

Monitoring Review

Monitoring Review 4/16
February 2016

Monitoring Review Final Update

The Robustness of the International Passenger Survey

Publication date – June 2013

The Authority published the Monitoring Review Report '*The Robustness of the International Passenger Survey*' in June 2013.¹ Annex 1 provides a brief summary of the report and documents actions taken in response to the recommendations.

Statement from the UK Statistics Authority

The published Monitoring Review Report contained 7 recommendations for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Home Office, and the National Statistician, to progress.

As of January 2016, all of the recommendations have been satisfactorily completed.

ONS made improvements to the presentation of the migration statistics, that provided a clear indication of the uncertainty of the migration estimates, and prepared guidance material intended for non-expert and new users. ONS has also increased the clarity and accessibility of the supporting information for other statistics based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS). It has undertaken further detailed research into using the Border Force administrative data, in collaboration with the Home Office, and kept users updated on progress.

The UK Statistics Authority confirmed the designation of the ONS migration statistics as National Statistics on 31 July 2014 (relating to Assessment report 267²).

Impact on Official Statistics

The Authority recognises the work carried out by ONS and the Home Office to improve the user experience for the IPS, both through enhancement to commentary and the provision of supporting information and through clear and regular communication.

We trust that understanding and meeting user needs has become an integral part of development and provision of IPS statistics in the future.

While the specific recommendations from the 2013 Monitoring Review have been satisfactorily undertaken, this is not to say there are no further issues with the IPS or with migration statistics more broadly. The latter have been the subject of considerable public debate recently and the Authority may consider these further in future work programmes.

¹<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/the-robustness-of-the-international-passenger-survey/>

²<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/migration-statistics/>

Annex 1

This Monitoring Review considered the IPS and the suitability of its use for producing official statistics. It considered concerns about the robustness of the survey statistics in relation to the different purposes for which they are used; and about whether the strengths and limitations of the statistics are currently explained sufficiently clearly when they are published. The review concluded that the IPS statistics are, in broad terms, sufficient at the level of UK aggregates in terms of overseas travel and visitor expenditure to meet a range of user needs. However, it noted that there is a consensus among users that the survey does not provide sufficient robustness to meet some important needs for more local migration data; for example, at the local authority level or for smaller areas.

The published Monitoring Review contained 7 recommendations for ONS, the Home Office, and the National Statistician to progress.

Recommendation 1	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>ONS should continue the enhancements to the presentation and commentary accompanying the migration statistics, providing a clear statement of the uncertainty around the estimates and supporting appropriate interpretation of the trends.</p>	<p>ONS has added further analysis of time series trends in Section 1 of the Nov 2013 Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR)³ and included a note on revisions to the migration component of change. This information on revisions has also been included within MSQR 'Information for Users'⁴, and a separate note⁵ covering this and the Long Term International Migration (LTIM) quality work has been published on the Population and Migration theme pages on the ONS site. A section has been added to MSQR to make clear the difference between provisional and final IPS-based and LTIM estimates. ONS added further information on non-sampling errors to the Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) and IPS nugget.</p> <p>As a result of the note on revisions and LTIM quality work, ONS published a revised net migration series.</p> <p>ONS included information describing the IPS samples in a paper released to coincide with the publication of the 2013 annual Overseas Travel and Tourism release "Travel Trends, 2013"⁶ in April 2014.</p> <p>The Statistical Products Working Group continues to work to develop approaches to expressing the uncertainty of survey based estimates. It aims to describe uncertainty prominently in statistical bulletins and a consistent approach across all ONS survey-based outputs</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>

³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/november-2013/msqr.html#tab-background-notes>

⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/international-migration-methodology/migration-statistics-quarterly-report---user-information.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/long-term-international-migration/quality-of-long-term-international-migration-estimates-from-2001-to-2011/sty-quality-of-ltim.html>

⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ott/travel-trends/2013/rpt-travel-trends--2013.html>

Recommendation 2	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>ONS should review and extend the supporting information about the quality of the IPS-based statistics, and provide a fuller and more coherent explanation of the strengths and limitations in relation to different uses of the data.</p>	<p>The IPS methodology web page⁷ has been revised to provide easier access to all IPS methodology documents. All methodology documents now sit on a single page of the ONS website to increase accessibility for users.</p> <p>ONS reviewed the links to <i>IPS QMI</i> and other IPS methodology documents and additional links were added as necessary to the release of <i>Travel Trends</i> published in April 2014. The information on methodology provided within the monthly, quarterly and annual Overseas Travel and Tourism releases was reviewed, and consistency between the releases improved. Information about the quality of the IPS in relation to use for producing balance of payments statistics was included in the IPS User Guide and a link provided from <i>Travel Trends, 2013</i> to this document. The IPS Nugget now includes key measures of IPS quality (e.g. response rates, sample size). The statistical bulletin includes links to the Nugget. Links to the Nugget have also been added to all other supporting documentation.</p> <p>Inconsistencies between the LTIM estimates and the migration component of the population estimates have been made clearer in MSQR and on the migration subject page. A comparison of the mid-year estimate components of change and the LTIM estimates is provided in the FAQs document. Further work on this area was undertaken as part of the response to Assessment Report 267⁸.</p> <p>A User Guide⁹ was published on the ONS website alongside <i>Travel Trends 2013</i> to provide additional information about the IPS for users.</p> <p>A paper outlining the imbalance issue between those arriving and those departing, research to date, and further plans¹⁰ was published on the ONS website on 7th May 2014.</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>

⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/travel-and-transport-methodology/international-passenger-survey-methodology/index.html>

⁸ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/migration-statistics/>

⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/travel-and-transport-methodology/international-passenger-survey-methodology/ips-user-guide-volume-1--background---methodology.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/travel-and-transport-methodology/international-passenger-survey-methodology/investigation-of-imbalance-in-the-ips-travel-and-tourism-sample.pdf>

Recommendation 3	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>The Statistics Authority and National Statistician should encourage other government departments to extend the range and accessibility of information about the characteristics and circumstances of migrants living in the UK.</p>	<p>ONS has worked closely with the Home Office to make good use of available data sources that provide a greater range of information of migration. DWP are members of the Migration Reporting Working Group and it has changed its publication timetable so that timely indications of Bulgarian and Romanian immigration are available. At the working level, other government departments are engaged in the aim of providing meaningful data on migration.</p> <p>COMPLETED – JULY 2014</p>

Recommendation 4	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>ONS should make further improvements to the estimation of international migration statistics, including a greater use of international migration data collected by other countries to better understand the patterns of migration to/from the UK.</p>	<p>ONS worked via Eurostat with other EU countries to compare flows data. Eurostat acknowledge that emigration data from the majority of EU countries is not of comparable quality to the UK (since people do not de-register from administrative systems when they emigrate and there are no border surveys). Definitional differences between countries' statistical systems mean that estimates are difficult to compare but there is value in examining trends between countries.</p> <p>ONS continue to work with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). ONS has also published initial research on the comparison of International Estimates of Long-term migration¹¹ in November 2014.</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>

¹¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/november-2014/rpt-international-comparisons.html>

Recommendation 5	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>ONS should provide regular updates for users on the development plans and their progress.</p>	<p>Assessment Report 267 also raised this issue. ONS has addressed this within the response to the assessment and as part of the Population Statistics strategy.</p> <p>ONS has published its latest research on the ONS Methodological research webpage¹².</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>

¹² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/population-statistics-research-unit--psru-/latest-publications-from-the-population-statistics-research-unit/index.html>

Recommendation 6	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>Home Office should keep users informed about the likely nature of its statistical outputs from the e-Borders system and the timescale for their release.</p>	<p>Plans for the use of e-borders data were included as part of a presentation at the Migration Statistics User Forum in 2013. These slides were published¹³ and circulated via mailing lists to set out the current position. Further evidence was also provided to the Public Administration Select Committee¹⁴ in 2013. At this stage there were no specific plans or milestones, pending investigations of the data quality and coverage.</p> <p>Home Office statistical outputs in relation to e-Borders were reliant on the roll-out of operational systems. The Home Office liaised with e-Borders staff through their Entry and Exit Working Group (EEWG) and this resulted in a large extract of data being provided to ONS in late 2013 (covering more than 3 years from April 2009 to October 2012), allowing ONS to analyse possible uses of e-Borders data.</p> <p>The main communications updating users have been the ONS reports that were published in June¹⁵ and November¹⁶ of 2014 – analysis of the large data extract resulted in ONS confirming in November 2014 that data from eborders (by then renamed Semaphore) were not yet able to be used as a source for migration statistics although new ‘exit checks’ to be implemented from April 2015 should improve the situation. There was also a parliamentary debate¹⁷ on Migration Statistics on 26 June 2014, initiated by PASC, at which the Immigration Minister responded to statistical questions and discussion at the Migration Statistics User Forum (MSUF) conference in September 2014.</p> <p>There have since been further annual meetings of the MSUF in 2014 and 2015 where Home Office statisticians answered user questions with respect to e-Borders (now termed Semaphore) and in 2015 on exit checks (based on Semaphore), noting specifically that exit check data will not replace IPS nor can it provide a measure of net migration. Further work continues to appraise data quality (e.g. matching rates and missing data) rather than looking at the operational side.</p>

¹³ https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/filearea.cgi?LMGT1=MIGRATION-STATS&X=5DA8154274EA717A59&Y=&a=get&f=/Presentations_from_the_17_September_2013_conference.htm

¹⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpublicadm/c1010-i/c101001.htm>.

¹⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/population-statistics-research-unit--psru-/latest-publications-from-the-population-statistics-research-unit/user-update--assessing-the-feasibility.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/population-statistics-research-unit--psru-/semaphore-research-update.doc>

¹⁷ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140626/halltext/140626h0001.htm>

	<p>Home Office introduced exit checks from 8 April 2015 to provide more information on travel movements across the UK border. Home Office statisticians are considering the use of the data collected for statistical reporting purposes, and have pre-announced¹⁸ an initial report on exit checks data to be published 26 May 2016.</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>
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¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/a-report-on-the-statistics-being-collected-under-the-exit-checks-programme>

Recommendation 7	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>ONS should investigate the feasibility of producing estimates that separate long-term migrants into those who might be regarded as 'non-permanent' (such as those planning to stay for less than five years) and 'permanent' migrants, in consultation with users.</p>	<p>ONS publish length of stay tables each November. These tables include estimates of LTIM and IPS by intended length of stay and IPS tables on actual length of stay by both citizenship and country of last/next residence. ONS referred to data on intended length of stay in the FAQs supporting the MSQR.</p> <p>In 2014 ONS consulted on country groups with the intention of aligning these to create improved coherence between HO and ONS statistics¹⁹.</p> <p>ONS also carried out a user consultation in 2014 on the MSQR that did not highlight any additional data needs in this area²⁰; therefore, ONS considers the published tables to meet current user needs.</p> <p>ONS has made more use of the 'Migrant Journey' report to provide context to the statistics. The latest migrant journey report²¹, published in February 2015, is referenced and a link provided within the MSQR²².</p> <p>COMPLETED – APRIL 2015</p>

¹⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations-and-user-surveys/consultations/country-groupings-in-international-migration-statistics/consultation-on-country-groupings-ons-response-june-2014.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/consultations/migration-reporting-consultation/consultation-on-the-reporting-of-international-migration-statistics.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/migrant-journey-fifth-report>

²² http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_396645.pdf