



N.i.D.S.

NATIONAL INCOME DYNAMICS STUDY

Migration: Analysis of the NIDS Wave 1 Dataset

Discussion Paper No. 1

Dorrit Posel
School of Development Studies, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
posel@ukzn.ac.za

July 2009

1. Introduction

This paper investigates measures of migration captured in the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), and it compares these measures, and how information is collected, with other household surveys conducted in South Africa. The paper is divided into five sections. The first section describes households with non-resident (or absent) household members. A key reason why individuals may be absent from a household for much of the year is because they are migrant workers. The second section therefore looks specifically at households which report migrant workers as absent household members. Section three describes inter-household transfers received by households, and it considers the relationship between households that report transfers and households that report migrant workers. The fourth section investigates migration more generally as the movement of people across space and the change in an individual's place of residence. The last section summarises the main similarities and differences between NIDS and other household surveys in South Africa.

2. Households with absent members

Households in South Africa are more complex formations than households typically found in developed countries. In particular, individuals can be members of more than one household, and they may be part of a household even if they are not resident in that household for much of the year.

Most national household surveys in South Africa do not identify, and therefore collect information on, all absent household members. Rather, these household surveys impose a “strict” residency requirement in defining household membership. For example, the household surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (such as the October Household Surveys (OHS), the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and the General Household Surveys (GHS)), collect information only on household members who are usually resident in the household for at least four nights of the week.

The one exception is the 1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD). Here individuals can be identified as household members even if they had resided in the household for only fifteen days of the previous year. This definition of the household, which recognises fluidity in household composition, has been adopted also in NIDS.

The data presented in this section compare the extent of “absent” household membership in South Africa, captured in the PSLSD and in NIDS. Absent household members are individuals who are reported as household members but who

- do not usually reside at least four nights of the week in the household; or
- are absent from the household for at least a month a year to work or to look for work, or because they are in prison or in school; or
- are away from the household for more than three months of the year for other reasons.¹

¹ A relatively consistent definition of absent household members is applied to both NIDS and the PSLSD. One small difference is that the PSLSD asks whether individuals have been resident in the household for the last 15 days out of 30 days; whereas NIDS asks whether individuals “usually reside

Table 1 describes measures of households with absent adult members across NIDS and the PSLSD. The data suggest that from 1993 to 2008, there has been a significant fall in the percentage of households who report non-resident household members, from approximately 24 percent of households in 1993 to 18 percent in 2008. However, both surveys identify comparable patterns in absence across households: African² households are more likely than other households to report absent household members; and African households in rural areas are the most likely to contain non-resident members. In 1993 and 2008, 39 percent and thirty percent respectively of African households in rural areas reported at least one adult as a non-resident member of the household.

Table 2 summarises why adults are absent from the household. The question on reasons for absence is almost identical across the two surveys, except that the PSLSD includes an option for “national service”. For comparability purposes, national service has been included under “other” reasons in the table.

In both surveys, the majority of household members are identified as absent for employment reasons. However, the proportion of adults absent from the household because of employment falls considerably from 1993 to 2008 (from 0.77 to 0.59). A larger proportion of adults are reported as absent for education reasons (0.13 in 2008 compared to 0.10 in 1993); and there is a dramatic increase in the proportion of adults who are reported as household members but who are identified as “living elsewhere” (from 0.02 to 0.17).

Individuals who are absent from the household because they are working or looking for work typically are referred to as migrant workers in South Africa. One possible explanation for why migrant workers form a smaller share of all absent household members in 2008 (and more generally why the proportion of households with absent members has fallen) may be that migrant workers are settling at places of employment. In this case, they could

here at least four nights a week”. The question on residency in NIDS is consistent with the definition of residency adopted in the household surveys conducted by StatsSA.

² Information on race is not collected in the household roster questionnaire in NIDS. To identify the race of a household, I mapped race information collected in the adult questionnaire onto all households. There are a small number of mixed race households. In the estimates provided here, a household is identified as an “African” household if it contained at least one resident African adult member.

either be reported as absent household members but the reason for absence is given as “living elsewhere”, or they are not retaining membership in their household of origin. The next section explores trends in labour migration further.

Table 1: Households with absent adult members, 1993 and 2008

Households with absent adult member(s)	PSLSD 1993	NIDS 2008
	<u>Unweighted</u>	
Number:		
All households	2 189	1 595
African households	1 917	1 412
African rural households	1 654	1 042
Proportion:		
All households	0.25 (0.00)	0.22 (0.00)
African households	0.29 (0.01)	0.25 (0.01)
African rural households	0.39 (0.01)	0.33 (0.01)
	<u>Weighted</u>	
Number:		
All households	2 015 009 (37623)	2 478 440 (91993)
African households	1 731 385 (33333)	2 105 152 (72392)
African rural households	1 488 519 (28605)	1 326 908 (48217)
Proportion:		
All households	0.24 (0.00)	0.18 (0.01)
African households	0.28 (0.01)	0.20 (0.01)
African rural households	0.39 (0.01)	0.30 (0.01)

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Adults are all individuals older than 15 years. Where age information is missing, adults are identified as all individuals who are married, widowed or divorced, or who have completed at least a grade 11 education. Rural in NIDS comprises tribal areas, and rural formal and informal areas.

Table 2: Reasons for absence among adults, 1993 and 2008

Proportion of adults absent because of:	PSLSD 1993	NIDS 2008
Employment reasons (work/look for work)	0.765 (0.007)	0.590 (0.015)
Education	0.097 (0.005)	0.132 (0.010)
Personal reasons	0.077 (0.005)	0.073 (0.008)
Business reasons	0.004 (0.001)	0.005 (0.002)
Prison	0.002 (0.001)	0.012 (0.003)
Hospital	0.011 (0.002)	0.008 (0.003)
Living elsewhere	0.021 (0.002)	0.174 (0.012)
Violence/political problems	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)
Other	0.015 (0.002)	0.004 (0.001)
	1.000	1.000

Notes: The data are weighted. Standard errors are in parentheses. Personal reasons include visiting spouse, family or friends and away on vacation.

3. Labour migration

One of the distinguishing characteristics of apartheid South Africa was the ways in which restrictions on settlement and employment divided families across space. These formal restrictions were removed twenty years ago, but available data suggest that individuals continue to migrate “temporarily” to places of employment, retaining membership in their household of origin.

Although most national household surveys in South Africa do not collection information on all non-resident household members, some surveys have included a separate module on migrant workers specifically.³ Migrant workers typically are identified in these surveys as individuals who are regarded as members of the household but who are away for at least a month of the year to work or to look for work. In NIDS (and in the PSLSD), migrant workers can be defined similarly through the household roster questionnaire, as individuals who are members of the household but who are absent for a month or more in the year for employment reasons. This section compares measures of labour migration estimated in NIDS with measures derived from other household surveys in South Africa.

Table 3 describes an increase in the number of households reporting migrant workers from 1993 to 2002, with the extent of labour migration then remaining relatively unchanged to 2005, but falling substantially in 2008. In 2005, approximately two million households (or about 16 percent of all households) reported migrant workers as household members; by 2008, this had fallen to approximately 1.5 million households (or 11 percent of all households).

³ These surveys include the OHSs (1996 – 1999) and the September LFSs (2002 – 2005).

Table 3: The extent of temporary labour migration across households, 1993-2008

Households with migrant worker(s)	PSLSD 1993	OHS 1999	LFS 2002	LFS 2004	LFS 2005	NIDS 2008
Number:						
All households	1 604 104 (34 394)	1 780 779 (27 644)	2 059 737 (32 460)	2 033 005 (33 618)	1 993 015 (32 653)	1 495 134 (71 656)
African households	1 443 232 (31 423)	1 722 400 (26 700)	1 980 792 (31 247)	1 983 709 (32 768)	1 929 645 (31 655)	1 331 161 (57 295)
African rural households	1 295 763 (27 812)	1 418 364 (25 030)	1 636 161 (26 759)	1 593 535 (28 084)	1 529 584 (26 546)	960 452 (43 215)
Percentage:						
All households	18.8 (0.41)	16.6 (0.25)	17.3 (0.26)	16.2 (0.27)	15.7 (0.26)	10.9 (0.52)
African households	23.7 (0.52)	21.6 (0.33)	22.1 (0.35)	20.5 (0.34)	19.7 (0.33)	12.6 (0.55)
Rural African households	33.8 (0.73)	35.8 (0.54)	36.9 (0.58)	36.9 (0.59)	36.0 (0.59)	21.8 (0.96)

Notes: All data in the table are weighted. Migrants are aged 15 years and older. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The decline in measures of labour migration in NIDS coincides with an increase in the proportion of absent household members whose reason for absence is reported as “living elsewhere”. However, even if all these absent household members are recoded as labour migrants, estimates of labour migration would remain significantly lower in NIDS than in the other household surveys: 16 percent of all African households, and 25 percent of rural African households, would be identified as containing labour migrant members in 2008.

Although there are large differences in measures of labour migration in NIDS, patterns of labour migration are consistent with the surveys. The vast majority of households which report migrant workers are African households, and the extent of labour migration is highest from African households located in rural areas.

Table 4 compares the characteristics of African migrant workers over the years. In those OHSs and LFSs where a separate module on migrant workers is introduced in the survey questionnaire, only a limited number of questions are asked about migrant workers. In the OHSs, for example, no questions on the education of migrant workers are included, and in the LFSs, information on the age of migrants is not collected. A distinguishing feature of NIDS is that the same basic demographic information is collected on all household members, whether resident or absent.

Across all the surveys, the characteristics of labour migrants are largely consistent. The majority of labour migrants are male although there is some suggestion that women form a growing share of labour migrants. Since 1993, labour migrants also appear to have more education, with a jump particularly from 1993 to 2002, and then from 2005 to 2008, in the proportion of labour migrants reported as holding at least a matric education.

Table 4: Characteristics of African migrant workers (15 years and older)

	PSLSD 1993	OHS 1999	LFS 2002	LFS 2004	LFS 2005	NIDS 2008
Female	0.29 (0.01)	0.34 (0.01)	0.37 (0.01)	0.36 (0.01)	0.36 (0.01)	0.37 (0.02)
Age	34.80 (0.26)	36.58 (0.14)	--	--	--	35.23 (0.43)
Years of schooling	6.83 (0.09)	--	8.23 (0.05)	8.47 (0.04)	8.52 (0.04)	9.11 (0.14)
At least a matric (Grade 12)	0.17 (0.01)	--	0.29 (0.01)	0.31 (0.01)	0.31 (0.01)	0.35 (0.02)
Married	--	--	0.37 (0.01)	0.34 (0.01)	0.32 (0.01)	0.35 (0.02)
(unweighted sample)	2 557	5 746	6 862	7 998	7 931	1 205

Notes: The data are weighted for 1993 and 2008, but they are not weighted for the intervening years. Standard errors are in parentheses. Married includes living together.

4. Remittances

Many households in South Africa rely not only on income generated by resident household members, but also on inter-household transfers of income. An important type of transfer is remittance income, sent by migrant workers to (members of) their household of origin.

In most surveys where it is possible to identify migrant workers, information is also collected on the value of remittances received from these migrants. However, there are fundamental differences across the surveys in how questions on remittance transfers are included in the instrument. In the OHSs and the LFSs, questions on remittance receipt are tied to questions on migrant workers. Only those households with migrant workers can report on income transfers received. In NIDS and the PSLSD, in contrast, questions on remittances, and inter-household transfers more generally, are asked in a different part of the questionnaire. Consequently, information is collected not only on income transfers received from migrant workers, but also on contributions received from other individuals, including absent household members who are not identified as migrant workers, and individuals who are not household members (for example in the case of child maintenance payments).

In this section, I first compare information collected in NIDS and in the PSLSD on all income transfers received in households, and I then look specifically at estimates of remittances in migrant households, comparing NIDS also with the 1999 OHS and selected LFSs.

Table 5 provides measures of households which report positive values for income (cash or in-kind) transfers received from individuals who are not resident household members, and the average monthly household value of these contributions⁴ in 1993 and 2008. The data describe a large fall in the proportion of all households receiving income transfers in 2008. In 1993, approximately 23 percent (24 percent unweighted) of all households reported positive income transfers from “absent members of the household or from any other person”. In 2008, this had fallen to 15 percent (16 percent unweighted).

⁴ The monthly value of income transfers is calculated as the monthly average of total annual transfers received by the household, in both cash and in-kind.

Table 5. Income transfers received and migrant households, 1993 and 2008

	PSLSD 1993	NIDS 2008
		<u>Unweighted</u>
Number of households receiving contributions	2 115	1 186
Proportion of households receiving transfers	0.24 (0.01)	0.16 (0.00)
Average household monthly nominal value of transfers (Rands)	255.05 (5.68)	552.32 (32.11)
Average household monthly real value of transfers (Rands, 2000 prices)	416.75 (9.28)	345.20 (20.07)
Number of households receiving transfers which are also migrant households	1 304	287
Proportion of households receiving transfers which are also migrant households	0.62 (0.01)	0.24 (0.01)
		<u>Weighted</u>
Number of households receiving transfers	1 932 640 (36845)	2 112 171 (92265)
Proportion of households receiving transfers	0.23 (0.00)	0.15 (0.01)
Average household monthly nominal value of transfers (Rands)	256.94 (5.87)	740.21 (83.91)
Average household monthly real value of transfers (Rands, 2000 prices)	419.83 (9.59)	462.63 (52.44)
Number of households receiving transfers which are also migrant households	1 170 754 (20 170)	422 316 (32 602)
Proportion of households receiving transfers which are also migrant households	0.61 (0.01)	0.28 (0.02)

Notes: A household is identified as receiving transfers only if positive income values for transfers are reported. Reported remittance values are conditional on remittances being received. Standard errors are in parentheses. Nominal income has been converted to real income using the CPI index published by Statistics South Africa.

The NIDS data are distinctive also because they describe a large mismatch between households that report positive income transfers and households that report migrant workers. Only 28 percent (or 24 percent unweighted) of all households receiving income contributions are identified as migrant households in NIDS. In surveys where remittance questions are tied to migrant questions, this kind of mismatch is not possible. However, the PSLSD adopted the same approach to collecting information on income transfers as NIDS, and here the relationship between households that receive transfers and migrant households is far stronger: in 1993, approximately 61 percent of all households receiving income transfers are also households that report migrant workers.

Table 6: Remittances received in African migrant households

	PSLSD 1993	OHS 1999	LFS 2002	LFS 2004	LFS 2005	NIDS 2008
All African migrant households						
Percentage of migrant households receiving remittances	78.24 (1.04)	85.12 (0.62)	76.99 (0.71)	76.15 (0.77)	76.38 (0.74)	31.00 (2.14)
Average monthly nominal value of total remittances received by the household (Rands)	279.21 (6.73)	--	344.08 (7.43)	479.90 (13.50)	508.18 (22.77)	561.01 (51.44)
Average monthly real value of total remittances received by the household (Rands, 2000 prices)	456.23 (11.00)	--	298.17 (6.43)	387.64 (11.22)	397.01 (17.79)	350.63 (32.15)
Rural African migrant households						
Percentage of migrant households receiving remittances	79.10 (1.08)	85.39 (0.69)	77.15 (0.79)	74.61 (0.89)	75.33 (0.83)	30.84 (2.18)
Average monthly nominal value of total remittances received by the household (Rands)	251.10 (5.87)	--	340.53 (8.05)	452.29 (11.91)	445.89 (11.35)	585.15 (45.02)
Average monthly real value of total remittances received by the household (Rands, 2000 prices)	458.43 (11.57)	--	295.09 (6.97)	365.34 (9.62)	348.35 (8.87)	365.72 (28.14)

Notes: Remittance values are conditional on remittances being received in migrant households. The data are weighted. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 6 explores further the extent of remittance receipt in African migrant households specifically, looking also at other household surveys conducted between 1993 and 2008. Until 2005 (the last year of the LFS for which remittance data are available), the majority of African migrant households reported positive values for remittance income; however, estimates of remittance receipt from the NIDS data differ sharply. From 2002 to 2005, the percentage of migrant households receiving remittances remained stable at about 76 percent; but in 2008, only 31 percent of migrant households reported non-zero remittance income. A far smaller share of migrant households therefore is identified as receiving remittances in 2008, in comparison to the other years, (although differences in the monthly household value of these remittances, conditional on positive remittances, are less marked).

A possible explanation for why remittance receipt in migrant households is so low in NIDS (and for why there is such a large mismatch between income transfers and migrant households more generally), may concern the surveying process itself. Individuals who were identified as contributors to the household in the adult questionnaire (Section F2) may not have been consistently matched back to the household roster drawn up from the household questionnaire. It is also possible that migrant workers have been underreported in the household questionnaire.

Table 7 considers the implications of these possibilities, by reclassifying all African households that receive income transfers as migrant households. With this reclassification, the proportion of African households that contain “migrant workers” increases to about 25 percent, comparable with estimates across the earlier years (presented in Table 3). The percentage of “migrant households” receiving remittances obviously also increases considerably. Nonetheless, only 66 percent of redefined migrant households would be identified as receiving remittance transfers, a measure which remains significantly lower than remittance receipt reported in migrant households in earlier years. The NIDS data therefore suggest a decline in the proportion of households receiving inter-household transfers, and a large fall specifically in the extent of remittance receipt among migrant households.

Table 7: Reclassifying African migrant households, NIDS 2008

	Percentage of households with migrants	Percentage of migrant households receiving remittances
All households receiving contributions reclassified as migrant households	25.47 (0.80)	65.87 (1.58)

Notes: The data are weighted. Standard errors are in parentheses. Households are reclassified as migrant households if they reported receiving income transfers.

5. General migration

Migration, at the broadest level, involves the movement of individuals across space and a change in an individual's place of residence. Only a few of the nationally representative household surveys in South Africa have collected information on general migration, and of those which have, questions have been asked typically about migration that occurred in the five years preceding the survey.

The approach in NIDS is different: individuals are first asked in what year they moved into the “place/town/city” where they are currently residing, and then they are asked where they had been living both in 2006 and in 1994. It is therefore possible to construct a more detailed migration history using NIDS than could be generated with other household survey data. However, for reasons of comparability with other surveys, I have restricted the description of general migration to a change in the place of residence (across at least a district council) over the five years prior to the survey.⁵

Table 8 describes general migration among adults using the September 2004 and 2005 LFSs, and NIDS. Although the extent of labour migration declined considerably from the LFSs to NIDS (Table 3), a similar trend is not evident for general migration. Rather, there is some suggestion that general migration increased in 2008 (particularly relative to 2005).

⁵ In NIDS, I used only question B10 (in what year the individual moved to this place) to generate a general migrant.

Table 8: General migration among adults

Migrated in the last 5 years	LFS 2004	LFS 2005	NIDS 2008
		<u>Unweighted</u>	
Number of adults	10 905	7 295	2 219
Proportion of adults	0.15 (0.00)	0.10 (0.00)	0.13 (0.00)
		<u>Weighted</u>	
Number of adults	5 613 542 (77712)	4 014 210 (64740)	5 772 631 (181667)
Proportion of adults	0.18 (0.00)	0.13 (0.00)	0.19 (0.01)

Notes: Individual data in NIDS are weighted using household weights. Standard errors are in parentheses. Adults are all individuals older than 15 years. Where age information is missing, adults are identified as all individuals who are married, widowed or divorced, or who have completed at least a grade 11 education.

The profile of general migrants is also largely comparable in the unweighted samples for the September 2004 LFS and NIDS. Table 9 shows that in comparison to non-migrants, migrants are more likely to be white, married, more educated and younger. In comparison to migrants in 2004, individuals identified as migrants in 2008 are more educated, more likely to be female and less likely to be married than in 2004, changes which seem plausible.

Finally, Table 10 describes the provinces into which, or within which, general migration occurred. In 2004 the provinces with the largest (unweighted) share of adults who were identified as migrants are the Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga, where approximately twenty percent of adults living in each of these provinces reported that they had moved place over the previous five years. In 2008, migration rates increased particularly in Gauteng, where approximately 28 percent of all adults reported moving into their current place within the last five years, and to a far smaller extent in Limpopo.

Table 9. Characteristics of adult migrants and non-migrants

	LFS 2004		NIDS 2008	
	Migrants	Non-Migrants	Migrants	Non-Migrants
Female	0.53 (0.01)	0.55 (0.00)	0.57 (0.01)	0.59 (0.01)
African	0.70 (0.00)	0.77 (0.00)	0.73 (0.01)	0.77 (0.00)
Coloured	0.13 (0.00)	0.14 (0.00)	0.10 (0.01)	0.16 (0.00)
Indian	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)
White	0.16 (0.01)	0.07 (0.00)	0.14 (0.01)	0.05 (0.00)
Married	0.48 (0.00)	0.37 (0.00)	0.45 (0.01)	0.34 (0.00)
At least a matric	0.25 (0.00)	0.16 (0.00)	0.39 (0.01)	0.23 (0.00)
Years of schooling	9.21 (0.04)	7.77 (0.02)	10.08 (0.06)	8.95 (0.03)
Age	33.34 (0.13)	37.16 (0.07)	31.66 (0.28)	35.25 (0.16)

Notes: The data are not weighted. Standard errors are in parentheses. Adults are all individuals older than 15 years. Where age information is missing, adults are identified as all individuals who are married, widowed or divorced, or who have completed at least a grade 11 education. Migrants are individuals whose place of residence changed over the five years prior to the survey.

Table 10. Province of residence

	LFS 2004		NIDS 2008	
	Distribution of migrants by province	Percentage of all adults who are migrants	Distribution of migrants by province	Percentage of all adults who are migrants
Western Cape	15.46	20.28	17.98	18.06
Eastern Cape	12.54	14.17	6.58	6.93
Northern Cape	4.95	11.25	5.27	10.17
Free State	7.95	15.89	5.90	12.40
KwaZulu-Natal	18.10	10.49	18.34	9.77
North West	10.19	17.22	9.64	15.07
Gauteng	14.25	19.69	21.63	27.51
Mpumalanga	10.71	21.90	7.17	13.54
Limpopo	5.85	9.14	7.48	10.62
Total	100.0		100.0	

Notes: The data are not weighted. Adults are all individuals older than 15 years. Migrants are individuals whose place of residence changed over the five years prior to the survey.

6. Conclusion

NIDS includes a more comprehensive set of questions on migration and related information than most other nationally representative household surveys in South Africa. The approach to identifying household membership, labour migration and inter-household transfers closely resembles that adopted in the 1993 PSLSD. In contrast to the surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa, individuals can be included as household members even if they are not resident in the household for much of the year, and information is collected on all inter-household transfers, and not only on remittances received from migrant workers.

Although the survey questions on household membership, migration and inter-household transfers are largely comparable, this paper has highlighted a number of differences between estimates generated in NIDS and in the PSLSD. In particular, in NIDS a far smaller proportion of households reports non-resident household members; there is a significant decline also in the proportion of household members who are identified as being absent for employment reasons (migrant workers); a smaller share of households reports receiving income transfers from individuals who are not resident household members; and there is a substantially weaker relationship between the receipt of transfers and households with migrant workers. In comparison to the other household surveys described in the paper (the 1999 OHS and the September rounds of the LFSs from 2002 to 2005), estimates of labour migration, and remittance receipt are also considerably lower in NIDS.

There are also a number of similarities between the NIDS data and other household survey data. Although levels of absence, labour migration and remittance receipt differ markedly in NIDS, the demographic profile of labour migrants and migrants more generally, the value of remittances (conditional upon receipt), and the extent of general migration are largely consistent or follow consistent trends across the surveys.

If the NIDS data are identifying real changes, then the survey suggests that a far larger share of individuals migrating for employment reasons are settling in destination areas and ties between migrants and their households of origin are weakening (quite dramatically).