that the latest consultation on migration assumptions for population projections did not make it clear that the short-term period was for seven years. It was noted that it was the same time frame as the national projections and it was agreed that for future consultations the length of the period for short-term migration should be made clear in the consultation documentation. (Post-meeting note: the initial short-term assumptions were sent out in the consultation paper but comments were not specifically asked on them, because if the long-term assumption changes then the short-term assumptions will change as a consequence.)

4. Update on the work to develop fertility and life expectancy variants – PPWG (10) 03

4.1 Esta Clark introduced this paper and went over the work that was carried out by GROS to produce variant population projections at sub-national level. The variants produced were for high and low fertility, high and low life expectancy, and zero migration (natural change only) and were consistent with the national level projections published by ONS. She asked for comments on how useful these variants would be to users and what the demand was for them as well as comments on the results. She stressed that these variants were alternative scenarios rather than higher or lower limits for the projections and that they could only be produced for the 2010-based sub-national projections if resource allowed.

4.2 It was agreed that users would find these variants useful and that there was a demand as it would save some local authorities from producing their own variants. It was thought that GROS should include them in the next set of sub-national population projections if possible. The variants produced for this investigation have not been published and members of the group indicated that if they were not to be published then they should at least be sent to all local authorities. Esta agreed to consider the status of the variants and whether they could be published on the website. There was interest from group members in what values were used for the high and low fertility rates and life expectancy. All the assumptions for the variant projections at Scotland level are on the ONS website in the 2008-based reference volume, and it was agreed to include a link with the minutes (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=4611>). The local scaling factors were those used in the principal projections.

4.3 It was suggested that scaling factors for fertility and mortality rates could be varied across time for each local authority, rather than use the same value for the duration of the projection period. It was agreed to add this to the work plan going forward.

- 4.4 There was a request that when the zero migration variant is published in future it is made clear how the zero net migration is achieved (for example, zero in and zero out). It was also thought that the associated household projections, especially the zero migration variant, would be particularly useful as these are important for the Strategic Development Plan Area reports. This request was noted and will be discussed at the next HARG meeting.
- 4.5 It was thought that the presence of the variants at sub-national level would highlight the uncertainty in the population projections and encourage users to consider whether one of the variants might be more appropriate for their needs than the principal projections.
- 4.6 There was a request for group members to be given access to the minutes of the meetings of the National Population Projections Expert Advisory Panel. It was noted that these minutes are available on the ONS website.

(Post-meeting note – the report of the latest NPP expert panel meeting is available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/NPP2008/ExpertPanelMeeting.pdf.)

5. Small area population projections – PPWG (10) 04

- 5.1 Harvey Snowling introduced this paper and summarised the work that GROS has been doing to identify and provide local authorities with the necessary data to do their own population projections at small area level. (A report on this work was also provided at the most recent PAMS committee meeting.) He reported that GROS had run various population projections in POPGROUP for the multi-member wards in Fife Council area. These projections used a variety of different fertility, mortality and migration assumptions. The results were then compared with population projections that had previously been done by Fife Council to see what impact the alternative assumptions had on the population projections for each ward. The investigation found that, in most cases, the additional level of detail used in the GROS projections (for example, age-specific fertility rates that use the age of mother data at ward level) had little impact on the final population projections.
- 5.2 Harvey informed the group that a report on the findings of the investigation had been written and made available to local authorities. Also, local authorities had been notified that additional data on births and deaths were available, on request, for use in producing small area population projections and for general demographic research. So far, about twelve local authorities have been provided with this data.
- 5.3 He also explained that a POPGROUP users group had been set up (meeting that afternoon) to provide support and help for local authority users in Scotland.
- 5.4 There was a short discussion about some of the factors that may affect fertility rates and mortality rates to a greater extent in small areas, such as deprivation and a high number of care homes for the elderly. The need to be aware of these and other factors when producing or using population projections was highlighted.

6. Review of past work and work going forward - PPWG (10) 05

- 6.1 Esta Clark introduced this paper and invited group members to agree the items that could be marked as completed and also to suggest future development work.
- 6.2 Mortality and fertility scaling factors – no further development work is planned but as mentioned previously varying the scaling factors could be looked at in the future subject to resources.
- 6.3 Controlling the results to the national total – it was reported that the uncontrolled options had not been investigated yet. There was a request for the population projections to be run using the uncontrolled options as it was felt that it would be useful to see the results.
- 6.4 Economic factors in population projections – including economic factors in the population projections have been discussed with the Scottish Government, but no straightforward method of using economic information could be found. This item was marked as completed.
- 6.5 Migration assumptions for population projections – the short-term migration assumptions were discussed earlier in the meeting. There was a request for long-term migration assumptions to have variable values, rather than the same values for each year. The case of Aberdeen City was given as an example of a situation where a large drop in the population was projected, mainly due to the effect of high net out-migration figures for each year in the long-term period. It was thought a more realistic projection could have been achieved if the net migration had converged to zero over the period. It was noted that the current method meant that sub-national projections were consistent with the national projections produced by ONS but it may be possible to investigate if there is a suitable national variant that can be adapted to work with the sub-national methodology.

In response to a query, it was explained that ONS had published their annual report on the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme in August (available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/imps/updates-reports/current-updates-reports/migration-statistics-improvement-programme-annual-overview-2009-10.pdf>) and had funding for another year for this work, which is outlined in the ONS latest Update report ([Migration Statistics Improvement Work Programme Update - August 2010](#)).

- 6.6 Other methods for making population projections, including available software – this work was concentrating on POPGROUP, which was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- 6.7 Accuracy of past projections – this item was marked as completed.
- 6.8 Support for demographic statistics – this item was marked as completed.
- 6.9 Requirements for geographic areas - this item was marked as completed.
- 6.10 Variant projections – this item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 There was a discussion about the future role of the Population Projections Working Group. It was agreed that as most of the work in the original plan was complete and the group had achieved what it had been set up to do, there was no need to have any further meetings of the group. In future, matters dealing with population projections, along with the outstanding items on the PPWG work plan, should be dealt with at the PAMS meetings.
- 7.2 Esta thanked everyone for coming and for their contribution to the group.