



Highlights of [GAO-10-452T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) is tasked with conducting an accurate count of people living in dwellings known as group quarters as part of the 2010 Census. Group quarters consist of college dormitories, prisons, nursing homes, and other facilities typically owned or managed by an entity providing housing, services, or both for the residents. During the 2000 Census, for a variety of reasons, group quarters were sometimes counted more than once, missed, or included in the wrong location.

As requested, this testimony will focus on (1) the extent to which the Bureau has strengthened its procedures for counting group quarters compared to the 2000 Census, and (2) particular challenges and opportunities for an accurate group quarters count in Brooklyn. The testimony is based on previously issued and ongoing GAO work in New York and elsewhere.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making new recommendations in this testimony, but a past report recommended that the Bureau revisit its group quarter procedures to ensure that this population was properly located and counted. The Bureau implemented this recommendation and strengthened aspects of its group quarters procedures. In commenting on a draft of this testimony, the Bureau provided some minor clarifying points.

View [GAO-10-452T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2757 or goldenkoffr@gao.gov.

2010 CENSUS

Operational Changes Made for 2010 Position the U.S. Census Bureau to More Accurately Classify and Identify Group Quarters

What GAO Found

The Bureau developed and tested new procedures to address the difficulties it had in identifying and counting group quarters during the 2000 Census. For example, the Bureau moved from manual to GPS-generated map spots, which should reduce the chance of human error and of group quarters populations being counted in the wrong jurisdiction; moved from a telephone interview to a field verification approach, which should increase accuracy; and combined the conventional housing unit and group quarters address lists into a single address list, which should reduce the chance of double counting.

Moreover, the Bureau implemented a three-pronged approach to locate and count group quarters. The approach consisted of Group Quarters Validation, where temporary census workers visited each group quarter and interviewed its manager or administrator to determine whether the dwelling was a group quarters or some other type of residence. If the dwelling was in fact a group quarters, it was then determined what category it fit under, and its correct geographic location was confirmed. This was followed by the Group Quarters Advance Visit, which is currently under way. Census workers are to verify the location of the group quarters; identify contact officials; and schedule the date, time and other information to help conduct the actual enumeration. The actual count of group quarters residents is conducted during the third phase of the approach, Group Quarter Enumeration from the end of March to mid-May. The effort includes an operation known as Service-Based Enumeration, during which people commonly referred to as homeless are counted. Additional procedures to ensure a complete count of group quarters include a series of quality assurance procedures, such as supervisory review of workers' assignments.

Brooklyn presents challenges as well as opportunities. For example, a planning database the Bureau developed to help it target its resources placed Brooklyn on a list of top 50 U.S. counties with the highest number of people living in hard-to-count areas, based on data from the 2000 Census. Factors that contribute to the hard-to-count designation include poverty levels, high levels of non-English speakers, complex household arrangements, as well as a high percentage of rental and vacant units, multi-unit buildings, and crowded housing.

In light of these demographic and housing challenges, a successful group quarters count will, at a minimum, depend on how well the Bureau executes the following activities: (1) complete remaining group quarters activities on schedule, (2) implement the group quarters quality assurance procedures as planned, and (3) closely monitor key performance metrics to ensure that the group quarters count proceeds on track and quickly address any glitches. It will also be important for the Bureau to ensure that census workers have knowledge of neighborhood culture and living arrangements, and possess the language skills to reach out to residents with limited English proficiency.