

International migration is a topic that reaches beyond the interest of demographers and media. The advent of annually updated data from the American Community Survey (ACS) makes it possible to revise the methods that the U.S. Census Bureau used in the 1990s. We have ported the existing methodology to this new data source, making small adjustments for the fact that it is an annual data source rather than a decennial source. An examination of the methodology explains why the overall method is retained for the computation of the net migration of the foreign born. However, when it comes to providing detailed characteristics for use in the population estimates program, we have to model those characteristics from existing data, namely Census 2000.

In an effort to understand the impact of the international migration component in the population estimates, it is necessary to examine the distributions of the characteristics. Although the total estimate, without characteristics, is calculated using the methodology developed with decennial data, the survey does not have a large enough sample to provide all the characteristics needed for the population estimates. In order to get a full matrix of characteristics, single year of age, sex, Hispanic origin, and race by county, we have to turn back to the results of Census 2000. By examining the characteristics of the net international migration component and its pieces (net migration of the foreign born, net movement from Puerto Rico, and native emigration), we can analyze the data that go into the overall population estimates for the entire United States.

Although it is clear that a more up-to-date data source would be preferable for all aspects of the net international migration component, there is no other source readily available until the ACS reaches full implementation (currently scheduled to begin in

2005). How can we maximize the data available from Census 2000 and ACS? There are currently various projects underway to determine if the calculation of the total net international component is the best that we can produce with the data we have. We have just begun to explore improvements to the ways in which we have used Census 2000. In the future, we will explore way to improve our distributions of characteristics based on available data.