United States Census Bureau

Invest Now for a Cost-Effective 2020 Census
Innovation Leads to Greater Fiscal Responsibility

The U.S. Census Bureau is at a critical juncture. Continued investment in research and development will produce an accurate and cost-effective 2020 Census.

What Is a Census?

Q: What goes into conducting a census?

A: As mandated by the U.S. Constitution, America gets one chance each decade to count its population. The next census in 2020 will require counting an increasingly diverse and growing population of around 330 million people in more than 140 million housing units. To get an accurate count, the Census Bureau must build an accurate address list of every housing unit, maximize self-response to the census, and follow-up with those who do not respond. It is the largest mobilization and operation conducted in the United States and requires years of research, planning, testing and development of methods and infrastructure to ensure an accurate and complete count.

Q: What is the Census Bureau doing differently?

A: The Census Bureau is researching and developing innovative and efficient methods to increase the response rates, decrease the number of door-to-door interviews, raise workforce productivity, and stream-line operations without sacrificing the accuracy of the census. These changes have the potential to save taxpayer money (compared to the cost of repeating 2010 methods in 2020), maintain accuracy and reduce the burden on respondents.
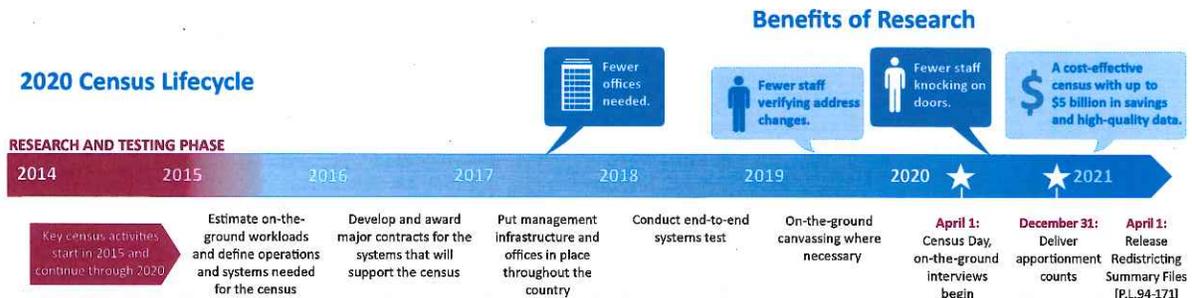
2010 Census in Review

506 Census Offices

550,000 Staff on the Ground

More Expensive 2020 Census

More Than 500 Census Offices

More Than 750,000 Staff on the Ground

Increased Follow-Up Workload

Cost-Effective 2020 Census

Approximately 250 Census Offices

Approximately 300,000 Staff on the Ground

Reduced Follow-Up Workload

Elements of a Cost-Effective Census

1 **Use the Internet** to increase self-response.

2 **Use information people have already given the government** to answer Census questions and reduce follow-up workload.

3 **Automate operations** to increase productivity and reduce staff and offices.

4 **Update existing maps and addresses** to reflect changes rather than walking every block in every neighborhood in America.

Fewer Staff Fewer Offices + Less Burden

More than $5 Billion in Savings

Why Now?

America gets one chance each decade to count its population accurately. The Census Bureau must start making major decisions next year about the methods it will use to get the job done in 2020. Without funding to research and develop systems and operations, the risks and costs will be much higher. Investing now will save billions of dollars later.

Benefits of Research

Fewer offices needed.

Fewer staff verifying address changes.

Fewer staff knocking on doors.

A cost-effective census with up to $5 billion in savings and high-quality data.

2020 Census Lifecycle

RESEARCH AND TESTING PHASE

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Key census activities start in 2015 and continue through 2020	Estimate on-the-ground workloads and define operations and systems needed for the census	Develop and award major contracts for the systems that will support the census	Put management infrastructure and offices in place throughout the country	Conduct end-to-end systems test	On-the-ground canvassing where necessary	**April 1:** Census Day, on-the-ground interviews begin	**December 31:** Deliver apportionment counts **April 1:** Release Redistricting Summary Files [P.L.94-171]

Four Elements of a Cost-Effective Census

1

Updating Existing Maps and Address Lists

What are we talking about?
- An accurate address list is the cornerstone of a high-quality census. In the past, we have walked every street in every block to get every housing unit. In 2020, we want to visit and check only areas of change.

What are we researching and developing?
- Identifying the neighborhoods with significant change, usually about 20 percent of all addresses change between decades.
- Using alternative sources of information, including tribal, state, and local governments.

What are the intended outcomes?
- Ensure we have an accurate address list.
- Fewer staff walking through America's neighborhoods to check addresses.
- Stronger partnerships with tribal, state, and local governments.

2

Increasing Self-Response With the Internet

What are we talking about?
- Giving people more options to respond to the census, so we do not have to knock on their doors.

What are we researching and developing?
- Testing ideas to measure how much we can increase self-response. Finalizing estimates to know how large to build response collection systems.
- New techniques using e-mail, text and social media to encourage immediate online responses anytime, anywhere. This is made possible by our ability to verify responses in real-time using existing data, whether or not the respondent has their pre-assigned Census ID.
- Testing language support.

What are the intended outcomes?
- Encourage self-response via Internet (Internet is cheaper than paper).
- Fewer offices to manage staff.
- Fewer staff knocking on doors.
- More response options.
- More attention on hard-to-count populations.

**Fewer Staff
Fewer Offices
+ Less Burden
More Savings**

3

Using Information People Have Already Given the Government to Answer the Census Questions

What are we talking about?
- Using government data instead of conducting in-person interviews, so we can reduce the number of knocking on doors.

What are we researching and developing?
- Using existing government data (HUD, VA, HHS, SSA, IRS) to reduce the number of in-person follow-up interviews.
- Learning how to apply the data in a Census environment.
- Assessing the quality of the resulting data.

What are the intended outcomes?
- Supplement 2020 Census self-responses with other existing governmental data.
- More convenient, less burdensome.
- Conduct fewer interviews—making fewer phone calls and knocking on fewer doors.
- More resources to focus on areas with hard-to-count populations.

4

Innovation and Automation in Workforce Management

What are we talking about?
- Using technology, data, and GPS to collect interviews efficiently.

What are we researching and developing?
- Streamlining data collection using smart phones and tablets to lower costs.
- Managing through technology, not brick-and-mortar offices.
- Automating logistics to increase workforce efficiency.

What are the intended outcomes?
- Fewer census offices.
- Fewer staff.
- Increased productivity.
- Leveraging off-the-shelf technology.
- More staff redirected to hard-to-count populations.