

CIH response to Office for National Statistics consultation on Population Projections



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Housing

About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple - to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world.

Further information is available at: www.cih.org

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Our main use of population projections data

Population projections provide information on likely scenarios in the scale and future composition of population. This information is important in its own right for the planning for housing services such as changes in the potential scale and nature of demand for services from older people, migrants and young people at the early stages of their housing career.

Population projections are also a key input into household projections, which are vital for planning for the future supply of market and affordable housing provision at national and local level throughout the UK.

CIH makes specific use of population and household projections in the annual *UK Housing Review*.

What are your preferences around the timescales for future projections? Do you need 2020-based national and/or subnational population projections or would you prefer to wait until census data can be included? Do you have preferences for 2021- or 2022-based projections?

Our strong preference would be for the publication of 2020-based projection projections at sub-national (local authority) level in late 2021 and for the

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publication of 2022-based (Census recalibrated) population projections to be issued in 2024.

Devolved governments and local authorities require the best available estimates of population and household growth to inform discussions and plans for the provision of housing and housing-related services. It is appreciated that the underlying assumptions for the 2020 projections may be somewhat outdated, to the extent that these are rolled forward from the 2011 Census. In their absence, however, there would be a 5+ year gap in the provision of projections. We believe this would not be acceptable to national and local government and would lead to questions from various stakeholders about the credibility of forward plans based on the alternative - which would be the current 2018-based projections.

An important use of demographic statistics is to inform UK planning and resource allocation. Another is to compare trends between the four UK nations. This requires data to be produced as consistently as possible. For this reason, our preference would be to wait until the 2022 Census data for Scotland is available before rebasing projections for all four nations.

We would also note that producing 2020- and 2022-based projections would retain continuity with the current practice of issuing projections every 2 years.

In addition, we would suggest that ONS consider issuing an early warning in 2023 should the 2021 Census results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland suggest that a marked change between the 2020 and 2022 projections is probable. This would allow government bodies to make some allowance for this in their plans, for example by running alternative scenarios.

**Why do you require national and/or subnational population projections?
How will you use these?**

See earlier response.

What specifically do you require from national and/or subnational population projections? Please list any specific variant projections (excluding non-National Statistics variants) and tables that you require (from the list of variants). If it is possible, would a variant projection that potentially reflects the coronavirus (COVID-19) be beneficial?

For our purposes the current ONS, etc variant projections are helpful, although 25 as opposed to 100 years would suffice in the case of the 2020-based population projections.

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If possible, a variant projection to reflect Covid-19 at sub-national (and in particular local authority) level would be beneficial, not least because the spatial impact of the virus will be highly differentiated across the UK. We suspect that the adverse effect of Covid may have not only affected life expectancy assumptions but also fertility and migration rates.

Could a shorter release containing only datasets and information on how the assumptions were set meet your needs? (that is, without an accompanying statistical bulletin summarising the main findings).

In principle, publication of the datasets without the accompanying bulletin would be acceptable. However, there should be a brief methodology note explaining the purpose of any Covid-19 variant and the underlying assumptions applied.

What effect would it have on your use of 2020-based projections if it was decided to re-use 2018-based assumptions because of uncertainty over short- and longer-term demographic trends arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

This would be acceptable so long as a one or more Covid-19 variants were produced. This would also help to illustrate the inherent uncertainty of projections.

Do you have any other comments on national or subnational population projections?

Once the Census 2022 has been issued it would be useful to carry out an in-depth review of migration evidence and their implications for future migration assumptions underpinning population projections.

The short-term impact of Covid-19 on death rates and their implications for future life expectancy assumptions may also warrant review.

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