

Article

Household projections update for users: September 2019

An update about the work undertaken to address recommendations from the Office for Statistics Regulation and the use of household projections within planning policy.

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1 . What steps have we taken since the household projections were published in 2018?

Since the [first set of household projections](#) were published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 20 September 2018, we have continued to develop these statistics and the supporting information about them. On 28 June 2019, we published a [response](#) to the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) [Compliance Check of Household Projections for England](#) against the Code of Practice for Statistics. This response provides an update about the work being undertaken to address the OSR's recommendations to ensure that household projections continue to meet the high standards required of National Statistics.

On 27 August 2019, we published several pieces of analysis and guidance that together address these recommendations. These include:

- [supplementary analysis](#) to help users understand the drivers behind the largest differences at the local authority level between the 2014- and 2016-based household projections
- a [household projections analysis tool](#) to help users compare figures for local authorities
- a new [summary of the methodology](#), an updated [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) report](#), and [detailed methodology guidance](#) to reflect more recent analysis of the 2016-based household projections

Working with colleagues from the Welsh Government, National Records of Scotland (NRS), and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), we have updated the guidance about the [coherence and comparability of the household projections](#) produced for each of the four countries of the UK. This updated guidance was also published on 27 August 2019.

Finally, additional variant household projections were published through our four [variant subnational household projections](#) on 16 May 2019 to help users understand the impact of different assumptions about the population and living arrangements on projected numbers of households.

2 . Household projections and planning policy

The ONS has previously stated that [household projections are not a prediction or forecast of how many houses should be built in the future](#). Household projections set the baseline to assess housing need, and assessing housing need is just the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has specified that local authorities should use the [2014-based household projections](#) as part of the [standard method for calculating local housing need](#). The MHCLG states that this decision was taken to “provide stability for planning authorities and communities, ensure that historic under-delivery and declining affordability are reflected, and to be consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes”.

The MHCLG has [also stated](#) that its recommendation of the use of the 2014-based household projections in the standard method “does not mean that [the government] doubts the methodological basis of the 2016-based household projections”. They have also confirmed that the use of the [standard method for strategic policy making purposes is not mandatory](#), “if it is felt that circumstances warrant an alternative approach but authorities can expect this to be scrutinised more closely at examination. There is an expectation that the standard method will be used, and that any other method will be used only in exceptional circumstances.”

The MHCLG has committed to “[review the formula and the way it is set using National Statistics data](#) with a view to establish a new approach that balances the need for clarity, simplicity and transparency for local communities with the Government's aspirations for the housing market”.

As we develop the 2018-based household projections, due for publication in late spring or early summer 2020, we will continue to work closely with the MHCLG to provide clear guidance for users about how different sets of projections can be used in the planning process.