



## SUMMARY

**A**t the behest of the Dutch Scientific Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice and Security, the research and consulting firm Breuer&Intraval conducted a preliminary study of the available data and methods for estimating the number of illegals in the Netherlands. The purpose of this preliminary study is to assess the practical suitability, usefulness, and availability of supplementary data and methods for conducting an estimation of illegals.

The capture-recapture method was used in previous estimations of the number of aliens living illegally in the Netherlands. This method is based on one registration. For that registration, use was made of detention of illegals by the police for working illegally, for example, or for committing crimes. Just like many other methods for estimating the size of hidden populations, this method has some limitations, vulnerabilities, and uncertainties. Illegals who, because of their behaviour, are hardly in danger of being detained, are not found in this registration and cannot be taken into account if an estimation of illegals in the country is based exclusively on detention by the police. On the basis of the results of the preliminary study, the client wishes to have a study done of supplementary methods for estimation that will improve the estimation of illegals.

### Design of the study

The study is divided into two parts. In the first part, the focus lies on making an inventory of the available methods of estimation, and in the second part we concentrate on mapping the potential data sources. The results of both parts are examined in conjunction in order to arrive at an overview of the most promising methods of estimation if the suitability, usefulness, and accessibility of the potential data sources are taken into account.

### Useful Methods

The study shows that the multiplier method is the most promising method to validate an estimation of illegals done with the capture-recapture method. This is a method that is relatively easy to implement and does not need to meet very strict criteria. The data sources used should be representative of the population to be estimated, and the available data should also be able to be validated.

In addition to the multiplier method, variants of the capture-recapture method seem to be promising in conducting an estimation of the number of illegals in the Netherlands. A variant in which an estimation is made based on two or more registrations proves – based on the availability of data sources for this method – to be the most promising. There are some potential data sources available for this.

An important focus with the available data sources are the premises that must be met. In particular, the premises of a perfect link between personal data and the independence that exists among the registrations appear to be contravened. Thus, a capture-recapture estimation based on three or more registrations is preferred; the premise of complete independence in that case is no longer necessary because it can be corrected statistically in that instance.

Illegals can also be estimated using variants of the social network approach. A sticking point in this method are the relatively high costs. Networks of illegals should be taken into account when applying the method; this requires extensive field work among illegals. There are also uncertainties



about the validity and reliability of the results of this method. Therefore, this approach does not seem the most suitable method to validate estimations of illegals.

In addition, we looked at the possibility of a theory-guided method. This is, however, a complex and labour-intensive estimation method. Moreover, it is unclear if the results of various estimations of categories can help group illegals together into one complete estimation.

### **Useful sources**

Data about illegal immigrants are available from various agencies and aid organisations. This concerns, among other things, the SZW Inspectorate (Social Affairs and Employment) on work by illegal aliens, from DUO (Student Financing) on school-age minors, from IOM Netherlands on illegal aliens who wanted to return but were not successful, and aid organisations like Doctors of the World, ASKV Refugee Support and Medisch Opvangproject Ongedocumenteerden (Medical Care Project for Undocumented Aliens) that are primarily active in some large cities in the northern part of the country. The number of illegals with whom they have contact per year is relatively limited per organisation, but, added together, this amounted in 2016 to more than 3,000 people, which is an attractive number for applying the capture-recapture method.

The CAK (Central Administration Office) has statements of expense from health care providers on data on uninsurable individuals. Here it concerns primarily illegal aliens. Those whose application is still being processed by the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) or have submitted an objection or appeal and are not, de facto, in the Netherlands illegally but do not qualify for health insurance, can be filtered out via a comparison of files from the CAK and the IND so that what is left is a data file of uninsurable illegal aliens.

The data file from the CAK records initials, gender, year of birth, and nationality of uninsurable aliens. There are statements of expense covering individuals from young to old, both men and women in equal numbers, people from a great number of countries and all GGD (Municipal Health Service) regions in the Netherlands. The uninsurable aliens who have received care are expected to constitute a good cross section of the illegals in the Netherlands. A primary identifier is missing in the data source, such as a BSN (Citizen Service Number) or a name and birth date. By combining secondary identifiers (initials, gender, year of birth, nationality, and region of residence), it is possible to make a link to other data sources.

### **Supplementary Estimations**

To be able to use triangulation with the existing capture-recapture estimation on the basis of detentions by the police, for estimating illegals in the Netherlands, we recommend that supplementary estimations be carried out, in which use is made of the following methods and data sources:

- The multiplier method with the CAK data file on statements of expense of uninsurable and illegal aliens by health care providers;
- The capture-recapture method with data sources from CAK, the SZW Inspectorate of Social Affairs and Employment and aid organisations.