Reference No. 143

Summarising: Taylor & Kinfu (2006), *Differentials and determinants of Indigenous population mobility*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990-2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Differentials and determinants of Indigenous population mobility

Research Publication:
CAEPR Research Monograph No. 26 2006

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor and Y. Kinfu

Time period:
2002

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
A statistical analysis of the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

Aims:
The purpose of this paper is to examine the determinants of spatial mobility among Indigenous Australians.

Selected findings and insights:
Overall 31% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over indicated that they had moved to live in another dwelling/house/place in the previous 12 months. Of these one-quarter had moved more than once over the previous 12 months.

- Mobility peaked among young adults aged 20–24 years and decreased thereafter.
- There was little difference across States in terms of mobility, except for Tasmania and the Northern Territory, where mobility tended to be less, although in the latter instance this could have resulted from measurement difficulties associated with very remote communities in the Northern Territory.
- Mobility was greatest among those residing in inner regional areas (and to a lesser extent capital cities), compared to outer regional, remote and very remote areas.

The major factors associated with Indigenous mobility recorded in the 2002 NATSISS were:

- Labour force status, with greatest mobility among the unemployed, followed by those not in the labour force and then those in employment. Among the employed, mobility was more frequent among the CDEP employed and those employed in the private sector compared to those employed in the mainstream public sector;
- Level of educational attainment, with increased mobility related to higher levels of secondary educational completion;
• **Housing tenure** was also a key influence upon mobility, with those in private tenancy dwellings more likely to move than those in community dwellings or those owning their own home; and

• Those living in **neighbourhoods with perceived social problems** were much less likely to move residence than those living in other neighbourhoods, possibly due to lack of residential choice or to extended family commitments.

The **main reasons** for moving residence were largely due to **family** and **housing** reasons, 38% and 33% respectively. Among the family reasons the most commonly mentioned was a desire to be close to family and friends, which is consistent with case studies of Indigenous mobility that stress the importance of kin location in shaping the frequency and pattern of mobility. In contrast, only 11% cited employment as their main reason for moving residence.

Note that the paper raises **possible error** in gathering information about the frequency of mobility in the 2002 NATSISS and suggests that it may well be an under-estimation if it is interpreted as meaning any mobility.

• The NATSISS data are inconsistent with fieldwork undertaken in remote areas, which show a higher degree of mobility than recorded by NATSISS.

• The data also appear inconsistent in terms of the lower reported frequency of accessing services such as medical, banking and educational services as the main reason for moving compared with evidence gained from case studies.

The paper therefore highlights the difficulties of 'measuring' Indigenous mobility for service delivery planning purposes. Rather it appears social, economic and other aspects of Indigenous life often act together to influence Indigenous mobility.

**Educational implications:**

By highlighting the substantial degree of Indigenous mobility, even if it appears to be an underestimate, this paper focuses upon an issue faced by those schools which enrol a significant number of Indigenous students. Planning for adequate staffing, resources and classroom facilities to cater for a mobile student population requires a more flexible approach than is usually the case for non-Indigenous students, especially when (from other CAEPR research evidence) Indigenous mobility is directed towards particular localities and therefore has a significant impact upon specific schools, rather than being spread more generally. Furthermore, there are curriculum and student record transfer considerations which need to be addressed by the receiving school, especially in regard to those students with low levels of basic skills or other learning difficulties.

**Relevance:**

*Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia*

*Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships*

Complexity and diversity of communities

**Related papers:**
