Refugee Transition to Legal Permanent Resident Status: Characteristics and Timing

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It is generally assumed that all refugees admitted to the United States eventually adjust to legal permanent resident (LPR) status. Refugees are eligible to adjust after one year of residence in the United States. However, the timing of adjustment is estimated at three years between arrival and adjustment of status based on a retrospective self-reported year of entry measure. There are several limitations associated with retrospective measures include clustering of events at cardinal dates, memory loss, and a lack of a full complement of retrospective information (Dahmann, 1989). By utilizing data matching to complete a prospective longitudinal analysis, this research will provide a more accurate determination of the number and timing of adjustment of status of refugees, thus aiding in our understanding of refugee adjustment and improving population estimates.

Research Questions:

This study will analyze the timing and patterns of refugee adjustment to LPR status. This research seeks to answer the following questions: 1. What proportion of refugee arrivals to the United States adjust to lawful permanent resident status?; 2. What is the timing of that adjustment?; and 3. How do the characteristics of refugees (e.g. nationality, gender, education, years in U.S., etc.) affect their likelihood of adjustment?

Data:

Individual level data for this study were obtained from two sources. Data on refugee arrivals were derived from data maintained in the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) of the U.S. Department of State. Data on

refugee adjustments to legal permanent resident status were taken from applications to adjust status submitted by foreign nationals and maintained in the Computer Linked Application Information Management System (CLAIMS) of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security.

Methods:

Matching

Every individual admitted to the United States via the U.S. Refugee Program is assigned a unique Alien number. This same identifier must be provided and verified on form I-485, *Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust* Status. For the purposes of this study, individual cases will be matched by Alien number.

Descriptives and Models

Analysis will include data on refugee arrivals between fiscal years 2001 and 2005, and refugee adjustments of status from 2002 to 2006. This paper will first analyze the descriptive characteristics of refugees who arrived in the United States including category of admission, nationality, state of intended residence in the United States and education. Demographic characteristics including gender, age and marital status will also be examined. Next, probability of adjustment by the above mentioned variables and time in United States will be analyzed. Finally, logistic regression will be utilized to measure the determinants of adjustment among refugees in the United States.

References:

Dahmann, D.C. 1989. "The Survey of Income and Program Participation as a Source of Migration Data." *Journal of Economic and Social Measurement,* 15:57-70.