Components of Change in the Relative Size of the Foreign-Born Population, 1960-2000

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Objectives

- This study employs a synthetic cohort approach to study changes in the size of the foreign-born population arriving in the decade prior to the census, identified by questions regarding foreign-birth (non-U.S. citizen) and “year of arrival.” The research questions to be addressed are what factors determine the relative size of this population in a subsequent census, and, by taking account of these factors, what can be learned about the “quality” of census data in estimating the foreign-born population of the United States.
The foreign-born population that arrived in the decade prior to the census consists of the following:

- Legal immigrants – persons who are or have applied for permanent U.S. resident status;
- Legal non-immigrants – persons admitted with employment or school related visas, and their dependents; and diplomats and their dependents;
- The unauthorized – persons who entered the U.S. illegally or who failed to leave once their visa expired;
- Return migrants, who emigrated, and returned during the decade (may also include an unknown share of (1-3) who arrived in a previous period, emigrated, then subsequently returned);
- Individuals who were incorrectly identified as having arrived in a decade.
Can the actual size of this population be determined?

• Extant census methodology makes this difficult if not impossible.
• 1) Coverage or enumeration errors.
• 2). Some individuals who arrived during the decade are not present at the time of the census because of emigration and mortality.
• The substitution of the American Community Survey, which is conducted annually, for the census long-form may help to improve the accuracy of the estimates.
Figure 1. Recently Arrived Foreign-Born Population

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Ratio (t+n/t)

Age at (t)

- 1980/1970
- 1990/1980
- 2000/1990

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Figure 2. Recently Arrived Mexican-Origin Population
Sources of change in the size of the recently arrived foreign-born population

- 1. Mortality
- 2. Emigration
- 3. Return migration
- 4. Change in visa status
  - (legal non-resident to permanent resident, etc)
- 5. Enumeration errors
- 6. Reporting errors
Figure 3. Recently Arrived Foreign-Born Population-Citizen
Figure 4. Recently Arrive foreign-Born Population Non_Citizen

![Graph showing the recently arrive foreign-born population non-citizen ratio over age at time (t). The graph includes data for the years 1980/1970, 1990/1980, and 2000/1990. The x-axis represents age at time (t), and the y-axis represents the ratio (t+n)/t.]
Figure 5. Recently Arrived Mexican-Origin Population-Citizen
Figure 6. Recently Arrived Mexican-Origin Population Non-Citizen
Figure 10. Share of Foreign_Born who were Citizens at Beginning of Period

![Graph showing the share of foreign-born individuals who were citizens at the beginning of a period for different ages and years: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000. The graph illustrates the percentage of citizens across various age groups for each year.](image-url)
Figure 14. Share of Mexican-Origin Who were Citizens at the Beginning of Period
Figure 15. Changes in the Share of foreign-Born who are Citizen

Age at (t)

Change Share Citizen \((t+n)/t\)

- 1980/1970
- 1990/1980
- 2000/1990
Figure 16. Changes in the Share of Mexican-Origin who are Citizen