

**August 2008 CPS Migration Supplement: A Preliminary Look
at the Citizenship and Year of Entry Sections**

PAA Abstract

U.S. Census Bureau

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Short Abstract

In August of 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau sponsored a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) that included an updated question on citizenship and additional questions on year of entry, not included in the basic CPS questionnaire. The goals of the CPS Migration Supplement, particularly the Citizenship and Year of Entry sections, were to determine the current citizenship status of individuals who may have naturalized while participating in the survey and to examine the variability of responses to the year of entry (YOE) question within a household over time, to examine the quality of the current measure of year of entry, and to create and assess various measures of time spent in the United States.

The poster will show some preliminary results from both sections and will focus primarily on issues of data quality from the year of entry section, for example item non-response and the consistency of reporting.

Extended Abstract

I. Introduction

Does naturalization during the survey have an impact on citizenship categories? Can we derive naturalization rates by looking at those who have naturalized during the survey? What are the characteristics of those who recently naturalized? Does the year of entry question vary within a household over time? What do these measures of time spent in the United States tell us about the quality of the data generated from the existing questions on year of entry? How do these different estimates influence what we conclude about time in the United States and economic attainment/assimilation/ adaptation?

The U.S. Census Bureau sponsored a new migration supplement to the Current Population Survey basic (BCPS) monthly questionnaire in August of 2008 that attempts to answer these and other research questions. The aim of the CPS Migration Supplement (SUP) was not only to aid us in our mission of understanding the foreign-born population in the United States generally, but also to increase the Census Bureau's analytical capabilities in providing the most accurate and reliable data on the foreign born. Through the information gathered from the additional questions, the Census Bureau will address five specific areas: 1) citizenship status and rates of naturalization, 2) year of entry and total time spent in the United States, 3) residence one year ago, 4) emigration, and 5) remittances/monetary transfers.

The CPS Migration Supplement's comprehensive set of questions does not duplicate any other single information collection. As part of the federal government's effort to collect data and provide timely information on migration for policy planning, the main citizenship question and year of entry questions have been collected annually on the CPS Basic questionnaire (BCPS) since 1994. The Migration Supplement to the CPS provides some basic data on contemporary migration dynamics and population change that is necessary for tracking historical trends. This supplement will be instrumental for understanding the prevalence and nature of changing migration patterns, which is necessary as background for maintaining high data quality, utility, relevance of data, and for policy planning and support. When combined with basic CPS (BCPS) -collected characteristics, such as citizenship, place of birth, parental

nativity, income, and household relationship, the data can provide information on the social and economic adaptation of and the potential needs of the foreign-born population over time in the United States. The CPS August 2008 Migration Supplement (SUP) is currently the only comprehensive, nationally representative source of data on multiple years of entry to the United States, time outside the United States since coming to the United States, emigration, and monetary remittances.

Households in the BCPS sample are included on a rotational basis over a 16-month period: in for four months, out for eight months, and back in for four months. The citizenship question (i.e., Are you a citizen of the United States?) and only a single year of entry question (i.e., When did you come to live in the United States?) are asked of all foreign-born members of the household during the first month in sample. The data from the citizenship question are used to identify the foreign-born population. The year of entry data are used to group the foreign born by year of entry and as a proxy measure of the total time spent in the United States. However, both the citizenship and year of entry questions are only asked once throughout the rotational cycle of the survey period. The citizenship status of respondents is not updated in subsequent interviews and the single year of entry question assumes only one entrance into the United States and permanent residency. Research on year of entry has clearly shown: circular migration and temporary residency have increased over the last several decades. The citizenship question was updated in the CPS Migration Supplement to determine the current citizenship status of those who may have naturalized while participating in the survey. The additional year of entry questions were added to provide a better understanding of: 1) the quality and consistency of the current year of entry question; 2) the prevalence and interpretation of entries prior to and exits and re-entries after the initial year of entry; and 3) the interpretation of alternative measures of total time spent in the United States.

The goals, purpose, and issues with the citizenship and year of entry questions are as follows:

CITIZENSHIP

Goal (SUP): To determine the current citizenship status of individuals who may have naturalized while participating in the survey.

Purpose (BCPS): The citizenship question is used to collect the citizenship status of all persons within a household.

Issue (BCPS): It is only asked in the first interview of the CPS basic questionnaire and is not updated in subsequent CPS interviews.

YEAR OF ENTRY

Goal 1: To examine the variability of responses to the year of entry (YOE) question within a household over time by comparing the YOE responses in the first interview (BCPS) to the second or later interviews (SUP).

Goal 2: To examine the quality of the current measure of YOE (BCPS), asked as “year came to live,” through comparisons with information provided by questions on year of first entry (FE) and year of most recent entry (MRE) in SUP.

Goal 3: To create and assess various measures of time spent in the United States in the SUP.

Purpose (BCPS): The two main uses of the current year of entry question are to measure year of entry (the year a respondent came to “live” in the United States); and measure total time spent in the United States.

Issues (BCPS): The year of entry question is currently asked in the first interview of the CPS basic questionnaire and only provides a *single* measure of the year “came to live” in the United States, and estimating total time spent in the United States.

The poster will show some preliminary results from both the Citizenship and Year of Entry sections but will focus primarily on issues of data quality from the Year of Entry section, for example item nonresponse and the consistency of reporting.