

Demographic Characteristics and Geographic Distribution of Foreign-Born Immigrants and Emigrants

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Introduction

There have been changes in the demographic characteristics and geographic distribution of immigrants to the United States since Census 2000. Research suggests that immigrants are now more likely to settle into areas that historically have not had large immigrant populations. The Census Bureau's estimates of net international migration continue to rely on data from Census 2000 for the demographic characteristics and geographic distribution of foreign-born migrants entering and leaving in the United States. The 2010 census will not include a question on nativity, thus making the incorporation of changes in the composition and geographic residence of immigrants and emigrants difficult. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a primary source of information on the foreign-born population. This poster describes an evaluation of the demographic characteristics and geographic distribution of foreign-born immigrants and emigrants in the post-2000 period using data from the ACS. We present results from analyses examining whether the ACS can be used to improve the Census Bureau's estimates of foreign-born immigrants and emigrants by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and state and county of residence.

Data and Methods

This research uses data from Census 2000 and the ACS 2005-2007 multiyear estimates file. The ACS is a nationwide survey, fully implemented in 2005. ACS 2005-2007 includes data from the 2005, 2006, and 2007 ACS, and provides information on the average characteristics of the population over this time period. Because this data source combines information collected over three years, it provides a large sample that allows for more detailed analysis than can be performed using single-year ACS files.

We develop proxy population universes for foreign-born immigrants and emigrants using data from Census 2000 and ACS 2005-2007. For example, the proxy universe for foreign-born immigrants is the foreign-born population whose year of entry was five or fewer years before the census/survey year. We assume these proxy universes represent the characteristics of foreign-born immigrants and emigrants. This poster presents results from our analysis of the reliability of demographic and geographic information in ACS 2005-2007 for these proxy universes.

We first evaluate whether ACS 2005-2007 has a large enough sample to support our proxy universes by detailed characteristics and level of geography (nation, state, county). We then disaggregate our proxy population universes by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and state and county of residence, and compare the distributions from Census 2000 to the distributions from ACS 2005-2007. We evaluate whether the difference between Census 2000 and ACS 2005-2007 is likely attributable to variability in the ACS or real change across the time period. This is accomplished by first determining whether changes between Census 2000 and ACS 2005-2007 are statistically significant. Then we evaluate the margin of errors around ACS 2005-2007 distributions and assess the reliability of data on our proxy populations in the ACS. In addition, we measure the impact of population controls on the demographic characteristics and geographic distribution of the proxy populations of foreign-born immigrants and emigrants by examining characteristics of the proxy populations in ACS 2005-2007 both before and after the population controls have been incorporated into the sample weights. We conclude by

providing our assessment on the extent to which ACS 2005-2007 can be used as a source for demographic and geographic information on recent foreign-born immigrants and emigrants.