

# American Community Survey: COVID-19 Impacts and an Overview of the Foreign-Born Population

Lauren Medina

Chief, Foreign-Born Population Branch

International Forum on Migration Statistics 2023

Santiago, Chile

24-26 January 2023

# The American Community Survey (ACS)

- Surveys **3.5 million addresses** and informs over **\$675 billion** of Federal government spending each year
- Covers 40+ topics, supports over 300 evidence-based Federal government uses
- Typically provides three key annual data releases:
  - 1-year Estimates (areas with populations of 65,000+)
  - 1-year Supplemental Estimates (areas with populations of 20,000+)
  - 5-year Estimates (all areas)

The image shows a sample of the American Community Survey mail form. At the top, it features the U.S. Department of Commerce logo and the title "THE American Community Survey". Below the title, there is a "Start Here" section with instructions: "Respond online today at: [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs)" and "Complete this form and mail it back to us soon as possible." A paragraph explains that the form asks for information about the people who are living or staying at the address on the mailing label and about the house, apartment, or mobile home located at the address on the mailing label. There are several callout boxes: one for "If you received no mail services from participating mail carriers" (with a phone number 1-800-852-8400), one for "If you are unable to reach someone who is participating in the survey" (with a phone number 1-800-852-8400), and one for "For more information about the American Community Survey, visit our website at [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs)". On the right side, there are several numbered sections: 1. "Household telephone numbers" with fields for "Number" and "Type"; 2. "Living and sleeping quarters information" with a "First Name" field; 3. "How many people are living or staying at this address?" with a "Number of people" field; and 4. "Will you accept a survey for this household?" with a "Yes/No" field. At the bottom, there is a barcode and the text "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE" and "U.S. CENSUS BUREAU".

# ACS Data Collection Process: Pre COVID-19

- The ACS is a continuous, multimode survey that uses a multiple mailing strategy
- Data collection for each monthly panel takes place over a three-month period



# ACS Data Collection Modifications Due to COVID-19

## Mail

- Suspended mail operations starting mid-March through June 2020
- Resumed limited mail operations in July 2020
- Restored our full 5-piece mail strategy in April 2021

## Internet

The internet option was available only to a subset of our full sample due to reduced mailings during April—June 2020

## In-Person Interviewing

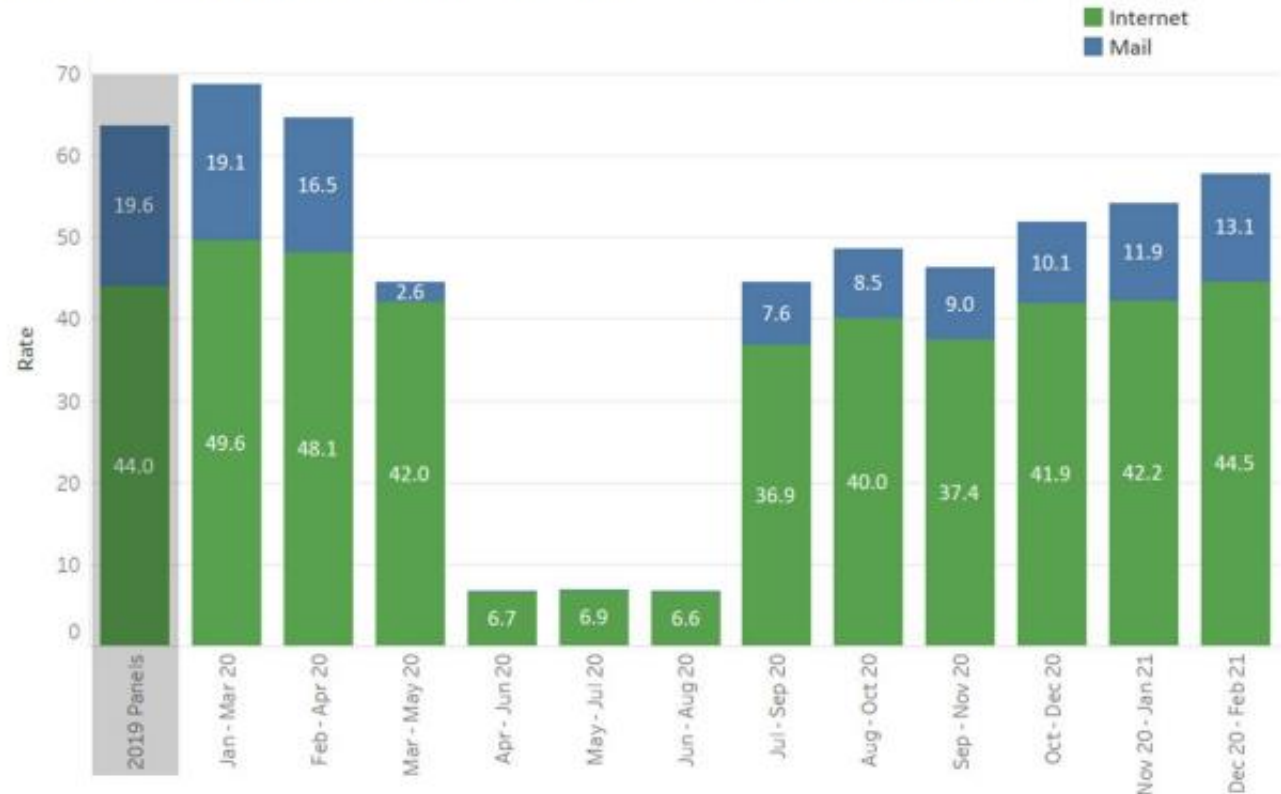
In-person interviewing for housing units and group quarters was suspended mid-March—June 2020

# Impact of Data Collection Challenges on ACS Data Quality

- Significant nonresponse bias
- The 2020 1-year estimates did not meet the Census Bureau's data quality standards

**Decision:** Release experimental estimates.

Figure B-1. Self-Response Rates by Data Collection Panel by Mode



Note: Panel labels show the full data collection period, i.e., the label for the January 2020 panel is 'Jan - Mar 20'.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Operational Data

# Guidance for Data Users: 2020 1-Year ACS & Beyond

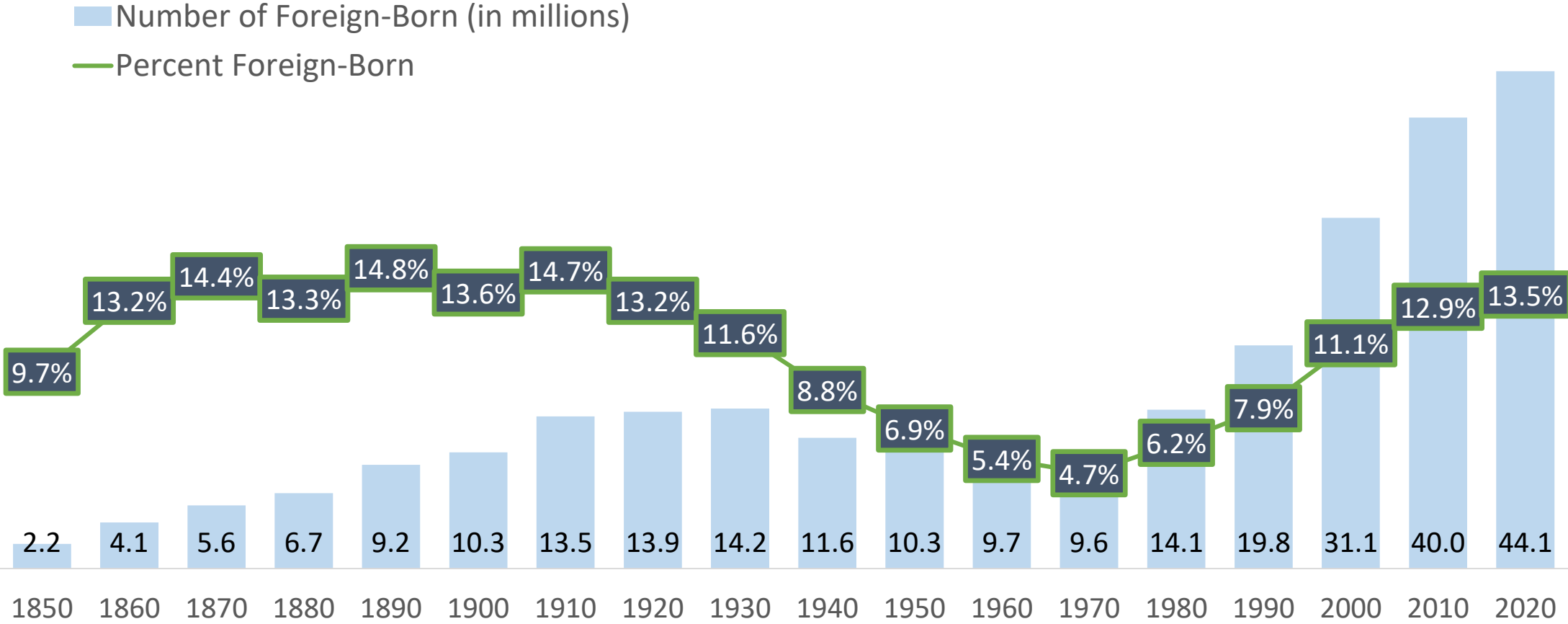
- The Census Bureau encourages data users to evaluate the data and determine whether they are suitable for their needs
- Experimental data should be used with caution because they may not meet all our quality standards
- Estimates for lower levels of geography, particularly, Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) should be used with caution because the experimental weights were not optimized to produce estimates for these areas

## Moving forward:

- 2016-2020 5-year ACS release
- 2021 ACS Releases

# Historical Perspective

## Number and Percent Foreign-Born in the U.S.: 1850-2020

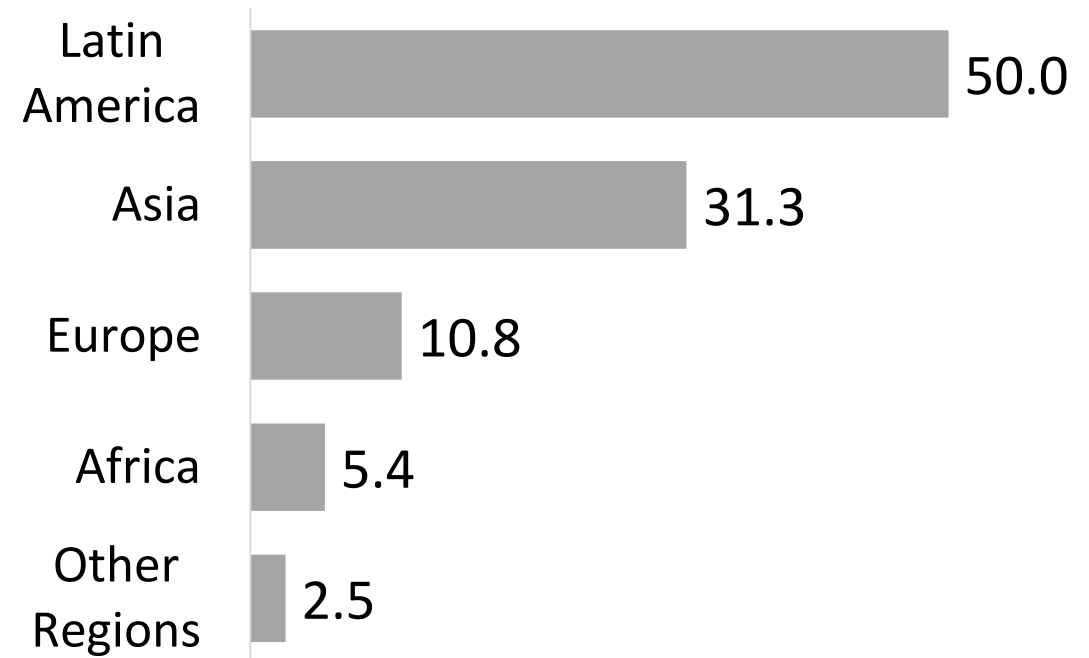


Source: U.S Census Bureau, Census of Population, 1850-2000; 2010 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates; 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

# Place of Birth Among the Foreign-Born Population

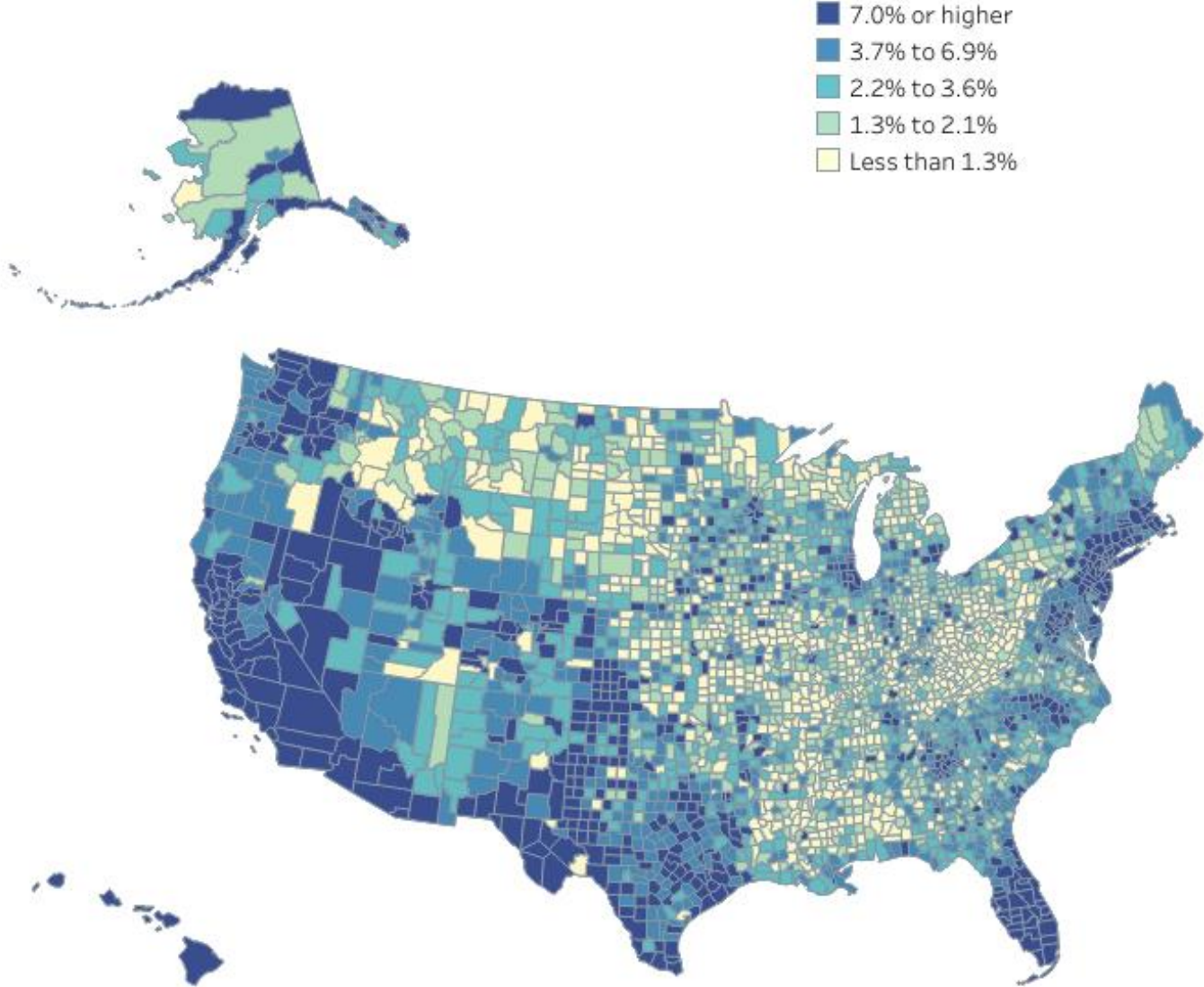
- **13.5 percent** of the nation's population was foreign-born.
- Approximately half of the foreign-born population was born in Latin America.

**Percent Foreign-Born by World region of Birth, 2016-2020 ACS**





# Percent Foreign-Born by County: 2016-2020 American Community Survey



Thank you!

Questions?

[lauren.medina@census.gov](mailto:lauren.medina@census.gov)