



Australian Government Statistical Forum

On the move: the statistical challenges posed by migration, why they are getting harder, and what might be done about it

Mark Cully, Chief Economist
Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Canberra, Tuesday, 8 November 2011



Migration: there's a lot of it!

- 215 million people were living outside their country of birth in 2010, representing 3.1% of the world's population
- In Australia, around 6 million people were born in other countries, representing 27% of the population
- Net overseas migration has averaged 176,000 per year over the past decade. If it was to average 180,000 per year – the base case assumption in IGR 3 – the foreign-born population would almost double to reach 11.4 million by 2050, a third of the total
- Total NOM flows (arrivals plus departures) were 680,000 in 2009-10
- The stock of temporary migrants resident in Australia is around 700,000
- The stock of New Zealand citizens resident in Australia is around 600,000
- The stock of Australian-born living overseas in 2005-06 was 320,000
- The stock of Australian citizens, including dual nationals, living overseas is unknown.



Conceptualising migration

The migrant

- Two-stage selection process
- Differ to native-born in culture, language
- How migrants fare (relative to native-born)
- Differences narrow over time

Population flows

- Defining population
- Where do migrants settle? Do they stay?
- Relationship with native-born flows

Migration and communities

- Labour market adjustment
- Housing & public services adjustment
- Social cohesion

Improving statistics on migrants

The migrant

- Two-stage selection process
- Differ to native-born in culture, language
- How migrants fare (relative to native-born)
- Differences narrow over time

- 👍 ABS routinely collects country of birth and time in Australia, and usually collects self-reported English proficiency, in household surveys
- 👎 Not possible to control for selection bias without (i) panel surveys and (ii) mode of entry

Future developments

- Link Settlement Database with Census over time to create longitudinal records; DIAC longitudinal survey of refugees
- Look to also incorporate personal income tax data over time (as done in Canada)

Improving statistics on population flows

Population flows

- Defining population
- Where do migrants settle? Do they stay?
- Relationship with native-born flows

- 👍 Universal visa system, border control and passenger cards, combined with Census, mean Australian resident population statistics are world's best
- 👎 Diaspora scale and attributes not well understood
- 👎 Post-entry settlement and movements only via Census. No real visibility of temporary residents

Future developments

- Work with OECD and World Bank to improve diaspora statistics, including presence of dual nationals
- Use of administrative data (Medicare, Centrelink, others??) to track population movements
- Identify temporary visa holders in Labour Force Survey

Improving statistics on migration and communities

Migration and communities

- Labour market adjustment
- Housing & public services adjustment
- Social cohesion

- 👉 Census provides five-yearly snapshot
- 👉 HILDA can be used to model dynamics of adjustment
- 👉 This area matters most to public (cf. population debate), but poorly served by national statistics

Future developments

- Construct MAP at community-level by making effective use of address records in nationally important datasets
- Improve access for researchers to make use of matched nationally important datasets at community-level