

Improvements to Migration and Population Statistics

August 2008 Progress Report

Introduction

This report provides an update on progress made between May and August 2008 in the Improvements to Migration and Population Statistics (IMPS) work programme. This is a substantial work programme that includes taking forward the recommendations of the 2006 Interdepartmental Task Force on Migration Statistics.

Organisation and governance

As reported in previous IMPS updates in February and May 2008, the improvement work programme will be overseen and steered by a senior Migration Statistics Improvement Programme Board, with a Ministerial Group providing impetus. Both of these groups have met since the last update report. The Ministerial Group met for the first time on 11 June and Ministers were supportive in principle of sharing key administrative data with ONS for statistical purposes to enable improvements to population and migration statistics. The second full meeting of the Programme Board was held on 16 June.

Improvements to Mid Year Estimates

A package of improvements was introduced for the mid-2006 population estimates which were published in August 2007. Some improvements to the International Passenger Survey, identified through the Port Survey Review, have already been made and so will be reflected in long-term estimates of immigration and emigration used to produce mid-2008 estimates.

ONS are now considering the package of other improvements that might also feed into the mid-2008 estimates to be published in August 2009. These estimates will be used as the basis for the next local government finance settlement round by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).

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There are five major strands to the research that is in progress:

- Using timely administrative data to improve the distribution of immigration at local area level.
- Use of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data to improve estimation of UK and overseas students.
- Development of short-term immigration estimates at local area level.
- Refinements to the methods of modelling emigration at local area level introduced for the mid-2006 population estimates.
- Quality measures around population estimates.

User Engagement

Prior to the introduction of the package of improvements for the mid-2006 population estimates ONS engaged with users mainly (though not exclusively) through the Population Sub-group of CLIP and a small QA panel of experts. A series of implementation seminars were held across the country and a series of technical and non-technical papers explaining the changes were published.

It was widely felt among users that more engagement during the research phase would have been beneficial. To be able to draw on more local area expertise ONS plan to run open seminars toward the end of 2008 to explain the research being undertaken. Implementation seminars will again be held across the country in April/May 2009 to further explain the changes. In addition it may be appropriate to convene a small number of working groups to separately consider the research being undertaken.

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Since the May IMPS update report presentations have been made at a Local Authorities Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) seminar “Population and Household Analysis: Current Research Issues” and at the North West Regional Development Agency Research Conference. Looking forward, a range of presentations on the work programme will be given at the British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) annual conference in September and a second Local Government Association (LGA) workshop will be held on November 5 which will cover the work of the IMPS programme.

Implementation of the Port Survey Review

Enhancements to the International Passenger Survey have already been successfully introduced in 2008 including (from January) improving coverage of some short-term migrants and (from April) the introduction of specific additional survey shifts designed to identify more international migrants at Stansted, Luton, and Manchester. Although these latter airports were already covered in the IPS, this second refinement will boost the numbers of migrants identified and is in response to recent increases in flows of migrants through these airports. Similar additional tailored shifts are run at Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

In June 2008 the ONS published a Stage Two Progress report on the Port Survey Review. Within the report was an evaluation of fundamental changes to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) first proposed in the interim Port Survey Review in 2007. Following this evaluation, ONS will be adopting a new survey design in 2009 with a larger, main migration sample and a sub-sample for interviews collecting data for balance of payments and tourism statistics. Sample design, questionnaire review, piloting and system development work are in progress and planned during 2008.

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Access to Administrative Data Sources

Both the Ministerial Group and the senior Migration Statistics Improvement Programme Board saw the potential to improve migration statistics through improved data sharing of administrative data for statistical purposes, while recognising the importance of guaranteeing the security of individual level data. ONS are in the process of using the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 to establish legal gateways for information sharing for statistical purposes between the UK Statistics Authority and other public authorities and agencies, where these do not already exist.

A draft regulation to allow sharing of Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) School Census data is being developed along with the statistical business case and information on data security and confidentiality. This regulation could be laid before Parliament as early as the Autumn. Similarly a draft regulation on sharing Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Migrant Worker Scan data on National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations is anticipated to be laid later this year or early next.

Research is also being undertaken to assess how to make best use of administrative data. Prior to the legal gateways being established, ONS are assessing the potential use with the data custodians. This involves ONS research staff visiting the relevant departments to securely access the data and holding workshops with data custodians. Recently ONS staff have visited DCSF in Darlington and are planning to visit DWP in Sheffield. A workshop was held in July with DWP to improve understanding of how the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) and National Insurance Migrant Worker Scan might be used.

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Entry and Exit Data

ONS are looking at how data from the e-borders system, which will record flows into and out of the country, might help improve migration flow estimates. Linking these records together should enable identification of the number of long and short-term migrants. E-borders data for all moves into and out of the UK may now be available sooner than originally planned, although dates have yet to be finalised. Previously it had been anticipated that 100% coverage of all moves would be achieved by 2014..

As with other administrative sources, ONS are researching what might be possible with e-borders before gaining access to the data. Research has included how e-borders data might be used to measure migration prior to 100% coverage and how e-borders data might be used in combination with the International Passenger Survey or Home Office data such as that from the Points Based System.

Migration Reporting

A fourth joint release of migration information was issued on 21 August. This release represents a further step toward the vision of simultaneous publication of demographic data at a small number of release dates through the year. For the first time, in addition to joint release of ONS and Home Office data, DWP published data on National Insurance Numbers allocated to overseas nationals. Within the release the ONS published a range of demographic statistics including mid-2007 population estimates for England & Wales down to local area levels and estimates of the employment of foreign workers from the Annual

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Population Survey. The latest figures from the Home Office are for asylum applications, controlled immigration, and accession monitoring information.

A link to the press release of the joint release is provided below.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/jrds0808.pdf>

Recent IMPS research helps understand some of the differences between the estimates published in the joint release. In May 2008 ONS published a reconciliation exercise between estimates based on the International Passenger Survey and, among other sources, National Insurance Allocations (NINo). This found evidence that the IPS based estimates of immigrants staying for longer than a month were much more in line with NINo counts than IPS estimates of stays lasting more than 12 months.

A link to this work is provided below.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/population/future/imps/updates/downloads/Reconciliation_Exercise.pdf

Short-term Migration

The latest set of short-term migration estimates are planned for release in September 2008. These estimates will refer to the twelve months to mid-2006 and are based on the International Passenger Survey. As part of this release ONS will, for the first time, include quality measures (standard error) around the stock estimates.

Research on short-term migration estimation is now concentrating on local area distributions. This work includes assessing simple disaggregation approaches and more complex model based approaches. A report on the suitability of these approaches will be published by the end of 2008. If a suitable method can be developed, estimates would then be planned for

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Summer 2009. ONS will be involving external experts in quality assuring any proposed method.

