

<p>POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)</p>

PROPOSED CHANGES IN ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLISHING DIVORCE STATISTICS

1. This paper asks members of the Committee for their views on proposed changes to the arrangements for publishing statistics about divorces and dissolutions of civil partnerships in Scotland.

2. At present, the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) is the main publisher of statistics about divorces, and about the small number of dissolutions of civil partnerships, in Scotland. The following are the main statistics on these topics that GROS published in 2009:

- [chapter 6](#) of "Scotland's Population 2008" - three pages, including:
 - charts showing:
 - the total number of divorces (1971 to 2008); and
 - the breakdown of divorces by ground (1985 to 2008);
 - commentary on:
 - trends in the numbers of divorces;
 - the numbers by ground, marital status and age at marriage;
 - the duration of marriages that end in divorce; and
 - the number of dissolutions of civil partnerships.
- [Section 8](#) of the Vital Events Reference Tables - including the numbers of divorces by:
 - ground (1981 to 2008) - Table 8.1;
 - duration of marriage (selected periods/years from 1971 to 2008) - Table 8.2;
 - ground and duration of marriage (2008) - Table 8.3;
 - marital status of husband/wife at time of marriage (1971 to 2008) - Table 8.4;
 - age of husband/wife and duration of marriage (2008) - Table 8.5;
 - ages of husband and wife at marriage (2008) - Table 8.6;
 - method of celebration (e.g. Church of Scotland, Civil); and duration of marriage (2008) - Table 8.7
- [Section 9](#) of the Vital Events Reference Tables – including the number of dissolutions of civil partnerships by:
 - sex (2006 to 2008) - Table 9.3

3. Scottish Government Civil Justice Statistics (SG CJS) provides analytical support to the development of SG policy on divorce and the dissolution of civil partnerships. SG CJS will make more use of the statistics on divorces and dissolutions, and understand better the policy context, than GROS. Following discussions between GROS and SG CJS, it is proposed that SG CJS will become the main publisher of statistics about divorces and dissolutions in Scotland, with effect from the figures for the calendar year 2009 and/or the financial year 2009/10.

4. It is proposed that, under the new arrangements, the only statistics on divorces and dissolutions that GROS will publish will be:

- time-series of the overall numbers of divorces (e.g. as in Table 1 and Figure 6.1 of "Scotland's Population", and in Vital Events Reference Table 1.1) and dissolutions (e.g. as in Vital Events Reference Table 1.1);
- a cross-tabulation of number of divorces by the ages of husband/wife at divorce and the duration of marriage (as in Vital Events Reference Table 8.5, that being the only Reference Table which provides figures which are used for demographic purposes - GROS uses the numbers of men and women who were divorced, broken down by age, when estimating the break down by marital status of the population); and
- a table on the numbers of dissolutions of civil partnerships by sex (as in Vital Events Reference Table 9.3).

Chapter 6 of "Scotland's Population" will be reduced to just over a page, and will comment only on the above figures. This chapter, and the relevant parts of the GROS Web site, will include links/references to other statistics on these topics being available from SG CJS's publications and/or web site.

5. Under the new arrangements, it is proposed that SG CJS will publish (or otherwise make available on its web site):

- tables containing the kinds of figures that appear in all the other Vital Events Reference Tables on divorces, for the time being at least. (SG CJS cannot commit itself to producing those tables forever: it might drop some of them if, for example, it found that they were seldom, if ever, used when it consulted the users of its statistics);
- any new tables for which SG CJS feels that there is a need; and
- any commentary/analysis that SG feels appropriate on the topics covered by the above tables.

6. It should be noted that GROS currently publishes, and expects that it will continue to publish, data for calendar years (for consistency with the statistics that it has published for many years and with the statistics that it publishes for births, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths), but SG CJS is likely to publish the data for financial years (for consistency with other Crime and Justice statistics published by the SG). Therefore, in theory, there might be very slight breaks in the continuity of the series of figures for which SG CJS will assume responsibility, but this is not expected to cause any practical problems: there is no difference in length between calendar years and financial years, so any factors like seasonal patterns should not affect them. Other Crime and Justice publications have successfully changed from calendar to financial years and so SG CJS does not expect any problems to arise. There is a risk that some users may be confused by differences between the levels and changes shown by the two sets of figures, but this should not be a significant

problem because GROS and SG CJS will publish their figures at different times of the year: GROS will publish the preliminary figure for the calendar year in mid-March, and the final figure for the calendar year around the start of August (as a "low-profile" part of "Scotland's Population"); whilst it is not yet known when SG CJS will publish figures for the financial year, it will be several months after GROS's preliminary publication.

7. In due course, SG CJS will preannounce the publication of its data on the SG's Statistics [Publications Schedule](#):

(see)

and will publish the data on the SG's [Crime and Justice](#) website

(see).

8. Any enquiries about SG CJS's plans should be directed to Ruth Stewart, the SG Civil Justice Statistician, whose contact details are:

direct line: 0131 244 6936;

e-mail: ruth.stewart@scotland.qsi.gov.uk .

9. Members of the Committee are asked for their views on these proposed changes to the arrangements for publishing statistics of divorces and dissolutions: for example:

- are they content with what has been described? or
- do they feel that something else should be done?