Measuring migration in the UK – Challenges and opportunities

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Our vision

To provide the best possible international migration statistics and insights.

By using the best data available, we will produce outputs that are relevant, coherent and timely.
Measuring international migration in the UK - the past

- Big flows of travellers c. 150m
  - Of which c600,000 immigrants (1 in 250 arrivals) and c300,000 emigrants (1 in 500 departures)

- The main measure used is long-term migration, using the UN definition

- Our report provided migration data quarterly based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) – an intentions-based survey about migration flows

- We publish separately measures of migration stocks, using Annual Population Survey
Measuring international migration in the UK - the present

**Administrative-based migration estimates (ABMEs)**
- Strategic solution to produce **behaviour-based** international migration estimates.
- Derive flows of migration from two periods of stocks produced using administrative data.
- Based on applying rules to imply whether someone has immigrated into or emigrated out of the UK.

**Sources**
- RAPID – dataset containing all individuals who pay tax or receive benefits (with additional nationality information linked on)
- Exit Checks – information on visa records (currently restricted to just non-EEA nationals only)

**Modelling to produce migration estimates**
- Tactical solution after IPS suspended to produce timely measures of migration during pandemic.
- State space model using admin data, designed to cope with turbulent periods
- In lack of complete data, relies on assumptions (e.g. proxying EU traveller flows with non-EU traveller behaviours)

**Sources**
- Timely information on travellers (visas, border crossing and travel data, including Civil Aviation Authority, Eurotunnel and ferries data)

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UNECE Expert Meeting on Migration Statistics
Admin Based Migration Estimates – early research

EU net migration – RAPID* > LTIM**
Greater accuracy when moving from an intentions (LTIM) to behaviour (RAPID) based approach.

Non-EU net migration – LTIM < RAPID
Exposes the challenges in coverage in RAPID, particularly here in international students.

ABMEs coverage gaps
- Visa information limited to non-EEA nationals only
- Difficult to spot UK Nationals emigration and immigration on RAPID
- Limited coverage of students and <16’s

*RAPID = Administrative dataset containing all individuals who pay tax or receive benefits (with additional nationality information linked on)
**LTIM = Long term international migration measured using IPS
Measuring international migration in the UK - the future!

Administrative-based migration estimates (ABMEs)

Modelling to produce migration estimates

ABMEs supported by statistical modelling & ABME insights

Why?
- Single set of international migration statistics for the UK.
- Bring together the strengths of each approach -

How?
- Using administrative information to reduce assumptions in model.
- Longer-term, link together data sources to address coverage gaps (less reliance on modelling)
- Using strengths of individual ABME sources to provide insight into key policy areas. (e.g. labour market shortages)
- Working with experts, being innovative, and open to new sources and methods.

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UNECE Expert Meeting on Migration Statistics
# Questions and challenges

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<td>Do we need to consider 12-month rule?</td>
<td>When and how do we revise estimates?</td>
<td>We are now more reliant on external data suppliers</td>
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<td>Census 2021, admin-based population estimates</td>
<td>Reconciling our stocks and flows measures</td>
<td>Pandemic means greater need for timely, granular and more accurate population statistics</td>
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Next steps

Late November

• Research on visa patterns, expiries and transitions – ABME insights
• Population of UK by country of birth and nationality, year to June 2021 (“stocks”)
• UK totals for immigration and emigration, year to December 2020 (“flows”) - Modelling
• Explainer on the difference between stocks and flows

Spring/Summer 2022

• UK totals for immigration and emigration, year to June 2021 (“flows”) – Modelling introducing ABME data feeds
• Impact migration has on labour market shortages (will publish sooner if data and permissions allow) – ABME insights
• Introduce revisions process for migration statistics