

PORT SURVEY REVIEW
STAGE TWO PROGRESS REPORT

June 2008

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on a programme of work designed to enhance the data obtained from migrants as they enter or leave the UK, in order to deliver improved statistics on international migration. This work, part of the ONS Improvements to Migration and Population Statistics work programme, represents stage two of the Port Survey Review (PSR) and builds upon the findings of the Review's interim report, published in October 2007.

The PSR took forward two of the recommendations made to the National Statistician by an Inter-departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics. The Task Force recognised a general consensus that the available estimates of migration required further improvement. It concluded that in the longer term data from administrative sources, for example the e-Borders project, would provide better information on the number of people entering and leaving the country. However, in making its recommendations the Task Force also addressed the need to make more timely improvements to the available data.

The PSR identified improvements to the existing International Passenger Survey (IPS) which could be introduced in 2008, together with proposals for a more fundamental redesign of the port survey and the potential use of administrative data in subsequent years.

Good progress has now been made against these three key findings. The work underway is summarised below. It is building on changes made in January 2007 to increase the number of migrant contacts within the IPS, which produced a three-fold increase in the sample size for emigrants.

- 1) Further enhancements to the IPS were successfully introduced in 2008, taking into account changing patterns of migration. These included, from January, improving the coverage of some short-term migrants (those intending to change their country of residence for three to twelve months) and, from April, increasing the number of migrant contacts at ports already included in the survey (in particular at Stansted, Luton and Manchester airports).
- 2) The options for more fundamental changes from 2009, outlined in the October 2007 interim report, have now been evaluated. A new survey design is being developed 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.
- 3) It is recognised that a survey approach provides detailed information, but only for a sample of passengers as they enter or leave the country, a minority of which are migrants. The PSR is exploring the potential use of data from administrative sources for international travellers as they enter and leave the country, although this information will be limited in its scope and will supplement rather than replace survey data. Inter-departmental work is underway to specify data that, in the future, might be drawn from the e-Borders and/or Points Based System currently being developed by the Home Office.

The importance and timeliness of this work programme is confirmed in the Treasury Select Committee report 'Counting the Population' (published in May 2008) which emphasised the urgency of the need to improve the available estimates of migration and population estimates as a whole. The work outlined in this Progress Report represents a significant investment towards achieving the improvements in migration data sought by data users.

1 Background

- 1.1 Over recent years net international migration has become an increasingly important component of population change in the UK and consequently estimates of migration an increasingly important element in population estimates and projections. These estimates and projections play a vital role in key public policy, resource allocation, planning and business decisions.
- 1.2 The Treasury Select Committee report 'Counting the Population'¹ (published in May 2008) has emphasised the urgency of the need to improve the available estimates of migration and population estimates. The report of the Inter-departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics, published in December 2006, recognised a general consensus that the available estimates of migrant numbers needed to be further improved in order to effectively meet all the purposes for which they were required.
- 1.3 In the longer term the Task Force acknowledged that data from administrative sources (as a result of the e-Borders project) and the 2011 Census would provide fuller coverage of migrants and other populations to supplement data collected from surveys. However, it recognised that more timely improvements in migration statistics were also required. In order to improve the available data on people entering and leaving the country, the Task Force recommended the development of a port survey capturing a substantially increased sample of migrants and the potential use of data from administrative sources in the shorter term.

Box 1: Inter-departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics

The Inter-departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics was set up by the National Statistician in 2006 to recommend timely improvements that could be made to estimates of migration and migrant populations in the United Kingdom, both nationally and at local level. Its report made 15 recommendations, the first two of which were addressed by the Port Survey Review in 2007:

Recommendation A(1): A port survey designed to capture a substantially increased sample of migrants (especially emigrants), is essential to provide reliable estimates of population and migration at regional and local levels. To do this, key elements of the e-Borders project need to be brought forward, including passport scanning (starting with arrivals). Improvements to statistics could be delivered in three to five years.

Recommendation A(2): The early provision of more data on controlled migrants, from landing cards, is essential (in particular, duration of stay and destination in the UK). Access to individual level data is needed for linkage to subsequent information about the migrant. To achieve more comprehensive coverage of migrants, a sample of all travellers would need to complete a card on arrival in the UK. Improvements to statistics could be delivered in two to four years.

- 1.4 During 2007 ONS undertook a Port Survey Review (PSR) to take forward these two recommendations of the Inter-departmental Task Force on Migration Statistics. The PSR published an Interim Report in October 2007². This identified:

¹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtreasy/183/183.pdf>

² <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/population/future/imps/updates/downloads/PSREVIEW.pdf>

- a) a series of enhancements to the International Passenger Survey (IPS)³ in order to increase the sample of migrants at a number of key ports where passengers were already interviewed and increase the coverage of short-term migrants. These developments were intended to build on changes already made in January 2007 when additional interview shifts had been introduced to boost the number of emigrant contacts. This had produced a three-fold increase in the sample size for emigrants.
 - b) options for more fundamental changes to the IPS, through the development of a new port survey; and
 - c) potential uses of data from administrative sources to improve migration statistics
- 1.5 The report concluded that whilst it would be feasible to introduce the IPS enhancements in 2008, further work was needed to decide upon and progress more fundamental changes and to investigate further the practicalities of using data from administrative sources. This report provides an update on the work that is now being undertaken in stage two of the Port Survey Review.

Box 2: The International Passenger Survey (IPS)

ONS collects data on migration through the IPS, a sample survey of people coming through port entry and exit points in the United Kingdom. The survey has been running since 1961 and currently interviews 280,000 respondents per year, at all the main points of entry to and exit from the UK.

The main purpose of the IPS has been to collect expenditure information (to feed into the Travel Account of the Balance of Payments) and information on tourism. Collecting information on migrants began in 1963/64 and was expanded in the 1980s, through the introduction of migration filter shifts.

The survey questionnaire covers these three main areas: gathering information on expenditure, tourism and migration, although not all questions are asked of all respondents. For example, on migration filter shifts only detailed questions on migration are asked of respondents who have firstly indicated a positive migration status.

Migration filter shifts boost the small number of migrant contacts that would otherwise be made. In 2006 this enabled around 2,500 migrants to be interviewed rather than the 700 or so who would have been contacted had only the 'ordinary' IPS shifts been run.

2 Port Survey Review Stage Two: Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The following terms of reference for the project were agreed:
- a) To oversee the implementation of changes to the IPS from 2008
 - b) To confirm the required statistical outputs that further improvements to data collection need to address
 - c) To scope the development of a new port survey to meet these requirements, based on a main sample for migration interviews and a sub-sample for interviews relating to expenditure for balance of payments and tourism
 - d) To continue to meet the needs of other users of the data - in particular the demand for statistics on the Balance of Payments and tourism

³ See Box 2 for more information about the IPS.

- e) To undertake work, including sample design and questionnaire, field-force and IM development
 - f) To identify potential future developments, for example use of e-Borders data which, whilst beyond the timescales of this stage of the project, might be implemented at a later date
- 2.2 The PSR forms part of the wider ONS Improvements to Migration and Population Statistics work programme.⁴ ONS has jointly set up arrangements for overseeing this programme, working closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Office in particular. Five inter-departmental working groups are covering the range of work, reporting to a senior Migration Statistics Improvement Programme Board (composed of key government departments) with responsibility for steering the work programme. The Entry and Exit Data Working Group leads on the development of data sources at ports of entry to and departure from the UK.

3 2008 Changes to the IPS

- 3.1 The PSR Interim Report identified a number of short-term enhancements that could be made to the IPS, including the introduction of additional migration filter shifts at ports already covered by the survey and extending IPS coverage to ports not currently included. (Migration filter shifts boost the small number of migrant contacts that would otherwise be made, see Box 2).
- 3.2 Between October 2007 and March 2008 preparations were made to introduce a series of changes from April 2008. This involved negotiations with authorities to introduce the IPS at ports not previously included and the recruitment, security clearance and training of interviewers to cover these ports and the additional shifts at other ports.
- 3.3 The changes outlined in the PSR Interim Report were successfully introduced in April 2008, including:
- a) the introduction of migration filter shifts to boost the number of migrant contacts at Luton, Stansted and Manchester (Terminals 1 and 2) airports
 - b) additional shifts on the Dover-Calais and Dover-Dunkirk ferry crossings
 - c) additional shifts on the Eurotunnel shuttle between Cheriton and Coquelles
 - d) additional ordinary IPS shifts introduced at some other airports e.g. Birmingham
 - e) the introduction of interviewing for the survey at Southampton, Bournemouth and Robin Hood, Doncaster airports
 - f) all migration filter shifts (from January 2008) extended to include interviews with some short-term migrants, that is those intending to change their country of residence for between 3 and 12 months. (Previously only migrants who intended to change their country of residence for longer than 12 months, were included.)
- 3.4 In addition adjustments have been made at Heathrow Airport, to include in the IPS passengers arriving and departing at the new Terminal 5.

4 A new port survey in 2009

Strategic direction

- 4.1 Three options for the further development of a port survey were identified in the PSR Interim Report. These were:
- a) to retain the existing IPS structure and further extend the number of migration shifts

⁴<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/population/future/imps/updates/default.asp>

- b) to develop a new survey design, with a main sample focused on collecting migration data and a sub-sample for expenditure/tourism data (essentially reversing the current IPS design which focuses on expenditure/tourism and sub-samples for migration)
- c) to develop two separate surveys for migration and expenditure/tourism

4.2 The pros and cons of these options were assessed against the following criteria, taking into account user requirements:

Methodology

- port coverage, sample design, questionnaire and data collection methods

Flexibility

- ability to respond to changing migration patterns and business requirements

Outputs

- impact of changes on all survey outputs, including tourism and expenditure estimates

Information Management

- implications for the IPS processing system

Field Force

- staffing and training needs

4.3 Based on this assessment the second option was selected as the one that most clearly met the criteria. This design:

- a) optimises cost and quality
- b) gives prominence to migration data collection
- c) minimises duplication of effort and infrastructure that option (c) would have introduced
- d) retains the synergy between the two parts of the IPS
- e) offers flexibility to add modules and make changes to the sample design to meet changing data requirements

Development work

4.4 A substantial programme of survey design work is underway or planned, covering sampling and questionnaire design, fieldwork requirements, data processing and information management. It is proposed to introduce the new design in 2009.

Sampling design and optimisation

4.5 The number of migrants within overall passenger flows is relatively small. In the new design all sampled passengers will be approached to assess their eligibility for a migration interview, with a sub-sample of passengers approached for an expenditure/tourism interview. Sampling rates will be set independently for these two elements of the survey.

4.6 An initial review of the sample design has been completed in preparation for a detailed sample optimisation exercise. This detailed work is now underway and is incorporating both expenditure/tourism and migration estimates. For migration estimates, the initial review identified a number of alternative options for further assessment, including an optimisation on:

- a) national migrant estimates for current port/route coverage
- b) national migrant estimates for current port/route coverage plus additional ports/routes
- c) migrant estimates by region of destination

d) migrant estimates by region of origin

Questionnaire design

- 4.7 The content of the IPS questionnaire is reviewed on an annual basis. Revisions for 2009 are already in development and will take into account business requirements identified by the PSR. As part of the PSR Stage Two a review of the questionnaire in terms of question wording, format and routing is being undertaken.

Revisions to data processing

- 4.8 From the data collected by the IPS, grossed estimates of migration and other variables are produced using a complex weighting procedure. Sample data is weighted up to known passenger flow totals. The weighting process for the new survey design is being developed.
- 4.9 In addition, for incomplete responses to the survey, ONS imputes the missing information based on the information provided by other similar respondents who do give these details. A review of the existing IPS imputation processes is also being undertaken as part of the PSR Stage Two.

Information system development

- 4.10 Parallel work has commenced to assess the information system requirements for the new port survey, in order to develop IT systems to support the new survey design, building on existing systems where possible. A feasibility study has been completed and work is now underway on detailed system and design analysis, prior to the development of the new design.

Business implementation

- 4.11 This phase of the project is planned for the second half of 2008, based on the outputs of the sampling and questionnaire design work. Preparations are planned for the implementation of the data collection, including piloting and testing work and interviewer training.

Statistical Outputs

- 4.12 Data collection based on the new sample and questionnaire design is scheduled to commence early in 2009. As a result of the proposed changes to sample design and data processing, potential migration data discontinuities will need to be anticipated and accounted for. These will be assessed and estimates of discontinuity will be produced accordingly.
- 4.13 Under current timetables the first statistical outputs from the new survey design would feed into the 2009 Mid Year Population estimates and the 2009 Total International Migration estimates that will be published in 2010.
- 4.14 In addition work is underway to consider ways in which early indicators of changes in migration patterns could be produced. The outputs from the new survey will be an important part of this process.

5 Beyond 2009

Building flexibility

- 5.1 Patterns of migration change over time. The ability to make changes to the IPS (for example, to introduce interviewing at additional ports or amend the sample drawn at existing ports) to take account of changes (or anticipated changes) is important to ensure that the currency of the statistics is maintained.
- 5.2 Total passenger flow data, for example from the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department for Transport, is regularly monitored. This process was used as evidence to support the introduction of additional migration shifts and IPS interviewing at additional

ports in 2008. The flexibility in the new survey design will be able to more easily accommodate changes in sampling and the pattern of interviewing.

Use of administrative data

- 5.3 The current IPS covers a wide range of topics that provide useful information on migration. One disadvantage of the survey approach is that, because of the relatively low number of migrants within overall passenger flows, it requires a relatively large sample size in order to pick up sufficient numbers of migrants. The PSR Interim Report made an initial assessment of the potential use of administrative data sources as an alternative or supplemental source for migration statistics.
- 5.4 It focused on the development of e-Borders; a Home Office Programme intended to deliver a modernised border control. The programme will require commercial carriers and owner/operators of all vessels scheduled to arrive in or depart the UK to submit all passenger details to the e-Borders system.
- 5.5 Since the Interim Report was published ONS has continued to work with the Home Office and Border and Immigration Agency to specify the data that would be accessed from the e-Borders system and the Points Based System currently being developed by the Home Office.
- 5.6 Information from these systems should improve the reliability of national level migration estimates, providing data for all people entering and leaving the UK. However, it will not provide information to cover all of the topics and questions that are currently included in the IPS or the new Port Survey, for example the intended destination within the UK. It is envisaged there will be a continuing requirement for a port survey to augment the data from administrative sources. Therefore, the potential interrelationship between these two data sources is also being explored in more detail as part of the PSR stage two.