

**AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA ON THE
FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION: PUMS FILES
AND DETAILED TABLES, 2000 TO 2003**

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*This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to
encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed are those of
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ABSTRACT

As the planned replacement for the census long form, the American Community Survey (ACS) is poised to become the leading source of data on the foreign-born population in the United States. ACS data are available to the public in the form of tables, which include detailed tables and ranking tables, and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files. This poster details the results from available ACS data (2000-2003) relevant to the foreign born, and provides control counts for data users who are interested in using PUMS files. Specifically, I show the difference between the number of foreign born in pre-tabulated ACS data products (which are tabulated using U.S. Census Bureau internal files) and the number of foreign born a data user would tabulate using ACS PUMS files (which are a sample of the internal files). Selected characteristics of the foreign born are shown as well.

INTRODUCTION

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey that provides up-to-date estimates of demographic, housing, social, and economic characteristics of the population in the United States. As the planned replacement for the census long form, the ACS is poised to become the leading source of data on the foreign-born population in the United States.

The ACS is conducted on an ongoing basis by mail and via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). For 2000 through 2003, the ACS sampled between 800,000 and 900,000 addresses

annually (this number includes addresses later found to be commercial or nonexistent).

The 2003 ACS data collection resulted in approximately 572,000 final interviews.

The large sample size and high response rate— for 2000 through 2003, the response rate was between 95.1% and 97.7%— contribute to the ACS being an important source of data for researchers interested in foreign-born populations.

Data from the ACS are made available to the public in the form of annual data tables, which include detailed tables and ranking tables, and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files. The detailed tables include information on the foreign-born population in the U.S. for the nation, states, and some smaller geographic areas. These data products are tabulated using U.S. Census Bureau internal files. The ACS PUMS files are microdata files which data users can tabulate on their own according to their specific needs.

The ACS PUMS files are produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, and contain records for a sample of housing units. The records include characteristics of both the housing unit and the people who live there, with identifiers removed to preserve confidentiality.

Researchers frequently use PUMS files to create tabulations specific to their topic of study and also employ the microdata in more advanced applications (such as modeling and multivariate analyses).

This poster details the results from available ACS data (2000-2003) relevant to the foreign born, and provides guidance to data users regarding PUMS files. Specifically, I show the differences between the number and characteristics of the foreign born shown in pre-tabulated ACS data products (which utilize U.S. Census Bureau internal ACS files) and the number and characteristics of the foreign-born population a data user would tabulate using the ACS PUMS files (which are a sample of the internal files).

At the national level, the estimates of the total number of foreign born shown in the detailed tables and the number available via the PUMS files have differed in the past four years of data (2000-2003); however, the differences are not statistically significant. A similar pattern (that is, estimates that are different but usually not statistically different) is seen for characteristics of the foreign born— including citizenship status, place of birth, and year of entry— at the national level.

PUMS FILES

The PUMS files utilized in this poster are the PC SAS Dataset Population files for the total U.S. downloaded from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/PUMS/pums2002.htm> (although the URL includes “2002,” this is, in fact, the access point for downloading the ACS PUMS files for every year 2000 through 2003). The files downloaded for 2000, 2001, and 2002 have a “last modified” date of June 10, 2004. The 2003 file was last modified August 24, 2004.

DETAILED TABLES

The Detailed Tables data included in this poster can be accessed through American FactFinder (go to <http://www.census.gov> and click on American FactFinder). The 2000 data utilized here can be found in the 2000 Supplementary Survey tables, and the 2001 data can be found in the 2001 Supplementary Survey tables. For 2002 and 2003 the data can be found under the 2002 American Community Survey heading and the 2003 American Community Survey heading on the Data Sets page.

LOWER AND UPPER BOUNDS

The American Community Survey (ACS) data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The upper and lower bounds included in the tables that constitute this poster are calculated using a 90-percent confidence interval. The confidence interval can be interpreted as providing 90-percent certainty that the number that would have been obtained from a full census falls between the lower and upper bounds. For the Detailed Tables data, the lower and upper bounds are those that are available via American FactFinder (lower and upper bounds accompany the data tables, where appropriate). For the PUMS data, the lower and upper bounds were calculated according to the formulas provided in the *PUMS Accuracy of the Data* documents for each year. The PUMS accuracy documents are available via the American Community Survey main page (<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>).