



**2013 Estimates of
Compact of Free Association
(COFA) Migrants**

November 5, 2013

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Introduction

The Compacts of Free Association are joint congressional-executive agreements between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. These agreements establish, in part, that citizens of the aforementioned areas may move freely among these places, engage in occupations, and establish residence as nonimmigrants in the United States and their territories and possessions.

The Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003 introduced the requirement for an enumeration of qualified nonimmigrants (for the purposes of this report they will be referred to as COFA migrants) to be conducted no less frequently than every five years in Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and American Samoa. This is the third such enumeration and serves as the basis for apportioning \$30 million in funding to these jurisdictions for a range of development programs and other benefits as a result of the immigration of COFA migrants.

In accordance with the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003, the U.S. Department of the Interior signed an Interagency Agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to produce estimates of COFA migrants for 2013.

Methodology

The Census Bureau and the Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs agreed to use the following existing datasets for producing the 2013 Estimates of COFA Migrants:

1. To produce estimates of qualified nonimmigrants residing in Hawaii, the Census Bureau used three-year data (2009-2011) from the American Community Survey.
2. To produce estimates of qualified nonimmigrants residing in American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam, the Census Bureau used data from the 2010 Census.

Definitions

A COFA migrant is defined as “a person, or their children under the age of 18, admitted or resident pursuant to section 141 of the U.S.-Republic of the Marshall Islands or U.S.-Federated States of Micronesia Compact, or section 141 of the U.S.-Palau Compact, who as of a date referenced in the most recently published enumeration, is a resident of an affected jurisdiction.” The date of residency for COFA migrants is determined by the effective date of the agreement, which is 1986 for the U.S.-Republic of the Marshall Islands and the U.S.-Federated States of Micronesia Compacts, and 1994 for the U.S.-Palau Compact.

Thus, from the above statement there are two types of persons to estimate:

1. COFA migrants – This was defined as a person born in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or Palau, and who entered American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, or Hawaii by 1986 or earlier (for those persons born in the Republic of the

Marshall Islands or the Federated States of Micronesia), or by 1994 or earlier (for those persons born in Palau). All residents were considered, regardless of their residency status (household or facility-based) or citizenship status. In order to identify these persons, the following data items were used: place of birth and year of entry.

2. The children of COFA migrants – This was defined as an unmarried child or grandchild of a COFA migrant, less than eighteen years old, residing in the same household as the COFA migrant. In order to identify these persons, the following data items were used: age, relationship, and marital status.

Timeline

On May 22, 2013, the Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs signed an Interagency Agreement with the Census Bureau to produce estimates of COFA migrants for 2013. The final tabulations are being delivered to the Department of Interior on November 5, 2013.

Results

The Census Bureau estimates that there were 34,555 COFA migrants residing in the four jurisdictions combined (American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, and Hawaii) in 2013.

Table 1: 2013 Estimate of COFA Migrants: All Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Estimate	Margin of Error
American Samoa	25	(x)
CNMI	2,660	(x)
Guam	17,170	(x)
Hawaii	14,700	+/-2,241

x – Not Applicable.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey (Hawaii), and 2010 Census (American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam).

Understanding Margin of Error

A margin of error is not applicable for the estimate of COFA migrants and their children living in American Samoa, CNMI, or Guam because these estimates are derived from a census as opposed to a survey. The estimate of COFA migrants and their children living in Hawaii are based on a survey and are subject to sampling variability, and the degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through a margin of error. The value shown above is the 90-percent margin of error. The margin of error is best understood through a confidence interval. The 90-percent confidence interval provides a range of possible values for which we are 90 percent confident that it contains the true value of the estimate. The 90-percent confidence interval is constructed from the lowest possible value (estimate minus the 90-percent margin of error), ending with the highest possible value (estimate plus the 90-percent margin of error).

Although there is a range which we are 90-percent confident contains the true number of COFA migrants, for the purposes of this project, the Census Bureau is recommending the use of the estimates reported in Table 1 as the best estimate of COFA migrants in 2013.

For additional information on accuracy of the American Community Survey three-year data, please visit the following link:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/MultiyearACSAccuracyofData2011.pdf