

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS

United States Census Bureau

In accordance with the U.S. Census Bureau's strategic objective to provide accurate, timely, and relevant population estimates, the Census Bureau intends to provide statistics and methodologies on the size, characteristics, and impact of international migration to (and from) the United States for use in policy-making decisions and in demographic and economic research. The current activities of the Census Bureau are summarized below:

A. SIZE OF IMMIGRATION

The Census Bureau has begun its work to improve the estimates of net international migration through research on the utility of data from the American Community Survey (ACS) and through international data exchanges.

The ACS is a new approach for collecting reliable and timely information needed for critical government functions. The ACS was designed to replace the decennial census long form and will collect the detailed demographic, socioeconomic, and housing statistics traditionally collected on the long form. The ACS has been tested in a sample of counties since 1996. With full implementation starting in 2005, the ACS sample will include about 3 million addresses nationwide each year. To date, research on the ACS has focused on using the annual change in the total foreign-born population as the basis for deriving estimates of international migration. Future research, to start in 2005, will focus on the number of arrivals to the United States based on (1) the "residence one year ago" question and (2) the "year of U.S. entry" question on the ACS.

The Census Bureau has also been working with different international statistical organizations to begin exchanging data and information related to international migration with the intent to match migration in-flows to one country with out-flows from another. For instance, the Census Bureau has worked with agencies in Canada to examine international migration flows between the two countries (e.g., some emigration from Canada becomes temporary migration into the United States). These types of exchanges have been conducted through the North American Migration Working Group (NAMWG), which was established to allow experts from North American statistical agencies to formally exchange ideas on current and future approaches to measuring migration.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANTS

The Census Bureau continued work on evaluating data on the foreign-born population and released several standard and custom reports and tabulations in 2004.

Beginning in the summer of 2004, the Census Bureau started to release detailed tabulations that profile the demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics of the foreign-born population in the United States (iterated by U.S. citizenship status, by period of entry into the United States, and for numerous countries of birth). These profiles are based on data from Census 2000 and are the first to show the housing characteristics of the foreign-born. More than 150 country-specific profiles have been created and will be released on a flow basis during 2005. These profiles will also allow for comparative analysis between data from U.S. sources and data from statistical agencies in other countries.

A set of detailed tabulations titled *Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2004* was released in early 2005 and provides a profile of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the foreign-born population based on data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey has been conducted for more than 50 years and is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population.

The Census Bureau has also produced tabulations of the foreign-born population in the United States, including information about their demographic, social, and economic characteristics, for international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

C. IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION

The Census Bureau has begun evaluating the validity, reliability, and utility of survey questions that are related to the measurement of international migration. The Census Bureau began working on preliminary proposals for changes to the place of birth, citizenship status, and year of entry questions on the American Community Survey (ACS) for further evaluation in a national content (field) test in 2006. The Census Bureau has completed cognitive tests of these proposed changes to the ACS and expects results of these tests by April 2005.

The Census Bureau was also involved in working groups and technical meetings with the United Nations' Statistics Division and Population Division, in efforts to increase international dialogue on defining international migration and improving its measurement.