Summary

Australia's Statistical Information for Migrants 2015 and beyond

Future Directions for Migrant Statistics

Background

Over the last decade regular reviews have been conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in consultation with key government and non-government agencies, service providers and community organisations to determine their needs and priorities for evidence-based migrant information. The most recent, 2013-14 Migrant Statistics Data Needs Review and 2014 Data Gaps Review, provided valuable background information to inform this paper.

These future directions for migrant statistics have been formulated as a result of consultation between the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP). It is important to note that this is regarded as a dynamic document and will be reviewed annually.

Six broad policy areas have been identified:
- mobility
- settlement of migrants
- financial independence of migrants
- economic contribution of migrants
- social cohesion
- health of migrants.

Evidence-based policy making

These policy areas are informing the priorities of Migrant Statistics. The Forward Work Program of the ABS National Migrant Statistics Unit (NMSU) is funded by a collaborative partnership arrangement between ABS, DSS and DIBP. A strong focus of the work program is to provide information to maintain and develop the evidence base that will contribute to achieving two principal government outcomes: a strong economy and a prosperous and cohesive society[1] and to support Australia's migration, settlement and multicultural policies and programmes. The future directions identified encompass many different aspects of migrant statistics, some of which are aspirational. These data needs may be addressed through a variety of quantitative and qualitative statistical approaches, with an increased focus on collaborative data solutions.

Statistical solutions

The ABS is working in partnership with other agencies to explore the opportunities administrative data can provide. Through data integration the aim is to improve the quality and value of this information. Data integration has already substantially enhanced the evidence base for social and economic policy in Australia in a cost effective and efficient way without increasing the burden on the general public. Some of the identified data priorities may also be fulfilled by utilising more sophisticated statistical techniques (e.g. modelling). Through new models for utilising population and social surveys and the Census, significantly improved methods in utilising and transforming data sources to provide statistical solutions will be achieved. It is envisaged that these Future Directions for Migrant Statistics will serve as a reference point and a guide through this change to enable the NMSU to harness the opportunities that these change initiatives provide.

Collaboration through Partnerships

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[1] Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Portfolio Budget Statements 2015-16, Section 1: Entity overview and resources, Strategic Direction Statement.

The opportunities provided by increased cooperation and collaboration within the statistical community (data providers, custodians, analysts and users) will build stronger statistical capabilities and increase the pool of available migrant statistics. It is envisioned that the priorities and directions identified in this paper will continue to evolve over time and serve as a valuable basis for future discussions.

The following six broad policy areas have been identified along with their relevant priorities, priority population groups and requirements for critical spatial information.

Mobility

Understand the economic and social context of population mobility, and the drivers of migration to, from and within Australia.

- Identify key drivers and motivators of mobility (e.g. economic advancement, labour mobility, safety & security, culture or family, tourism, operation of companies)

- Understand the predominant global and local migration corridors to and from Australia, and destination regions and movement within Australia

- Improve the pool of information on mobility and the social, economic and other impacts on communities and regions

Priority Population Groups

- Recent migrants arriving in the last 10 years

- All visa applicants, including visitors and temporary entrants

- New Zealand citizens

- People holding dual or multiple citizenship

- Emigrants, and Australia's diaspora

- Second and third generation migrants

Critical spatial information

- Country and city or region of origin

- Australia, State/Territory and Capital City level analysis of initial destination

- Small area regional analysis of settlement movements within Australia up to five years after arrival

- Customised service or contract delivery areas

Settlement of migrants

Statistics relating to the successful settlement of migrants.

- Maintain and enhance information on settlement outcomes for migrants and temporary entrants to Australia, including employment, education, housing and English language proficiency

- Enhance information on visa pathways to settlement (as visitor, student, temporary entrant and permanent migrant) and how these pathways relate to settlement outcomes

Priority Population Groups

- Those migrants who enter Australia through the Migration or Humanitarian Programmes

- Recent migrants arriving in the last 10 years

- Longer term migrants (10+ years of residency)

- Temporary entrants (International students, Business Long Stay 457, Working Holiday Makers)

- Second and third generation migrants

Critical Spatial

- Small area regional analysis of settlement outcomes

- Small area regional analysis of pathways to settlement

- Customised service or contract delivery areas

Financial independence of migrants

Migrants seek to financially provide for themselves and their family in Australia but potentially also in a previous home country. The ability to successfully achieve financial independence is strongly tied to employment, education, English language proficiency and income but may also be related to migration circumstances, culture and community expectations.

Australian Government income support provides an important safety net for migrants who need financial assistance. It is important to identify any migrant groups that may be falling behind, relative to other Australians, in achieving a reasonable level of financial independence and economic wellbeing.

- Maintain and enhance information on the personal and business income levels and parity of migrants

- Maintain and enhance information on levels of employment, education and English language proficiency of migrants

- Enhance information on the patterns and level of Australian Government income support provided to migrants, particularly through improved administrative data integration

- Improve information on the income support provided by migrants to extended family or community (including those outside Australia i.e. remittances)

Priority Population Groups

- Permanent and Humanitarian migrants

- Recent migrants arriving in the last 10 years

- Longer term migrants (10+ years of residency)

- First, second and third generation migrants

Critical Spatial

- Analysis of income of migrants at the Australia, State/Territory, Capital City levels and Local Government Area levels

Economic impact of migrants

Assess the contribution that migrants make to Australia's economy.

- Enhance information on labour force participation and labour utilisation of migrants in Australia (e.g. identify the predominant industries utilising migrant labour)

- Improve information on the economic contributions of migrants, including data on personal and business income, business innovation, human capital and cultural contributions that have an economic impact

- Improve information on the economic contribution of temporary entrants

- Improve information on how their economic circumstances interact with markets operating within Australia and globally

Priority Population Groups

- Permanent and Humanitarian migrants

- Recent migrants who have arrived in the last 10 years

- Longer term migrants (10+ years of residency)

- Temporary entrants, in particular Business Long Stay 457 Visa holders

- All employed persons or business owners from diverse cultural backgrounds, including first, second and third generation migrants

Critical Spatial

- Analysis of economic indicators and labour markets at the Australia, State/Territory, Capital City and SA4 level

- Analysis of selected case study regional areas with higher migrant labour, as required (e.g. mining regions)

Understanding social cohesion and the role of family and community networks

Australian governments at all levels seek to actively support migrants to settle into the community and to encourage citizenship, social participation and social cohesion. Formal and informal family and community networks, local community services and government programs all contribute to the support and wellbeing of migrants and successful settlement outcomes. These family and community networks can have local, national and global connections.

- Improve information on the social and civic contributions of migrants, their inter-cultural family and community networks and cultural discrimination.

- Improve information on the status of community well-being, such as socio-economic disadvantage and the utilisation of social services by different subgroups.

- Maintain and enhance population based measures relevant to cultural diversity which are important to service providers (such as language, religion, ancestry and country of birth).

- Improve information on the service needs, particularly targeted to those groups with special needs (e.g. Language services) shaped by cultural factors

Priority Population Groups

- Humanitarian and Refugee migrants

- Temporary entrants

- Recent migrants arriving in the last 10 years

- Religious, ethnic and culturally diverse communities including those born in Australia

Critical Spatial

- Analysis at the Australia, State/Territory, Capital City and Local Government levels

- Customised analyses of a culturally defined regions, based on clusters of diversity characteristics
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Health of migrants

Migrants encounter a range of physical and psychological health conditions and information is needed to track and assess changes in their health and wellbeing after migration to Australia.

Cultural attitudes and prior experiences in relation to health provision along with varying levels of English proficiency provide additional challenges in this area. In particular, more vulnerable migrants may have poorer health outcomes due to social isolation and disadvantage.

- Improve the range of health data available for migrant populations of interest, and their families, particularly those likely to be most vulnerable
- Develop the potential for future data integration of administrative data (e.g. from Department of Health, Department of Human Services and Department of Social Services) to improve the depth and range of health data for migrant sub-populations

Priority population groups

- Humanitarian and Refugee migrants
- Other vulnerable migrant subgroups e.g. homeless, youth, older migrants
- Children and dependents of migrants with immediate and ongoing health issues
- Older migrants with symptoms of English language attrition as a result of dementia or Alzheimer's disease

Critical Spatial

- Analysis of service needs and access for customised service delivery regions (e.g. Aged Care Planning Regions, Health regions - service defined catchments)
- Analysis at the Australia, State/Territory, Capital City and down to SA3 levels

For further information contact the ABS National Migrant Statistics Unit migrant.statistics.unit@abs.gov.au