

FINANCE COMMITTEE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND AGEING POPULATION INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM THE NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND

Projected population change

1. In recent years Scotland's population has been growing steadily. In mid-2011 the population reached 5.25 million, around the same level as the previous high in mid-1974. However, the population has aged over recent decades and the age structure of the population in 2011 was very different to that of 1974. In 1974, 27 per cent of the population were under 16 and 13 per cent were aged 65 and over. In 2011, the proportion of under 16 year olds had dropped to 17 per cent and the proportion of the population aged 65 and over had risen to 17 per cent.

2. Population projections show how the population will change if current trends continue. The most recent set of population projections¹ suggest that the continued ageing of the baby boomers born after the Second World War and projected improvements to mortality rates will contribute to an increase of the population at older ages. In creating the projections, life expectancy was assumed to rise by about five years for men and women.

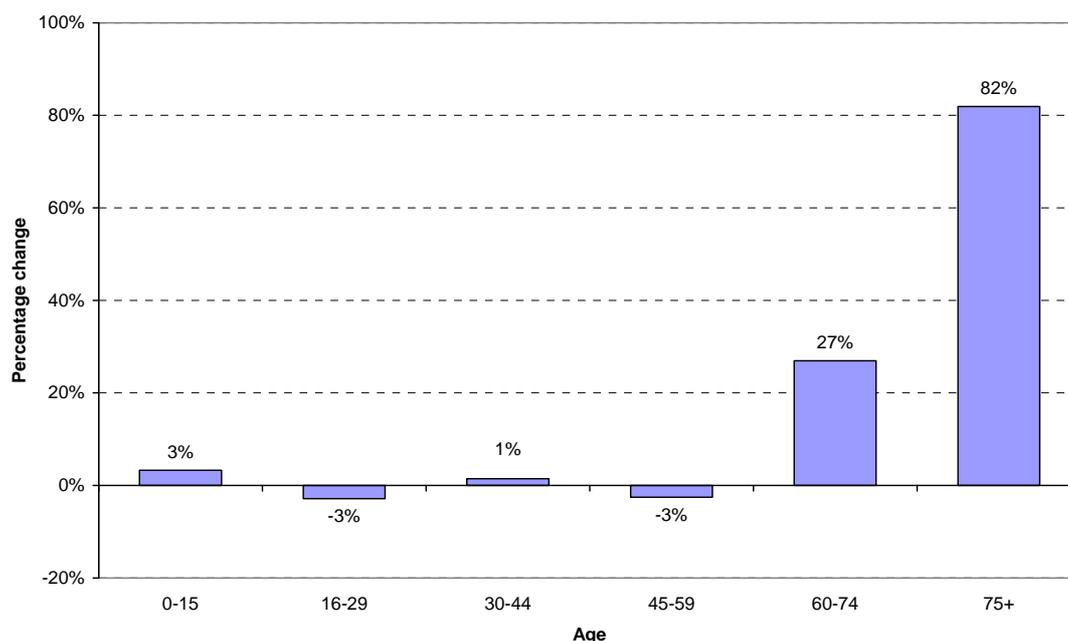
3. These projections also indicate that although Scotland's working age population is set to increase by 7% between 2010 and 2035 (and those under 16 by 3%) those of pensionable age will increase by 26% over the same period. The increase in the working age is partly attributable to the UK Government's planned gradual increase in state pension age over the period 2010 to 2046. The number of births is expected to rise slowly for a few years from its current level of around 58,900, before falling to around 56,500 by 2035. This long term decline in the number of births will also contribute to the overall ageing of the population.

4. The ageing of the population is also reflected in the dependency ratio - the ratio of people aged under 16 and over pensionable age to those of working age. The dependency ratio is projected to rise from 60 per 100 in 2010 to 64 per 100 in 2035.

5. It is the most elderly age-groups of the population that are projected increase most dramatically. Between 2010 and 2035 those aged 75 and over are projected to increase by 82%. The estimated 820 centenarians in Scotland in 2010 is projected to increase to 7,600 by 2035. The projected ageing of Scotland's population is summarised in Figure 1.

¹ Available from the National Records of Scotland website at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/population/projections/scotland/index.html

Figure 1: The projected percentage change in Scotland's population by age group, 2010-2035



Impact of population change on household structure

6. Between 2010 and 2035, the number of households in Scotland is projected to increase by 23 per cent to 2.89 million. Most of the projected increase in households is the result of more people living alone or in smaller households. The average household size is projected to decrease from 2.17 people in 2010 to 1.95 people in 2035.

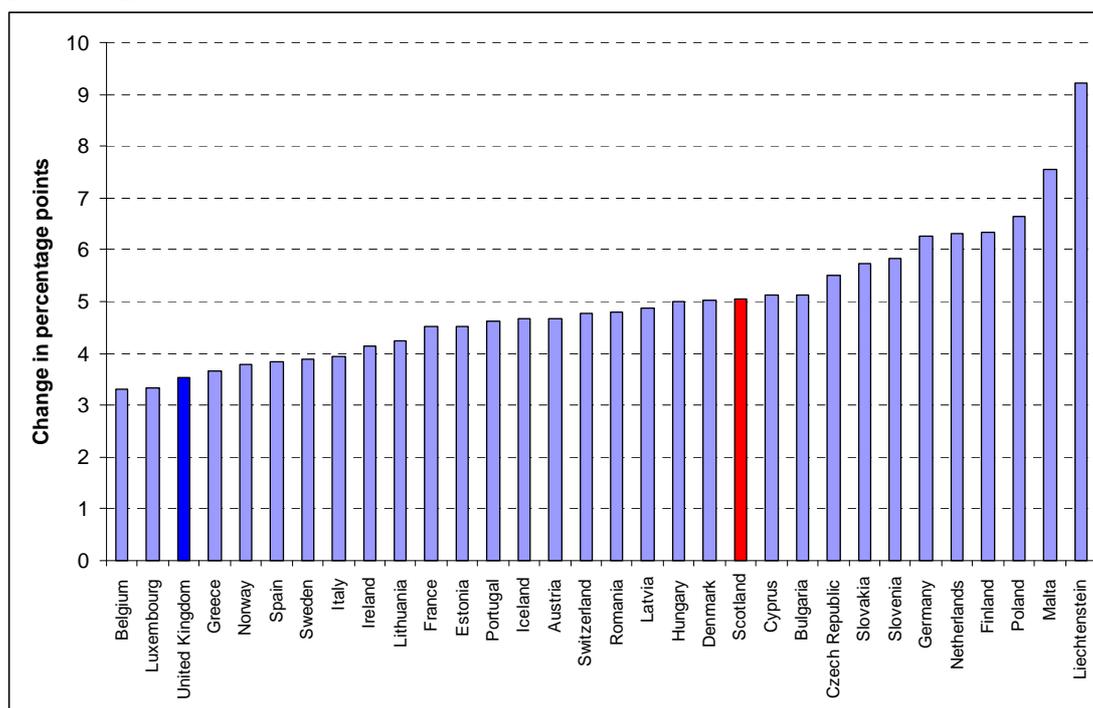
7. Older people tend to live in smaller households. By 2035 there are projected to be 352,000 women aged 65 and over living alone and 168,000 men, increases of 50 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. Increases are particularly large in the oldest age groups (85 and over) where the numbers of women and men living alone increase by 158 and 216 per cent respectively. In 2035, 77 per cent of the oldest women and 38 per cent of the oldest men are projected to live alone.

Comparisons with other countries

8. Scotland's projected population growth is less than that of the rest of the UK. However, the age structure of Scotland's population means that it is projected to age more rapidly compared to the UK. The proportion of Scotland's population that is of pensionable age is projected to increase by 2.9 percentage points between 2010 and 2035, compared with a 1.7 percentage point rise for the UK.

9. The population in all European countries is projected to age but to varying degrees. Figure 2 shows that the proportion of the population aged 75 and over in Scotland is projected to increase more than in most European countries.

Figure 2: Projected change in proportion of population aged 75 and over from 2010 to 2035



Variant population projections

10. As demographic behaviour is uncertain, a number of variant projections of the future population have been calculated, based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, mortality and migration. The variant projections illustrate plausible alternative scenarios, rather than representing upper or lower limits of future demographic behaviour.

11. However, the variant projections tell the same story as the principal projection: Scotland's age structure is projected to change dramatically between 2010 and 2035 (Figure 3). In each variant projection, the number of people aged 60 and over is projected to increase significantly, (particularly the number aged 75+) while, in most cases, the numbers in each of the age categories below 60 are projected to decrease.

Figure 3: Principal and variant projections of the percentage change in age structure of Scotland's population from 2010 to 2035

