Why GAO Did This Study

One of the most important functions of the Bureau is conducting a complete and accurate decennial census of the U.S. population, which is mandated by the Constitution and provides vital data for the nation. A complete count of the nation's population is an enormous challenge as the Bureau seeks to control the cost of the census, implement operational innovations, and use new and modified IT systems. In recent years, GAO has identified challenges that raise serious concerns about the Bureau's ability to conduct a cost-effective enumeration. For these reasons, GAO added the 2020 Census to the High-Risk List in February 2017.

In this statement, GAO discusses three challenges: (1) implementing new innovations, (2) implementing and securing critical IT systems (3) and ensuring the reliability of the Bureau’s cost estimate for the 2020 Census.

The information in this testimony is based primarily on GAO’s previous reports on the Bureau’s planning efforts for 2020. GAO also collected and reviewed new information on the following Bureau activities: (1) recent decisions on preparations for the 2020 Census, (2) IT security testing leading up to the 2017 Census Test, (3) progress on key systems to be used for the 2018 Census Test, and (4) efforts to update its life-cycle cost estimate.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has previously made a number of recommendations to address issues raised in this testimony, many of which have not yet been implemented.

View GAO-17-584T. For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff at (202) 512-2725 or goldenkoffr@gao.gov or David A. Power at (202) 512-9286 or pow@ga.gov.