

Edinburgh's future population: 2012-based population projections

July 2014

Context

The future size, distribution and characteristics of the population are a fundamental consideration for land use and infrastructure planning at both the regional and the local scale. More generally, as public finances come under increasing pressure, it is recognised that Council services need to be responsive to changing demographics to make the best use of resources.

Demographic change is a subject of particular relevance in Edinburgh, where the demands of a rapidly growing population and resilient economy must be reconciled with the protection of a world renowned cultural and natural environment.

The primary source of information on the future population is the biennial *population projections* published by National Records of Scotland (NRS). NRS has recently published its 2012-based projections for local authority areas, which are the first to take account of the 2011 Census results. These projections look up to 25 years ahead, from 2012 to 2037.

The Planning Service has published a briefing paper which analyses the latest projections for Edinburgh. This looks at the continuing growth of the population, the changing age composition, the relative significance of migration and natural change (births / deaths), comparisons with other areas of Scotland, and differences from the previous (2010-based) projections. This Planning Information Bulletin provides a brief summary of some of the key messages.

It is important to note that these **projections are NOT forecasts**, but an estimate of what will happen if recent trends continue. They take no account of future economic changes or new policy interventions. Furthermore, migration flows can be particularly volatile and difficult to measure accurately, and this introduces a degree of uncertainty as to whether recently recorded trends will be sustained over the longer-term.

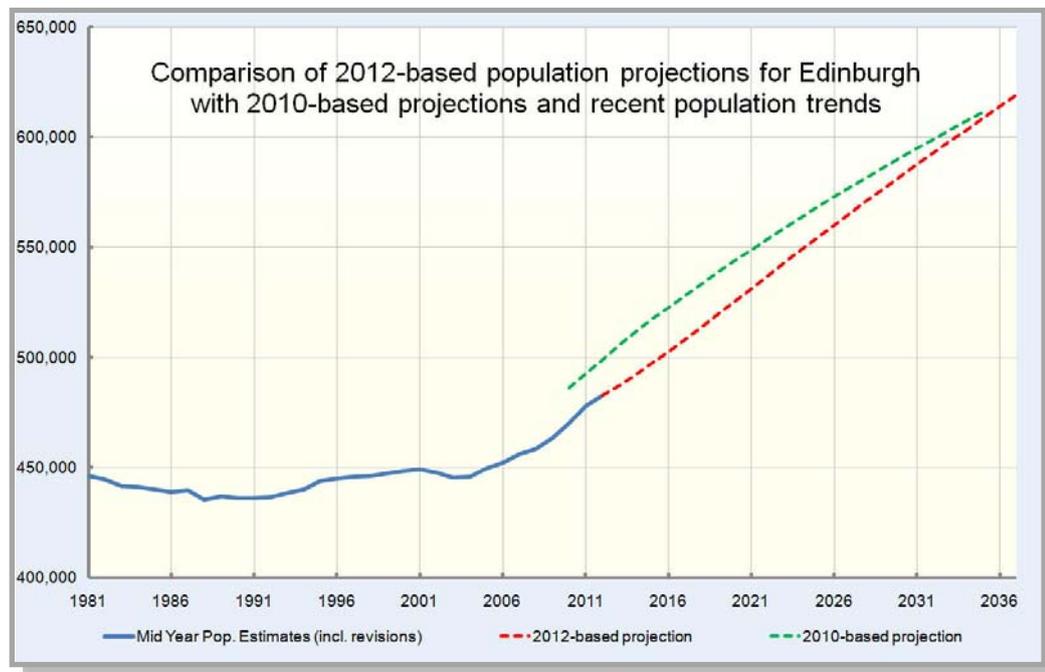
In due course the Planning Service also proposes to provide a briefing note on NRS's 2012-based *household projections* (scheduled for release in July 2014). These will be an important input to estimating future housing needs.

Key findings

- NRS's 'principal projection' envisages that **Edinburgh's population will continue its recent rapid growth**, rising from 482,600 in 2012 to 537,000 in 2022. The 54,400 increase (or 11.3%) over a 10 year period would amount to about 80% of the population of Dunfermline.
- Over the full 25 year period, if recent trends continue, Edinburgh's population would grow by 136,400 (or 28.2%) to reach 619,000. (This growth would equate to 2 'Dunfermlines').
- In both numerical and percentage terms, **Edinburgh** is projected to be **home to a faster growing population than anywhere else in Scotland**. The 54,400 increase to 2022 puts the city ahead of Glasgow City (+ 34,600), Aberdeen City (+ 24,900), and Aberdeenshire

(+18,200). The 11.3% increase over the same time period puts it ahead of Aberdeen City (+ 11.1%), Perth & Kinross (+ 9.2%), East Lothian (+ 8.8%) and Aberdeenshire (+ 7.1%).

- **Neighbouring areas** with close links to Edinburgh's housing and labour markets will also experience substantial population increases.
- **Compared with the previous (2010-based) projections**, the 2012-based projections for Edinburgh are pegged to a lower starting point (see graph below). This reflects the fact that the 2011 Census found some 18,000 fewer people in the city than previous estimates suggested.
- However, the **projected rate of increase is now even steeper than before**, and this means that by the end of the 25 year period the latest projection will catch up with the previous one.



- **Approximately 70% of Edinburgh's future population growth is accounted for by net migration** (i.e. excess of inward over outward migration), and the remaining 30% by 'natural' change (i.e. excess of births over deaths).
- In-migrants tend to include a high proportion of young adults, and **Edinburgh has a very young age profile** compared with the Scottish average. It is expected that this will continue to be the case, although the average age will drift upwards.
- **Some age groups which make intensive use of public services are projected to increase more rapidly than the overall population growth.** In particular, the projections envisage a 30% growth in the number of 5-11 year olds and a 28% growth in those aged 85+ over the next 10 years (2012-2022). The increase in primary school aged children is well above the national average, although the growth in the very elderly is below the national growth rate.
- **Edinburgh has the 2nd lowest 'dependency ratio' in Scotland**, after Aberdeen (i.e. those aged <16 or 65+ as a % of the 'working age' population aged 16-64). The dependency ratio is projected to increase from 42.7% in 2012 to 51.6% in 2037, but will remain well below the Scottish average (72.9% in 2037).

More detailed information

The full report, "Future demographic change in Edinburgh : an analysis of the 2012-based population projections published by NRS" may be accessed via the following link :
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/813/population_and_household_reports

Contact

For further information, please contact Graeme Gainey
tel. 0131 469 3931 e-mail graeme.gainey@edinburgh.gov.uk