

**ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FLOWS
TO AND FROM THE UNITED STATES: 2000 TO 2006**

by

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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Annual estimates of immigration to the United States have, historically, been difficult to construct. Lacking a comprehensive administrative records system that seeks to account for all migration across the borders of the country (50 states and D.C.), researchers have relied on a combination of the available administrative record data, survey data, and assumptions about migration behavior to generate estimates of the number of international migrants coming to, and departing from, the United States. The work discussed here represents the U.S. Census Bureau's latest efforts geared towards improving our estimates of annual international migration flows. Utilizing American Community Survey data, Puerto Rico Community Survey data, data from Census 2000, and information from the National Center for Health Statistics, we create annual estimates of net international migration for the United States, 2000-2006.

Data Sources

This research utilizes four sources of information: the American Community Survey, the Puerto Rico Community Survey, Census 2000, and life tables from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

The primary data source for this research is the annual American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS has included a nationally-representative sample of U.S. households

since 2000, when it was called the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey. From 2000 to 2004, the ACS sampled about 800,000 addresses per year. Beginning in 2005, the ACS sample size increased to nearly 3 million addresses.

The ACS collects responses to a wide variety of questions, including several which provide information about the geographic movement of both native and foreign-born people currently residing in the United States. In particular, responses to the questions “Did this person live in this house or apartment one year ago?” and “Where did this person live one year ago?” may be used to estimate the in-flow of international migrants. For the purposes of this research, we considered those who were abroad “one year ago” as international migrants.

In addition to the ACS, this work uses information from other data sources to construct the estimates of international migration. Census 2000 data, along with life tables from the National Center for Health Statistics, are utilized in our estimates of emigration of the foreign-born. Data from the Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS), in concert with data from the ACS, are used to create estimates of movement between Puerto Rico and the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Similar in structure and content to the ACS, the PRCS was first fielded in 2005, and about 36,000 addresses are sampled each year. Like the ACS, the PRCS includes questions on the prior residence of each person in the household (“Did this person live in this house or apartment one year ago?”, “Where did this person live one year ago?”).

Constructing Estimates of Net International Migration

Net international migration (NIM) is comprised of three key parts: the migration of the foreign born, the migration of people from Puerto Rico to the United States (defined, for these purposes, as the 50 states and the District of Columbia), and the migration of natives born in the United States or abroad of American parents. Each of these subcomponents of NIM are estimated separately, due to data limitations which necessitate different estimation methods for each subcomponent.

Migration of the Foreign Born. The net international migration of the foreign born is estimated in two parts: immigration and emigration. Immigration of the foreign born is estimated using the ACS question about place of prior residence. The foreign born who indicated that they lived abroad in the prior year are considered in-migrants. For example, the number of foreign-born migrants who entered the United States between January 2003 and January 2004 is estimated as the number of foreign born in the 2004 data who reported living abroad one year ago. The emigration of the foreign born is estimated using a residual method. The foreign-born household population in Census 2000 is aged forward (using NCHS life tables) to obtain the expected population in ACS 2005 (and, separately, in ACS 2006), and then that expected population is compared to the population enumerated in ACS 2005 (and ACS 2006). Subtracting the actual from the expected populations provides us with the residual, which serves as the basis for our emigration rates for the 2000 to 2005 and 2000 to 2006 time periods. The averaged rate is then applied to the population at risk of emigrating each year (specifically, the foreign-born population in the ACS who

indicated that they lived in the United States one year ago) to obtain an estimate of emigration.

Migration between the United States and Puerto Rico. The net migration of people from Puerto Rico to the United States (the 50 states and the District of Columbia) is also estimated in two parts, immigration and emigration. Survey coverage in the United States (via the ACS) and Puerto Rico (via the PRCS) allows us to estimate the annual migration flows directly, using the question on place of prior residence. People who indicated on the ACS that they lived in Puerto Rico one year ago are considered the immigrants (they moved from Puerto Rico to the United States). People who indicated on the PRCS that they lived in the United States one year ago are considered the emigrants (they moved from the 50 states or the District of Columbia to Puerto Rico).

Migration of Natives Born in the United States or Abroad of American Parents. The migration of natives born in the United States or abroad of American parents is currently estimated using the results of past Census Bureau research. Updating the method used to estimate the immigration and emigration of this population is currently being researched. Preliminary estimates of the immigration of natives are constructed using the ACS question about place of prior residence.