



Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-1106T](#), testimony before the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The decennial census is a Constitutionally-mandated activity that produces critical data used to apportion congressional seats, redraw congressional districts, and allocate billions of dollars in federal assistance. The Census Bureau (Bureau) estimates the 2010 Census will cost \$11.5 billion, making it the most expensive in the nation's history after adjusting for inflation. This testimony, based primarily on GAO's issued reports and preliminary observations from our ongoing work, discusses the extent to which the Bureau has (1) developed a comprehensive project plan with the most current cost data; (2) incorporated lessons learned from Dress Rehearsal activities; (3) managed automation and technology for the reengineered census; and (4) planned for an accurate census in areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

What GAO Recommends

At this time, GAO is not making new recommendations, but past reports recommended that the Bureau take steps to develop a project plan for the 2010 Census, further test software for the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program, and promote an accurate census in areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Bureau generally agreed with these recommendations and has begun to implement some of them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1106T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mathew J. Scire at (202) 512-6806 or sciremj@gao.gov.

2010 CENSUS

Preparations for the 2010 Census Underway, but Continued Oversight and Risk Management Are Critical

What GAO Found

The Bureau is conducting its Dress Rehearsal of the 2010 Census, the last opportunity it will have to test its design under census-like conditions. Given the importance of a successful enumeration and the complexities of enumerating a hard-to-count population in a more technology-dependent census, our message remains that the risks associated with the decennial must be closely monitored, evaluated, and managed. GAO found that the Bureau is developing but has not yet completed a comprehensive project plan that includes milestones, itemized costs, and measurable goals, nor has it updated the 2010 life-cycle cost estimate to reflect current information from testing. Having a comprehensive project plan and updated cost information will allow the Bureau to manage the operations and cost of the decennial census. Moreover, GAO observed technical problems with the handheld computing devices used in the Dress Rehearsal by field staff for address canvassing (in which the Bureau verifies addresses). If the device does not function as expected or needed, little time will be left for the Bureau to take corrective action. In addition, during the LUCA Dress Rehearsal, the Bureau did not fully test software tools intended to reduce burden on participants. Also, the Bureau's level of reliance on automation and technology for the 2010 Census, at an estimated cost of \$3 billion, makes effective contractor oversight (of cost, schedule, and technical performance) and risk management activities imperative. Finally, in the Gulf Coast Region, the condition of the changing housing stock is likely to present additional challenges for the address canvassing operation and subsequent operations. However, the Bureau has not finalized plans for modifying the address canvassing operation or subsequent operations in the Gulf Coast region.

Timeline of Selected Key Decennial Events

Dates	Decennial activity
Jan. 2007–Jan. 2010	Local Update of Census Addresses (localities assist in updating address lists and maps)
Feb. 2006–June 2009	2008 Dress Rehearsal (Bureau's rehearsal of all planned decennial operations)
Jan. 2008	Opening of 12 Regional Census Centers
Oct. 2008	Opening of about 455 Local Census Offices
Apr.–Sept. 2009	Address listing activities (staff validate address lists and maps)
April 1, 2010	Census Day
Apr.–July 2010	Nonresponse follow-up (field staff follow-up in person at housing units of nonresponding persons)
Dec. 31, 2010	Delivery of apportionment counts to the President
Mar. 31, 2011	Complete delivery of redistricting data to the states

Source: GAO summary of Census Bureau data.