

Summary of Feedback Received on the Short-term Migration Feasibility Report

A 'Short-term Migration Feasibility Report' was published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 25th January 2007. This report was an initial assessment of the feasibility of producing short-term migration estimates for England and Wales. Central to the paper was an outline of planned outputs, supported by illustrative data on short-term migration to show the size and robustness of International Passenger Survey (IPS) based estimates. The paper also addressed the issues of stock estimation and local authority distribution.

Users of population statistics were asked to feedback comments to the report. Specifically they were asked to comment in three areas:

- Definition(s) of short-term migration
- The usefulness of stock estimates in addition to flow data
- Whether planned outputs would meet user expectations and requirements.

In general the report has been well received. In total, 25 substantive responses have been received from a range of users including academics, central and local government. The majority (17) of these responses have been from local authorities and local government organisations. Of these 17, 7 are from London Boroughs and local government organisations representing London Boroughs. A list of the respondents is provided in appendix 1.

This update summarises the feedback received from users concentrating particularly on the question of short-term migration definitions. An ONS response on which definition(s) to use will be published later in the year. This response will consider whether definitions are coherent with each other and whether sufficiently robust estimates can be made when using them.

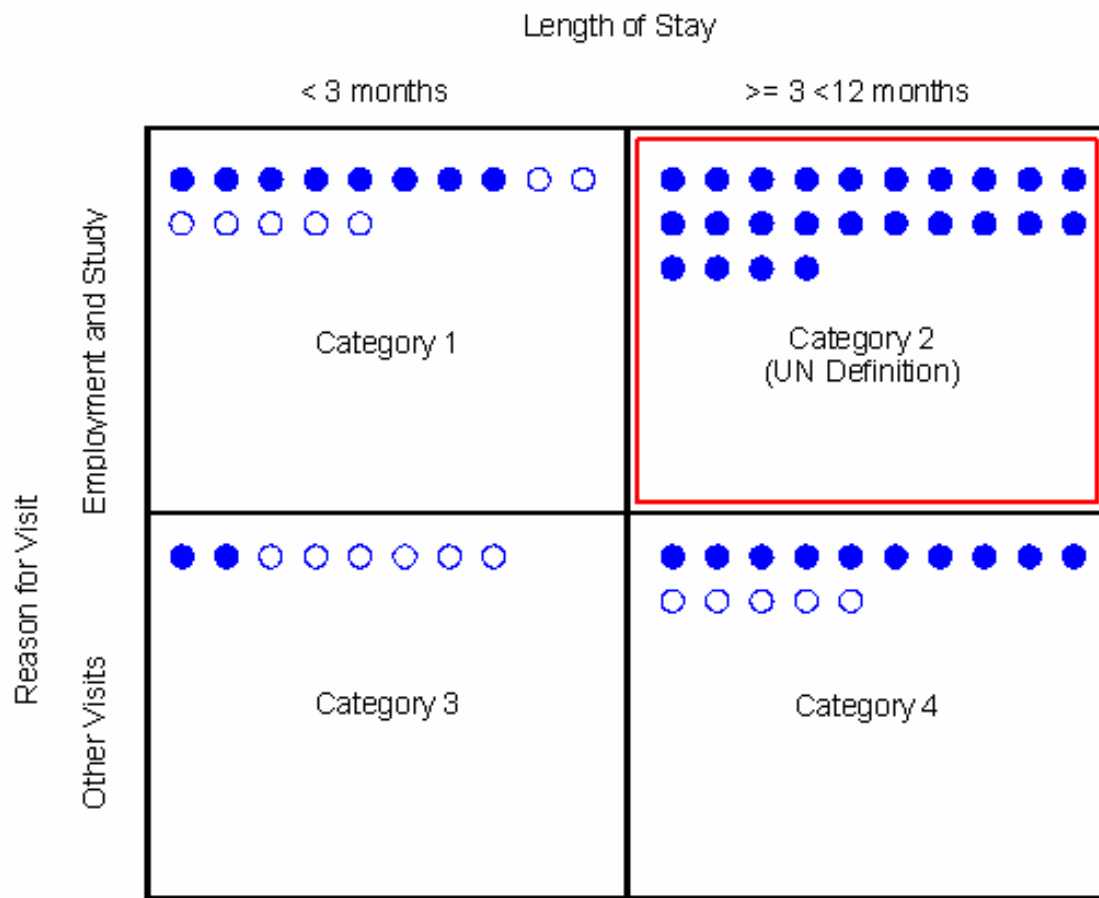
Feedback Area 1 - Definitions

The UN definition of short-term migration was used as the starting point for discussion in the original feasibility report. In this definition a short-term migration is made for employment or study reasons and lasts between 3 and 12 months. Extensions to this definition were then proposed, broadened by reason for visit and/or length of stay. Figure 1 presents a summary of the definitions proposed, along with an overview of responses received.

Within the feasibility report users were asked to consider which of the definitional options were most appropriate for their uses. A further question also asked whether it would be appropriate to amend the definitional categories, for example by excluding specific reasons for visit or using different time-cut offs.

In total, there were 24 responses to the questions on definitions. In Figure 1, blue dots represent interest in the whole of a category. White dots represent interest in part of this category, for example interest in category 1 for employment but not for study.

Figure 1: Overview of Definitions Feedback



Key

- Respondent requests inclusion of the entire category in a short-term migration definition
- Respondent requests partial inclusion of the category in a short-term migration definition

Response Summary

Overall Figure 1 shows that:

- All responses suggest moves for between 3 and 12 months for employment or study (UN definition) are important. Short-term migration estimates based on the UN definition are therefore clearly required as a minimum.
- However, there is also wide interest in extending this definition in terms of length of stay and reason for visit.
- Only a third of the responses suggested that other visits for less than 3 months are important. Much of the interest in this category is due to a suggested reduction in the minimum length of stay criterion to 1 month.

Responses to the most noted extensions to the UN definition (categories 1 and 4) are summarised in more detail below.

Category 1 - Employment and Study visits for <3 months

- Over half of the responses to the definition questions expressed a preference for the inclusion of work and study visits for under 3 months in a short-term migration definition.
- Central government departments showed particular interest in including category 1. Amongst the departments expressing this preference were those with an interest in macro economic statistics.
- Local government interest was also apparent from London boroughs and local government organisations representing London boroughs (such as the Greater London Authority). London is likely to have a high proportion of short-term migrant workers.
- Additional local authority interest was predominantly from more rural local authorities in the east of England. Studies have shown that such areas have important seasonal agricultural workforces.¹
- It was suggested by the majority of local authority users that the 3 month length of stay criterion in the UN definition be reduced. Several suggested that a 1 month cut-off should be considered.

Category 4 - Other Reasons for Visit for 3 – 12 months

- Over half of the responses to the definitions question suggested the inclusion of additional reasons for visit for 3-12 months is important in a short-term migration definition.
- The majority of interest in other reasons for visit was from local authorities and local government organisations. Several respondents commented that individuals used local services irrespective of their reason for visit.
- Central government departments interested in this category use population statistics at a local area level. A preference for robust estimates of short-term migration at a local authority level was stated.

Additional Comments

Several responses requested the separate identification of groups within the wider definition. Many of these requested the separate reporting of employment and study. Additional requests were for the separate identification of the UN definition (if a wider definition was used), the unemployed and *au pairs*.

Feedback Area 2 - Planned Outputs

The feasibility report set out the dimensions by which ONS aims to publish experimental estimates of short-term migration. These dimensions are:

- by using a limited number of definitional bases;
- as flow and stock (population present) estimates;
- by sex and broad age group;
- at national, regional, and local authority levels;
- by citizenship (as a minimum separately identifying migrants who come from EU accession countries).

These estimates are dependent on appropriate methodologies being developed. With this caveat, users were asked in the feasibility report whether planned outputs met expectations and requirements. Users were also asked which of the outputs were regarded as highest priority.

Response Summary:

- In general the planned outputs are well suited to meet user expectations and needs.
- The priority for local authority users is the provision of data at local authority level.
- Many users have expressed the need for estimates to allow them to effectively tailor services such as schools and translation services to the specific needs of migrant groups. It was suggested that breakdowns such as citizenship, nationality or country of birth and broad age group would be most useful to do this.
- It is recognised and accepted that national level data will be more robust, allowing a greater level of disaggregation.

Feedback Area 3 - Stock/Flow Estimation of Short-Term Migration

Stock estimates refer to the population of short-term migrants at a given point in time. Within the feasibility study methods were discussed for estimating short-term migration stocks, in particular whether methods could account for seasonality in short-term migration flows. The solution proposed was to explore whether average stock estimates could be made. A limitation with such an approach is that averages provide no information on how long migrants are staying for, an important question for resource use. Hence it was also proposed to explore supplementing average stock with estimates of average length of stay.

Within the feasibility report users were asked whether they required estimates of short-term migration stocks as well as flows and whether supplementary information was required, most specifically on average length of stay. Users were also asked whether stock estimates were required for both overseas residents in England & Wales and England & Wales residents overseas.

Response Summary:

- Short-term migration stock estimates are required by the majority of users as these provide a useful measure of population change.
- The majority of respondents also suggested that average length of stay would be useful supplementary information in assessing the impacts on services.
- Stock estimates of overseas residents in England & Wales were viewed as a priority, with complementary estimates of England & Wales residents overseas generally seen as useful information but non-essential.
- Regional/ local stock estimates are ideally required to accurately assess community needs and inform demands on public services, however it is recognised that producing sufficiently robust statistics at this level may not be possible.
- A number of users suggested that quarterly estimates would be useful in illustrating seasonal patterns, however not a priority.

Key Points – Overall Summary

Definitions

- All respondents were interested in the UN definition of short-term migration as a minimum.
- There was also interest in extending the definition by length of stay or reason for visit.
- Central government departments with a specific interest in macro economic statistics were generally more interested in extending the UN definition to include employment and study for less than 3 months.
- Local government users are generally more interested in extending the UN definition to include all reasons for visit. Interest was expressed in estimates for 3 to 12 months and 1 to 12 months.
- There was little demand for a definition including all lengths of stay and all reasons for visit.
- A number of users expressed an interest in separately estimating by study and employment reasons for visit.

Planned Outputs

- Planned outputs were well suited to user expectations and needs
- Priority for most users is data at local authority level
- Citizenship, nationality or country of birth and broad age group data requested by a number of users

Stock/Flow Estimates

- The majority of users do require stock estimates
- Average length of stay would also be useful for most users
- Stock estimates of overseas residents in England & Wales were the priority though there was also interest in England & Wales residents overseas
- Users recognised that while they had a clear need for regional/local stock estimates, it may not be possible to produce sufficiently robust estimates at this level

Next Steps

An ONS response on which definition(s) to use will be published later in the year. This response will consider whether definitions are coherent with each other and whether sufficiently robust estimates can be made when using them.

It is also intended that national short-term migration stock estimates, using IPS data, will be published later in the year. These estimates will be based around the average stock/average length of stay methods described in the feasibility report. User feedback outlined above will be used in the development of these estimates.

In addition to the above, research will also continue into the development of a suitable methodology for distributing short-term migration to a local area level. As stated in the feasibility report, the IPS alone cannot produce sufficiently robust estimates at local area level.

References

1. A8 Migrant Workers in Rural Areas: Briefing Paper (2007). Commission for Rural Communities. Available from:
<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/migrantworkersinruralareas>

Appendix 1: Responding Organisations

Note: Opinions expressed in the paper are those of individuals within these organisations, and do not necessarily represent the views of the organisations themselves.

National Organisations:

Welsh Assembly Government
Department of Health
Bank of England
Home Office
Department for Communities and Local Government
Office for National Statistics: Labour Market Division
Health and Safety Executive

London Boroughs and Organisations:

Greater London Authority
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Westminster City Council
Islington Council
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
London Councils
Local Government Association: High Ethnicity Authorities Special Interest Group
London Borough of Lambeth

Other Local Authorities and Organisations:

Cambridgeshire County Council
Sheffield City Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Norfolk County Council
Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Warwickshire County Council
Leicestershire County Council
Cheshire County Council

Academics:

Edge Analytics Ltd./ University of Leeds