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United States General Accounting Office

**Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on
Immigration and Refugee Affairs,
Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate**

December 1988

IMMIGRATION

Data Not Sufficient for Proposed Legislation



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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

**Program Evaluation and
Methodology Division**

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December 28, 1988

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration
and Refugee Affairs
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to your February 19, 1988, letter, we are submitting this report on the availability and adequacy of data needed to fulfill the reporting requirements provided for in proposed immigration legislation, S.2104.

Copies of the report will be sent to the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law of the House Committee on the Judiciary. Copies will also be sent to the Attorney General, the Secretaries of Housing and Urban Development, State, Health and Human Services, and Labor, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Director of the Census Bureau, the Commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and we will make copies available to others upon request.

Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Carl E. Wisler'.

Carl E. Wisler
Deputy Director

Executive Summary

Purpose

The proposed Immigration Act of 1988, S.2104, would require the Attorney General to submit to the President and the Congress an annual report on the effect of immigration on the United States. These reports may become controversial because every three years they must discuss the need (if any) to revise the numerical limitations that the bill sets on annual immigration to the United States. The bill provides that every three years the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House shall hold hearings on the findings of the latest report. GAO was asked by the chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs to determine whether adequate data would be available for the required reports.

Background

Current law provides 216,000 family preference visas as part of a preference system that also includes two categories of labor-related preferences. S.2104 would reform the system for admitting immigrants to the United States in several major ways. First, within an overall annual numerical limit under the bill of 590,000 visas, 470,000 are reserved for relatives of U.S. citizens or of permanent residents. Family preference visas would be allocated after an adjustment for immediate relative admissions in the previous year. Immediate relatives are defined as spouses, unmarried children under 21 years of age, and parents of adult United States citizens. Second, there is less emphasis on reunification of extended family members. And third, a new category, independent immigrants, is established, with an initial annual ceiling of 120,000. Some independent immigrants would compete for a chance to be admitted based on point scores derived from their education, occupation, English language ability, and other characteristics. (It is likely that S.2104 will be reintroduced in the new Congress in 1989.)

Further, S.2104 requires the Attorney General, beginning in 1992, to report annually on the impacts of immigration on a broad range of domestic and foreign policy considerations, including (1) family reunification; (2) labor needs, employment, and other economic and domestic conditions; (3) demographic and fertility rates; (4) resources and environmental factors; (5) foreign policy; and (6) national security. The report for 1992 and every third year thereafter is to include a discussion, based on these reported impacts of immigration, of the need to revise the numerical limits contained in the bill. Thus, the bill does not attempt a direct assessment of the numerical limits but provides a linkage in which the information on the impacts of immigration is used to provide the basis for revising or maintaining the numerical limits.

Results in Brief

GAO found that quantitative data relevant to a variety of impacts of immigration are available but are frequently not adequate for the purposes of the S.2104 reporting requirements. Expanding information in some available data bases and developing additional data sources could fill many data gaps. However, to produce the strongest evidence concerning the impact of immigration generally would require longitudinal data sources or other similar methodologies that could suitably address cause-and-effect questions. One way to obtain such evidence efficiently regarding at least some impacts would be to graft new data collection onto selected large existing longitudinal studies.

GAO's Analysis

To assess whether the data needed to answer questions about the six categories of outcomes would be (1) available and (2) of adequate quality, we examined prior reviews of the relevant data bases and drew on our prior studies of immigration. We consulted experts and interviewed officials at the agencies named in the bill.

Data Availability and Adequacy

There are three different methods of examining the “impact of immigration” in a quantitative way: current status, trends over time, and cause-and-effect. These methods require different data and study designs. For example, the size of the waiting lists for admission under the preference system could be determined at two points in time under a “current status” model. If many more data points were available, a “trend over time” analysis could be done. A “causal” analysis would require additional data to estimate what the waiting lists would have been in the absence of the new legislation and to determine reasons for patterns of change.

When GAO considered the data requirements for the least demanding method of analysis—current status—the data available for addressing 24 of the 26 proposed outcomes were limited. Credible information on consequences that could be clearly attributed to immigration, utilizing a causal model, would be even more difficult to obtain.

GAO identified promising federal agency data bases and determined their adequacy in measuring immigration impacts using the current-status method. The data elements most often lacking concern alien status—both the legality of the alien’s presence and the class of admission (immediate relative, refugee, or whatever)—and date of naturalization or adjustment to legal immigrant status. The second type of commonly

missing information is those educational and occupational characteristics which, as criteria, will be weighted heavily in the selection of the new independent immigrants.

Further, information on the impact of immigrants on resources and the environment and on foreign policy is limited. This is in part due to measurement difficulties in those areas. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency informed GAO that the agency was unable to provide information on the impact of immigration on the environment and was not planning to initiate such studies.

Possible Data Improvements

GAO finds that if the proposed bill were enacted, it would be possible to obtain some of these data through the augmentation of existing data bases or through additional data collection. The augmentation strategies with regard to current status and trend data include

- more integration of different data sources within the Immigration and Naturalization Service;
- additional national data collection about immigrant status on vital statistics records, including records of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces;
- expansion of data collection by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, especially on education, occupational history, and language skills of immigrants applying for permanent residence or naturalization, and on the potential for future petitioning for relatives (so-called "chain migration") among new immigrants;
- possible efforts to encourage states with large immigrant populations to develop compatible data systems; and
- improved data on emigration (since the impact of immigration on the United States depends in a significant way on the degree of emigration, or out-migration, of immigrants).

Cause-and-effect data could be produced on some of the outcomes by adding some new data collection to existing longitudinal studies such as the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation. It could also be useful to initiate other longitudinal studies aimed specifically at selected immigration issues.

Recommendation

GAO finds that available data are frequently not adequate for the purposes of the reporting requirements under S.2104. Therefore, GAO recommends that the linkage between impact measures and the process of

periodic review of the numerical limits be removed from proposed legislation. However, if the Congress views this linkage as critical, then a variety of steps (such as those previously cited) should be undertaken to strengthen immigration data. A number of federal agencies could be involved in such a data improvement effort.

Agency Comments

In the interest of time, the requester asked that GAO not seek agency comments on this report. However, GAO did discuss these findings and general conclusions with agency officials and took their observations into account.

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Abbreviations

AFDC	Aid for Families with Dependent Children
CPS	Current Population Survey
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GAO	General Accounting Office
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRCA	Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
NCHS	National Center for Health Statistics
SAVE	Systematic Alien Verification System for Entitlements
SIPP	Survey of Income and Program Participation
SSA	Social Security Administration

Introduction

Background

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, asked us to determine whether currently available or planned data collection would meet the needs of studies on the impacts of legal immigrants mandated by pending legislation S.2104, the Immigration Act of 1988.¹ Specifically, we sought answers to the following questions: (1) What data will be required for the mandated studies? (2) Will the needed data be available? (3) Will they be of adequate quality?

The Proposed Legislation

Table 1.1 contrasts the main features of S.2104 with those of the current law. The bill proposes to change legal immigration in three major ways:

1. It changes the system for allocating family preference visas. Within an overall annual limit of 590,000 visas, 470,000 are reserved for the relatives of U.S. citizens or of permanent residents.² Family preference visas would be allocated after an adjustment for immediate-relative admissions the previous year. Immediate relatives are defined as spouses, unmarried children under 21 years of age, and parents of adult U.S. citizens. Current law provides 216,000 family preference visas as part of a preference system that also includes two categories of labor-related preferences.
2. It provides fewer visas to brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens, and more to unmarried adult children and spouses of U.S. residents, within the family reunification preferences.
3. It creates under the overall category "independent immigrant" a new preference category of "selected immigrants" who qualify on the basis of a point system. Points are assigned to applicants on the basis of criteria such as their education, English language ability, and occupation. There is an initial annual ceiling of 120,000 for independent immigrants, of whom 45 percent (54,000) are selected immigrants. (Appendix I contains a more detailed description of S.2104.)

¹Because the Immigration and Naturalization Service's definition of an immigrant is "an alien admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident," the phrase "legal immigrant" is redundant. Nevertheless, since "immigrant" is commonly used to refer to all aliens regardless of their legal status, we will use the phrase "legal immigrant" where it will help to avoid confusion.

²The annual limit of 590,000 does not apply to immediate relatives and certain other classes of immigrants.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Table 1.1: Comparison of Provisions and Visa Numbers in the Current Law and S.2104, Based on Fiscal Year 1987 Data

Immigration category	Category description		Numerical limitation		
	Under current law	Under S. 2104	Under Current law	Under S.2104	
			No.	%	
Exempt	Immediate relatives: spouses, children under 21, and parents of U.S. citizens	No change	No limit ^a	No limit	^b
Family preferences	1st: unmarried adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens	No change	54,000	33,000	15%
	2nd: spouses and unmarried sons and daughters of permanent residents	Limited to spouses and unmarried sons and daughters under 26	70,200	143,000	65
	4th: married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens	No change	27,000	22,000	10
	5th: brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens	Limited to never married brothers and sisters	64,800	22,000 ^c	10
Total: family preferences			216,000^d	220,000^e	100
Independent	Special immigrants (ministers of religion, for example)	No change	No limit	6,000	5
	3rd: professions and exceptional ability	Advanced degree required for professions	27,000	27,600	23
	6th: skilled and unskilled workers	Limited to skilled workers	27,000	27,600	23
	^f	Employment-generating investors: one million capital plus 10 full-time jobs ^g	^f	4,800	4
	^f	Selected immigrants chosen according to new point system	^f	54,000	45
Total: other preferences			54,000	120,000	100

^a220,000 immediate relatives immigrated in fiscal year 1987.

^bNot applicable

^cThis does not include the addition of 30,000 per year for fiscal years 1990-1992 to reduce the current 5th preference backlog.

^dThis total excludes immediate relatives

^eNumber fluctuates according to the number of immediate relatives entering the United States in the previous year, here assumed to be 220,000.

^fNo such category under current immigration law.

^gFor United States citizens or lawfully admitted aliens or permanent residents rather than the family of such immigrants.

Source: U.S. Senate, Immigration Act of 1988 Report 100-290, 100th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988).

The Mandated Studies

S.2104 requires the Attorney General to assess the impact of immigration and report the results to the President annually. Every third year the report must include a discussion of the need, if any, to revise the numerical limitations on immigration. The President then can recommend to the Congress a change in the numerical limit on legal immigration, initially set at 590,000. The Congress then may accept or reject those recommendations under an expedited parliamentary procedure.³

Section 102(a) of S.2104 requires that the Attorney General, commencing before fiscal year 1993, and in each succeeding year, "in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, shall prepare and transmit to the President and to the Judiciary Committees of the Senate and of the House of Representatives a report discussing the effect of immigration on the United States." This report is to consider (emphasis added)

"(A) the requirements of citizens of the United States and of aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence to be joined in the United States by immediate family members;
(B) the impact of immigration on labor needs, employment, and other economic and domestic conditions in the United States;
(C) the impact of immigration with respect to demographic and fertility rates and resources and environmental factors; and
(D) the impact of immigration on the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States."

The report for 1992 and every third year thereafter is to include a discussion, based on these reported impacts of immigration, of the need to revise the numerical limits contained in the bill. Thus, the bill does not attempt a direct assessment of the numerical limits but provides a linkage in which the information on the impacts of immigration is used to provide the basis for revising or maintaining the numerical limits.

The Senate passed S.2104 in 1988, but the House did not take action. It is likely that S.2104 will be reintroduced in the new Congress in 1989.

³If the President recommends an increase or decrease of 5 percent or less, it takes effect, unless the Congress objects. If the proposed increase or decrease is greater than 5 percent, the Congress must act affirmatively to approve the proposal, otherwise the numbers remain the same. Under the 590,000 annual limit proposed by S. 2104, 5 percent corresponds to 29,500 immigrants, thus allowing immigration to reach 619,500 for fiscal years 1993 to 1995 if the President and the Congress agree to a 5 percent increase. The law would also allow an increase of 5 percent annually above the 590,000 ceiling during 1993 and each following year, compounded annually. Additionally, the 5 percent increase could apply to either the family preference immigrants or independent immigrants, or both.

(Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), the President is required to report to the Congress triennially on the effects of immigration, but none of the recommendations which he may make become law without the Congress's consideration.⁴)

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to determine: (1) What data will be required for the mandated studies? (2) Will the needed data be available? (3) Will they be of adequate quality? As requested by the Subcommittee, we focused on the mandated studies, and we then limited our consideration to the reports due from 1992 through 1999.

We disaggregated the topics in Section 102(a), which yielded six general categories of policy concerns: (1) family reunification; (2) labor needs, employment, and other economic and domestic considerations; (3) demographic characteristics and fertility rates; (4) resources and environmental factors; (5) foreign policy; and (6) national security. We then sought to identify more specific, plausible dimensions or outcomes of immigration. Put another way, we sought to identify measurable dimensions within these six general policy concerns on which immigration might have some impact. In order to select such dimensions or outcomes, we reviewed the proposed legislation, the multi-volume report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, and the text of the hearings conducted on the bills that were later consolidated as S.2104. We also consulted the experts on immigration policy listed in appendix II.

To assess whether the data needed to answer questions about the six categories of outcomes would be (1) available and (2) of adequate quality, we relied on several sources of information. We examined prior reviews of the relevant data bases, particularly those used in attempts to assess immigration effects over the last few years. We also drew on our own prior studies of immigration. We asked the experts listed about the completeness of our preliminary statement of data requirements and about the availability and adequacy of the needed data. Further, we interviewed officials at the six agencies named in the bill to learn about relevant data bases and to ascertain the continued availability of the

⁴Section 401(a) of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-603) requires the President to transmit a comprehensive "immigration-impact" report to the Congress by January 1989 and every third year thereafter. Topics are to include the impact of legal and illegal immigration on the economy, the labor and housing markets, the educational system, social services, foreign policy, environmental quality and resources, and the rate, size, and distribution of population growth in the United States.

data.⁵ We asked about their plans for improving or changing these sources or collecting new data, particularly if the bill became law.

We also asked agency officials how they intended to meet the triennial reporting requirements mandated by IRCA, which are similar to those of S.2104 with respect to the topics to be included. Their plans for data availability, where applicable to the reporting requirements of S.2104, are incorporated in our assessment. However, the IRCA reporting requirements differ from those of S.2104 in two relevant ways. First, under IRCA the assessment period is set as the preceding three years (with projections to be made for the next five years), while no assessment period is named in S.2104. And second, under IRCA the impacts on specific states and local units of government with high rates of immigration resettlement are required, whereas no state or local impact assessments are required by S.2104.

We identified and applied methodological criteria for adequate quality using recognized professional standards (such as measurement validity) and factors of specific concern to immigration studies (for example, whether the data base differentiated legal and undocumented aliens). We did not, however, independently test the completeness and accuracy of the data bases.

Our reviews were conducted between March and May of 1988. We note, however, that agency plans can change. Our study approach is summarized in table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Sources of Information for Answering Study Questions

Question	Primary source of information
What data would be required for the mandated triennial studies	Review of hearings Expert opinion Select Commission reports
Will needed data base be available?	Interviews with agency officials
Will they be of adequate quality?	Prior reviews of the data bases Prior GAO studies

⁵Officials at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicated that EPA was unable to provide information on the impact of immigration on the environment and were not planning to initiate any such studies at this time. The other agencies were the Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Urban Development, and the Department of State.

Strengths and Limitations of Our Approach

Our approach has several strengths. First, we assess the availability of data bases for a wide range of proposed outcomes. Second, we assess the adequacy of available data bases with regard to each proposed outcome they are intended to address. And third, the criteria we use to assess data bases allow us to describe their limitations specifically. One limitation of our approach is that, while it achieves broad coverage of outcomes, it does not examine detailed questions that may be raised. For example, we review the outcome “size of the waiting lists,” but we do not attempt to itemize all the questions that could be framed relative to this general topic. Another limitation is that we do not systematically develop, nor empirically test, indicators of the outcomes we propose. The data bases may include many indicators, but it was beyond the scope of our effort to identify and catalog all of the relevant indicators within each data source. However, in appendix IV we do list relevant data elements from three of our major data sources. A final limitation is that we do not include in the scope of our work the larger question of how one would use the various analyses of the impacts of immigration to reach a determination as to whether the current ceilings for family-related and independent immigration should be changed. As noted earlier, the proposed bill specifies this use of the information in the reports as part of a triennial process of considering revisions in these numerical limits.

Organization of This Report

In chapter 2, we identify data required by the legislation as proposed outcomes—that is, broad data requirements—for each of the six issues, and we discuss some implications for research design and data collection. In chapter 3, we report on the availability and adequacy of federal data relevant to these outcomes. Finally, in chapter 4, we note some improvements that would increase the likelihood of satisfactorily meeting the congressional requirements for information.

Outcomes to Be Measured

The proposed legislation specifies that the reports cover the following outcome areas: (1) family reunification; (2) labor needs, employment, and other economic and domestic considerations; (3) demographic characteristics and fertility rates; (4) resources and environmental factors; (5) foreign policy; and (6) national security. In this chapter we divide these broad areas into 26 specific outcomes.

Family Reunification Under S.2104

Two aims of the bill are to reduce visa backlogs for entry of family members, some of whom now face waiting periods of up to 18 years, and to reduce the likelihood of “chain migration” among highly extended, as opposed to relatively nuclear, families. The question remains as to whether the changes the bill proposes to reduce visa backlogs will provide for an adequate number of visas for family members of U.S. citizens and permanent residents who wish to join their relatives in the United States. Distinctions between the categories of the preference system are based upon whether the relative of the person seeking immigrant status is a permanent resident or U.S. citizen and on the closeness of the family connection. Three of the four preference categories require that the person seeking immigrant status be related to a U.S. citizen, while another, second preference, is reserved for the spouses and unmarried children (under 26) of permanent residents. Thus, one important consequence of this system is that the number of persons applying for immigrant status through family connections is dependent upon the number of those permanent residents who subsequently become U.S. citizens and the number of native U.S. citizens who marry or adopt foreign nationals.

As previously noted, one provision of S.2104 offers a substantial number of visas for the brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens (that is, the current fifth preference). However, these additional 30,000 visas per year would be available for a 3-year period only and are specifically intended to reduce the waiting lists that now exist for this visa category. After that, the allocation for this group would be substantially reduced to 22,000 under S.2104. In addition, new applicants would be required to have a “never married” status. This requirement would not apply to those already on the fifth preference waiting list. Changes in the qualifying ages of unmarried children of permanent residents (current second preference) and the qualifying marital status of siblings of U.S. citizens (current fifth preference) may further reduce the waiting lists of those seeking family-connection immigrant status. The periodic review of the operation of the preference categories for family members is intended to ensure that the temporary increases in available visas and changes in

eligibility requirements reduce existing waiting lists and prevent the growth of long waiting lists in the future.

We identified four salient outcomes in the area of family reunification on which data will be needed. As shown in table 2.1, these outcomes are (1) size of the waiting lists, (2) preference category distribution, (3) preference category use rates, and (4) immigrant characteristics (such as country of origin) for each preference category.

Table 2.1: Outcomes for the Reporting Requirements: Family Reunification

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Size of the waiting lists	X	X	
Distribution of family reunification preferences			X
Rate of preference usage	X		X
Demographic characteristics of immigrants	X	X	X

Labor Needs, Employment, and Other Economic and Domestic Considerations

Legal immigration may have both a direct and indirect impact on “labor needs, employment, and other economic and domestic conditions.” The direct economic impacts of immigration are caused by the extent of participation of additional immigrant workers in the labor force as well as by the participation of such workers who may have different skills and requirements for their labor than native workers. Indirect economic impacts involve the benefits or drawbacks that may result from the presence of immigrants in the work force. It has been suggested, for example, that as a greater number of U.S. citizens become eligible for social security benefits, the presence of immigrant workers will have a beneficial effect on the social security system. Alternatively, it has also been suggested that the presence of immigrants increases the nation’s costs for social services.

In addition to the direct and indirect economic impacts of legal immigration, other domestic conditions that can be affected by immigration include political affairs, the level of crime and delinquency, and increases in the use of public services such as schools and hospitals.

We have identified, as table 2.2 indicates, eleven outcomes on which data will be needed in the areas of employment and the economy. Two outcomes are related to U.S. labor needs; two to the employment of U.S. citizens; two are related to the economy in general; and five to other domestic conditions.

Table 2.2: Outcomes for Reporting Requirements: Labor Needs, Employment, and Other Economic and Domestic Conditions

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Labor needs			
Job-related characteristics of immigrants	X		X
Unmet labor needs of U.S. employers	X	X	X
Employment of U.S. citizens			
The wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens	X	X	X
Restricted development of the training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens		X	X
Other economic conditions			
U.S. productivity	X		X
Economic status of immigrants	X		
Other domestic conditions			
Economic segmentation of immigrants by language	X		
Rates of crime and delinquency			X
Costs			
Social services	X		X
Health services	X		X
Educational services	X		X

Demographic Characteristics and Fertility Rates

Legal immigration may impact on “demographic characteristics and fertility rates” through changes in birth rates, age and sex composition, and ethnic composition. Because immigrants from different countries differ from native U.S. citizens in their fertility rates, legal immigration will have some impact on the U.S. population.¹ The three outcomes we see as particularly relevant to data collection in this area are shown in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Outcomes for Reporting Requirements: Demographic Characteristics and Fertility Rates

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Fertility rates	X		X
Population growth and location	X		X
Immigrant household composition	X		X

¹We recognize that significant variation also exists in the fertility rates of native-born subgroups.

Resources and Environmental Factors

Legal immigration may impact on resources and environmental factors by contributing to the depletion of natural resources such as fossil fuels and increasing the amount of pollution that may occur as a result of the increase in the U.S. population produced by immigration. Table 2.4 lists three outcomes of particular interest in regard to an increase in the U.S. population on which data will be needed, as well as the source which identified these outcomes as relevant to the proposed legislation.

Table 2.4: Outcomes for the Reporting Requirements: Resources and Environmental Factors

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Air and water quality	X		
Resource depletion	X		
Waste management	X		

Foreign Policy

Legal immigration may impact U.S. foreign policy directly because of its effect on the countries from which immigrants come. For example, immigrants may send to their native countries remittances that provide an important contribution to the economy, or immigration to the United States may be a mechanism which siphons off the most educated citizens in the country. Immigration to the United States may also serve as a safety valve by relieving pressures on a labor market that does not provide jobs to its citizens. Indirectly, immigration may affect United States foreign policy by creating interest groups within the country that are able to influence this policy. As table 2.5 indicates, we have identified three foreign policy outcomes on which data will be required as particularly relevant to the proposed legislation.

Table 2.5: Outcomes for the Reporting Requirements: Foreign Policy Factors

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Foreign governments' satisfaction with U.S. immigration policy			X
Inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy			X
Domestic political influences on foreign policy			X

National Security

The impact of legal immigration on national security refers to the possibility that the admission of immigrants could be used to cloak the infiltration of this country by individuals hostile to the United States. The

specific activities in which such individuals could engage include terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and the sheltering of those who engage in these activities.

Table 2.6 shows the two outcomes that we judged particularly relevant to this area. None of the three primary sources identified additional, or more specific, outcomes for us. In contrast to the attention given economic and domestic consequences, the national security implications of the proposed legislation have received little analysis.

Table 2.6: Outcomes for the Reporting Requirements: National Security Factors

Outcome	Source of the outcome		
	Select Commission	Hearings	Experts
Infiltration of terrorists into the United States			X
Infiltration of drug traffickers and other criminals into the United States			X

Summary

In summary, we have identified 26 outcomes for the six areas of interest on which data will be needed. The primary source for these outcomes was the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, supplemented by legislative hearings and experts. These outcomes help to define the information needs. There are, however, other factors to consider before we turn to the question of whether sufficient data to measure the 26 outcomes will be available.

Classifying Immigrants

This discussion of measuring outcomes of immigration raises the issue of identifying immigrants in order to determine their impact on the United States. The need to identify and, for some analyses, to track immigrants in data sources raises some complex issues.

Many aliens are in the United States illegally. These undocumented aliens have impacts on this country which we need to attempt to isolate from the impacts of legal immigrants. Further, Subcommittee staff expressed particular interest in legal immigration, which we highlight in this report. Thus, adequate data must include legal status.

A measure of legal status can be difficult to obtain because undocumented aliens may not identify themselves as such. Further, approximately 1,700,000 undocumented aliens became eligible under IRCA to

adjust their status to that of legal immigrant. Such persons hypothetically could be included in a data base as either legal or illegal aliens. Another complexity regarding legal status concerns persons who are admitted to United States for a temporary period (such as students, tourists, or trainees). These aliens may be in this country legally, but they are not considered "legal immigrants" because temporary visitors are classified as "nonimmigrants." This group may have a substantial impact upon this country. In 1983, there were about 10 million "nonimmigrants," and over 113,000 stayed for a year or longer.

It is not realistic to think of legal status in a static sense. There can be considerable movement between statuses. For example, a person can enter the country under a student visa (as a nonimmigrant) and later drop out of school but remain here (as an illegal alien). Such aliens could later adjust their status to that of legal immigrant.

Even within the category of legal immigrant, there are important differences in classification of persons that could have corresponding differences in their impacts on the United States. We noted many of these categories under the current law and under S.2104 in table 1.1.

All of this suggests the value of data bases that maintain information on the "alien status" of persons, by which we mean to include both the legal status and class of admission (immediate relative, first preference, refugee adjustment, and the like). While such information would not eliminate the problems of classifications, it would help in defining the impacts of immigration and would make it possible to sort out the impacts of different categories of immigrants.

Finally, interpretation of immigration-impact assessments would be easier if it were possible to measure validly the emigration of native-born U.S. citizens, permanent resident aliens, persons who have illegally entered the United States, and persons whose status is unknown.² There are no current official data on emigration from the United States. The emigration rate—that is, the rate at which immigrants (or other populations) leave the United States—has a bearing on immigration impact. If the emigration rate is not known, then net migration is also unknown. And, for most outcomes—such as employment, labor needs, and social

²The net effect of immigration and emigration on an area's population may be referred to as "net immigration" or "net emigration," depending on whether immigration or emigration is larger. Net migration is the net effect of the number of immigrants and emigrants on an area's population, and it can refer to either net immigration or net emigration. However, except for two brief periods in 1917-18 and 1932-36, alien immigration has always exceeded alien emigration in the United States.

service use—assessing the impact of immigration requires that net migration for major groups, as well as in the aggregate, be reliably calculated. In a recent report, we recommended that the Attorney General direct the Commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to consult with the Director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census to develop and implement a uniform methodology for estimating net migration to the United States by adequately accounting for the emigration of permanent resident aliens.³

Methods of Determining Impacts of Immigration

Having identified outcomes to be measured and some pitfalls in classifying immigrants, we will turn in the next chapter to the task of identifying available data bases that contain the needed information and to rating the adequacy of those sources for the purposes of S.2104. Before we turn to those tasks, however, we consider the issue of how to measure impacts. For example, how can one determine “the impact of immigration with respect to demographic and fertility rates?” The term impact implies effects or consequences but can be interpreted or conceptualized in three ways, each of which has different implications for data needs: (1) analyses of current status (relative to some previous status), (2) analyses of trends, and (3) cause-and-effect analyses. It is beyond the scope of this report to elaborate on possible designs.⁴

As table 2.7 indicates, the least demanding design or method for assessing impact is current status, where the primary question is: “What is happening now?” For example, a current status question might be: “What is the current backlog of applicants for entry under the fifth preference? Has it been—as we anticipated—reduced?” Such questions only require relevant data at two points in time.

³The number of legal immigrants who become permanent resident aliens and then later emigrate is unknown, and there are no estimates of the size of this group. For more details about our study of this problem, see *Immigration: The Future Flow of Legal Immigration to the United States* (GAO/PEMD-88-7, Jan. 1988).

⁴See, for example, Peter H. Rossi and Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1982) and Charles M. Judd and David A. Kenny, *Estimating the Effects of Social Interventions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Table 2.7: Design Requirements for Different Interpretations of “Impact”

Interpretation ^a	Typical design	Requirement
Current status (What is happening now?)	Cross-sectional survey	Representative sample
	Secondary analysis (of administrative data)	Data are complete, accurate, reliable, and valid.
Trends (How have things changed?)	Repeated cross-sectional surveys	Representative sample using comparable measures and procedures
	Time series analysis (of administrative data)	Data are complete, accurate, reliable, valid, and are comparable across time with regard to measures and procedures; enough data points exist to quantify trends; enough data are available for each point to be reliable.
Cause and effect (What are the consequences of immigration?)	Interrupted time series analysis (of administrative data)	Data are complete, accurate, reliable, valid, and are comparable across time with regard to measures and procedures.
		Enough data points exist to quantify trends; enough data are available for each point to be reliable; impacts must have been due to changes in patterns of immigration that occurred at a single, identifiable point in time.
	Multiple cohort longitudinal panels	Representative samples are constructed comparably, at close enough intervals to detect changes in response to the new law. Data need to be complete, accurate, reliable, valid, and consistent across time and cohorts for comparability. Enough data points will be collected for each cohort to quantify trends, and each cohort will be large enough for relevant subgroup analyses.
	Selected case studies	Target of opportunity studies to provide in-depth understanding of key groups (for example, net migration of nurses) or to obtain data needed for ruling out alternate interpretations; requirements vary for different methodologies.

^aTrend data can also give current status; cause-and-effect data can also be analyzed for trends and current status.

A second interpretation of impact is change over time, where the primary questions are: “In what direction and to what extent are there changes?” Interpreting “impact” as requiring a trend analysis implies additional data needs: periodic data collection providing many data points (for example, monthly reports over 3 years would give 36 points, usually a minimal number of points for a trend analysis). There must be

no relevant changes in the data definition, collection instruments, or procedures from one time to another.

The third interpretation is that “cause-and-effect” analyses are required to determine impact, thereby implying a yet greater demand for data. Different data would be needed in order to attribute any changes found to the new legislation (by ruling out alternative explanations). First, a measure of change in the outcome of interest is needed. This must involve a pre-legislation and post-legislation comparison. Long-term data, with many data points before and after the new legislation, are also desirable for analyzing immigration impacts. Further, for each plausible alternative explanation, an independent measure must be obtained. For example, a sharp decline in the unmet need for labor after passage of the legislation could be due to selective immigration under the new independent category, or perhaps to a decline in demand for the goods or services in question. Data on such demands would be needed to statistically adjust for changes in demand, while also measuring the decline in the unmet need for labor. The data needed to rule out alternative explanations must be quite specific to the alternative explanation to be eliminated. However, it is not always possible to specify in advance what explanations must be ruled out and, thus, what data will be needed.

Interpretations of impact as current status or trends for some outcomes, such as those involving the labor market, may not be sufficient to inform immigration policy. However, we do not attempt to specify cause-and-effect designs for all the outcomes, but we do note that this interpretation is most difficult to carry out adequately. (See, for example, our reports on assessing the employer-sanctions-provisions impact of IRCA.⁵)

⁵Immigration Reform: Status of Implementing Employer Sanctions After One Year (GAO GGD-88-14, Nov. 1987), and Immigration Reform: Status of Implementing Employer Sanctions After Second Year (GAO/GGD-89-16, Nov. 1988). We note that we may not be able to isolate and measure the effects of employer sanctions on any identified discrimination because of the many factors involved. We do, however, present current status and note that we will be analyzing trend and opinion data in future reports.

Data Availability and Adequacy for the Immigration Outcomes

Our first task was to locate potential data bases and to assess the availability of information for each of the 26 outcomes. Our second task was to assess data adequacy.

With regard to availability, our method involved considering only data collected and maintained by the federal government. This limitation of scope is particularly appropriate in terms of the intent of the proposed bill—namely, to measure immigration impacts at the national level. However, the concentration of immigrants in six states suggests that data sources within those states and for localities would also be useful.¹ Indeed, it could be argued that for some outcomes immigration may have a very small impact for most places in the United States. One difficulty in using such data sources is the inability to generalize findings. If immigration shows a certain impact in one state, but data are not available to test for a similar impact in other states, then no conclusions about national impacts can be drawn. Another difficulty is the array of practical barriers involved in conducting a systematic inventory of possibly thousands of local data sources in six states. The resources required for an inventory of other non-federal sources such as universities, associations, and foundations are also daunting. Thus, our inclusion only of federal data sources is based on a combination of research design and practical considerations.

By “available,” we mean that the data have been entered into computerized data systems rather than, for example, put in files that would have to be hand-searched. We did not examine availability as access because, in general, federal agencies can use most federally collected data whenever access to these data is necessary for these agencies to meet their legislative responsibilities. (Although some data, such as Census Bureau data, are available to outside researchers under some conditions, other data are completely unavailable. For example, the interpretation of the Privacy Act of 1974 by the Social Security Administration (SSA) has been that the data it collects cannot be made available to outside researchers. However, researchers at SSA may be able to conduct analyses using social security data that could then be reported to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.)

With regard to adequacy, we developed criteria for judging the available data sources consistent with the reporting requirements of the bill and what is known about the process of international migration to the

¹INS estimates indicate that 72 percent of immigrants in fiscal year 1986 intended to live in the states of New York, California, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois.

United States. We judged technical adequacy according to recognized statistical standards, such as whether data elements measure what they purport to measure. While our criteria are not overly stringent, we find the data sources we have identified to be limited in their usefulness for our purposes. (Details identifying the criteria for data adequacy and the scoring system we developed to rate the adequacy of data bases are available in appendix III.) The limitations of available data sources can in many cases be remedied. In chapter 4 we will discuss data improvements that would make the assessment of immigration impacts envisioned by S.2104 more feasible. (We present our findings—based on expert opinion, interviews with agency officials, and prior reviews of data quality—in table form for each of the six categories of outcomes, considering both data availability and adequacy.)

Family Reunification

As table 3.1 indicates, data adequacy and availability are good for two of these outcomes: the distribution of family reunification preferences and the rate of preference usage. State Department waiting list data are limited with regard to both availability (due in part to incomplete computerization) and adequacy. For demographic characteristics of immigrants and the size of the waiting lists, however, data are limited. Specifically, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) administrative data record age, sex, and marital status for the alien at time of admission. They do not include information on education nor adequate information on occupation. The definition of occupation used by INS is limited because it does not distinguish between the occupation the immigrant was trained for, the occupation that the immigrant previously held in the country of origin, and the occupation that the immigrant expects to hold in this country.

Table 3.1: Data Availability and Adequacy for Family Reunification Outcomes

Outcome	Source	Description	Availability	Adequacy	Analysis possible
Size of the waiting lists	Department of State	Administrative data	Limited	Limited	Current; trend ^a
Distribution of family reunification preferences	INS	Administrative data	Good	Good	Current; trend
Rate of preference usage	INS	Administrative data	Good	Good	Current; trend
Demographic characteristics of immigrants	INS	Administrative data	Limited	Good	Current; trend
	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
	Current Population Survey	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current; trend

^a“Current” refers to current status; “trend” to changes over time.

Further, the visa backlogs (or waiting lists) for the various preference categories that are maintained by the Department of State may not represent the true size of these backlogs. In addition to *bona fide* applicants, there are also listed (1) persons who may no longer qualify to be immigrants, (2) persons who have died, (3) persons who will be removed from the waiting lists as a result of the legalization programs of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), and (4) persons who no longer wish to immigrate to the United States. While the latter category of persons would be extremely difficult to estimate, additional work by the Department of State overseas could produce estimates of the first two categories. Currently, the State Department classifies applications as “inactive” only after the applicants fail to appear and receive their visas when called. Although more than 200,000 applications were finally classified as inactive between 1982 and 1986, they were considered “active” before the applicants were called. A recent State Department review found that the accuracy of its waiting list varied by country. (Accuracy is measured by dividing the number of persons who appear when called by the number who initially apply for a visa.) Consular reports from the five countries with the highest totals in the fifth preference waiting list indicated that the accuracy for the fifth preference ranged from a high of 93 percent down to a low of 70 percent. A comparison of immigrant visa issuances for those countries that were not oversubscribed indicated that overall waiting-list accuracy was roughly 85 percent.

The Current Population Survey (CPS) and the decennial census provide more detailed educational and occupational information, as well as other important social-demographic characteristics. However, data from the decennial census may not be processed in time for the first report and may be too dated for subsequent reports. Neither data source identifies permanent resident aliens among the alien population. Thus, the CPS and decennial census sources fail to meet the alien-status criterion. We discuss the alien-status criterion in chapter 2. There we define alien status to include information on both legal status (legal or illegal) and class of admission (immediate relative, first preference, asylee adjustment, special immigrant, and the like).

**Labor Needs,
Employment, and
Other Economic and
Domestic Conditions**

As table 3.2 indicates, data for relevant outcomes in these areas are generally available but of limited adequacy.

Chapter 3
**Data Availability and Adequacy for the
Immigration Outcomes**

Table 3.2: Data Availability and Adequacy for U.S. Labor Needs, Employment, and Other Economic and Domestic Conditions

Outcome	Source	Description	Availability	Adequacy	Analysis possible
Labor needs					
Job-related characteristics of immigrants	INS	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
Unmet labor needs of U.S. employers	SSA	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
Employment of U.S. citizens					
The wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens	SSA	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current
Restricted development of training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens	a	a	a	a	a
Other economic conditions					
U.S. productivity	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
Economic status of immigrants	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	SSA	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
Other domestic conditions					
Economic segmentation of immigrants by language	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current
Rates of crime and delinquency	a	a	a	a	a
Costs					
Social services	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
	SIPP	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current, trend
Health services	SSA	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current
Educational	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current, trend

^aWe were unable to locate any suitable national data bases.

U.S. Labor Needs

With regard to job-related characteristics of immigrants, INS immigrant-admissions data include age and occupation. As previously noted, however, the INS data do not include the education of the immigrant. INS collects information on employment history but does not include it in the

data base. The INS form does not distinguish between the occupation for which the immigrant was trained, the occupation the immigrant held prior to immigration, and the occupation that the immigrant expects to hold in the United States.

Data from the Bureau of the Census can also address the job-related-characteristics outcome. However, the availability of the decennial census coincides with the reporting requirements of the bill only once every ten years, and neither the decennial census nor the CPS provides adequate information on alien status. Both, however, do allow for comparisons among ethnic and nativity groups, resident aliens, and U.S. natives. The CPS sample is not large enough to reliably detect immigration impacts at the state or local level. Local and regional sensitivity—that is, the capacity of the data to be analyzed to detect regional and local variations—is one of our criteria of data adequacy for reasons we discuss at the beginning of this chapter.

Turning to the other outcome, the term “unmet labor needs of employers” refers to the impact that immigration policy is expected to have on the availability of workers with certain job-related characteristics. For example, increasing the number of points to be awarded for educational attainment under the independent labor provisions of the proposed bill, while also revising the limitation on the total number of legal immigrants that can be admitted annually, may decrease the number of immigrants available for relatively low-skilled occupations (assuming a constant or decreasing number of other types of immigrants—for instance, refugees, asylees, and undocumented aliens). If the number of immigrants available for low-skilled occupations were to decrease, it has been hypothesized that some industries which are heavily dependent on low-skilled immigrants—such as certain service industries (for example, janitorial, restaurant) and the furniture manufacturing industry—would have difficulty operating as they currently do. In other areas of shortage under current conditions, the new independent immigrant category could attract persons with sorely needed higher skills.

Technically, the concept of a “labor shortage” is a difficult one for which to find an indicator. Gross measures such as labor market unemployment rates are not adequate because some occupations require special skills which most of the unemployed do not possess. Moreover, employers who face a labor shortage when offering one level of wages and a particular set of working conditions may find adequate labor when offering a higher level of wages and a different set of working conditions. However, it is usually not possible to show for which wage

level and set of working conditions there is a “true” labor shortage. Thus, a labor shortage experienced by some employers may be the result of their own efforts to “unreasonably” decrease their labor costs. Further, employers who have a labor shortage could adopt new technologies which eliminate their need for labor. Finally, it is difficult to determine when employers have failed to introduce new technologies that could eliminate labor shortages.

Because of the complexities associated with the concept of “labor shortage,” selecting a single indicator may not be feasible. Instead, one approach that could be used to determine when employers “unreasonably” try to reduce labor costs or fail to introduce labor-saving technologies is to compare across similar firms, types of employees, the wages those employees are paid, and the firms’ use of technology. Although this approach is limited by the range of salaries and the extent to which technological innovation is found in the firms compared, it may be possible to draw limited conclusions about the extent to which changes in the labor needs of employers are affected by immigration policy.

The only currently available data source that is capable of linking individual-level employee characteristics to firm-level data, over time, is the Continuous Work History Sample maintained by SSA. These data do not include alien status, although they do include country of birth.² The date of arrival in the United States can be inferred by date of issuance of the social security card. In addition, the construct validity of some of the data elements for the purpose of measuring labor shortages is unknown, and data on the firms’ use of technology are not available.

Employment of U.S. Citizens

Wages aside, some of the working conditions of United States citizens include number of hours worked per day, the number of days worked per week, the number of paid holidays and vacation days, the safety and cleanliness of the workplace, the ability to unionize, retirement plans, and health benefits. Immigration policy could change the wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens by changing the amount of competition U.S. workers face from legal immigrants. As the number of available workers with the same job-related characteristics increases, employers may reduce the wages and provide less favorable working conditions because of the increased competition among workers for the same jobs.

²Beginning in 1980, social security data identified four categories of residents: (1) U.S. citizen, (2) legal alien allowed to work, (3) legal alien not allowed to work, and (4) other.

The continuous work history data maintained by the Social Security Administration (SSA) are the only data that could begin to address this proposed outcome because they are the only data that identify the firm and include individual employees' wages. However, not all the aspects of this outcome could easily be addressed by these data. While information is available on wages, data elements on other aspects of working conditions are not available. Further, these data do not include alien status, although it is possible to distinguish naturalized U.S. citizens from native-born U.S. citizens.

The outcome termed "the restricted development of training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens" refers to the possibility that the employment of already well-educated and trained immigrants may be seen as a way to avoid the training and educational costs associated with hiring U.S. citizens, especially those who may require special "out-reach" efforts. However, we were not able to locate national data to address this outcome.

Other Economic Conditions

In addition to technological innovations, which greatly contribute to productivity, legal immigration will affect U.S. productivity to the extent that the levels of skill and training possessed by immigrants are either above or below those of native workers. If the levels of skill and training of immigrants are below those of native workers, then U.S. productivity will suffer. If the immigrants' levels of skill and training are above those of native workers, then U.S. productivity will benefit. While workers' formal levels of training may be specified with some clarity, the levels of skill that workers possess are not as clearly specifiable. Therefore, finding indicators of comparable training and skill poses certain difficulties. Possibly further compounding this problem is the belief held by some researchers that immigrants are more motivated to succeed than native workers. If so, then the training and skill possessed by immigrants may be poor indicators of the productive input of immigrants, because they do not account for motivation.

One indicator that has been used to assess the productive input of immigrants is their wages compared to those of native workers over time. If the productive input of immigrants is greater than that of native workers, then, despite whatever shortcomings they may bring to the labor market (such as deficient English skills), over time the income of immigrant workers should outstrip that of native workers. To measure the changes in wages over time without the problem of cohort confounding,

longitudinal data are needed.³ Although decennial census data from more than one census can be pooled to approximate a longitudinal design, and even though the Continuous Work History Sample is longitudinal, the failure to distinguish among different categories of resident aliens reduces the quality of these data.

In regard to economic progress, the immigrants' development can be measured by income, occupation, self-employment, capital acquisition, and labor force participation. Although the data sources cited previously cover these measures of economic progress, the same limitations apply here as in the former case.

Other Domestic Conditions

Economic Segmentation by Language

The outcome "economic segmentation of immigrants by language" refers to the possibility that poor English language skills limit the work opportunities available to immigrants. Some research suggests, however, that immigrants' English language skills are improved as a consequence of labor force participation.

Crime and Delinquency

There could be a relationship between immigration and crime-and-delinquency outcomes. However, data meeting our requirements are not available for either the victims of crimes or for those arrested for crimes.⁴

³When members of a cohort disappear differentially, instead of randomly, it is not possible to say that the cohort as a whole is changing. If less skilled immigrants who entered in 1980 leave, for example, the remaining members may seem to gain in average earnings by 1990. Comparing cohorts cross-sectionally at different times yields data that mixes or confounds biased attrition and true changes in individuals.

⁴The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Automated Identification System contains information submitted by local law enforcement agencies on persons arrested in each city. These crime statistics identify individuals as foreign-born—that is, aliens, naturalized citizens, and children of U.S. citizens born outside the country—rather than as aliens. However, these data suffer from numerous limitations. First, they include only those arrestees reported by local law enforcement agencies and for whom acceptable finger print cards were submitted. Second, one would use arrest records as a proxy for criminal behavior, but that may not be valid due to discrimination or other reasons. Third, according to the Justice Department, many aliens falsely claim to have been born in the United States and therefore are not recorded as foreign-born. See our report entitled Criminal Aliens: INS' Enforcement Activities (GAO/GGD-88-3, Nov. 1987).

Social Services Costs

The proposed outcome “social services costs” refers to the net cost (costs less revenues) of the benefits and services provided by federal, state, and local government. They include health care (emergency health care, medicare, medicaid), housing (assisted housing, rent subsidies, mortgage assistance), education (public school costs, job training, college costs), public safety (fire and police), welfare benefits (aid to families with dependent children, food stamps), insurance (social security, unemployment compensation), and the administration of justice (INS, courts). Because most legal immigrants are generally eligible for the benefits and services provided by government, it is expected that legal immigration will increase the absolute cost of social services. However, it is also expected that the taxes paid by legal immigrants would increase the revenues to government to offset the costs of social services so that legal immigrants would not increase the per capita costs of these services.

Determining the impact of legal immigration on the cost of social services presents formidable problems. First, with the exception of the INS and State Department data, most of the data bases we looked at do not include the alien status of the alien. Second, with the exception of census data and data maintained by SSA, most of the data we reviewed do not even include place of birth so that the foreign-born can be identified.⁵ As a result, only INS and Department of State can distinguish between legal immigrants and other types of immigrants. However, these data do not include social service costs.

Although census data and SSA data do not distinguish between aliens by their alien status, they do distinguish between U.S. citizens and resident aliens. Thus, while SSA and census data include some of the benefits and services received, they do not show the alien status of the immigrants receiving them. And, because the use of social services is expected to systematically vary by alien status, the inability to identify alien status seriously confounds any conclusion based on these data about the impact of legal immigration on social service costs.

Second, with the exceptions of public education, emergency health care, and public safety services, many legal immigrants may not be immediately eligible for social services because they have been “sponsored” by relatives or organizations already in the United States who agree that they will provide for the immigrant so that he or she will not become a

⁵Citizenship status is usually ascertained.

public charge.⁶ The number of sponsored aliens currently residing in the United States is not known. Neither INS nor the State Department collects data on “sponsored aliens” because the category does not exist as an official class of immigrant. Thus, for a period of from three to five years, an unknown—but possibly large—number of legal immigrants may not be eligible for social services.

Nonetheless, some legal immigrants who are not eligible to receive these benefits and services may, in fact, receive them. Separating out the unauthorized use of social services by legal immigrants, as distinct from other immigrants, presents an additional problem.⁷ Moreover, if legal immigrants become naturalized U.S. citizens, they become eligible for the same social services as native U.S. citizens.

Finally, many social service programs—such as publicly assisted housing, emergency health care, and public safety—are administered at the local level, have local eligibility requirements, and have records that are maintained at the local level. We were unable to find any appropriate national-level data that were sensitive to regional variations. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), for example, which includes data on services and benefits that are received by resident aliens and U.S. citizens, does not have a large enough sample to detect variations at the local level.

Health Status of Immigrants

With regard to the health status of immigrants and their children, the only appropriate data that we found are in the CPS disability file. These data suffer from the problems of cohort-confounding found in cross-sectional surveys and from a lack of sufficient detail on health condition and alien status to allow meaningful comparison across groups. Data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)—such as the National Health Interview Survey, National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and the National Medical Care Utilization and Expenditure Survey—which could provide detailed information on health condition and health

⁶When prospective immigrants apply for visas, they must prove they are not excludable on any of 33 grounds. One of those grounds is that, in the opinion of the consular officer, they are likely to become public charges. In the absence of proof of employment, a job offer, or evidence of personal assets and income, an affidavit of sponsorship by a relative or organization is the only way to demonstrate that the immigrant will not become a public charge.

⁷See, for example, our report entitled Undocumented Aliens: Estimating the Cost of Their Uncompensated Care (GAO/PEMD-87-24BR, Sept. 1987).

expenditures, do not ask for place of birth.⁸ Because of the difficulty of measuring health status through surveys, the accuracy and construct validity of these data can be questioned. At best, they provide only a crude indicator of health status.

Educational Costs

Educational costs associated with immigrants could be derived from educational attainment data. Only the decennial census and CPS include information on both educational attainments and alien status. The decennial census data provide enough sensitivity to local variations but are flawed by cohort-confounding. CPS neither guards against cohort-confounding nor provides sensitivity to local variations.

An important outcome for the localities is the increase in the number of public school pupils. Longitudinal data that are sensitive to local variation are needed to address this outcome. Except for the decennial census, however, we did not find data available. However, the decennial census may not be timely enough and does not include information on alien status.

Demographic Characteristics and Fertility Rates

Two points need to be considered with respect to all the outcomes associated with the impact of immigration on demographics and fertility rates. First, although the need to know the emigration rate is important for studies in all areas of immigration impacts, it is particularly acute in the area of demographic impacts. And second, the age, sex, and ethnic composition of immigrant flows are important because they underlie the demographic and fertility impacts of immigration. With these considerations in mind, we found that data are very limited for these areas.

Fertility Rates

If immigrant groups have higher fertility rates than that of the U.S. population in general, then the fertility rate of the United States will increase. Data from the decennial census and the CPS supplement on fertility are available to address this issue over time and across groups. In addition, the 1988 Survey of Family Growth from the National Center for Health Statistics will include an item on place of birth. If the survey continues to include this item, it will be a valuable addition for addressing this outcome. Vital statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics include information on births, deaths, marriages, and divorces

⁸The last-named survey was conducted in 1980.

but do not code place of birth in sufficient detail for tabulation by country. However, none of these data include alien status, and only the census data include the date of immigration. (See table 3.3.)

Table 3.3: Data Availability and Adequacy for Demographic Characteristics and Fertility Rates

Outcome	Source	Description	Availability	Adequacy	Analysis possible
Fertility rates	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
	NCHS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
Population growth and location	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
	INS	Administrative data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
Immigrant household composition	Decennial census	Census data	Good	Limited	Current; trend
	CPS	Survey data	Good	Limited	Current; trend

Population Growth and Location

Data from the decennial census are able to address this outcome over time and across groups. However, the decennial census may not be sufficiently timely, and alien status is not included in the data.

INS administrative data do include intended place of residence for most aliens entering the United States as permanent residents. However, the usefulness of this data element is limited because the data refer only to the flow of new immigrants. INS has not collected information on the number of aliens residing in the United States since 1980, when alien address-reporting was discontinued. Also, the outcome “immigrant household composition” can be addressed with data from the decennial census, although the limitations noted in the previous paragraph apply.

Resources and the Environment

The outcomes of legal immigration associated with resources and the environment are air and water quality, resource depletion, and waste management. No direct data are available to address these outcomes over time. Data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for example, focus on the impact of population on air and water quality and do not distinguish between the impacts of different groups, such as resident aliens and U.S. natives, on air and water quality. (Impacts would have to be simulated or imputed, rather than measured directly.) As noted earlier, EPA officials declined to discuss data availability or adequacy with us, indicating that this set of questions addressed an area in which there was not any activity. (It was beyond the scope of this job to

assess the technical adequacy of simulations or imputation procedures that might be employed.)

Foreign Policy

The data needed to address foreign policy outcomes are qualitative rather than quantitative and involve subjective assessments of a dynamic process. For example, State Department officials told us that in order to meet their reporting requirements under IRCA, they will ask personnel at the consulates and embassies of each country to write a descriptive report on the outcomes of interest. These reports will be collated centrally, and a comprehensive report prepared. They would use the same procedures with regard to the reporting requirements under S.2104. That is, the assessment would not be based on quantitative data bases but on the observations, views, and opinions of “on-the-spot” State Department personnel. We did not independently examine the adequacy of this approach.

National Security

Our review with regard to national security was limited to the sources discussed in chapter 2. We did not contact federal security agencies regarding the terrorism and drug trafficking outcomes, in part because these agencies were not listed in the bill as responsible under the reporting requirements. However, one source of quantitative data—albeit indirect and limited—available through the State Department on the infiltration of individuals hostile to the United States via immigration is the number of visa refusals for reasons of national security. The utility of visa refusal data is probably limited to recording upward and downward trends in infiltration.

Summary

We found that data are available to address most outcomes that we derived from S.2104. However, these data are often not adequate for the purposes of the reporting requirements contained in the bill. Three gaps we often found are (1) those data that include alien status do not include the needed content, while data with the appropriate content do not include alien status; (2) the available data lack local and regional sensitivity; and (3) some data, such as the decennial census, may be timely for purposes of the reporting requirements in S.2104 only once a decade. Further, we did not find any current or planned data that are, or would be, available, technically adequate, and useful for cause-and-effect analyses.

This means that to the extent that cause-and-effect information is desired, two relatively "soft" approaches would have to be relied on. The first involves quantitative analyses using many assumptions. For example, the number of illegal aliens in the total foreign-born population could be estimated by calculating the difference between the number admitted legally over a given period and the number of aliens reported by the census, and then adjusting other data bases. The second approach involves qualitative data collection, usually through surveys of the opinions and views of knowledgeable people about the impacts they perceive or their estimates of impacts. To summarize, we were not able to locate data that would permit credible quantitative statements about causes and effects resulting from immigration. Further, in order even to present interpretable current status or trend data, we think some new information will have to be collected. This view is presented in the next chapter.

New Data to Improve Outcome Assessments

To examine additional data needs, we first review the most serious problems for the 26 outcomes. We next consider available relevant data bases and identify what changes, if any, could correct these problems. We also suggest some possible additional data sources.

The Definition of Impact

It was beyond the scope of our work to develop detailed designs, cost estimates, or analyses of probable trade-offs in alternative investments of similar resources in data collection. The three interpretations of impact that we specified—current status, trends, and cause-and-effect—have markedly different implications for additional data needs. We have generally rated the adequacy of data sources based on the requirements for impact measurement in terms of current status or trends. Some studies, such as case studies or longitudinal studies (which are typically costly and require considerable lead time), could be a useful investment. These studies typically give the most convincing evidence on cause-and-effect. Nonetheless, expectations need to be quite modest concerning how much insight will be possible in regard to the true impact of immigration beyond the area of family reunification. In our judgment, it is likely that improved descriptions of current status and trends over time, while not without their difficulties, are typically feasible.

Most Important Additional Data Needs

Table 4.1 summarizes our observations on the most pressing additional data needs, in terms of current status and trend analyses, for the 26 outcomes. In general, we think that better information on alien status and on social and demographic characteristics is most important. In the next section, we identify opportunities to upgrade existing data and ways in which new sources could be developed. At the same time, we note that these are not GAO recommendations. We have not weighed the advantages of each data improvement against the cost, nor have we assessed the relative importance of improved data for each outcome. (The 26 outcomes are presumably not equally important.) However, we have identified where improvements could be made as a first step in the process of improving data for the reports that would be required if S.2104 were enacted.

Table 4.1: Outcomes and Most Pressing Additional Data Needs for Current-Status or Trend Analysis

Outcome	Additional data needed
Family reunification	
1. Size of waiting lists	Accuracy checks
2. Distribution of family reunification preferences	Accuracy checks
3. Rate of preference usage	Accuracy checks
4. Demographic characteristics of immigrants	Alien status for all foreign-born differentiated by dates of entry, adjustment to legal immigrant status, and naturalization (if U.S. citizen)
Labor needs	
5. Job-related characteristics of immigrants	Alien status, pre-entry and post-entry education, and occupational skills
6. Unmet labor needs of U.S. employers	Problems are conceptual, in ruling out alternative interpretations of stated unmet need
Employment of U.S. citizens	
7. The wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens	Disaggregation of wage and working conditions data by native-born and foreign-born status and, within foreign-born, by alien status
8. Restricted development of training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens	No data bases located
Other economic conditions	
9. U.S. productivity	No data bases located
10. Economic status of immigrants	Because of cohort-confounding problem, we believe this outcome should not be reported in trend form; for current status reports, data should be disaggregated by alien status
Other domestic conditions	
11. Economic segmentation of immigrants by language	Data on language proficiency and language spoken for different foreign-born and U.S. citizens for relevant economic data bases
12. Rates of crime and delinquency	Information on crime and delinquency rate by alien status
Costs	
13. Social services	Alien status of social services recipients
14. Health services	Alien status of health services recipients
Demographic characteristics and fertility rates	
15. Educational	Alien status of educational services recipients
16. Fertility rates	Alien status of new mothers and fathers alien status in data on family size
17. Population growth and location	Alien status
18. Immigrant household composition	Alien status
Environmental factors	

(continued)

Outcome	Additional data needed
19. Air and water quality	No data bases located
20. Resource depletion	No data bases located
21. Waste management	No data bases located
Foreign-policy factors	
22. Foreign governments' satisfaction with U.S. immigration policy	No data bases located
23. Inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy	No data bases located
24. Domestic political influences on foreign policy	No data bases located
National security factors	
25. Infiltration of terrorists into U.S.	No data bases located
26. Infiltration of drug traffickers and other criminals into U.S.	No data bases located

Upgrading Administrative Data Bases

As noted in table 4.1, we found problems in data availability and in their technical adequacy, some of which could be eliminated rather easily. More specifically:

- Test information about the accuracy and completeness of the data bases was available only for the census activities. Although all the data bases we reviewed did not have documented deficiencies, we believe that regular testing of the quality of all data bases and the documenting of the results of these tests are needed to ensure future data quality. (If this improvement were made, data adequacy would be increased for the outcomes whose numbers—as listed in table 4.1—are 1, 2, and 3.)
- Detailed information on the relationship of the alien relative to the “petitioner” (a permanent resident or U.S. citizen who is sponsoring the application of an alien) is being collected on the INS form I-130.¹ However, this detailed information is not now being entered into the INS data system.² Instead, all categories of preference are combined into the category of “alien relative.” (Entering this detailed information would be helpful for outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 17.)
- Other data INS already collects could be linked to the I-130. When aliens become permanent residents of the United States, INS creates records for its data file which contain social and demographic data and a unique

¹This form was revised February 28, 1987.

²The State Department keeps an annual count, by country and preference category, of those already approved and waiting for entry.

identifier, the "A" number.³ If this immigrant becomes a naturalized citizen at some future time, the "A" number is also recorded on the naturalization data file.⁴ And, if as either a permanent resident or a naturalized citizen an alien relative is sponsored by this immigrant, the "A" number is listed on the petition.⁵ By linking these three files, it is possible to get a more precise estimate of the potential demand for preference category usage, because the number of aliens in each preference category who have been sponsored by permanent residents and naturalized citizens is known.⁶ (This increases the data adequacy for outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 17.)

- Births, deaths, marriages, and divorces are recorded at the local level by the states, and the information is forwarded to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Although place of birth and place of residence are recorded as a part of standard vital statistics, the level of detail for place of birth is "State in the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, Canada, Cuba, Mexico," "remainder of the world," and "place not stated." Increasing the level of detail concerning place of birth, date of entry to the United States, and naturalization date (if applicable) would improve the timeliness and adequacy of data on demographic trends and fertility rates. (See outcomes 16 and 17.)
- Providing INS data on naturalization and adjustment of legal status to SSA could allow the Continuous Work History Sample to be updated in regard to the alien status of the immigrants in that sample. The number of immigrants in this sample also could be increased. (This data source could provide longitudinal earnings data for the economic status and labor needs outcomes 7, 10, and 14.)

Data Sources That Could Be Developed

Additional data sources could be developed by increasing the administrative information agencies currently collect, conducting special Census Bureau cross-sectional surveys, building on non-federal efforts, and conducting longitudinal surveys. These additional data sources would be used to address outcomes related to family members, demographic characteristics and processes, fertility rates, labor needs, employment and

³These data come from the I-130 and G-325A forms.

⁴Much of the information in this file is the same as in the new immigrant entry data file and the petitioner data file. An additional piece of information is how long the individual was a permanent resident before naturalization.

⁵The block on the I-130 form asks for the "A" number, "if any."

⁶Similar information is available for immigrants who are sponsored in the occupational preference categories.

other economic and domestic conditions. Adding information on the status of aliens to data collected by the Census Bureau and NCHS could increase the adequacy of these data sources for the reporting requirements of S.2104 but also could decrease the public's willingness to respond.

Additions to Currently Collected Data

- INS form G-325A, on which biographical information for immigrants applying for permanent residence or naturalization is collected, could be revised to include additional information on the education and formal training of immigrants. This information is likely to become even more important to collect because points are awarded to immigrants in the independent category for educational attainment. (Relates to outcomes 5, 10, and 15.)
- INS form G-325A, or another form, could be used to collect information on the intended household composition of the immigrants in this country.⁷ In addition, the "A" number of the principal immigrant (that is, the person for whom the visa is obtained) could be appended to the new immigrant file of the family of the principal so that the family connections could be constructed. (See outcome 18.)
- On either the biographic profile form (G-325A), or on a special form, information on the English language skills of the immigrant could be collected. This information is likely to become more important because points are awarded to immigrants in the independent category on the basis of English language skills. (See outcome 11.)
- More complete information on the occupation, occupational aspirations, and job history of immigrants could be collected by INS. This information is likely to become even more important because of the independent labor category of immigrants provided in S.2104. (See outcomes 4 and 5.)
- If the surveys conducted by NCHS asked for place of birth, number of years in this country, and citizenship status, then data from surveys such as the National Health Interview Survey, National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, and the National Medical Care Utilization and Expenditure Survey would provide information on immigrants.⁸ (Relates to outcome 14.)

⁷These data would be more timely than decennial census data on household composition and would supply more complete information on immigrant status.

⁸Local and regional sensitivity would be limited, but for some purposes related to health status this information could be useful.

Special Supplement Possibilities to Census Bureau Surveys

- The Census Bureau could be commissioned to conduct regional or national cross-sectional surveys with foci specific to outcomes related to immigrants. Currently, the Current Population Survey Supplements collect much information that could address outcomes related to legal immigration. For example, the displaced worker supplement, the alimony and child support supplement, the employee benefits supplement, the health insurance coverage supplement, the school enrollment supplement, and the housing vacancy survey—all could be made to yield immigrant-related outcomes. (Information relates to outcomes 13 and 14.)

However, these supplements are generally inadequate for addressing outcomes related to immigration for two reasons. First, the sample size is too small to pick up local variations in the foreign-born population. And second, the questions that are used to infer immigrant status (that is, place of birth, citizenship status, date of entry to the United States) are not routinely asked on all CPS surveys. It is possible, however, that the CPS surveys could be altered to include the routine immigrant-status information.

Encouraging Innovative Uses of Existing Data Sources

- Those states with the largest immigrant populations could be encouraged to restructure the data bases that they may now maintain on immigrants so that they would be compatible with one another with regard to data definitions and formats. We noted earlier that the systematic identification and use of state data sources are now largely impractical for the purposes of the bill. We have not explored the feasibility of an effort to standardize state immigration data sources, but we note the potential value of such a data source. (The outcomes for which data adequacy could be increased are to be determined.)
- Some reviewers of an earlier draft of this report recommended a new program of extramural research as a strategy to ensure access to local and private data sources as well. Such an effort might provide a better base of research on the impacts of immigration. Case studies of employers, for example, could be conducted with the goal of learning more about impacts of immigration on the workforce and their causes. Such a program might improve the quality of the annual reports required under this bill if the research could be effectively targeted to the reporting needs.
- The Systematic Alien Verification System for Entitlements (SAVE) is a pilot project for providing automated access to a specific subset of an INS data base, the Central Index, for verification of the alien status for entitlement eligibility decisions made by program administrators at the local sites where the entitlements are distributed. Although this system has

not been fully implemented and was not designed to monitor program use, the possibility of using it for this purpose could be explored.⁹ (Relates to outcomes 13 and 14.)

Longitudinal Surveys

A multiple cohort longitudinal survey could provide a cause-and-effect assessment of outcome categories of labor needs, employment, other economic and domestic conditions, and demographic characteristics and fertility rates. In addition, such surveys could provide information on the process of immigration and assimilation which is needed to develop indicators that could then be used to measure the progress, benefits, costs, and contributions of past or future immigrant streams.

- The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) now collects the kind of information needed to address the social services outcome as well as other outcomes related to household composition, fertility, health care, education, labor market participation, wages, and migration. Further, the design of this survey provides longitudinal as well as cross-sectional data and allows linkage to administrative data such as those maintained by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Internal Revenue Service. Unfortunately, the sample size in SIPP is inadequate for addressing legal immigration outcomes. But, a special supplement to SIPP could oversample in the areas with large immigrant populations and thus provide an adequate sample size for addressing these outcomes for legal immigration. (Relates to outcomes 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.)
- Other ongoing Department of Labor sponsored longitudinal studies, such as the National Longitudinal Survey and the Panel of Income Dynamics, could add an immigrant component and thereby provide useful comparative information. In addition, there is the possibility that currently planned cross-sectional surveys by INS and the Department of Labor could be used as the base year for longitudinal studies. (Relates to outcomes 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.)

In addition to the strategy of grafting data collection related to immigration impacts onto large existing longitudinal studies, it would be possible to design smaller longitudinal studies tailored to many of the 26 outcomes. For example, one or more studies could be designed to determine whether or not immigrants are associated with higher governmental

⁹See, for example, our report, Immigration Reform: Systematic Alien Verification System Could Be Improved (GAO/IMTEC-87-45BR, Sept. 1987).

health care costs than those incurred by native citizens. Other outcomes—foreign policy impacts, for example— could not be measured appropriately using longitudinal surveys. If it were determined that stronger evaluation data were required, a systematic review of the feasibility of longitudinal studies and other designs capable of cause-and-effect analyses could be undertaken for each of the 26 outcomes. As noted earlier, in this review we have emphasized current status and trend data sources, which tend to be more available and less costly than data sources designed to address cause-and-effect questions.

Emigration

Emigration is a factor that underlies all immigration impacts because the magnitude of those impacts depends upon the length of time that immigrants reside in the United States. However, as we have discussed in other reports (see GAO/PEMD-88-7), no data are currently available on the emigration rates of legal immigrants.

- One approach to this problem involves the use of INS form I-94. When entering the U.S., non-U.S. citizens must fill out this form. The arrival portion is sent to a central data processing facility.¹⁰ The matching departure copy of the form becomes the nonimmigrant's proof of legal admission into the U.S. This copy is collected during departure and sent to the data processing facility, where it is matched to the arrival copy in the nonimmigrant information system. However, these forms are not retained for aliens entering as new immigrants or for permanent resident aliens returning from temporary trips. Thus, while the system is essentially in place, the gaps in coverage make it unusable for purposes of measuring emigration. All that is needed is that the I-94 form be retained for all aliens entering the United States and a system be put in place whereby a departure form would be submitted by all aliens upon departure.
- A second approach, currently being tested by the Census Bureau in a CPS supplement, involves estimating the emigration rate from information supplied about relatives who once resided in the United States but now live in another country.

Major Remaining Gaps

Data for several of the outcomes would not be affected by the foregoing data improvements and additions. These unaffected outcomes include (numbers refer to table 4.1 row numbers) restricted development of the

¹⁰Canadians who intend to stay in the U.S. for six months or less and Mexicans who intend to stay in the U.S. for 72 hours or less are not required to submit this form.

training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens (8), resources and environment outcomes (19-21), foreign policy outcomes (22-24), and national security outcomes (25-26.)

With regard to restrictions in training and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens, we find this concept difficult to formulate in a manner susceptible to research inquiry. The remaining data limitations here are in part due to measurement difficulties in these areas. With regard to resources and the environment, EPA informed us that the agency was unable to provide information on the impact of immigration on the environment and was not planning to initiate related studies. Experts we consulted disagreed over the likelihood and nature of a possible relationship between immigration and resources or environmental outcomes. Some posited a relationship linking immigration through population growth or population density to these outcomes. Others suggested theoretical models that required knowledge of occupation or industry of employment and other factors. Inherent measurement problems are associated with the foreign policy outcomes and possibly with the national security outcomes regarding terrorism and drug trafficking.

Recommendation

We find that available data are frequently not adequate for purposes of the reporting requirements under S.2104. Therefore, we recommend that the linkage between impact measures and the process of periodic review of the numerical limits be removed from proposed legislation. However, if the Congress views this linkage as critical, then a variety of steps should be undertaken to strengthen immigration data. A number of federal agencies could be involved in such a data improvement effort.

Summary

We identified the major gaps in data for the 26 outcomes. We find that it would be possible to obtain some of the needed data through the augmentation of existing data bases or through additional data collection. We find that cause-and-effect data could be produced on some outcomes by adding some data collection to existing longitudinal studies such as the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation. GAO is not recommending such specific improvements because we have not weighed the advantages of each improvement against its cost, nor have we assessed the relative importance of improved data for the different outcomes.

The Proposed Immigration Act of 1988, S.2104

The bill is intended to improve some aspects of the entry process, such as reducing backlogs in family reunification categories, establishing a national level of U.S. immigration, and ensuring that individuals whose skills are needed in the United States have a better chance of being admitted. Although this bill retains some of the features of the current immigration law, it also changes the current law in a number of respects.

Current Law

Under the current law an overall total of 270,000 immigrants may be admitted annually in six preference categories. (All six preference categories are listed in table 1.1.) Regardless of preference-category admissions, the number of immigrants that can be admitted annually from any one country is generally limited to 20,000. Once this limit is reached, applicants are placed on a waiting list until the following year, or until there is an opening. Also, under the current law, immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (spouses, unmarried children under 21, and parents of adult citizens) can be admitted without regard to the numerical limitations. The annual number of immigrants admitted as exempt-immediate relatives has been growing steadily, from 103,925 in fiscal year 1976, to 151,131 in fiscal year 1980, to 198,143 in fiscal year 1985.

And third, those who are admitted as refugees or asylees, after one year of continuous presence in the United States, are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status. The number of refugees that can be admitted is determined annually by the President after consulting with the Congress.

Changes in the Law

S.2104 proposes some notable changes in the law. First, it sets a higher numerical limitation or ceiling for immigrant visas. Second, it changes the system of preference categories by altering the percentage of visas allocated to each category and by establishing an independent immigrant category. And third, it establishes reporting requirements and an expedited parliamentary procedure for adjusting the numerical limitations proposed by the President.

Numerical Limitation for Legal Immigration

The new limit is set at 590,000 for at least the first three years and includes an anticipated 220,000 exempt-immediate relatives, 250,000 immigrants who enter in the preference categories, and 120,000 in the independent immigrant category (to be discussed below). The number of exempt-immediate relatives admitted in any one year is to be offset against 470,000 (440,000 after fiscal year 1992) family-connection

immigrants authorized to enter in the preference categories in the following year. That is, if 470,000 exempt-immediate relatives enter in one year (120,000 visas are reserved for the independent immigrant category), then in the following year, no immigrants could enter in the family-connection preference categories; however, an unlimited number of exempt-immediate relatives would be permitted to enter. (Under the current law, the number of exempt-immediate relatives admitted is not counted against the numerical limit of 270,000 who enter in the preference categories.)

Changes in Preference Category System

Within the overall limit of 590,000 visas, 470,000 are reserved for the relatives of U.S. citizens or of permanent residents (through fiscal year 1992). (See table 1.1.) Of these visas, for the first three years, 30,000 are allocated to reduce the current backlog for the brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens. (After fiscal year 1992, 30,000 of these family-connection visas are allocated to the independent-immigrant category. From the remaining 440,000 visas authorized, the number of "immediate relatives" (that is, spouses, unmarried children under 21, and parents of adult U.S. citizens) admitted the previous year (about 220,000 in fiscal year 1987) is subtracted to determine the number of family-connection visas available. After this calculation, allocations are as follows: 15 percent to the unmarried adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens; 65 percent to the spouses and unmarried sons and daughters (under 26 years of age) of permanent residents; 10 percent to married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens; and 10 percent to the never married brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens.¹

A New Preference Category

The proposed bill also creates a new category of "independent immigrants." One hundred and twenty thousand visas would be available (150,000 after fiscal year 1992) for those with skills that are needed in the U.S. and others who have been unable to obtain visas because they have no relatives in this country. Of the 120,000 visas, 5 percent are for "special immigrants" (that is, certain categories of immigrant, such as ministers of religion or those who lost their citizenship by serving in foreign armed forces); 23 percent are for skilled workers; 23 percent are for aliens who are members of professions and hold advanced degrees or who possess exceptional ability; and 4 percent are for investors with not less than one million dollars who will create at least 10 new jobs.

¹Those who are 26 years of age and over with petitions pending by the date of enactment may also receive visas under the 65 percent category.

Finally, at least 45 percent of the independent-immigrant visas are randomly distributed to “selected immigrants” who have scored at least 50 out of 95 points (awarded on the basis of age, education, occupation, and English language skills).

Unlike current law, S.2104 would subject most “special immigrants” to numerical limits. Further, current law makes no provision for awarding visas on a point system based on capital to be invested, age, education, or English language skills. Finally, unlike current law, S.2104 makes no specific allocation of visas for unskilled laborers.

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Criteria for Data Adequacy

We list the criteria that we developed, other than the presence or absence of data, that need to be considered in assessing the availability and adequacy of data. We then group the nine criteria that pertain to the current status of an outcome into three clusters. And finally, we show our approach to evaluating specific data bases.

The Eleven Criteria

1. The data must include legal status. Both the language of the bill and its legislative history make it clear that the focus of the immigration impacts that are to be reported is legal immigration.

Many of the outcomes involve comparisons across groups, such as recently arrived immigrants versus immigrants who arrived in the past, U.S.-born citizens versus immigrants or naturalized U.S. citizens, first-generation immigrants versus their children and grandchildren, immigrants who entered under given provisions of the immigration bill versus those who entered under other provisions, and legal immigrants versus other aliens admitted to the United States. For example, to determine if immigrant workers displace or complement U.S. workers, U.S. workers are compared to immigrants. Similarly, to determine if the legal immigrants who enter under occupational preferences have different effects on the labor market than legal immigrants who enter under the family reunification preferences, immigrants in these two categories will need to be compared.

Data that do not provide information on the legal status of immigrants—that do not differentiate, for example, between refugees, undocumented aliens, and legal immigrants—generally will not be adequate. For some purposes—for example, comparisons between immigrants who enter under occupational preferences and those who enter under family reunification preferences—the category of preference admission must also be provided.

2. The data must be collected close to the time the review is due. We reviewed the data in terms of recency for the periodic reviews mandated by the bill. For example, the results of the decennial census may not be available in time for the first report, due January 1992, and they will be dated by the time the next triennial report is due in January 1995.

3. The focus of the data for immigration impacts must be on those concerns named in the bill or on information needed to address those concerns. Although many important concerns about legal immigration could be identified, our focus is limited to the proposed outcomes that directly

flow from those concerns named in the bill or to information that is needed to address those outcomes. Data that do not address these proposed outcomes are rated not adequate, even though they may address important concerns about legal immigration.

4. Data quality must be high in terms of accuracy. Because data are never completely accurate, it is necessary to know the limits within which available data are accurate. Documentation of tests for accuracy may be sparse for administrative immigration data. Nonetheless, we believe the accuracy of administrative data, as well as of other data, should be tested, especially when they are used for immigration impact studies. We will assign a not adequate rating to data which are not high in accuracy.

5. Data quality must be high in terms of measuring what they purport to measure (that is, construct validity). Most of the data that have been used for immigration studies were not collected for this specific purpose. Further, some of our proposed outcomes involve concepts, such as “labor shortage,” that are inherently difficult to specify precisely. Nonetheless, the validity of the constructs relevant to the immigration impact reports required by the proposed bill should be tested by some means. Such tests are needed for all data that will be used in immigration impact studies. Data that are not high in construct validity or that contain key data elements for which construct validity is unknown will be rated not adequate.

6. Data quality must be high in regard to the completeness of the record. Most data records are not fully complete with respect to either the coverage of the intended population or the extent to which there are requisite data elements for all members of the covered population. It is important to know the extent to which the records are complete. Data whose coverage of the intended population is low or in which many key data elements of the covered population are missing or unknown will be rated not adequate.

7. The data must be capable of being analyzed so that regional and local variations can be detected. Many of the outcomes that are associated with legal immigration will be limited in their impacts to regions or localities. Outcomes related to the labor market, for example, are likely only to have regional or local impacts because U.S. labor markets are primarily regional or local, and impacts that occur in one labor market may not occur in other labor markets. Similarly, outcomes related to social services use are likely to have regional or local impacts because

many social service programs (such as publicly assisted housing and health care programs) are administered at the regional and local level.

More importantly, however, legal immigrants are not now evenly distributed across all regions and states. More than 70 percent of all immigrants are located within six states. While S.2104 might affect this distribution, we must still expect data sources which are not sensitive enough to detect impacts at the regional or local level to be inadequate for reporting immigration impacts.¹

8. Impacts which require time to develop should be detectable. For some proposed outcomes—such as educational attainment of the children of immigrants and the rate of economic progress of immigrants—impacts will not be readily apparent. These sorts of outcomes take time to develop and mature. As a consequence, to detect these impacts, analyses must either allow some “lag time” for the impact to develop or make repeated measurements over time. Data which cannot be analyzed so that impacts that need time to develop can be detected will be rated not adequate.

9. Incremental impacts should be separable from cumulative impacts. The magnitude of some immigration impacts, such as those related to the depletion of natural resources and pollution, are likely to be different if all legal immigrants are considered, rather than just those who might enter the U.S. after the passage of S.2104. Data which cannot be analyzed so that incremental impacts can be separated from cumulative impacts, and for which conclusions about immigration impacts need to be distinct, will be rated not adequate for the relevant questions.

10. Some outcomes can only be established over time. Many of the outcomes, such as population growth and social services costs, are time dependent and require repeated studies over time. Further, in order to show that there has been a change due to immigration, baseline data are needed. These considerations indicate that comparability of data sources is necessary. That is, the variable definitions, sampling procedures, and data collection procedures must be similar enough so that data collected in the past can be combined with currently collected data. Finally, data for which trends over time are needed, and for which analyses of trends over time are not possible, will be rated not adequate.

¹Data collected through case studies do avoid this aggregation problem. However, case studies have other problems that limit their usefulness.

11. For cause-and-effect interpretations, the research design used to collect or link the data must be sufficiently well-constructed to eliminate alternative explanations. Some data may have been collected or linked by designs that allow alternative explanations to be eliminated. For example, the educational level of immigrants now arriving may be higher than that of immigrants who arrived earlier. As a result, the earnings of immigrants could rise over time and appear to indicate that as immigrants become better assimilated into the labor market, their incomes rise. Alternatively, those immigrants who fail to adjust to the labor market may emigrate, leaving behind only those who have adjusted well. As a result of this selective emigration, a comparison of immigrants' earnings between the two points in time would appear to show them rising.

Generally, for data not bounded by their context (that is, case studies), only longitudinal or nonequivalent control group designs will meet this requirement. Administrative data, for example, should, if necessary, be linked so that longitudinal or nonequivalent designs can be used. When survey data or census data are used to examine some proposed outcomes, such as the trend in fertility rates, linked cross-sectional surveys may be adequate. And, if possible, census data should be used to construct pseudo-longitudinal designs. Data which are not collected or linked so that alternative explanations can be eliminated will be rated inadequate for the cause-and-effect interpretation of "impact."

The Three Clusters

We decided to rate each data base on the nine criteria related to the current status, the least demanding interpretation of impact. (See pp. 22 to 24.) The two criteria we deleted were trends over time and cause-and-effect. (Data bases which are found to be less than adequate for analyses of the current status will not be adequate for analyses of trends and cause-and-effect.) We then grouped the nine criteria into three clusters on the basis of face validity. The first cluster, "Focus," included those criteria that describe the population of interest according to what information is available, what designations are used, and how detailed any differences are.

- Relevant focus: the focus of the data for immigration impacts must be on those concerns named in the bill or on information needed to address those concerns.
- Legal status: the data must identify legal immigrants.
- Local and regional sensitivity: the data must be capable of being analyzed so that regional and local variations can be detected.

A second cluster, "Timing," included those criteria that limited the data according to when they were collected and how they were collected.

- Data recency: data must be collected close to the time the review is due.
- Time sensitivity: impacts which require time to develop should be detectable.
- Incremental impacts: incremental impacts should be separable from cumulative impacts.

And the final cluster, "Technical," included those criteria that described the quality of the data.

- Accuracy: data quality must be high in terms of accuracy.
- Validity: data quality must be high in terms of construct validity.
- Completeness: data quality must be high in terms of the completeness with which the elements are recorded.

Applying the Criteria to Evaluate Data Bases

Our general approach to evaluating a data base's adequacy for addressing the current status of an outcome was to rate it on each of the nine criteria which pertained to the current status. We rated each criterion on a three point scale: 0 indicates that the data base is not adequate for addressing the outcome; 1 indicates that the adequacy of the data base is limited; and 2 indicates that the data base is adequate.

Table III.1 shows the ratings on each criterion for each data base we considered. To illustrate how the criteria are rated, consider the second column, legal status. This criterion, which refers to the presence of information on the legal classification of the aliens, is rated "0" for data from the Census Bureau (CPS, Decennial, and SIPP), while it is rated "1" for data from SSA. The Census Bureau data do not include information on the legal status of aliens. Thus, many types of resident aliens—including students, refugees, undocumented aliens, as well as legal immigrants—cannot be distinguished from one another. SSA data, on the other hand, identify four categories of social security card holders: U.S. citizen, legal alien allowed to work, legal alien not allowed to work, and other. For some outcomes, this categorization may be sufficient. However, it does not distinguish between aliens who are permitted to work on a short-term basis and those who are permitted to work on a long-

Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy

term basis (that is, permanent residents).² Only INS and State Department data, which pertain exclusively to legal aliens, are rated “2” on the criterion “legal status.”³

Table III.1: Evaluation of Data Base Adequacy for the Current Status of Each Outcome

Outcome	Relevant focus	Legal status
Family reunification		
Size of waiting list by state	2	2
Distribution of family reunification preferences, INS	2	2
Rate of preference usage, INS	2	2
Demographic characteristics of immigrant		
INS	1	2
Decennial	2	0
CPS	2	0
Labor needs		
Job-related characteristics of immigrant		
INS	1	2
Decennial	2	0
CPS	2	0
Unmet labor needs of employers, SSA	1	1
Employment of U.S. citizens		
Wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens, SSA	1	1
Restricted development of training and educational opportunities	a	a

²The SSA data represent the classification of social security card holders at the time they apply for a card. The data base is not updated to reflect changes in their classification unless application is made for new card. However, this is not a weakness for the study of current status, which is under discussion here. This would represent a weakness for trend analyses or cause-and-effect studies. Also, according to the Social Security Administration, (SSA) social security cards were properly issued in about 99 percent of the cases it reviewed in 1986. This high validity rate may be due to the fact that, until IRCA, an employer needed a social security number for tax purposes, but the individual did not have to present the card. As a result of IRCA, we believe the incentives are greater for illegal aliens to obtain a valid social security card with fraudulent documentation. See, for example, our report entitled Immigration Control: A New Role for the Social Security Card (GAO/HRD-88-4, March 1988).

³The INS and State Department data bases do not include undocumented aliens. However, the Committee's request concerned legal immigration, so for our purposes this omission does not represent a weakness.

**Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy**

Local/ regional sensitivity	Data recency	Time sensitivity	Incremental impacts	Validity	Accuracy	Completeness	Total
2	2	1	2	2	0	2	15
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	18
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	18
2	2	1	2	1	2	2	15
2	1	0	1	2	2	1	11
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12
1	1	1	2	1	2	2	13
2	1	0	1	2	2	1	11
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12
2	1	2	2	2	2	1	14
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	14
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a

(continued)

**Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy**

Outcome	Relevant focus	Legal status
Other economic conditions		
U.S. productivity, decennial	2	0
Economic status of immigrants		
Decennial	2	0
CPS	2	0
SSA	2	1
Other domestic conditions		
Economic segmentation of immigrants by language, decennial	2	0
Rate of crime and delinquency	^a	^a
Social services costs of immigrants		
Decennial	1	0
CPS	2	0
SIPP	2	0
Health services costs of immigrants, SSA	1	1
Educational costs of immigrants		
Decennial	1	0
CPS	1	0
Demographic characteristics and fertility rates		
Fertility rates		
Decennial	1	0
CPS	2	0
NCHS	2	0
Population growth and location		
Decennial	2	0
INS	2	2
Immigrant household composition		
Decennial	2	0
CPS	2	0

**Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy**

Local/ regional sensitivity	Data recency	Time sensitivity	Incremental impacts	Validity	Accuracy	Completeness	Total
2	1	0	1	2	2	2	12
2	1	0	1	2	2	1	11
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12
2	2	1	2	2	2	1	15
2	1	0	1	2	1	1	10
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
2	1	0	1	1	2	1	9
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12
0	2	2	0	2	2	2	12
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	14
2	1	0	1	1	2	1	9
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	11
2	1	0	1	2	2	1	10
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12
0	1	0	0	1	2	2	8
2	1	2	1	2	2	1	13
2	2	2	2	1	2	2	17
2	1	0	1	2	2	1	11
1	2	0	1	2	2	2	12

^aRelevant data bases could not be located

To obtain a summary measure of the adequacy of each data base, the ratings of the nine criteria have to be combined. One way to do this would be to add the ratings of the nine criteria. However, that would produce inflated scores that in some cases would understate serious problems with a data base. For example table III.1 shows a score of 15 for the State Department data base addressing the first outcome, "size of waiting list." It is rated "2" for seven criteria, "1" for time sensitivity, and "0" for accuracy. The limited rating for time sensitivity is due to over time measurements only being made at two points, and the low

accuracy rating is the result of the judgment we share with many experts in the field that the State Department waiting list is not accurate because it includes many people who no longer wish to immigrate, are no longer eligible, and the like. (See p. 27.) The State Department does not attempt to update the list between the period when the petition for a visa is first filed and one year prior to the issuance of a visa. Whatever other desirable qualities the State Department waiting list data base may possess, its inaccuracy is a serious limitation for many purposes.

Nevertheless, the limitation of this data base is not reflected in the score "15" because adding the ratings of all nine criteria counts those criteria that reflect the same strengths of the data base more than once. That is, while each of these criteria involves a distinct requirement for data bases, several reflect requirements that are related to the same overall purpose. To provide a summary measure of a data base's adequacy that avoids counting related strengths (or weaknesses) more than once, we decided to evaluate the data bases on the basis of their cluster scores.

We adopted a conservative approach to the cluster scores: we assigned the lowest rating within a cluster as the score for that cluster. This ensured that any serious weaknesses in a data base would not be understated. The scores for these three clusters were then added to yield a total score with a possible range of 0 to 6. As table III.2 shows, the actual range of scores is from 1 to 6.⁴ We interpret the adequacy of data bases with total scores of 5 or less as limited and indicate this in tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 as "limited"; total scores of 6 are indicated as "good."

⁴The interrater reliability for these cluster ratings ranged from .83 to .92.

**Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy**

Table III.2: Evaluation of Data Base Adequacy for the Current Status of Each Outcome by Cluster

Outcome	Focus	Timing	Technical	Total
Family reunification				
Size of waiting list by state	2	1	0 ^a	3
Distribution of family reunification preferences, INS	2	2	2	6
Rate of preference usage, INS	2	2	2	6
Demographic characteristics of immigrants				
INS	1 ^b	1	1 ^c	3
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0 ^f	0	2	2
Labor needs				
Job-related characteristics of immigrants				
INS	1 ^b	1	1 ^c	3
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0 ^f	0	2	2
Unmet labor needs of employers, SSA	1 ^g	1	1 ^h	3
Employment of U.S. citizens				
The wages and working conditions of U.S. citizens, SSA	1 ^g	1	1	3
Restricted development, training, and educational opportunities of U.S. citizens	1	1	1	3
Other economic conditions				
U.S. productivity, decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	2	2
Economic status of immigrants				
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0 ^d	0	2	2
SSA	1	1	1	3
Other domestic conditions				
Economic segmentation of immigrants by language, decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1 ⁱ	1
Rates of crime and delinquency	1	1	1	3
Costs				
Social services				
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1 ^k	1
CPS	0 ^f	0	2 ^k	2
SIPP	0 ^f	0	2	2
Health services, SSA	1 ^g	1	1 ^l	3
Educational				
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0	0	2	2
Demographic characteristics and fertility rates				
Fertility rates				

(continued)

**Appendix III
Criteria for Data Adequacy**

Outcome	Focus	Timing	Technical	Total
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0 ^f	0	2	2
NCHS	0 ^d	0	1 ^m	1
Population growth and location				
Decennial	0 ^d	1 ^e	1	2
INS	2	2	1 ⁿ	5
Immigrant household composition				
Decennial	0 ^d	0 ^e	1	1
CPS	0 ^f	0	2	2

^aThe waiting lists maintained by the State Department show as "active" petitions which are inactive; the waiting lists are not accurate.

^bEducation is not included.

^cThe measure of occupation is not valid because it does not distinguish between past occupation, current occupation, and intended occupation.

^dData do not allow legal immigrants to be identified.

^eDecennial census data will be timely, at best, only once between 1990 and 2000.

^fThese data do not have regional sensitivity for immigrants and do not allow legal immigrants to be identified.

^gSSA data only partially allow legal immigrants to be identified and their focus is only partially relevant.

^hMeasure of labor shortage is only partially valid.

ⁱRelevant data bases could not be located.

^jThe measure of English language competency on the decennial census is not accurate.

^kThe measure of social services is not accurate because it does not include all transfers.

^lThe measure of health services is not accurate because it does not include all health services.

^mCoverage is not complete.

ⁿIntended place of residence is not accurate.

Table III.2 shows two sources—the INS data base on the distribution of family reunification preferences and the rate of preference usage—with scores of 6. Another source—population growth and location (INS)—was rated 5. This source was rated as less than adequate on only one criterion. "Accuracy" was rated as limited because where immigrants actually live is not verified. The data base records their answers to the question (contained in the INS application for legal status) of where they "intend" to live. (Note that the State Department waiting list data base that we discussed above received a cluster score of 3.)

At the other extreme, three of the nine sources that scored 1 were (1) economic segmentation of immigrants by language (decennial), (2) social

services costs (decennial), and (3) fertility rates (NCHS). The decennial census does not include information on the legal status of immigrants and is lacking in the areas of data recency, time sensitivity, incremental impacts, and completeness. Additionally, for “economic segmentation of immigrants by language,” accuracy is lacking because English competency is self-assessed. Regarding “social services costs,” in addition to the above limitations, the relevant focus is lacking because not all types of social services are included, and those that are included (sources of income) may not indicate the extent of social services usage, such as uncompensated hospital care.

Data bases that meet our requirements for two outcomes—restricted development of training and educational opportunities for U.S. citizens, and the rate of crime and delinquency—could not be located.

Data Available From Three Sources Relevant to Immigration S.2104

Table IV.1: Data From INS

Data element	Data present
New immigrant file	
Citizenship status	X
How citizenship obtained	X
Alien classification	X
Place of birth	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Place of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Age	X
Sex	X
Current address	X
Previous addresses	X
Marital status	X
Place of marriage	X
Place of divorce	X
Date prior marriage ended	X
Current occupation	X
Previous occupation	X
Current employment	X
Previous employment	X
Social security number	X
"A" number	X
Naturalization data file	
Citizenship status	X
Tenure as a permanent resident	X
Alien classification	X
Place of birth	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Place of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Age	X
Sex	X
Current address	X
Previous addresses	X
Marital status	X
Date prior marriage ended	X
Current occupation	X
Previous employment	X
Social security number	X
"A" number	X
Petitioner file	

(continued)

**Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104**

Data element	Data present
Citizenship status	X
How citizenship obtained	X
Alien classification	X
Place of birth	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Place of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Age	X
Sex	X
Current address	X
Marital status	X
Place of marriage	X
Date prior marriage ended	X
Social security number	X
"A" number	X
Relative's children	X
Nonimmigrant information system	
Citizenship status	X
Alien classification	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Place of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Date of authorized departure	X
Age	X

**Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104**

Table IV.2: Data From Census Bureau

Data element	Data present
Decennial census of population and housing^a	
Citizenship status	X
How citizenship obtained	X
Tenure as a permanent resident	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Age	X
Sex	X
Race	X
Ethnicity	X
Current address	X
Marital status	X
Education	X
Current occupation	X
Labor force participation	X
Business ownership	X
Income	X
Children	X
Children's ages	X
Household members and relationship to head of household	X
Current Population Surveys (CPS)^b	
Citizenship status	X ^c
How citizenship obtained	X ^c
Tenure as a permanent resident	X ^c
Place of birth	X ^c
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X ^c
Age	X
Sex	X
Race	X
Ethnicity	X
Current address	X
Marital status	X ^c
Education	X
Current occupation	X
Current employer	X ^c
Labor force participation	X
Business ownership	X
Income	X ^c
Social security number	X ^c
Children	X

(continued)

**Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104**

Data element	Data present
Ages of children	X
Household members and relationship to head of household	X
Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)	
How citizenship obtained	X
Place of birth	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X
Age	X
Sex	X
Race	X
Ethnicity	X
Current address	X
Marital status	X
Date prior marriage ended	X
Education	X
Training for employment	X
Current occupation	X
Previous occupation	X
Current employer	X
Previous employer	X
Labor force participation	X
Business ownership	X
Income amount	X
Income source	X
Social security number	X
Children	X
Ages of children	X
Household members and relationship to head of household	X
Received unemployment compensation	X
Received worker's compensation	X
Received retirement income	X
Received food stamps	X
Received AFDC	X
Received social security supplemental income	X
Health impairment	X
Received Medicare/Medicaid	X
Living in public or subsidized housing	X

(continued)

Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104

^aNot all items were included in past censuses. For example, the item on citizenship status will be used for the first time on the 1990 census.

^bIn addition to the basic items that are included in every supplement, each supplement focuses on a particular topic.

^cItem is not asked on all supplements, and thus much of the information on the supplements cannot be used to address the proposed outcomes.

**Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104**

**Table IV.3: Supplements to Current
Population Surveys, 1988**

Period	Type of survey	Description
January	Displaced workers	Last collected in 1986; measures the number of workers who lost their jobs in the last five years for involuntary reasons such as plant closings and layoffs.
February	No supplement	None
March	Annual demographic file	Collected annually since 1947; produces annual income statistics, including official poverty figures, migration statistics, work experience data, and noncash benefits data.
April	Alimony and child support	First collected in 1979, and every two years since 1982; produces data on the number of women awarded alimony/child support—how many received it, and how many turned to the state for assistance in collecting the money.
May	Employee benefits	Collected irregularly since the early 1970s and last collected as the "pension supplement" in May 1983; measures the number of persons covered by employer-sponsored pension plans and the characteristics of employer-sponsored disability and health insurance coverage.
June	Fertility/immigration/emigration supplement	Fertility/birth expectations; collected annually since 1971; produces data on the number of children ever born and the number expected to be born in the future. Immigration, last collected in June 1986, and emigration, first collected in July 1987, measure the number and characteristics of foreign-born household members and the country of residence of relatives of household members who have moved out of this country.
July	Health insurance coverage	First collected in 1988; will measure the number of workers over forty years of age who are covered by employer-sponsored health insurance plans that continue in force after retirement.
August or September	Unspecified	Will contain questions on (1) time lost from a job due to work-related injuries and (2) secondary jobs, such as working at home for profit and volunteer work.
October	School enrollment	Collected annually for over twenty years; provides data on persons enrolled or recently graduated from pre-primary, high school, college, and vocational schools.
November	Voting and registration	Collected in congressional election years since 1964; provides characteristics of voters and those registered to vote
December	Agricultural work force	Collected for over thirty years, annually since 1987; measures characteristics of

(continued)

**Appendix IV
Data Available From Three Sources Relevant
to Immigration S.2104**

Period	Type of survey	Description
		agricultural work force (hired farm workers, migrants, farm operators, and unpaid laborers).
Other		
Triennial	Telephone availability	Collected in March, July, and November since 1983; provides aggregate estimates of telephone ownership by various household characteristics.
Monthly	Housing vacancy survey	Collected monthly since 1955; measures housing unit characteristics of vacant units identified in the monthly CPS.

Table IV.4: Data From the Social Security Administration

	Data present
Continuous Work History Survey (CWHS)	
Citizenship status	X ^a
Alien classification	X ^b
Place of birth	X
Date of entry (if foreign-born)	X ^c
Age	X
Sex	X
Race	X
Current address	X
Previous addresses	X
Current employer	X
Previous employer	X
Business ownership	X
Income amount	X
Income source	X
Social security number	X
Received social security supplemental income	X
Mortality	X

^aCitizenship status was obtained from 1980.

^bThis classification is not the same as either the INS or Census Bureau definition. Besides citizenship status, it includes legal alien allowed to work, legal alien not allowed to work, and other

^cThe date of issuance of the social security card can be used as a proxy for date of entry

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Glossary

This glossary includes some of the more commonly used expressions in the report. Most terms are based on definitions given in the 1983 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1987), pp. 122-28.

Adjustment to Immigrant Status

Procedure allowing certain aliens already in the United States to apply for immigrant status. Aliens admitted to the United States in a nonimmigrant or other category may have their status changed to that of lawful permanent resident if they are eligible to receive an immigrant visa and an immigrant visa is immediately available. In such cases, the alien is counted as an immigrant as of the date of adjustment, even though the alien may have been in the United States for an extended period of time.

Alien

Any person not a citizen or a national of the United States.

Asylee

An alien in the United States or at a port of entry unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof may be based on the alien's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. For persons with no nationality, the country of nationality is considered to be the one in which the alien last habitually resided. Asylees are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the United States. These immigrants are exempt from the numerical limitation of 270,000. However, the Immigration and Naturalization Act stipulates that only 5,000 asylees can adjust per fiscal year.

Documented Immigrant

An alien admitted to the United States as a permanent legal resident. INS refers to this category as "immigrants." They are those persons lawfully accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States. They may be issued immigrant visas by the Department of State overseas or adjusted to permanent resident status by INS in the United States.

Emigrant	A person who leaves one country to live in another country—specifically, in this context, prior immigrants who subsequently leave the United States. According to INS, this is the largest category of emigrants.
Illegal Alien	A commonly used synonym for Undocumented Immigrant.
Immigrant	There is no uniformly accepted definition of “immigrant.” For the purposes of this study, we define an immigrant as an individual who is not a United States citizen, who comes to the United States (or, once here, decides to remain) with the intention of making his or her home here permanently, or at least indefinitely. This definition thus includes refugees, asylees, permanent resident aliens, and undocumented aliens categorized as “settlers.” It does not include foreign-government officials or students, temporary business or pleasure visitors, international representatives, temporary workers, or the U.S.-born children of immigrants.
Legal Alien	Commonly used synonym for Documented Immigrant.
Legal Immigrant	See Documented Immigrant.
Naturalization	The conferring, by any means, of citizenship upon a person after birth.
Nonimmigrant	An alien who seeks temporary entry to the United States for a specific purpose. The alien must have a permanent residence abroad and qualify for the nonimmigrant classification sought. Nonimmigrants include foreign government officials, officials and employees of international organizations, visitors for business and pleasure, crewmen, students, trainees, and temporary workers of distinguished merit and ability or ones who perform services unavailable in the United States.
Parolee	An alien allowed to enter the United States under emergency conditions or when that alien’s entry is determined to be in the public interest. Parole is temporary and does not constitute a formal admission to the

United States. Persons paroled into the United States are required to leave when the conditions supporting their parole cease to exist.

Permanent Resident Alien A person entering the country with an immigrant visa or adjusting to this status after having entered on a nonimmigrant visa or as a refugee or asylee and, thus, entitled to live and work in the United States.

Refugee Any person who is outside his or her country of nationality and who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof may be based on the alien's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. People with no nationality must be outside their country of last habitual residence to qualify as refugees.

Undocumented Immigrant A person entering the United States without inspection by the INS or with fraudulent documentation, or one who enters legally but subsequently violates the visa terms.

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