

New Trends in the Racial and Ethnic Composition of Immigrant Flows to the United States: 2000-2009

By

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Abstract

The place-of-birth composition of immigrant flows to the United States contributes to the overall racial and ethnic make-up of the total population. Historically, the United States has experienced different periods of immigration, each marked by specific place-of-birth groups. During the most recent period, the largest proportion of immigrants was born in Mexico and other Latin American countries. New trends in the racial and ethnic composition of recent immigrants show that the share of immigrants that are Hispanic is declining while the share of that are Asian is increasing. In this paper we use data from the American Community Survey, Census 2000, and the Population Estimates Program to show that the racial and ethnic composition of recent immigrants is changing, that these changes are driven by the place-of-birth composition of recent immigrants, and how these changes could be incorporated into the race and Hispanic origin distribution of estimates of foreign-born immigration.

Introduction

The place-of-birth composition of immigrant flows to the United States contributes to the overall racial and ethnic make-up of the total population. Historically, the United States has experienced different periods of immigration, each marked by specific place-of-birth groups. During the most recent period (1965-present), the largest proportion of immigrants came from Mexico and other Latin American countries (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Portes 1997). Findings from the 2000 Census revealed that Hispanics had become the largest racial and ethnic minority group in the United States, in part, because of the magnitude of this migration (Grieco and Cassidy 2001). However, new trends in the racial and ethnic composition of recent immigrants show that the share of new immigrants that are of Hispanic origin is declining while the share of new immigrants that are Asian is increasing. Preliminary findings suggest that these changes are largely due to changes in the place-of-birth composition of recent immigrants. In this paper we use data from the American Community Survey (ACS), Census 2000, and the Population Estimates Program of the U.S. Census Bureau to show that the racial and ethnic

composition of recent immigrants is changing, that these changes are driven by the place-of-birth composition of recent immigrants, and how these changes could be incorporated into the race and Hispanic origin distribution of estimates of foreign-born immigration to the United States.

Data and Methods

The data for this paper come from the 2000 to 2009 annual single-year American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year ACS (2005-2009) file, Census 2000 long form, Vintage 2010 Population Estimates, and a simulation of estimates of foreign-born immigration from 2000 to 2009. The ACS is a survey of the U.S. resident population with an annual sample size of approximately 3 million addresses. The ACS includes data on the demographic, housing, social, and economic characteristics of the U.S. population. Specifically, we use data on the race, Hispanic origin, place of birth, residence one year ago, and year of entry of the foreign-born population from the ACS. The Census 2000 long-form data also contain information on race, ethnicity, place of birth, and year of arrival of recent immigrants. Population estimates are produced annually by the Population Estimates Program of the U.S. Census Bureau. These data are issued in vintages which include population estimates for July 1 of the current year and revised estimates for each year back to the most recent census. For this analysis, we focus on the distribution of race and Hispanic origin for the foreign-born immigration portion of the net international migration component of the Vintage 2010 estimates.

The Population Estimates Program uses the Residence One Year Ago (ROYA) method to measure annual flows of foreign-born immigration to the United States

(Kennedy-Puthoff, Bhaskar, and Rastogi, 2008). For this method, we use ACS data on citizenship (to identify the foreign-born population) and the residence of the respondent one year prior to the taking the survey to estimate foreign-born immigration. Foreign-born immigration can also be estimated using the Year of Entry (YOE) method which uses ACS data on citizenship and year of arrival to the United States (Kennedy-Puthoff and Bhaskar, 2006). For this analysis, we focus on changes in the place-of-birth, racial, and ethnic composition of recent immigrants from 2000-2009 using both the ROYA and YOE methods. Our preliminary results show that from 2000-2009 there was a decline in the percentage of recent immigrants that were Hispanic and an increase in the percentage that were Asian.

We further show how changes in the racial/ethnic composition of recent immigrants could be incorporated into estimates of foreign-born immigration. Estimates of the geographic distribution and demographic characteristics of the foreign-born immigrant population are not taken directly from the ACS using the ROYA or YOE method, but are calculated using the characteristics of a proxy universe or proxy population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). For the Vintage 2010 Estimates, state-level data from the 2005-2007 ACS and county-level data from the Census 2000 long-form were used to estimate the geographic and demographic characteristics of recent immigrants. Specifically, the characteristics of the foreign-born population who entered the United States in the last five years were used to estimate the age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and geographic distribution of foreign-born immigrants estimated using the ROYA method. In this paper, we show the results of a simulation using the 2007-2009 3-year ACS file at the state level and the 2005-2009 5-year ACS file at the county level to estimate

characteristics. Using descriptive statistics, we present how changes in the place-of-birth, racial, and ethnic composition of recent immigrant from the Census 2000 long-form to more recent ACS data are reflected in the simulated estimates of foreign-born immigration.

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