

## Caveats on Using the ACS County to County Migration data

The American Community Survey has released seven, five-year county-to- county migration data sets. Of these, all seven data sets report county-to-county total flows but five data sets also include socioeconomic characteristics of the migrants. Besides total migration flows, the following characteristics are reported in each data release:

- 2015-2019 – No characteristics data, only county-to-county flows data is available
- 2012-2016 – No characteristics data, only county-to-county flows data is available
- 2011-2015– Demographics (race and age)
- 2010-2014 – Household Type, Housing Tenure and Relationship to Householder
- 2009-2013 – Ability to Speak English, Place of Birth and Years in U.S.
- 2008-2012 – Employment, Occupation and Work Status
- 2007-2011 - Education and Income

Caution is urged, however, when using or analyzing the flows by socioeconomic characteristics for the 2007-2011, 2008-2012, 2009-2013, 2010-2014 and 2011-2015 data sets. Because of suppression of individual data flows by characteristic for outmigration, the outmigration totals by characteristic may not represent the full outflows from that geography.<sup>1</sup> Hence the net migration (in-migration

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<sup>1</sup> Data is reported only if there are three or more unweighted people from different households for the previous county of residence or remainder of the previous state of residence. Otherwise, the flow(s) are suppressed and are not reported.

minus out-migration) may not present the complete picture because of the under representation of the outflows.

For example, the interstate out-migration from Maryland for “Place of Birth” from the 2009-2013 data is 149,244.<sup>2</sup> However, the out-migration sum of all jurisdictions (all counties and Baltimore City) in Maryland for this characteristic is only 103,271 or 45,973 less than the reported statewide total. The smaller sum of Maryland’s jurisdictions compared to the statewide total is due to the suppression of outflow data at the county level. There is a similar but much smaller difference with the intrastate out-migration flows where the Maryland outmigration for the Place of Birth Status is 148,430, compared to the sum of jurisdictions’ total of 146,423.<sup>3</sup>

While these differences exist for interstate and intrastate out migration flows by characteristic, there is *not* a difference for the in-migration flows by characteristic between Maryland and the sum of jurisdictions or for the foreign in-migration flows. See “Comparison of Maryland to County totals” tables for comparisons of Maryland and sum of jurisdictions for each ACS migration dataset. Not all datasets contain suppressed outflows.

Finally, users should note that in-migration to Maryland from foreign countries includes migration from U.S. Island Areas and foreign countries. However, foreign out migration is not captured in this dataset. Puerto Rico is the only geography outside of the United States where out-migration statistics are made available.

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<sup>2</sup> Intra-U.S. Migrants are defined as persons who move within a state (intra-state), across state lines (inter-state), and from/to Puerto Rico

<sup>3</sup> Intra state migration measures the county-to-county migration within Maryland

