

# Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee Scotland Minutes

4<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Julie Ramsay welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that she was standing in for Ryan Scott as chair of the meeting, and that Esther Roughsedge would take over as chair later on as she would have to drop out due to another pre-arranged meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 16 November 2023 were approved without comment. The actions from that meeting were noted as being either closed or covered on the agenda – see list at end of these minutes.

### **Summary of Actions**

**Action point 2024.1: Chris McCrum to provide PAMS an update on timescales for bulk downloading of 2022 Census data.**

**Action point 2024.2: Chris McCrum to provide link to 2022 Census definitions of communal establishments to PAMS.**

**Action point 2024.3: Chris McCrum to provide PAMS with further information on comparing 2011 and 2022 Census tables.**

**Action point 2024.4: Cara Conachan to contact CHMA for information on their local authority contacts.**

**Action point 2024.5: All to provide suggested alternatives to the term 'settlement' to Mal Cooke.**

## **2. Census Update**

Chris McCrum provided an update on the 2022 Census outputs schedule. He noted that religion, ethnicity, national and language data had been released on 21 May, along with the unrounded population and household estimates. Data down to output area level had been made available. Future planned topic releases included those on Armed forces veterans (13 June), Sexual orientation and trans history (27 June), followed by Demography and migration and Housing (in August) and then Education, labour market and travel to work and Health, disability and unpaid care (in

September). Multivariate tables are planned for release from winter 2024/25. In 2025 various other census products will be produced, including census microdata files, origin-destination data, workplace and daytime population statistics and a number of analytical reports. Chris noted that the [Census outputs schedule](#) will be updated as publication dates are firmed up.

Chris gave a demo of how to access census data from [Scotland's Census website](#), eg on how to search for data by census topic or by location. Options for searching via a map, for specific geographic areas and by keyword are also available. Chris noted that statistical disclosure control (SDC) constraints meant there were sometimes two versions of a table, with less detail available for smaller geographies. For this reason it may be preferable for users to search initially by location. Chris added that the website will be updated with 2022 based Data Zones once these are confirmed later in the year, and that an option for bulk downloading 2022 output area data was under development. He commented that when the multivariate table phase was reached the flexible table builder (FTB) tool would be activated. Further demos and sessions for users on how to use the FTB will be run at that point.

Chris explained the aim of SDC was to minimise the risk of disclosure (of information about identifiable individuals, households or entities) while publishing as much information and detail as possible. The SDC measures adopted for 2022 Census outputs included targeted record swapping, cell key perturbation (adding some 'noise' by making small changes to numbers in a table) and table builder rules (eg restricting how many variables users can select when building a table). Chris noted that cell key perturbation was also deployed by ONS, NISRA and the Australian Bureau of Statistics for their census outputs. The aim was to keep it light touch, to flag to users that it had been applied to all outputs created through the table builder, and to publish supporting information alongside the census outputs. As every cell in a table is perturbed independently, Chris advised that in order to minimise the impact of this it was best in general to go by marginal totals and to work directly from the geography of interest (rather than aggregate up from lower geographies).

Heidi Goodship asked if the FTB tool could be tweaked so that Data Zone level data could be downloaded. Chris replied that an option for bulk downloading files was being worked on.

**Action: Chris McCrum to provide PAMS an update on timescales for bulk downloading of 2022 Census data.**

Paul Landman commented there is the potential for users to get confused when cells within a table don't neatly add up to its totals. Chris noted that total numbers should be the same across all tables (unless summing up from lower geographies). The benefits of cell key perturbation were that it enabled much greater flexibility in terms of the variety of tables that could be generated, and that it cut down the time to produce them. He said the supporting information to users would be updated in light of any feedback. Paul also raised a question he had sent to NRS in relation to how developments around Newton Mearns were dealt with in the census geographies. Chris noted this had been passed on to the NRS Geography team.

Aileen Cameron asked if the definitions of communal establishments (CEs) had changed between the 2011 and 2022 Censuses, eg for MoD bases. Chris thought any changes would likely have been marginal but agreed to check on this.

**Action: Chris to provide link to 2022 Census definitions of communal establishments to PAMS.**

Jill Marples asked if it was possible to directly compare 2011 and 2022 Census tables/ Chris replied that it was and he would provide further details. Jill also asked if more detailed outputs will be provided on language data. Chris confirmed this was planned, along with similarly detailed breakdowns for other census questions such as country of birth and national identity.

**Action: Chris to provide PAMS with further information on comparing 2011 and 2022 Census tables.**

Danny McAllion reported that at the morning meeting of local authority members of PAMS some concerns had been aired about the issue of getting figures for a table that differ slightly depending on the starting geography, for example starting from a bulk download of OA level data or going directly from a particular geography. Chris agreed there was a bit of a trade-off between the flexibility and other benefits of the approach taken and this issue. He noted that making available downloadable files for different geographies along with NRS geography lookups should help mitigate this.

### **3. Presentations**

#### **3.1 Sub-local authority population projections – Cara Connachan, Improvement Service**

Cara recapped that the Improvement Service (IS) had previously published sub-local authority population projections in 2020 to fill an evidence gap; further background on the [IS website](#). She was keen to gauge demand from PAMS for an update to these projections once NRS has published the updated sub-national population projections in 2025

Cara noted that a short survey is being run by IS to gather views; the survey closes on 20 June. They are interested in any feedback on how the sub-local authority projections are being used just now, of if there are any reasons why they aren't being used.

Mike Atkinson confirmed he had replied to the IS survey, commenting that these projections (and all other sub-local authority statistics) were useful for Highland given its disparate geography. He noted that the current projections are based on 2013-18 trends and so their use for HNDA purposes was questionable. Mike noted that the range of roles of LA members of PAMS meant they may not

always be best placed to feed in views to those who are contacts for CHMA. Cara agreed this was a good point and agreed to follow up with CHMA.

**Action: Cara to contact CHMA for information on their local authority contacts.**

Danny MacAllion supported Mike's comments. He thought the sub-local authority projections were useful (and would be used more if they were updated), and that updated projections based on the census-adjusted population trends were needed. At the morning meeting of local authority PAMS members all had been encouraged to respond to the IS survey.

David Murdoch agreed on the importance of using rebased NRS population projections for the sub-local authority projections. Esther Roughsedge confirmed that NRS will be producing population projections based on trends in census-rebased population estimates. She noted that the relevant policy team in Scottish Government had a strong interest in areas where there was population growth or depopulation, and had submitted a response to the IS survey. Esther clarified that in the census a lot of people at defence bases, eg Faslane, had recorded their family address rather than the base address. She noted that for the purposes of the mid-year population estimates these people were 'moved' to their base address.

### **3.2 Consultation on rurality data used in local government funding formula – Mal Cooke, Scottish Government**

Mal outlined the use made by Scottish Government of rurality data for a number of indicators in the local government funding (LGF) calculations. Two consultations on this topic are planned in the coming months, each will give a month for responses. Mal noted that for LGF purposes settlements that are within 1km from each other, border to border, are merged. A list of planned mergers of settlements will be sent to each local authority for a sense check, e.g. the 1km threshold for merging is initially set 'as the crow flies' rather than by road distance.

Mal noted that other funding indicators use data on distance travelled by population in rural areas to the nearest hub (a hub is taken as a settlement of 7,000 or more, or the largest settlement in council areas such as Shetland where there is no settlement of this size). Distance travelled by each member of the population outwith the hub is calculated as the quickest route, centroid to centroid; settlements that cross local authority boundaries are split; and hubs may not always tie in with where particular services are provided. The consultation will relate to sense-checking the allocation of population to their nearest hub settlement.

Mal noted that the information used for this will this time include real travel-time data. This gave rise to three further questions

- how to factor in peak/ off peak travel times,
- whether distance or time spent travelling was the key determinant

- whether we should continue to exclude populations living within key settlements from the calculation.

Mal asked for views on these questions to be provided to Local Authority Directors of Finance who would be considering this in the Settlement & Distribution Group. In discussion it was noted that the term 'settlement' is used differently in different contexts which is potentially confusing. Mal agreed to consider this point further and asked for suggested alternatives.

**Action: All to provide suggested alternatives to the term 'settlement' to Mal Cooke.**

### **3.3 SG consultation on data zone boundaries – Lee Bunce, Fliss Rollings, Scottish Government**

Lee provided some background on Data Zones (DZs) and Intermediate Zones (IZs). DZs in particular are a key geography for official statistics on small areas in Scotland. Lee noted that Scottish Government is undertaking a consultation on defining a new set of DZs based on the 2022 Census, and invited feedback from local authority members of PAMS on who the best person in their authority was to contact about this. He added that it would be helpful if responses to the consultation could be sent throughout the 12 weeks it is live, rather than everyone waiting until the end of the 12 week period to submit their feedback. This would help speed up the process for finalising the boundaries, as the workload for reviewing the feedback could then be spread out a bit. Lee added that a consultation is also to be held on the higher level international territorial level (ITL) geography which is used for regional and international comparisons. Communications for these two consultations will likely be tied together. Lee noted that the timetable for these consultations had been pushed back a little due to the General Election.

Danny McAllion noted that at the morning meeting of local authority PAMS members it had been agreed there had been good engagement on this topic in the past, and it was hoped that this would continue.

## **4. Demography updates**

### **4.1 Population and Migration – Esther Roughsedge (PAMS (24) 01)**

Esther provided an update on the publication plans for her branch, including the rebased population estimates for 2012 to 2021 following the 2022 Census. She invited views on whether there was a need for rebased small area population estimates for the old (2011 based) Data Zones, or whether a revised time series

for the new (2022 based) boundaries would be sufficient. Esther also asked if users still use, and find useful, the local area migration spreadsheet.

Danny McAllion noted that there had been no strong views at the morning meeting of local authority PAMS members on the need for reworked figures for 2011 DZs. Heidi Goodship commented that it might be helpful to consider a couple of transitional years for having data for both the old (2011) and new (2022) DZs as some other data providers may be slow to adopt the new ones.

James Arnott confirmed that he found the local area migration spreadsheet a useful product to have, and several other people said the same thing.

#### **4.2 Household Statistics - Sandy Taylor (PAMS (24) 02)**

Sandy noted that the latest (for 2023) statistics on household and dwelling estimates are due to be published on 20 June. Estimates for data zones and other geographies are also due for release on the same day. He noted that the publication will include revised council level household estimates for 2012 to 2022 as information from the 2022 Census is now available to feed into the adjustment process used in making these estimates; previously these adjustments for these years were made using just 2011 Census information. Sandy also noted that some caveats will be included on the statistics for long-term empty (over 6 months) properties due to some variations between councils in what had been included in the data provided for this category.

Sandy noted that approaching half of local authorities had signed off Data Sharing Agreements to cover the collection by NRS of postcode level data from council tax billing systems. He added that reminder emails will be sent to those who had not yet signed a DSA, and said he would be grateful for any help local authority PAMS members can give with this process.

Sandy noted that NRS was interested in any suggestions PAMS members may have for specific analysis of census data on households as this would be useful to factor into future census analytical topic reports

Paul Landman noted that the census household estimates for East Renfrewshire were thought to be on the low side and mentioned some data available locally that might be useful in exploring that further.

#### **4.3 Vital Events – Beth Watson (PAMS (24) 03)**

Beth provided a summary update on the vital events publication programme. She noted that the Vital Events statistics for Q1 2024 are to be published on 11 June. This would be the start of a series of publications due to come out over the summer, including the Vital Events reference tables in July followed by various publications on various causes of death over the next few months. A publication on life expectancy was then planned to follow these.

Beth noted that a new methodology for calculating excess deaths had been adopted in the mortality statistics NRS now publishes. This followed work by a UK-wide technical working group to take better account of the growing and aging population in estimating the expected and excess number of deaths.

## **5. AOB and date of next meeting**

James Arnott wondered if there had been any interest in looking at census data on Scottish new towns. He asked if there was a forum in which such issues were raised, or if these were swallowed up in wider considerations. Paul Landman noted that East Renfrewshire had high proportions of its population in the under 15 and over 65 categories, and thought this may also be the pattern in some other areas.

Esther Roughsedge said the aim is to hold the next meeting of PAM in November 2024. She thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for the useful contributions everyone had made.

## 6. Completed Action Points

- **Action Point 2023.1:** Ryan Scott to circulate the slides relating to Scotland's 2022 Census to PAMS Members. **Closed – Ryan had circulated**
- **Action Point 2023.2:** Jonathon Wroth-Smith to consider a blog article containing further explanation of how non-response in the census is handled in the statistical outputs. **Closed – blog on data quality added to census website**
- **Action Point 2023.3:** Esther Roughsedge to send Mike Atkinson additional information on population estimates for Highland Council if available. **Closed – Esther had written to Mike**
- **Action Point 2023.4:** James Robards to share the new international migration data and rebased population data with the group. **Closed – James had actioned**
- **Action Point 2023.5:** Emma Fitzpatrick to email PAMS Members to gauge interest in a webinar on Statistical Disclosure Control. **Closed - tbc**
- **Action Point 2023.6:** Ryan Scott to consider arranging a webinar on statistical disclosure control (SDC) and the Flexible Table Builder (FTB) on the NRS website. **Closed – webinar run**
- **Action Point 2023.7:** Esther Roughsedge to enquire about when the sub-local authority population projections will next be released. **Closed – to be covered at a later agenda item**
- **Action Point 2023.8:** Heather Smith to consult further with her colleagues on whether there was a preference for rebased small area population estimates based on the 2011 or 2022 data zone boundaries, and let Esther Roughsedge know what they say. **Closed – covered at an agenda item**

## 7. List of Attendees

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Aileen Cameron	Argyll & Bute Council
Alex Pritchard	NRS
Andrew Ballingall	Fife Council
Andrew Gasiorowski	Public Health Scotland
Anna Steele	South Ayrshire Council
Ashley Macleod	NRS
Beth Watson	NRS
Cara Connachan	Improvement Service
Chris Murray	Forestry and Land Government
Christopher McCrum	NRS
Clare Leadbetter	NRS
Colin Fryer	NRS
Danny Mcallion	Renfrewshire Council
David Murdoch	Argyll & Bute Council
David Rowley	NRS
Esta Clark	NRS
Felicity Rollings	Scottish Government
Heather Smith	Highland and Islands Enterprise
Heidi Goodship	Scottish Borders Council
Ian Dwyer	ONS
James Arnott	Glasgow City Council
James Robards	ONS
Jane Jarvie	Argyll & Bute Council
Jessical McAleese	NRS
Jill Marples	Perth & Kinross Council
Joseph Scott	Clydeplan-sdpa
Julie Ramsay	NRS
Karen McCreadie	Inverclyde Council
Kathleen Shirkie	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Kerry Gladstone	ONS
Kirsti McNicol	PHS
Lee Bunce	Scottish Government
Lewis Bennett	NRS
Lilly Herridge	NRS
Liz Mann	NRS
Lynsey Bunnefeld	NRS
Martin Miller	NRS
Michael Edie	NRS
Mike Atkinson	Highland Council
Nick Cassidy	Improvement Service
Paul Landman	East Renfrewshire Council
Peadar Morgan	Bord na Gaidhlig
Rosie Convey	Scottish Government
Ruby Adam	NRS

Sandy Taylor	NRS
Sarah Nodwell	Scottish Water
Susan Rarity-Middleton	CHSS
Susie Rose	NRS
William Howes	NRS