

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS MADE BY THE HOUSEHOLD ANALYSES REVIEW GROUP 1999/00

Introduction

1. The Household Analyses Review Group (HARG) met in April and July 1999 to discuss the household estimates and projections done by the Scottish Executive Housing Statistics Branch. This paper outlines the work done by the group during this period. **Members are invited to note the progress which was made during 1999/00.**

2. In 1998, the (then) Scottish Office held a seminar for all to local authorities explain the current methodologies used in producing household estimates and projections. At this seminar some of the weaknesses in the methods were discussed and it was agreed that a group would be set up to review the methods further. This group was set up later in that year and, as noted above, 2 meetings were held in the following year.

Remit

3. The group was set up to consider the process of producing household estimates and household projections for Scotland and local authority areas, and to make recommendations for any changes which were thought appropriate. Recommendations for change were to be put to the Scottish Census Advisory Group for approval. The group agreed that their remit would be to consider:

- the frequency and timing of the production of the estimates and projections
- the sources of the inputs used in the production of the estimates and projections
- appropriate means of validating the inputs and outputs
- the consultation process

4. The group agreed that the basic method used for the projections would be beyond the scope of the group, i.e. headship rates from previous Census's would continue to be used and projected forward using an exponential method. Although the initial remit also excluded a review of the actual method for producing the estimates and concentrated only on the inputs and validation techniques etc., this was reviewed at the second meeting of the group. At that meeting the local authority members expressed the view that the group's remit should be extended to review the basic methodology used in the production of estimates. Local authority members were particularly concerned that the current household estimates did not tie in at all with the production of population estimates. Taking forward the review of the estimates methodology was set for future meetings.

Summary of Progress

5. The group made some headway in exploring other possible sources of input data for the household estimates (assuming no change in the basic method) and in carrying out some basic comparisons of previous household projections with other data sources, as explained in further detail below. The group did not come to any final agreements regarding changes in or methodologies, or even the sources of the input data, and therefore household estimates for 1998 and 1998-based household projections were produced in 2000 using the same methods as in previous years.

Definition of a Household

6. There was extensive discussion about the merits or otherwise of using the standard definition of a household. The standard definition can be seen in paper 2001/3. The group made the point that simply because people were classified as a single household, this did not mean that they would not form separate households where suitable alternative accommodation were made available.

Household Estimates: Inputs

7. It was established that there were four main areas where inputs required refining:

- Estimate of dwelling stock
- Estimate of non-local authority vacant stock
- Estimate of other non-effective stock
- Allowance for households sharing

Estimate of dwelling stock

8. Alternatives to the current method of estimating dwellings from the data received via the regular statistical returns on new build completions, conversions and demolitions were discussed. It was noted that since these returns are slow to come in from local authorities, the current estimates are produced more than a year and a half after the mid-year to which they relate. Even then there are still missing returns which require the SE to make estimates of the data.

9. The council tax register was seen as the only possible alternative. The data would be much quicker to obtain and if used estimates could be made 12 months earlier than at present. However, the group recognised that an assessment of the reliability of the register was needed. It was not clear how up to date each council's register would be. There was also some uncertainty – to be investigated for future meetings – of whether the register included institutional properties and some non-domestic properties such as garages and lockups. Overall it seemed that the difference between the stock estimates feeding into the household estimates using the current methodology and those obtained from council tax registers 3 months after the target date was around 0.3% (council tax register around 6,000 dwellings lower) for Scotland as a whole. However, this differed between councils.

Vacant Stock

10. The current method of estimating total vacant stock (which includes the assumption that the proportion of the non-council stock which is vacant is the same each year, and equals the proportion found to be vacant in the 1991 Census) was considered to be lacking. In investigating other possible sources of data, the total vacant stock estimate used for the latest household estimates was compared with the number of vacant dwellings estimated by the 1996 Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) and an estimate of vacant dwellings derived from the council tax register. The total estimate of vacant dwellings at national level obtained from these two sources was found to be very similar to that used in the latest household estimates. However given the fact that the SHCS estimate included some second homes (i.e. some non-effective stock), and the suspicion that the council tax register would not include all vacant dwellings these were both ruled out as possible other sources at present.

11. The current method estimates non-council vacant stock as a single figure for each authority. The issue of estimating, Scottish Homes vacants and Housing Authority vacants separately (since up to date figures were thought to be available from Scottish Homes) was discussed. Census proportion would then only apply to the non-social rented sector. In addition the issue of estimating vacancy rate in the ex-council house stock separately from the rest of the private stock was raised.

Non-Effective Stock

12. The SHCS and council tax register were investigated as possible alternatives to the current source (which is based on the proportion of total stock in the 1991 Census which was non-effective). Although the 1996 SHCS identified households who owned a second home, it was not possible to tell if their second home was in Scotland or elsewhere, and hence the 1996 SHCS could not be a source of information on non-effective stock. [*The 2002 SHCS will ask if the second home is in Scotland.*] Again the issue of how up to date council tax registers would be, and whether the use of the double discount would include other types of dwellings, were issues to be investigated further.

Sharing Allowance

13. The current (constant) sharing allowance used for each LA was derived by comparing the 1992 household estimate (made prior to the 1991 Census results being available) and an estimate of the total occupied dwellings in 1992, made by rolling forward dwelling count at the 1991 Census (in the same way as the dwelling count is currently rolled forward for the household estimates).

14. Other possible sources of sharing allowance were considered, such as taking figures directly from a comparison of household and dwellings at the 1991 Census, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) or the SHCS. It was decided that until local authority figures were available from the SHS (mid to late 2001) the 1992 estimate currently used seemed the most reasonable to Local Authority representatives (with the exception of Glasgow).

Household Projections

15. Although issues were raised during general discussions about the household projections, analyses and recommendations were reserved for future meetings.

Students and GRO populations

16. The 1991 census counted students at their home address; GROS population estimates and projections counted students at their term time address. The group recognised that this had implications for the household projections since trends taken from census information were applied to successive GROS projections. Further investigation was deemed necessary. It was noted that the 2001 census would change to count students at their term time address.

Comparison of Figures from previous projections with other data sources

17. The group had asked if household type information from the SHCS and household estimates could be compared with the household projections for the same year. The SHCS was seen to have a lower percentage of single person households and a higher proportion of households consisting of 2 or more adults with children. The percentage of households containing 3 or more adults was the same for both sources. The remaining household types differed by 1%. 1992-based household projections for years 1993 to 1996 were compared with household estimates for those years as were 1994 based household projections for 1995 to 1997. It was found that for Scotland as a whole (and the majority of local authorities) projections tended to overstate the number of households when compared with the estimates. This difference increased as the projected year moved further away from its base year:

1992 based 1993 projection c.f. 1993 estimate	-0.2%
1992 based 1996 projection c.f. 1996 estimate	-0.7%

Comparison of minimum number of adults derived from household projections with GROS population projections

18. The group had asked if the projected minimum number of adults resulting from the household projections could be checked against the GROS population projections as a useful validation check. In all local authorities, with the exception of Inverclyde, the GROS population exceeded the minimum number of adults that would be required in order to fill the households projected by the Scottish Executive (i.e. valid). It was agreed that this was an important validation check that should be implemented for future household projections. [*This check was in fact carried out before finalising the 1998-based projections*].

General Points Raised

19. It was felt that the projections should be extended for a couple of years to fall in line with the structure plan time scales.

Comparison with other methods of producing Estimates and Projections

20. The group felt that it was important to identify those local authorities that did their own calculations. This would allow the group to compare alternative methodologies. A list was prepared and their methodologies were to be considered.

Current position

21. Since the initial work of the HARG, priorities shifted within the Housing Statistics Branch and Julie Bright left the branch to work elsewhere within the Scottish Executive. As a result the group lost momentum. Housing Statistics branch is keen to continue working with the group and it is now proposed that it should re-convene, consider its remit and membership and continue to assist the Scottish Executive Housing Statistics Branch to:

- maintain relevant good quality household estimates and projections;
- provide users with sound advice on the basis of household estimates and projections and their use.

Scottish Executive
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