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Progress Report on the Mail Response Rate and Key Operations

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2000 Census: Progress Report on the Mail Response Rate and Key Operations

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Maloney, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to provide the latest in our series of regular progress reports on the status of key census-taking operations. My statement focuses on the mail response rate and the implications it has for the timely and accurate completion of the Bureau's nonresponse follow-up workload. In addition, I will discuss the status of specific enumeration activities that have taken place over the last month. These include (1) update/leave, a procedure used to count people in certain small towns and rural areas; (2) Service Based Enumeration, used to count persons with no usual residence; and (3) Questionnaire Assistance Centers, which are designed to help people, especially those with limited English skills, complete their census forms. I will also discuss how well the Bureau's data capture centers are handling production-level workloads.

My remarks today are based on our analysis of Bureau data, including those data from the Bureau's Census 2000 Management Information System that tracks the cost and progress of the census. In addition, we made field visits to 12 geographic areas across the country, primarily selected for their relatively high numbers of hard-to-enumerate population groups.[1] We interviewed managers and other local census office employees to obtain information on specific census operations and observed those operations that were occurring at the time of our visit. We have conducted more than 90 observations of the census thus far.

In making these field visits, we were able to see, first hand, the extraordinary challenges of counting different segments of the nation's population, and the dedication, ingenuity, and professionalism that so many enumerators and other local census employees are bringing to bear to address these challenges.

The Mail Response Rate and Its Implications for Field Follow-up Operations

Key to a successful census is a high mail response rate, which helps the Bureau obtain more accurate data and reduce what, in past census efforts, has been an error-prone and costly nonresponse follow-up workload. The Bureau has based its schedule, staffing and funding resources needed for follow-up on an expected national mail response rate of 61 percent by April 11, 2000. At that time, the Bureau will begin to generate a list of nonresponding households that will be visited by census enumerators. Consequently, obtaining at least this 61-percent mail response rate is

[1] Field visits were made in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, as well as in San Francisco and the Los Angeles metropolitan area in CA; Albany, Columbus, and Waycross, GA; Enid, Tahlequah, and Tulsa, OK; and Laredo, McAllen, and the Dallas metropolitan area in TX.

critical to the success of the census. According to senior Bureau officials, a mail response rate of as little as 2 or 3 percentage points less than 61 percent could affect the Bureau's ability to complete nonresponse follow-up operations on schedule, which could affect data quality.

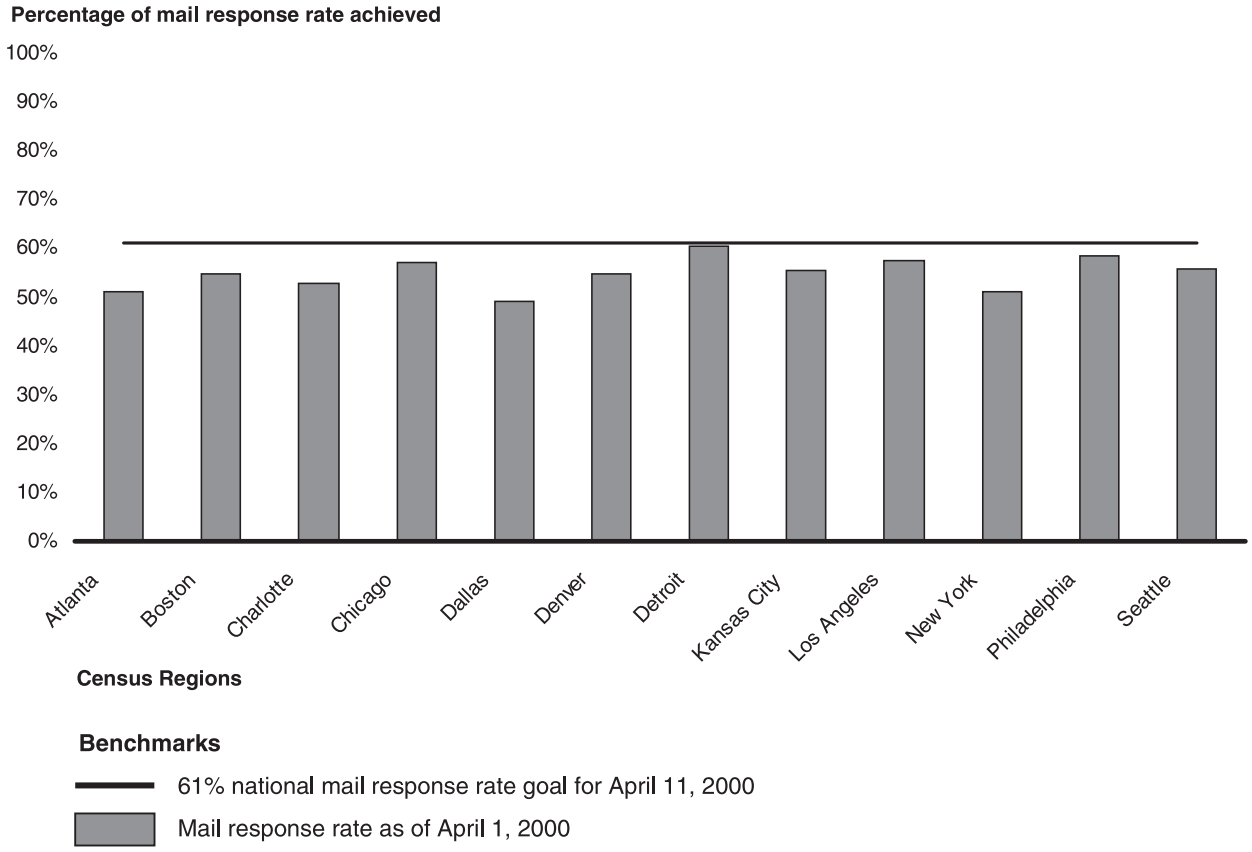
Mail Response Rates Vary Greatly at the Local Level

As of Census Day, April 1st, of the approximately 120 million households that were mailed or hand delivered questionnaires to complete and mail back, about 66 million have been returned to the Bureau, for a mail response rate of about 55 percent.[2] This rate is consistent with the Bureau's expectations for this date. Thus, with 10 days remaining until the April 11th deadline for mailback responses for purposes of generating the list for nonresponse follow-up, the Bureau needs to receive over 7 million additional questionnaires—more than 700,000 returns each day, on average—to reach its 61-percent response rate objective.

Although national numbers are important for providing an overall perspective of the census, as we have often noted, the census is a local effort, and thus we must look beyond the national figures when gauging the progress of the census. Examining response rates by local census office is particularly important because nonresponse workload, recruitment, and staffing are all managed through these local census offices. As shown in figure 1, as of April 1st, the mail response rates by census regions ranged from 49 percent in Dallas to 60 percent in Detroit.

[2] The Bureau calculates the total mail response rate by dividing the number of responses (including those received by mail, Internet, and other response options) by the number of questionnaires mailed or hand delivered.

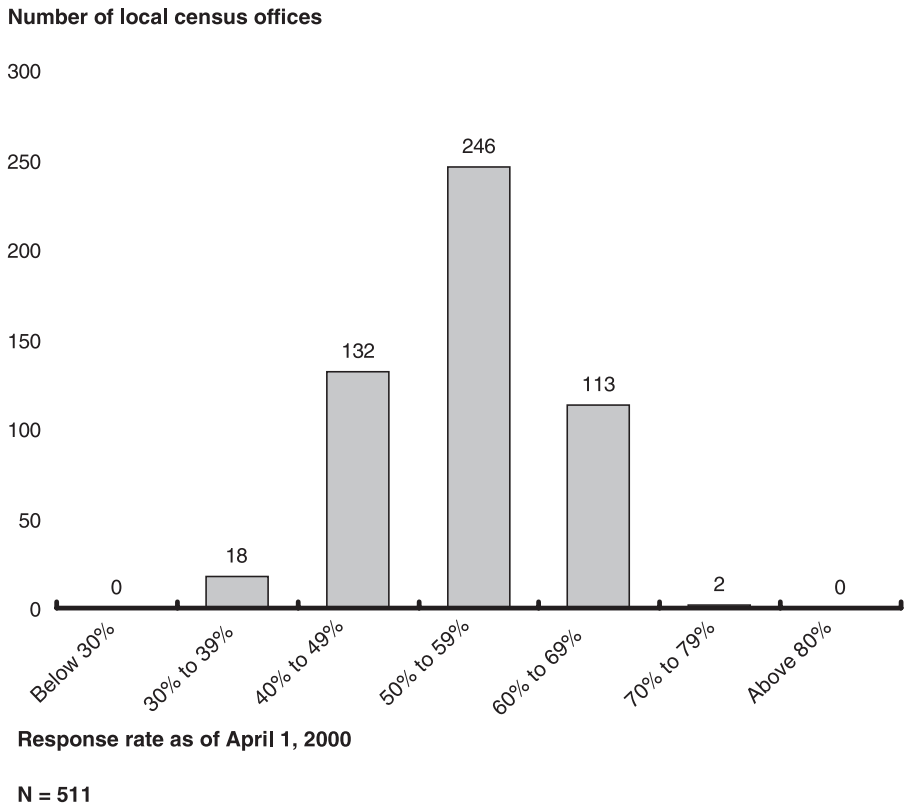
Figure 1: Response Rates By Census Region



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

Not surprisingly, greater variation in response rates exists at the local census office level. Based on our analysis of Bureau data as of April 1st, response rates by local census office ranged from 30 percent to 72 percent. And, as shown in figure 2, 115 local census offices have a mail response rate of 60 percent or greater, while 150 local census offices have a mail response rate of less than 50 percent.

Figure 2: Distribution of Mail Response Rates by Local Census Office



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

The wide variation in response rates also was evident in the final rates for the 1990 census. Although the national response rate was 65 percent—4 percentage points higher than the target rate for 2000—the response rates at the local census offices ranged from 40 percent to 84 percent.

Overall, it appears that the majority of local census offices are progressing towards the final mail response rate they achieved in 1990. Indeed, of the 509 local census offices for which we were able to obtain both 1990 and 2000 data, as of April 1st, 456 (almost 90 percent) were three-quarters or more towards equaling the final response rate they had in 1990.[3]

[3] These are approximate comparisons since the local census office composition used to obtain the 1990 local census office response rate data do not precisely reflect the Census 2000 local census office geographic areas.

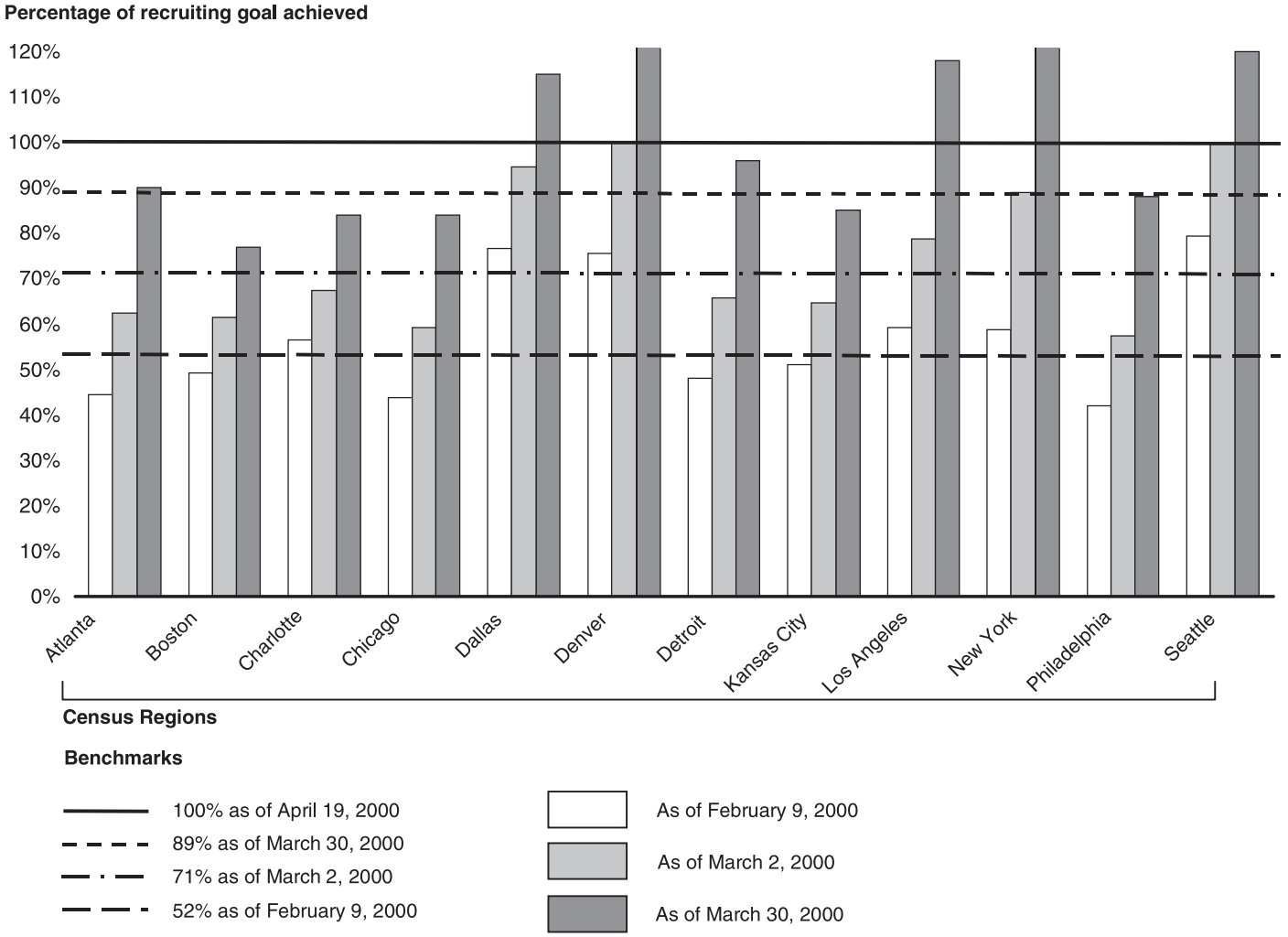
Local Census Offices Continue Making Progress Toward Their Recruitment Goals

The mail response rate drives the Bureau's field follow-up workload, which in turn affects staffing requirements and the Bureau's ability to complete its field workload on time without compromising the quality of follow-up data.

Nationally, to conduct nonresponse follow-up and to cover for the possibility of high turnover rates during this operation, the Bureau estimates it will need to recruit about 2.4 million qualified applicants by April 19, 2000. Although the Bureau is close to meeting this goal, several local census offices are still experiencing substantial shortfalls.

The Bureau's goal for March 30th, the latest date for which data were available, was to recruit about 89 percent of the 2.4 million qualified applicants needed. Nationally, the Bureau was well ahead of this objective, having achieved about 99 percent of its recruiting goal. However, 5 of the Bureau's 12 regional offices fell short of the 89-percent benchmark. Based on Bureau data, the current shortfalls ranged from 1 to 12 percentage points. As shown in figure 3, these 5 regions—Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Kansas City, and Philadelphia—were among those below the Bureau's 71-percent benchmark as of March 2nd, and 52-percent benchmark as of February 9th, when we last analyzed Bureau recruiting data.

Figure 3: Recruiting Levels Over Time By Census Region



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

At the local level, the Bureau appears to be making progress toward meeting its recruitment goal. Indeed, 210 (41 percent) of 511 local census offices fell below the Bureau's March 30th benchmark of 89 percent, compared with 270 (53 percent) as of March 2nd.[4] Moreover, of the 210 local census offices falling short of the Bureau's March 30th benchmark, 9 had recruited fewer than half of the qualified applicants that the Bureau

[4] Our analysis did not include nine local census offices in Puerto Rico.

estimated it needed as of that date. This compares with 22 offices as of March 2nd.

Update/Leave Questionnaires Were Delivered and Address List Data Appears to Have Improved Despite Challenges

To deliver questionnaires to an estimated 24 million housing units in areas with mostly rural route and P.O. box addresses, the Bureau conducted its update/leave field operation between March 3rd and March 30th, 2000. During update/leave, enumerators were to systematically travel every street, road, and path in their assigned areas to verify census address lists and maps and to leave questionnaires for residents to mail back. They also were to identify incorrect or missed units, make corrections and additions to the address list and maps, and leave questionnaires for those residents to mail back as well. In addition, enumerators were to identify, for later enumeration, "special places," such as correctional institutions, juvenile homes, and homeless shelters.

Over 70,000 enumerator and other staff were in the field conducting update/leave, and the Bureau did not experience any significant problems staffing this operation. This is notable given the generally low unemployment rates prevailing around the country and the other recruiting challenges we have reported on before.

While national data are not yet available, our observations of update/leave thus far at 9 of the more than 350 local census offices conducting this operation suggest that the update/leave operation appears to have improved the quality of the address list, including correcting for potential lapses in the quality of earlier address list development efforts. During update/leave, census enumerators made corrections to many types of problems with maps and address registers, including nonexistent streets, incorrectly located "map spots," overlapping block and assignment area boundaries, and a variety of typographical errors. In some cases, local staff redrew or relisted entire blocks. To the extent that corrections identified during this operation have been accurately reflected in the maps and address binders and are keyed in accurately, they will reduce problems with later census operations, such as nonresponse follow-up.

However, the update/leave operation faced challenges that made it difficult to conduct and to ensure the quality of the address list data that were updated. For example, given its door-to-door nature and the need to identify every possible housing unit, update/leave faced challenges similar to those encountered by enumerators during block canvassing, such as finding "hidden" housing units and accessing gated properties to update

the address list and deliver questionnaires.[5] In addition, most of the offices we contacted experienced delays in receiving key materials. For example, one office did not receive its enumerator training kits on time, which required staff to photocopy needed materials.

Methods to Count Persons With No Usual Residence Appear to Have Improved Since 1990

The 2000 Census includes several initiatives designed to count people without conventional housing who may have been missed in the traditional enumeration. One of these, known as Service-Based Enumeration, attempts to count these individuals where they go for services, such as shelters and soup kitchens, as well as targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations. However, the inherent challenge of counting this population, combined with several operational difficulties that we observed, makes the completeness and accuracy of this data uncertain.

Although Service-Based Enumeration may count selected components of the homeless population, the program is not designed—and was never intended by the Bureau—to provide a specific count of homeless persons or service users. Rather, Service-Based Enumeration is part of the Bureau's Special Place enumeration program that attempts to count people living in less conventional residences. Other Special Place initiatives include efforts to count people living on military bases and aboard ships, as well as people in group quarters, such as nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, and college dormitories.

During the 1990 Census, the Bureau attempted to count persons with no usual residence by enumerating individuals living in shelters and on streets on a particular night.[6] However, the Bureau's approach did not include the "hidden homeless"—those individuals not living in shelters or visible on the streets at night. The Bureau noted that independent researchers in two cities had found that the hidden homeless could represent up to two-thirds of the nighttime street population. Also, in 1990, the Bureau relied primarily on local governments to identify street locations where persons with no usual residence could be found—but only 36 percent of all local governments responded. As a result, the Bureau fully understood that it did not produce a complete and accurate count of this population in 1990.

In response to the limitations of the 1990 initiative, the Bureau expanded its efforts for the 2000 Census. Service-Based Enumeration, which

[5] For additional information on the challenges of identifying housing units, see Decennial Census: Information on the Accuracy of Address Coverage (GAO/GGD-00-29R, Nov. 19, 1999).

[6] 1990 Census: Limitations in Methods and Procedures to Include the Homeless (GAO/GGD-92-1, Dec. 30, 1991).

occurred nationwide from March 27th through March 29th, 2000, had several components, including one-time enumeration at emergency and transitional shelters; soup kitchens; stops made by regularly scheduled mobile food vans; and targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations where people live and eat, such as encampments under freeway overpasses.

During the outdoor enumeration, teams of enumerators, using contact persons familiar to the individuals living at a given location, interviewed people using a short-form questionnaire. Enumerators were directed not to wake anyone who was sleeping, but instead to record approximate age, gender, and race if it could be clearly determined.

Starting in April 1999, the Bureau has worked with local governments and community-based organizations, such as homeless advocacy groups, to identify and update the list of service locations for Service-Based Enumeration at census time. For example, the Tulsa, Oklahoma, Local Census Office staff had several meetings with organizations serving the homeless community. Some other local census offices went even further. In the City of Los Angeles, Bureau officials told us that they toured known outdoor encampments by helicopter to get an indication of how large the outdoor enumeration might be.

To augment its list of service-providing facilities, the Bureau also reviewed government responses from the Special Places Local Update of Census Addresses (which included Service-Based Enumeration locations), and from additional facility listings added from other census operations, such as update/leave, to determine if any potential Service-Based Enumeration locations were missing. In addition, local census office employees reviewed Yellow Pages listings to see if any service facilities were missed. In preparation for Service-Based Enumeration, Bureau enumerators were also to make advance visits to facilities to work with staff to plan the enumeration and determine which procedures would work best.

Overall, in our field observations, we noted several things that generally went well with the way Service-Based Enumeration was conducted, including the following:

- Operations were appropriately staffed. Bureau enumerators came prepared in proper numbers to conduct enumeration at locations that in some instances, such as soup kitchens at meal times, had over 2,000 people to count.

- Enumerators generally obtained cooperation from service providers. For example, at two locations that we visited, service providers took the Bureau's sworn oath to protect confidentiality and helped conduct the count. This helped the enumeration because it was conducted by people known to shelter residents.

- Enumerators showed professionalism and commitment to their jobs. We observed enumerators making an effort to explain the census process, and answer respondents' questions. We also saw the extraordinary level of effort many enumerators put forth to ensure a complete and accurate count. In Albany, Georgia, for example, starting at 4:00 a.m., a team of enumerators searched empty railroad cars and abandoned and condemned buildings to locate people. Ten people were counted as a result of their efforts. In Rosslyn, Virginia, a team of enumerators unrelentingly searched heavy underbrush along the Potomac River, and, while no one was encountered, enumerators found evidence that people lived there.

Service-Based Enumeration, as it was designed, was a very short-term operation conducted under a tight time schedule--one that required much coordination to complete. Enumerators, hired specifically for the 3-day operation, were expected to learn procedures quickly and be prepared to conduct each enumeration when the time came in a variety of locations and under various, often difficult, circumstances.

As with any undertaking of this scope and nature, operational problems can and did occur. First, accurately counting this mobile and often hard to identify population is fraught with challenges, many of which were evident in our observations. For example, enumerators had difficulty spotting people sleeping in alleys and under blankets on benches. As a result, some individuals were no doubt missed.

Police presence, the weather, and the terrain also hampered enumerators' ability to find people living on the street at some of the locations we observed. In Los Angeles, crew leaders told us that a police "sweep" before the count may have forced some people away from the sites targeted for enumeration by the local census office. According to a Bureau official in the Plano, Texas, Local Census Office, a previous night's tornado, rain, and hail in the area resulted in no one being found the following morning at the office's 5 targeted non-sheltered locations. In Tulsa, muddy and brush-filled terrain along a river bank and in other locations made it difficult to spot encampments where people could be living.

In addition to these inherent challenges, we also observed a variety of logistical, administrative, and procedural problems common to most of the sites that we visited. Specific problems included the following:

- **Insufficient quantities of supplies:** Supplies of questionnaires, training materials, and other documents were not always adequate at the locations we visited, which, at a minimum, appears to have led to inefficient use of staff time. For example, because a San Francisco Local Census Office did not have enough questionnaires, staff had to photocopy the questionnaires and use the same bar code identifier on all copies. In order for these forms to be data captured, the office will have to redo all the completed questionnaires on the individually bar coded forms when they are received from the Bureau's supply distribution center. At the Tulsa local census office, an official told us that training kits were incomplete, forcing employees to take apart other training kits in order to put together full sets of instructional material.

- **Inadequate training:** Enumerators in San Francisco and the Los Angeles area told us that their training did not sufficiently prepare them for the wide range of scenarios that they encountered. Also, training materials, such as videos of a mock visit to a soup kitchen, arrived too late in one San Francisco local census office to be used by the enumerators. In Tulsa, a crew leader told us that because the training materials arrived late, training was delayed by a week and, as a result, the crew leader had to rush through the training in order to complete it in time for the enumeration. Similarly, in Albany, Georgia, a crew leader told us that training materials did not arrive until the Saturday before training was to begin—leaving little time to prepare for the class held on Monday.

- **Inconsistent procedures for handling rejections:** Although Bureau procedures require enumerators to ask individuals to complete a form even if they said that they had already done so at another location (for later unduplication), many enumerators we observed did not do this. Instead, we observed that enumerators often accepted an individual's response (typically after attempting to confirm it by asking where and when the earlier enumeration occurred) without attempting to interview the individual further.

- **Inconsistent advance planning:** In the Los Angeles area, enumerators made an advance visit at a shelter the previous Saturday when no knowledgeable staff were present. As a result, the Bureau picked a less than optimum time to enumerate on shelter night. In another instance, the Minister of an Alexandria, VA, church that provides lunches to the poor

told us that she stressed to the Bureau during the visit before the enumeration that it was important that the Bureau bring only a few enumerators to count her clients. She knew from experience with efforts to take local censuses that too many enumerators would prove intimidating. However, she said that the Bureau did not take her advice and showed up with far too many enumerators, thus scaring off some of those coming in for lunch.

As I noted, while these problems may have affected the quality and completeness of the count, and therefore should not be minimized, it is not surprising that they occurred in an operation as large and complex as the Bureau's attempt to count persons without a usual residence.

Questionnaire Assistance Centers Are Available to Serve Targeted Groups, But Implementation Has Been Varied

For the 2000 Census, the Bureau planned a number of coverage improvement initiatives to increase the accuracy and completeness of the count. One such initiative is the Questionnaire Assistance Centers program. Questionnaire Assistance Centers are intended to help people—especially those with little or no English-speaking ability—complete their census questionnaires, by providing assistance in various languages on a walk-in basis. The centers are also to distribute Be Counted forms to count those people who believe that they did not receive a census questionnaire, or who were otherwise not included in the census. The centers are to be open between March 8 and April 14, 2000. Nationwide, as of March 30, 2000, the Bureau had about 23,700 centers open.[7]

As we discussed in our February report to the Subcommittee, several factors will be critical to the effectiveness of the Questionnaire Assistance Center initiative. The factors include (1) partnering with community, social service, religious, and other local organizations to identify sites with locations and schedules that best meet the needs of targeted groups, and to ensure they are adequately publicized; (2) ensuring that sites have "street-level" visibility so that targeted groups are able to find them; (3) monitoring usage so that people will be able to find forms and obtain assistance when and where they are supposed to be available; and (4) making sure staff are available with appropriate foreign language skills.[8]

Based on our fieldwork, during which we visited 15 Questionnaire Assistance Centers, our observations suggest that the Bureau has made

[7] According to a Bureau official, the number of Questionnaire Assistance Centers has fluctuated over time as centers have been established or consolidated.

[8] 2000 Census: Actions Taken to Improve the Be Counted and Questionnaire Assistance Center Programs (GAO/GGD-00-47, Feb. 25, 2000).

appropriate efforts to make Questionnaire Assistance Centers available to targeted groups. For example, at the Laredo, Texas, Local Census Office, Bureau officials told us that the office had so many partners volunteering to operate Questionnaire Assistance Centers that it could pick the more effective locations—for a total of 51 centers. The partners included the Texas Migrant Workers Association, the Laredo Department of Human Services, the American Association of Retired Persons, and the National Association of Federal Employees. In addition, the City of Del Rio, Texas, donated $50,000 to staff the Questionnaire Assistance Centers. The locations and operating times of the centers were advertised in English and Spanish on local television, radio, and in a Hispanic community newspaper. The Questionnaire Assistance Center that we visited at the Sunrise Convenience Store in a hard-to-enumerate Hispanic area was prominently advertised at a nearby intersection with a large street banner paid for by a local Coca-Cola franchise.

Similarly, in Albany, Georgia, we also visited a Questionnaire Assistance Center in a hard-to-enumerate Hispanic area where Bureau officials told us that approximately 50 percent of the Hispanic population could not speak English. The center was located in a health care center for the aging and was also publicly accessible. The staff at the center provided help in reading and completing the forms to respondents and arranged for language assistance. Advertisements for the center were placed in a local Wal-Mart and newspaper

In contrast, less input from local partners and less promotion was evident in other local census offices we visited. For example, management staff at a local census office in Northern Virginia identified Questionnaire Assistance sites that generally lacked any input from local partners. The centers are primarily located in less urban areas, in such government buildings as libraries, a city hall, and a police station. Moreover, at a local census office in Oklahoma, according to the local census manager responsible for the Questionnaire Assistance Center program, the office had to call organizations to reconfirm their interest in the Questionnaire Assistance Center initiative because contacts were not kept up-to-date in the Bureau's partnership database. According to the local manager, this office also did not have the time to promote the Questionnaire Assistance Centers and is instead relying on word of mouth to publicize them.

Bureau Reports Successful Data Capture Operations, but Risks Remain

In mid-March, we testified that the readiness of the Bureau's four data capture centers (DCC) to operate at production-level workloads was uncertain. Specifically, although the DCCs had been operating for about 1 week, they had not yet received sufficient questionnaires to reach production-level processing. Additionally, we had not yet seen the results of important tests, and we did not yet know the extent to which ongoing development of DCS 2000—the Bureau's automated data capture system—would be affected by diverting personnel to support data capture operations.

Bureau officials told us that, as of March 29th, the DCCs were experiencing no data capture problems and that questionnaires were being processed at a rate that will meet the Bureau's May 26th deadline for completing mail-back questionnaire processing. Available data on some processing activities, such as form check-in, corroborated these statements. However, because we do not yet know the Bureau's goals for other activities, such as data transmission and form check-out, we cannot independently assess progress in several key areas. Additionally, the ongoing changes to DCS 2000's software and hardware configurations face increased risk to their timely completion.

Successful Data Capture Operations Reported, but Not Independently Assessed

The Bureau's data for the first 3 weeks of data capture operations show that, through March 29th, the DCCs had received a sufficient number of census forms to perform data capture operations at the full production level of 1.1 million questionnaires per day. Bureau officials told us that the DCCs have been able to keep up with this production-level workload. Moreover, data show that some data capture operations are meeting or exceeding the Bureau's goals. For example, each DCC either met or exceeded its goal for check-in of questionnaires received. This step entails reading the barcode on each mailed-in questionnaire and sorting the questionnaires for subsequent data capture activities. Because the check-in enables the Bureau to determine who has not yet responded to the census and thus will require follow-up, the DCCs are expected to check-in as many questionnaires as possible before April 11, 2000.

As of March 29th, the Bureau reported DCS 2000's optical character recognition (OCR) accuracy rate was over 99.29 percent at each DCC, exceeding the Bureau's 98-percent accuracy goal. Additionally, the key from image (KFI) accuracy rate was 97.28 percent or more at each DCC, exceeding the Bureau's 96.5-percent KFI accuracy goal. The KFI keying rate exceeded the Bureau's 5,000 characters per hour goal at each DCC except Jeffersonville, which had a KFI keying rate of 4,127 characters per hour.

There are several other key data capture activities that we cannot independently assess because the Bureau has not yet provided its goals for these activities. These include imaging, the number of forms that have gone through KFI, data transmission, and check-out. However, according to the Bureau, it has compared its data on these activities against its goals and determined that the DCCs are processing questionnaires at a rate sufficient to meet its May 26, 2000, deadline for processing all questionnaires it receives through the mail.

To help prepare for the actual data capture operations during Census 2000, the Bureau and its contractors conducted a final operational test from February 22 to 25, 2000. In our previous testimony to the Subcommittee, we stated that the Bureau characterized the four-site test as successful.[9] Subsequently, our review of the four-site test report determined that the test identified several problems with DCS 2000. However, Bureau officials told us that these problems have been fixed and that DCS 2000 has been modified accordingly. Our analysis of these problems and the actions taken to address them indicates the problems should be resolved and will not affect an ongoing system operation.

DCS 2000 Problems Increase Risk of Delay in Completing Ongoing System Changes

In our February 2000 report on the progress of DCS 2000 development,[10] we raised the concern that the short time between the conclusion of the development and test activities and the date when DCS 2000 would start supporting data capture operations created the risk that new problems would be identified after the system was in use. This, in fact, is occurring. During the initial 3 weeks of data capture operations, the Bureau and its contractors identified a total of 66 new problems with DCS 2000. Six of these were classified as "critical," meaning that they could significantly degrade system operation and needed to be fixed within 72 hours.

The DCS 2000 system development contractor has fixed these problems, but doing so has required the Bureau to delay the development of some important changes to DCS 2000. As we testified in March, the Bureau was making two sets of software modifications that would enable the Bureau to set priorities for data capture operations and meet its deadline for producing apportionment counts. The first set of changes was completed in February, and the second was to be completed by April 27th. The Bureau has delayed its completion date for the second set to May 31st, because it needs to divert personnel to address DCS 2000 problems. According to the

[9] 2000 Census: Update on Essential Operations (GAO/T-GGD/AIMD-00-119, Mar. 14, 2000).

[10] 2000 Census: New Data Capture System Progress and Risks (GAO/AIMD-00-61, Feb. 4, 2000).

DCS 2000 development contractor, the revised schedule still allows time to complete development and testing activities, and further delays are not expected because the contractor is adding personnel to the second release development effort. Nevertheless, if new DCS 2000 problems continue to surface, the completion of the second release will be increasingly at risk.

Moreover, there are still a number of significant activities that need to be completed before the second release software is ready for operation. In particular, the Bureau and its development contractor have not yet completed a software development plan for the second release. Additionally, the contractor has proposed eliminating system acceptance testing—which is normally a government witnessed activity to ensure that the system meets required specifications—to save time in the development schedule. Because the development plan is not completed, we cannot yet offer an assessment of second pass development risks, including the proposal to forgo system acceptance testing.

Mr. Chairman, with about a week before the cutoff date for mailback responses for purposes of generating the list for nonresponse follow-up, the Bureau continues to need public cooperation to return millions of outstanding questionnaires.

While it is positive to note that the national response rate was at 55 percent as of April 1st, a large number of local census offices could be facing relatively large nonresponse follow-up workloads. The more the response rates for these offices increase, the better positioned they will be to complete their nonresponse follow-up workload. Thus, all of us need to continue to encourage our colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and those we meet in the public to return their census forms.

On behalf of the Subcommittee, we will continue to track the mail response rate and other operational data, and monitor the progress of the census.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Contact and Acknowledgments

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