

Population Estimates and Projections in Hackney

Introduction

This briefing seeks to outline the key sources of population data available and provide advice on their use, application and limitations. It includes comparative analysis on the different sources of population data used by the Council and provides links to the relevant websites and web pages containing further information on population data.

Population estimates and projections are crucial in ensuring the services that the Council provide are aligned with the population as it stands presently and as it will be in the future. The main differences between these data sources, together with details on which figures to use in defined projects, are outlined below.

1. The Office of National Statistics (ONS)

The ONS produce two main population figures that are commonly used – the Mid-Year Estimate and population projections for future years.

The Mid Year Estimates (“the MYE”)

The MYE are produced by ONS for all local authority areas across England and Wales, and are ‘official’ estimates of population.

They estimate how many people live in the UK as a whole and in each local area (rounded to the nearest 100), and provide a breakdown of the population by age and gender together with information on components of change (e.g. births, deaths and migrations). The estimates relate to the “usually resident” population i.e. population estimates are estimates of people where they usually live.¹ Geographically, data is available at the borough level, and increasingly at lower geographies too.

Limitations of MYE

There is much debate over the accuracy of the MYE particularly in the London boroughs that have seen notable inward migration since 2001. Migration is constrained to national assumptions about international and cross-border migration flows and therefore doesn’t take account of the higher rates of population churn in the capital.

It is widely accepted that the MYEs between 2001 - 2010 significantly undercounted the actual population found in many London boroughs. ONS has revised the back series of MYEs over the last decade to correct previous inaccuracies, and in recent years the ONS have undertaken work to improve migration statistics used in MYEs to avoid problems with migration statistics in MYEs following the 2011 Census

Sub-national Population Projections (“SNPP”)

The ONS also produce a second set of population data showing projections of expected future populations for a twenty-five year period. They are aligned with the MYE. These projections are based on past trends and illustrate changes to the population of an area if trends continue in the same fashion. ONS assumptions about future levels of fertility, mortality and migration are observed over a five-year reference period. The sub-national population projections are revised every two years.

Limitations of ONS SNPPs

One of the main limitations of the ONS population projections is that they take no account of planning policies or projected housing growth, and consequently take no account of the capacity of different areas to accommodate population growth. There is

¹ The usually resident population is defined by the standard United Nations definition for population estimates, and includes people who reside in the area for a period of at least 12 months whatever their nationality.

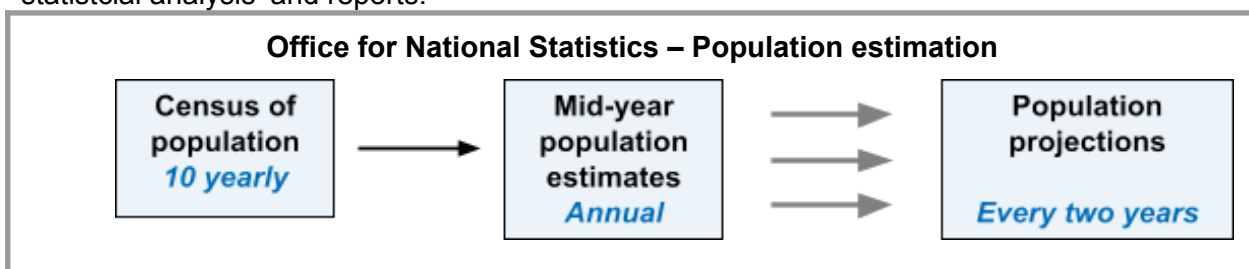
therefore uncertainly about their accuracy and for that reason they are not recommended for use. GLA population projection figures (see below) are more appropriate for use in most cases.

For the reasons stated above, the ONS population projections should not be used in areas such as demand forecasting or service planning as doing so may lead to a misestimating of service users and consequently may have a negative impact on quality of service. Additionally, ONS projections should be avoided when considering infrastructure assessments as they do not take into consideration housing projections or other relevant planning information.

When to use ONS Population Statistics and Estimates

The MYE remain the most widely used source for population estimates and are the only directly comparable (across all local authorities in England and Wales) source. Significant work has been undertaken by ONS in recent years to improve their accuracy, and the Mid-Year Estimate represents the official estimate of Hackney's population for any given year.

The MYEs are also used as the basis for calculating most of the indicators that show rates and proportions. These are used wherever national comparisons are required, and should be used as a basis upon which to calculate other official statistics (such as the employment rate, fertility rate, birth rate etc) and as a basis for comparative statistical analysis' and reports.



Current ONS Population Statistics:

ONS MYE and SNPP, along with Census data for Hackney available via www.nomisweb.co.uk

2. The Greater London Authority

Population projections are issued annually by the GLA for all London Boroughs. Current projections forecast up to 2041 and are available by age and gender at both borough and ward level. Ethnic group projections are also available. Projections are based on births, deaths and migration and utilising the ONS MYE and other Government data (from ONS and elsewhere).

Unlike the ONS population projections, the GLA projections do take into account the impact future housing development is likely to have on an area and use the information to estimate net migration, meaning they are likely to have a higher level of accuracy.

GLA data is available by gender, single year of age and aggregated ethnicity. By geography data is available at the borough and ward level.

GLA population projections variants

The GLA produce population projections under four broad variants:

1. SHLAA based Projections (projections which are constrained and take into account future housing growth - derived from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – SHLAA);
2. Trend based population projections (projections which do not take into account the driving or constraining effect of future housing growth)
3. The Borough Preferred Projections (population projections which take into account local estimates of future housing growth trends). These are available directly to boroughs, and are not published on the GLA website.
4. Zero development (projections which predict growth which is based on, and constrained to, an assumption that dwelling stocks will not increase)

Each is built on a similar demographic basis, with different outcomes produced by variant forecasts of housing capacity and growth. Sub variants are available which vary according to high medium or low fertility scenarios, and whether household growth rates are based on DCLG household formation rates, or a 'capped household size' methodology, which was developed by the GLA to be pragmatic and to yield sensible results across all local authorities. In most cases the standard fertility capped household size variant is more appropriate.

Limitations

The GLA population projections are not recognised for use in performance or monitoring so ONS statistics should be used in preference to GLA data when submitting performance returns. GLA ward population projections are also only currently available for pre-2014 ward boundaries in Hackney.

When to use GLA Population Projections

The Corporate Policy team regularly liaises with the GLA to ensure the accuracy of the estimates that are produced. It is advised that generally the GLA "borough preferred" projections are used over ONS or other GLA projections in service planning. The Borough Preferred projections are recommended as these are based on our own annually reviewed housing trajectories (produced by the Spatial Planning team).

The exception to this is in cases where it is critical that demand is not underestimated – in those cases it is recommended that the highest of the GLA figures (which is usually the 'Trend Based' variant) should be used in sensitivity testing as an 'upper bound' scenario.

School roll projections in Hackney are sourced from the GLA using standard fertility "borough preferred" capped household size projections as they are deemed the most accurate, taking account of specific planning and housing information. However, high fertility scenarios are also tested and the projections are supplemented with local intelligence.

Current GLA population projections for Hackney:

Accessed via: <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/2015-round-population-projections>, including a technical note on variants

Bespoke projections can be produced via <http://witan-alpha.mastodonc.com/>

Borough Preferred Projections available via: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/population>

For information regarding Hackney's housing trajectories, please contact the spatial planning team: spatialplanning@hackney.gov.uk

If you have any queries about GLA population projections or other demographic data, please contact policyandresearch@hackney.gov.uk

Annexe 1: Summary of population data sources

SOURCE AND DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	USES, PROS AND CONS
CENSUS / POPULATION ESTIMATES		
Census of population Detailed small area data on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population.	Every ten years	• Key benchmark for ONS population estimation. • Informs decisions about public sector funding. • Service planning (small area). • Pros: good for small area analyses and for exploring detailed characteristics of population. • Cons: (can be) out of date.
ONS mid-year estimate (MYE) * 'Official' estimates of resident population for local authorities, available by age and gender. * Experimental MYE statistics also available by ethnicity and for small areas.	Annual	• Used for statistical returns to government & input to calculation of some PIs. • Population denominator for rates where comparator data needed for other local authorities. • Pros: provides an official estimate of population between Censuses, useful for comparing Hackney with rest of England; • Cons: can be a 'drift' in the accuracy of estimates, particularly in years furthest from the Census
POPULATION PROJECTIONS		
ONS sub-national projections (SNPP) * Official ONS projections, by age and gender. From 2014 to 2039, for all Local Authorities in England.	Every two years	• Have been used by CLG and other government departments for funding allocation. • Cons: SNPP are trend based and no account is taken of expected housing development, so they can misestimate population growth in Hackney - not recommended for service planning
GLA population projections * For London boroughs by age and gender, to 2041. * Data by ward, ethnic group, labour force and household. * Takes account of development data.	Annual (at least)	• Used extensively by London boroughs for service planning purposes. • Used by GLA to underpin the London Plan. • Only source of ethnic group projections. • Pros: widely considered most accurate projection model amongst London Boroughs • Cons: not recognised for use in performance or monitoring. Currently available for old ward boundaries only.