

**UNECE Online Meetings on Migration Statistics, 26–28 October 2021**

**ABSTRACT**

<b>Title</b>	Leveraging U.S. Federal Statistics to Inform Census Bureau Migration Estimates during the COVID-19 Pandemic
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<b>Session</b>	Timeliness of migration data for policy-making, and use of estimates (27-28 October)

The need for timely and accurate data on migration became more urgent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Population Estimates Program (PEP) at the U.S. Census Bureau has primarily relied on American Community Survey (ACS) data to estimate the international migration component to produce official U.S. population estimates. Although the ACS is a comprehensive source for international migration data, the one-year lag in survey data has prevented timely research on the ongoing effect of COVID-19 on migration. To support the evaluation of the forthcoming 2020-2021 estimates, PEP adopted a new approach that produces a benchmark time series of international migration entirely from publicly available federal statistics on international mobility. Federal statistics on immigrant and non-immigrant visas, foreign students, refugees, and airline passenger traffic provide more timely information on international mobility than the latest available surveys. Although there are several limitations associated with comparing these administrative records-based statistics to ACS-based estimates, a simple descriptive analysis shows that annual trends in PEP international migration estimates track closely with benchmark estimates throughout the study period. Despite limitations in the data sources used in this research, the results support the use of benchmark estimates to project PEP international migration estimates for the 2020-2021 period. This presentation provides an example of a macro-level data integration strategy which combines lagged estimates with current administrative statistics for nowcasting. Given the decentralized nature of the U.S. federal statistical system in which the sharing of microlevel data across agencies involves numerous bureaucratic obstacles, the combination of available public macro-level data sources allows us to quickly compile very current, although incomplete, measures of international migration. The results from this research inform the upcoming round of COVID-19-adjusted international migration estimates scheduled for release by PEP later this year.