

Announcement

29 April 2009

Monitoring Review on Migration Statistics: Interim Report

Note on the open discussion of migration statistics and issues raised in the Interim Report

An open meeting was held on 22nd April at the Royal Statistical Society. Slides for the meeting presentations are available on the Authority website:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/migration-statistics-interim-report-open-meeting--22-april-2009---presentation.pdf>

The discussion flagged up several main issues with respect to migration statistics:

- the long-term solution:
 - the roles of a population register
 - administrative sources and
 - the census
- internal migration
- regional estimation of international migration
- the means of measuring emigration
- e-Borders

The long-term solution

Some speakers thought that the introduction of a population register was the only satisfactory way of accurately producing internal and international migration statistics. A suggestion was made of using NHS numbers which are already given to the majority of the population, and extending their use by assigning one to every person resident in the UK. Others felt that a population register would not receive public support and that registers can also face difficulties such as problems in getting people to de-register before emigrating. *The Authority will consider these issues within its final report.*

Several of the presentations reflected the views of the importance of administrative sources in delivering an integrated population statistics system. Some concern was raised in discussion that the use, and in particular the linking, of administrative sources was in reality more complicated than generally perceived. It was pointed out that it is often the case that changes are made with little notice or consideration of the consequences for the statistical uses of the administrative systems. Linkage will be very difficult as the systems are unlikely to be compatible, having developed separately and for specific purposes. *The section in the Authority monitoring report on administrative sources and data linkage will be reviewed in the light of these comments.*

Views for and against continuing to hold a census were expressed and the importance of triangulating administrative, survey and census sources was raised. It was suggested that the Authority report should go further in giving an opinion on the value of the data to be obtained from the 2011 Census on migration. *As well as clarifying the Authority's position on the census questions, the final report will also clarify why we think that a potential mismatch between census counts and population estimates is an important issue.*

Internal migration

The importance of considering ways of improving internal migration was flagged up, as well as the measurement difficulties given that there are no physical boundaries and that there is increased geographical mobility in UK society. GP data are at the heart of the current estimation method. The Department of Health outlined their current activities for improving these data, partly with an interest in examining the appropriate basis for resource allocation in the future. *The Authority's final report will further draw out the issues regarding internal migration.*

Regional estimation of international migration

It was pointed out that ONS are not planning to review their method for allocating international migrants to the UK at a regional level. However the desirability of doing so was highlighted in a reference to estimates for Yorkshire and the Humber, suggesting a substantially higher allocation of migrants than is being observed locally. *This issue will also be considered within the final report.*

The means of measuring emigration

While administrative sources are generally viewed to be essential to improving methods of estimating immigration, very few administrative sources are able to record emigrants. Consequently the means to improve the estimation of emigration is severely limited. Concerns around this issue were raised, encouraging research to be conducted in the area. *The Authority will consider these concerns and comment further within its final report.*

e-Borders

One administrative source that *does* have potential for improving the measurement of emigration (as well as immigration) is e-Borders. The first population estimates to draw on e-Borders data are expected to be the mid-2012 estimates, due to be published in 2013. It was flagged up that little has been published on how the system can be used to produce migration statistics. There was a strong interest in seeing anything that can be made public by the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme on research to find ways of using the data in producing migration statistics. The programme has responded to the call in the interim report for programme papers to be published with an assurance that this will happen. *The final report will reflect this assurance.*

Other issues

The difficulty experienced by academics in accessing micro-data on migration for research was raised and departments were encouraged to find ways to make this possible. The framework for international and internal migration presented at the meeting was positively received with a few suggestions for clarification. The revised framework is presented below.

Framework for international and internal migration statistics

