

Vital Records Wish List

NCVHS Hearing on Next Generation Vital Statistics
Panel 4. Challenges and Opportunities: Federal Level

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Overview

- Births and deaths data is very reliable.
- We will focus on our marriage and divorce data needs.
- However, we also have huge data demands for immigration.

Births and Deaths

- Births and deaths data is very reliable in recent history.
- Even going back in time from recent history, births and deaths are fairly reliable (underreporting was an issue).
- There is a difference between the U.S. and the Social Security area: Social Security area includes the states, D.C., territories, federal employees and their dependents overseas, armed forces overseas, beneficiaries living abroad, and other Americans living abroad.
- **Wish:** That NCHS would provide territory data for births and deaths, and Census would make population estimates for territories. But any birth and death data outside the U.S. and its territories, but within the Social Security area, would certainly help.

Married Population

- The American Community Survey (ACS) provides estimates for those married (age of spouse 1 crossed with age of spouse 2) only if they are living together.
- Those that are separated or otherwise living apart (for example, one person is living in an assisted living facility) cannot currently be matched.
- The ACS started collecting same-sex spouse data in 2012.
- **Wish:** That ACS would provide the sex and age of all spouses not in the same household.

New Marriages (NCHS)

- NCHS stopped collecting (or at least compiling) new marriages by age of husband crossed with age of wife in 1995, and we now only receive the number of total marriages from NCHS.
- **Wish:** It would be extremely helpful to have all years of data by single year of age of each spouse, sex of each spouse, and duration of marriage.

New Marriages (ACS)

- Some newly married couples may not be living together and are, therefore, not captured by the ACS.
- **Wish:** Once again, it would be helpful if those who are newly married (the ACS asks if you were married in the last 12 months) also had a field for age and sex of the spouse.

Divorces

- NCHS provides some limited divorce data from the 1980s (age-group of husband crossed with age-group of wife) and estimates of totals after.
- We were able to get some data, of various levels of age-groups, from 19 states ranging from years 2009 – 2012.
- The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) has marriage and divorce history, but has a much smaller sample size than the ACS, and only surveys those aged 15-44.
- **Wish:** That the ACS would ask the age and sex of the ex-spouse, marriage date, and divorce date, instead of just whether the respondent was divorced in the last 12 months.
- **Real Wish:** That NCHS would have all this data for all persons and we would not have to rely on a survey.

Divorces by Marriage Type

- **Wish 1:** With same-sex marriages being federally recognized, it would be very helpful to have divorces broken down by age of spouse 1, sex of spouse 1, age of spouse 2, and sex of spouse 2.
- **Wish 2:** Duration of marriage would be very useful, especially with same-sex divorces, since there is so little data on same-sex divorces in the United States.
- **Wish 3:** We already get total divorces in Puerto Rico from the ACS, but we would like to get data on divorces in other territories and other outside areas.

Legal Emigration

- Although legal permanent resident (LPR) data are reliable and we have some rough estimates on total legal emigration, the age distribution and actual counts of annual legal emigrants are not available.
- **Wish:** Counts of legal emigrants, by age and sex.
- **Wish:** We still base our distribution on data from the 1980 and 1990 Censuses, so at the very least, it would be useful to update these data based on more recent Censuses.

American Citizens Overseas

- We receive some detailed data on Federal employees, armed forces, and beneficiaries residing overseas, but many other Americans are living abroad and not in these groups.
- Census and the State Department have done some rough total estimates of these other Americans in the past that we use.
- **Wish:** Americans overseas data by single year of age, sex, and living abroad category.

Other Immigration

- The following items, along with duration of residency, would help improve our other immigration models.
- **Wish 1:** Counts, by single year of age and sex, of nonimmigrants living in the U.S. (by certain categories of visas).
- **Wish 2:** Updated rates of those that overstay nonimmigrant visas, by single year of age and sex, to be applied to the nonimmigrant stock.
- **Wish 3:** Estimates of the never-authorized and visa-overstayer populations, by age, sex, and duration.
- **Wish 4:** Estimates of those leaving the “other immigrant” population by age, sex, and immigrant type (nonimmigrant, never authorized, overstayer).