



Population research and policy review, ISSN 0167-5923
Volume 34, number 4 (august 2015)

Conflicts in the Use of the ACS by Federal Agencies Between Statutory Requirements and Survey Methodology

P. 461-480

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Abstract

The American Community Survey (ACS) has been fully implemented since 2005. The Census Bureau has released four 5-year datasets, the most geographically detailed dataset. Yet, government agencies still grapple with how to use the multiple datasets and estimates. The Census Bureau publishes guidelines for their use, emphasizing the need to balance timeliness and precision in choosing an estimate and encouraging the use of the margin of error. This study examines how three federal agencies use the ACS to implement programs to understand whether the published guidelines address the issues of importance to government agencies. These programs all use income data from the ACS, but for different ends: eligibility criteria, evaluation of federal guideline implementation, and allocation of funds among urban areas. After reviewing agency publications, studying changes in policy, and conducting personal interviews with officials, we find that the agencies consider not only precision and timeliness when choosing an estimate, but also statutory requirements, computational limitations, and geographic needs. Federal agencies are cognizant that these estimates are subject to error, but find that the margin of error adds complexity that does not necessarily result in better implementation of programs. The ACS offers users multiple dataset choices, with varying degrees of reliability, to estimate population characteristics. Current Census Bureau guidelines for the ACS do not meet the needs of many government agencies, as federal statutes are not designed with the current survey methodology in mind.

Mandating Prescription Contraception Coverage: Effects on Contraception Consumption and Preventive Health Services

P. 481-510

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Abstract

While recent national discussions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) made the introduction of mandated contraceptive coverage within health insurance policies seem like a novel idea, it is not new at all. Since the late 1990s, 29 states have mandated that insurance providers include prescription contraceptive supplies and, in some instances, associated contraceptive services in their coverage. We use state-level policy variation to generate both difference-in-differences and triple difference estimates to determine if women in states with state-level contraception supply or contraception supply and services insurance mandates experienced changes in their utilization of contraception and preventive health care services. We find a positive relationship between these policies and prescription contraception use for those with low educational attainment, but the results are not robust to a variety of specifications. Our results also show an increase in the consumption of preventive health services for women with low educational attainment as a result of these health insurance mandates. We conclude by discussing the implications for the ACA.

Fertility Decline, Gender Composition of Families, and Expectations of Old Age Support

P. 511-539

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Abstract

Recent fertility declines in non-Western countries may have the potential to transform gender systems. One pathway for such transformations is the creation of substantial proportions of families with children of only one gender. Such families, particularly those with only daughters, may facilitate greater symmetry between sons and daughters. This article explores whether such shifts may influence gendered expectations of old age support. In keeping with patriarchal family systems, old age support is customarily provided by sons, but not daughters, in India. Using data from the 2005 Indian Human Development Survey, I find that women with sons overwhelmingly expect old age support from a son. By contrast, women with only daughters largely expect support from a daughter or a source besides a child. These findings suggest that fertility decline may place demographic pressure on gendered patterns of old age support and the gender system more broadly.

Evaluating Linearly Interpolated Intercensal Estimates of Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of U.S. Counties and Census Tracts 2001–2009

P. 541-559

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Abstract

The American Community Survey (ACS) multiyear estimation program has greatly advanced opportunities for studying change in the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of U.S. communities. Challenges remain, however, for researchers studying years prior to the full implementation of the ACS or areas smaller than the thresholds for ACS annual estimates (i.e., small counties and census tracts). We evaluate intercensal estimates of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of U.S. counties and census tracts produced via linear interpolation between the 2000 census and both the 2010 census and 2005–2009 ACS. Discrepancies between interpolated estimates and reference estimates from the Population Estimates Program, the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, and ACS are calculated using several measures of error. Findings are discussed in relation to the potential for measurement error to bias longitudinal estimates of linearly interpolated neighborhood change, and alternative intercensal estimation models are discussed, including those that may better capture non-linear trends in economic conditions over the 21st century.

Socialization, Adaptation, Transnationalism, and the Reproductive Behavior of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in France

P. 561-592

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Abstract

Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) move from a region with high fertility to regions with low fertility. Yet very few studies have examined the reproductive behavior of international migrants from SSA. This study examines the roles of origin and destination socialization on the fertility and fertility ideals of SSA migrants in France. The study draws on measures of assimilation to systematically examine the effects of socialization and adaptation as well as transnationalism for the effects of sustained origin ties. Data are from the TEO ("Trajectoires et Origines") survey conducted in France (2008/2009). Logistic regression is used to examine current fertility (the odds of having a birth in the preceding 5 years), and poisson regression is used to examine cumulative fertility (children ever born) and fertility ideals (reported ideal number of children in a family). Controlling for sociodemographic factors, first-generation SSA migrants have higher fertility than second-generation SSA migrants and non-immigrants. But first- and second-generation SSA migrants have higher fertility ideals than non-immigrants. Among SSA migrants, first- and second-generation migrants do not differ in fertility and fertility ideals when adaptation is accounted for. Most measures of adaptation are negatively associated with actual fertility and fertility ideals. Transnationalism is associated with higher fertility ideals but less so with actual fertility. The study finds some evidence for origin socialization, but the findings are more strongly supportive of adaptation to the host society. Origin socialization appears to have a stronger influence on fertility ideals than actual fertility.

Subnational Population Projections by Age: An Evaluation of Combined Forecast Techniques

P. 593-613

Mario Reinhold - Stephan L. Thomsen

Abstract

Population projections commonly suffer from a decreasing accuracy with a higher degree of disaggregation. We suggest combining the cohort-component model and an averaged projection technique to improve precision of forecasts for small areas. Calculating ex-post population projections, we evaluate the precision and bias of the proposed method by contrasting error patterns of commonly used techniques using official population data from 46 districts of a German state for the years 1980–2013. In comparison to the individual methods considered, the combined approach results in the highest accuracy and lowest bias both for the total population and for age groups. The proposed method is also more robust regarding past growth.

Whose Fertility Preferences Matter? Women, Husbands, In-laws, and Abortion in Madhya Pradesh, India

P. 615-639

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Abstract

Few studies investigate the influence of husbands' or others' fertility preferences on women's abortion behavior, in spite of longstanding recognition that women are seldom the sole decision-makers governing reproductive behavior. This study uses survey data detailing women's reproductive histories in Madhya Pradesh, India to analyze the role of women's fertility preferences, their perceptions of their husbands' and in-laws' preferences, and empowerment in two aspects of abortion behavior: the decision to attempt an abortion ($n=8852$ pregnancies) and to seek a surgical abortion with a medical provider ($n=752$ abortion attempts). The latter is estimated using a Heckman's selection model. Women are most likely to attempt an abortion and to do so via surgical abortion when they and their husbands agree that they do not want another child. Husbands' fertility preferences exercise a strong, independent effect on both outcomes, while the effect of in-laws' preferences is weaker. However, the strongest influence on abortion behavior is women's own fertility preferences: the odds of attempting abortion decrease by a factor of 0.06 (p value <0.001) among women who wanted a pregnancy compared to those who did not. The magnitude of this effect does not diminish when controlling for others' fertility preferences. Restrictions on women's mobility increase the odds of attempting an abortion, but significantly reduce the odds of a surgical abortion.
