Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Workshop on the International Recommendations on Statistics on Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, and Statelessness

Geneva, Switzerland, 6 May 2024

Panel II: Using administrative data sources to produce official statistics on refugees, IDPs and/or stateless persons

Providing Insight on Applicants of International Protection Using Administrative Data

Note by the Central Statistics Office, Ireland*

Abstract

In Ireland, like most countries, opportunities to gather data and learn about hard-to-reach population groups is a major difficulty. The "Daily Expense Allowance" is a social benefit only paid to applicants for International Protection (IP) in Ireland.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has created an administrative data methodology underpinned by this social benefit that has, 1) identified current and past people in the IP population and 2) allowed assessment of administrative activity over time through linkage of pseudonymised personal identification keys.

This paper will start with an explanation of the administrative data infrastructure in the CSO followed by an explanation of the methodology for determining the IP population. The main results centre around the IP population and how it has changed in the period from 2016 to 2023. Statistics on the size of this population as well as a demographic breakdown will be presented. The methodology also allows the CSO to determine estimates on the number of IP persons who enter the Labour Force and obtain other social welfare payments outside of the Daily Expense Allowance. Results from this work will be highly informative to interested users, researchers, and policy makers in Ireland.

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I. Introduction

1. There is continued interest from users and experts both nationally and across Europe regarding statistics on hard-to-reach populations. At the UNECE meeting of the group of experts on migration statistic in October of 2022, the group decided that improving statistics on all hard-to-reach migrant's groups was a priority.

2. This report provides information on a methodology that has been developed to assess International Protection (IP) applicants in Ireland from 2016 to 2023. The methodology introduced is fully based on administrative data and allows labour force integration of IP applicants to be assessed.

3. An increasing number of Central Statistics Office (CSO) publications use administrative data as the primary source of information. The Life Events and Demography section produces the official Irish estimates of migrant flows as part of the Population and Migration Estimates publication. These flows are estimated using the Labour Force Survey as a primary source, exploration is ongoing to determine if administrative sources can be used to estimate these flows.

4. Part of this exploration is to assess the available flows and sources that might exist. One of the largest administrative data holdings managed by the Administrative Data Centre (ADC) in the CSO is the monthly Department of Social Protection (DSP) holding.

5. This Daily Expense Allowance (DEA) is one of over 70 social protection payments that is contained in this holding.

6. This is a payment that only International Protection applicants in Ireland are entitled to be allocated. Thus, if a link between the DEA and a person's Personal Identification Key (PIK) can be made on current and historic datasets, it will be possible to link across other Administrative Data Centre (ADC) holdings to provide a valuable longitudinal dataset.

II. Methodology

A. Daily Expense Allowance

7. This is a social welfare benefit payable to applicants for International Protection who live in or are on a waiting list to move into accommodation provided by the International Protection Accommodation Services of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DSP, 2019).

8. The table below shows a short history of the of the payment and as payment totals are available within the data holdings held be the CSO, it is possible to formulate a variable that can classify families and single persons.

Table 1
Daily Expense Allowance payment amount

	2016 – 2017	2018	2019 onwards
Per Adult	€19.10	€21.60	€38.80
Per Child	€15.60	€21.60	€29.80

B. Data Linkage

9. The CSOPPSN is a pseudonymised PIK that is used across all administrative data sources in the CSO. The CSOPPSN is unique and has a one-to-one relationship with a person.

10. As Table 1 below shows using 2016 as an example, DSP data holdings per month are filtered for only those CSOPPSNs in receipt of the DEA payment. Duplicates are then removed so that just one unique CSOPPSN per DEA recipient is kept, these are then merged with the Pay as You Earn Modernisation Database (PMOD) year-to-date (unique CSOPPSN for any PMOD activity in the year) dataset for 2019 to 2023. PMOD is a monthly database for all taxable payslips in Ireland and is used within this methodology as a flag for employment activity.

Table 2
Demonstration of the process for the isolation of the DEA population

2016	Filter		PMOD Year_to_Date				
			2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
DSP_Month1	▼ "DEA"						
DSP_Month2	▼ "DEA"						
DSP_Month3	▼ "DEA"						
DSP_Month4	▼ "DEA"	CSOPPSN →	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
⋮							
DSP_Month12	▼ "DEA"						

11. The table represents activity across PMOD, this type of matching can also be carried out for other social welfare benefits as well as across other administrative sources, such as education and health.

12. Characteristics for each CSOPPSN can also be collected including age, sex, nationality, gross pay per year, NACE code and social welfare payments. A longitudinal dataset for applicants of international protection with employment activity from 2019 to 2023 has been created and will allow for assessment of labour force integration over time with several breakdowns.

13. For those CSOPPSNs identified as recipients of the DEA payment, a one-to-one link is also available for any relationships that this person has. Two main sources for relationships have been assessed, the Corporate Register System the Child Benefit registers were manipulated to add all those persons related to the recipients of the DEA. An important variable for analysis in this report is the DEA start year where the year for the first DEA payment the IP applicant received is analysed. Only relationships at that time for the DEA recipient are assessed in this report, i.e. relationships that are formed after payments start (children from new births, new marriages etc.) are not analysed in this report.

III. Results

14. The longitudinal dataset described in section II has been analysed and results have been produced. Several different results have been obtained and are due to be disseminated

publicly using CSO publication channels in the coming months. As the results have not been publicly disseminated, this paper cannot discuss the results in detail. Instead, a description of potential results is given.

15. Characteristics for those in the DEA population in the year they began to obtain the payment can be assessed with sex, age and nationality. Labour activity can be assessed for DEA recipients and relations, assessed across sex and age.

A. DEA Population across sex and age, 2016 – 2023

16. Sex and age of the DEA population (those in receipt and relations) can be tabulated and published. Persons are aggregated in the year DEA payments began; age of the person was determined at the end of the year. Only relationships in the DEA start year are utilised, relationships that were formed in the years since the person began receipt of the DEA will not be included.

B. DEA Population across nationality, 2016 – 2023

17. The nationality of the DEA population can be tabulated and published. Actual country totals for the most common countries can be displayed and other countries are grouped by continent "Rest of Europe", "Other Africa", "Other Asia", "Other America" or "Any Country Not Listed".

18. A variety of countries have large volumes within the DEA population over time. These countries can be assessed in accordance with countries with large volumes in other available data sources including the number of applicants (IPO, 2024) and numbers within the International Protection Accommodation System (IPAS, 2024)

C. Employment Activity for the DEA Population, 2019 – 2023

19. It is interesting to explore employment activity over time for the DEA population. The population have been matched to monthly PMOD datasets to determine any employment activity in each year. Employment activity is classified as any instance of gross pay on PMOD. Only those aged 15 or older at the end of the PMOD reference year were considered for employment activity.

20. Frequencies and percentages for employment activity for the PMOD reference years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 will be determined for the DEA population from 2016 to 2023. This information can be used to assess the integration of the DEA population into the Irish labour force.

21. Trends over time will be assessed for the full DEA population, differences across sex (male and female) and age will also be examined and illustrated. Three age groups are assessed as part of this work, those aged 15-24 years, 25-44 years and 45 years and above.

IV. Conclusion

22. The results based on this novel methodology introduce a new source of information on the International Protection population in Ireland over the previous 10 years. This first series of results will be added to over time as data is collected by the CSO.

23. In scope with the current methodology described in this report is a description of the DEA population and an analysis of the labour market integration of this group based on sex and age. Future statistics will allow this time series to continue as well as addition statistics and analyses.

24. A similar type of analysis will allow other social welfare payments to be assessed for this group to determine activity (outside of employment activity) retrospectively and into the future.

25. The level of employment activity will be assessed – the number of weeks of employment and average gross pay can be assessed.

26. The DEA population can be linked to the Census of Population file to determine interesting cross-sectional information such as religion, ethnicity, country of birth and language(s) spoken.

27. Finally (but not exhaustively) relations outside of those who were relations in the first year of DEA activity will be linked to the DEA population and analysed.

28. The methodology presented allows an alternative source of information on the people who enter the Irish International Protection system. Government Ministries already publish information on applicants and accommodation and the new CSO source can be used in conjunction with existing sources to glean extra information about International Protection.

29. This new CSO product will provide extra insight on this hard-to-reach and will be an excellent data source for users and policy makers into the future and retrospectively. These results will be useful to users of migration statistics and particularly in the area of integration of migrants into the labour force. This is an extensive area of research in an Irish context and the retrospective longitudinal dataset that has been created will be invaluable for users, government officials, policy makers and researchers.

References

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