

2030 Census: Preparations Are Underway with Changes to How the Count Takes Place

GAO-25-107886 [Accessible Version]

Q&A Report to Congressional Requesters

July 24, 2025

Why This Matters

Census data are used to apportion the seats of the U.S. House of Representatives, support many private sector business decisions, redraw congressional districts in each state, and allocate hundreds of billions of dollars each year in federal financial assistance. Census planning is an enormous and complex undertaking, and the Census Bureau is well into its 14-year life cycle for the decennial census, which runs from 2019 through 2033 when including early planning and final evaluations. The Bureau approved a preliminary high-level operational plan in December 2024 (with public release awaiting review by the Department of Commerce as of early July 2025) and is making design and planning decisions that will affect implementation of the 2030 Census.

The Bureau previously faced challenges with estimating and managing the cost of the census. Costs of taking the census have risen over time, from \$45 per household in 1990 to roughly \$99 per household in 2020 (in constant 2020 dollars), due in part to factors like relatively lower self-response rates and increased infrastructure costs. The Bureau was able to slow the rate of increase for the last census compared to 2010, though, to roughly 7 percent versus the roughly 15 percent increase that the 2010 cost represented over the 2000 Census.

We were asked by Congress to report on a range of topics related to preparations for the 2030 Census, including any effects from known major design changes. This report is the first in what will be a series of products on how the Bureau is preparing for the 2030 Census.

Key Takeaways

- The Bureau is testing and refining its initial, high-level operational plan and estimating life-cycle costs. The Bureau has already completed much of its research and plans major field tests for 2026 and 2028.
- As of early July 2025, the Bureau plans several changes for the 2030 Census, including eliminating nationwide canvassing to build its address list, expanding its use of data from other government agencies to count people who do not respond, and further reducing census field-office infrastructure. Any changes to the types of data collected will become clear when the Secretary of Commerce transmits decennial questionnaire topics and content to Congress in 2027 and 2028, respectively.
- Continued oversight of the Bureau's planned changes is needed, considering the relevance of budgetary uncertainty; cybersecurity and privacy; managing cost, schedule, and risk; and data quality and transparency.

Why is the decennial census important?

The decennial census is a count of the nation's population and residences (including those located in the District of Columbia and the territories of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).¹ It takes place once every 10 years. Article 1 and the 14th Amendment to the Constitution mandate the conduct of a census for purposes of apportioning political representation among the states.²

The Census Act of 1790 established the procedures for the first decennial count.³ The Bureau tries to count every person where they usually live as of April 1 of the year of the census, which will next occur in 2030.

Many federal programs use data collected by the Bureau to help determine eligibility for and allocation of funding from federal programs that distribute resources to states, localities, and American Indian tribes. The census also serves as a source and reference point for the data and analytical methods of the many surveys that make up the country's statistical system. Moreover, the private sector uses the census to inform business decisions.

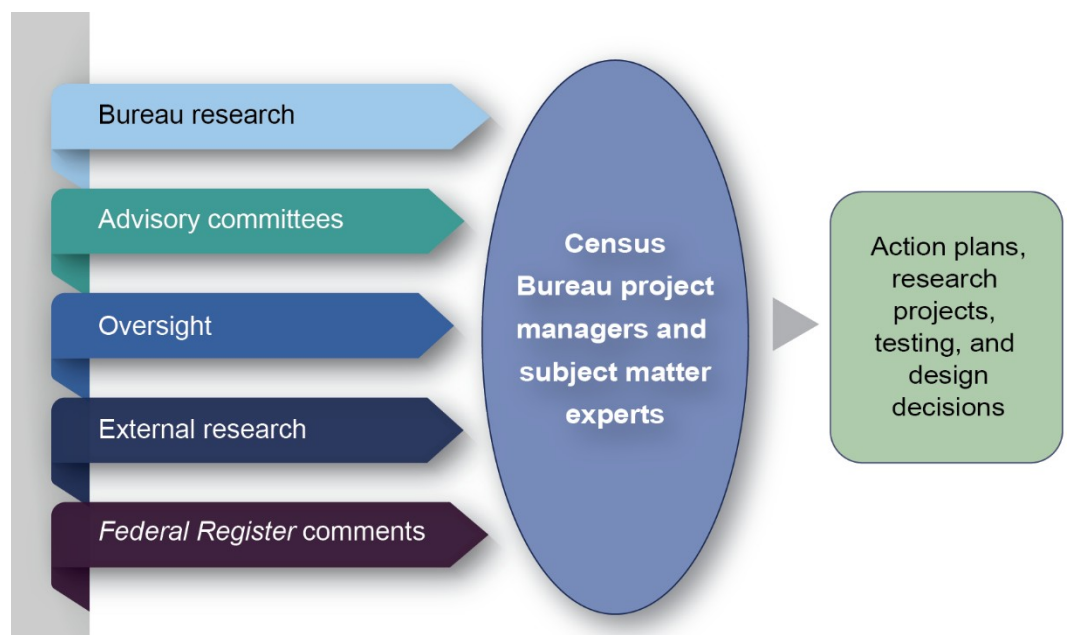
With the above considerations in mind, oversight is critical as the Bureau develops, tests, and refines the approach for 2030 that it has been researching.

How has the Bureau tried to improve the census since 2020?

The Bureau has multiple mechanisms to assess the quality of past decennials and apply appropriate lessons toward improving upcoming censuses. According to Bureau documents, the 2030 Census design is based on the 2020 Census and incorporates lessons learned, research results, and continuous improvements.

As part of this process, the Bureau assessed its prior census activities from the 2020 Census, obtained input from a wide range of stakeholders, and researched and tested new design approaches and systems (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Sources of Input the Census Bureau Has Considered when Designing the 2030 Census



Source: GAO analysis of Census Bureau planning documentation. Ikhlas/stock.adobe.com. | GAO-25-107886

For example, teams of Bureau officials that assessed 2020 operations researched the effects of late 2020 Census design changes on data quality, and the Bureau previously convened three advisory committees that proposed recommendations to address census-related challenges.⁴

The Bureau also considers external sources of input:

- External research organizations help assess the Bureau's plans, processes, procedures, and 2020 Census data quality metrics. For example, the Bureau tracks recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, the American Statistical Association, and the JASON group, an independent association of scientific consultants.
- The Bureau receives input from comments submitted by the public through any 2030 Census Federal Register Notices published by the *Federal Register*.
- We and the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General make recommendations for future action and document lessons learned.

The Bureau documents recommendations from these sources and assigns them to officials and experts who develop and implement action plans, which may result in testing or changes to the census design. As we reported in March 2023, the Bureau maintains a centrally accessible database to track and report on recommendations and their action plans.⁵ According to Bureau documents, as of July 2025 the Bureau was tracking over 700 open recommendations from oversight and internal research sources.

How does the Bureau try to count people in the right place?

To ensure it is counting people in the right place, the Bureau builds and maintains an address list (coded to geographic units) of all known living quarters throughout the country. This information enables the Bureau to determine how and where to send invitations to respond to the census, as well as to identify where to send census workers to follow up with households that do not respond.

The Bureau attempts to collect basic information (name, age, sex, ethnicity, and race) about full-time residents of a living quarter (home, facility, or transitory location) and link that information to a known address so that each person is counted only once and in the right place (see fig. 2).

Figure 2: Illustrative Questions from the 2020 Census

3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home? Mark ☒ ONE box.

☐ **Owned** by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan? *Include home equity loans.*

☐ **Owned** by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?

☐ **Rented?**

☐ Occupied without payment of rent?

Person 1

5. Please provide information for each person living here. If there is someone living here who pays the rent or owns this residence start by listing him or her as Person 1. If...

Person 2

3. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ☒ ONE box.

☐ Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse

☐ Opposite-sex unmarried partner

☐ Same-sex husband/wife/spouse

☐ Same-sex unmarried partner

☐ Biological son or daughter

☐ Adopted son or daughter

☐ Stepson or stepdaughter

☐ Brother or sister

☐ Father or mother

☐ Grandchild

☐ Parent-in-law

☐ Son-in-law or daughter-in-law

☐ Other relative

☐ Roommate or housemate

☐ Foster child

☐ Other non-relative

4. What is this person's sex? Mark ☒ ONE box.

☐ Male

☐ Female

Person 2

5. What is this person's age and what is this person's date of birth? *For babies less than a year old, do not write the age in months. Write 0 as the age.*

Age on April 1, 2020

Month

Day

Year of birth

years

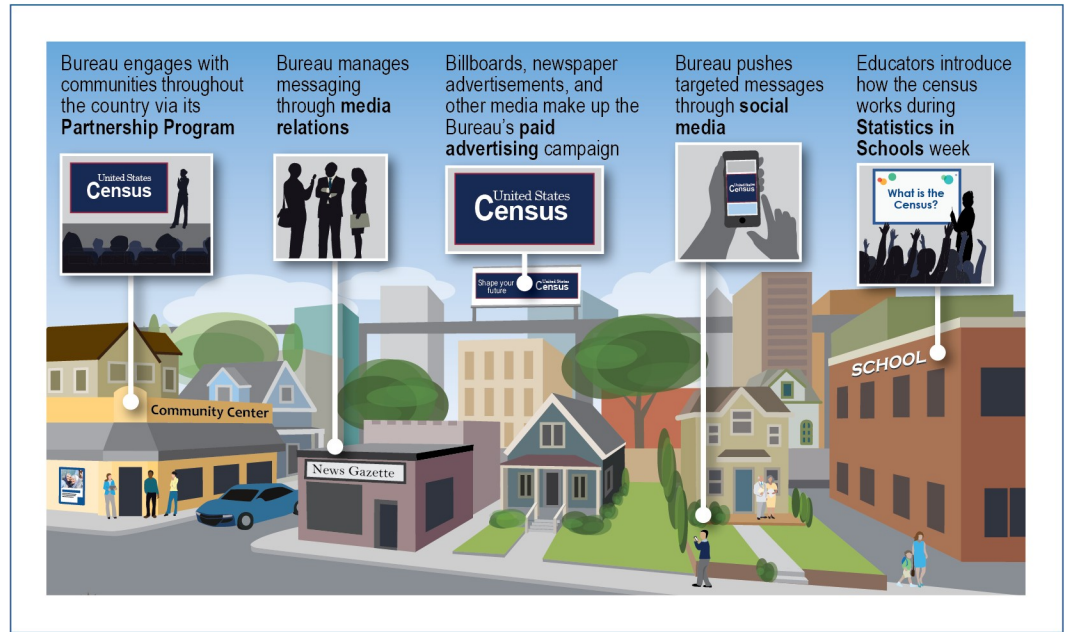
☐ No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am. Chicano☐ Yes, Puerto Rican☐ Yes, Cuban☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc...☐ White - *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.*☐ Black or African Am. - *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian etc.*☐ American Indian or Alaska Native - *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation*☐ Some other race - *Print race or origin*

Note: This figure is not a real 2020 Census form—for example, due to limited space, it includes only a subset of response options for race—but it illustrates the types of information that the Bureau ensures is complete and consistent in household responses.

Source: GAO illustration adapted from census form. | GAO-25-107886

The Bureau first encourages residents to respond to the census either online, by phone, or by paper questionnaire. The Bureau uses mailings with pre-generated respondent IDs, as well as a combination of advertisements and community outreach to promote participation in the census (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: The Census Bureau Tries to Encourage Self-Response Through a Variety of Outreach Methods



Source: GAO analysis of Census Bureau documentation. GAO (illustrations). | GAO-25-107886

After this period of self-response, the Bureau visits addresses of homes on file from which it has not yet received a response. Typically, these addresses receive in-person visits from temporary Bureau workers called enumerators.

The Bureau also uses a mix of self-response and follow-up techniques to count residents of other types of living quarters known as group quarters (GQ) facilities, such as university campuses, nursing homes, and correctional facilities, where people live and receive services.

In addition to trying to collect census responses from any remaining nonrespondents, the Bureau attempts to leverage authoritative sources of administrative records, where available, from other federal programs (such as tax data) to include those nonrespondents in the census. The Bureau as a last resort uses response data from nearby living quarters to complete the census for people who did not respond.

Finally, the Bureau reviews census data to remove any suspected duplicate responses, verify the addresses of people who self-responded without a pre-generated ID from the Bureau, and address other possible concerns with the data.

What is the Bureau currently planning to change for the next census?

In December 2024, the Bureau approved the first of several planned versions of its high-level operational plan for the 2030 Census, with a 2025 public release contingent upon review by the Department of Commerce as of early July 2025. This initial plan presents changes to several areas of the census. In appendix I, we list these and other major changes that we identified across the Bureau's plans.

- **Downsizing address canvassing as a large-scale field operation.** As part of the 2020 Census, the Bureau verified the addresses of about 35 percent of the country's households by sending temporary census

workers door to door. For 2030, the Bureau plans to build and maintain its address list throughout the decade by increasing the reliance on satellite imagery and geographic information systems from state, local, and tribal governments, as well as commercial sources. The Bureau believes that, since the quality of the above data sources has improved sufficiently over time, the Bureau will not need to send a large temporary workforce door to door but instead will use trained geographic professionals to verify individual addresses only when needed and as a last resort.

In 2020, the Bureau relied on an office-based clerical workforce to help decide which addresses needed to be verified by door-to-door visits. By contrast, for 2030, the Bureau plans to use a type of artificial intelligence known as machine learning—computer science techniques that allow computers to discover patterns in data—to detect changes in housing structures and identify locations of addresses within the images. The types of changes to be detected could include such changes as new construction or demolition.

The Bureau expects these changes to reduce or eliminate field work for address canvassing (see table 1).

Table 1: The Census Bureau’s Approach to Building the 2030 Address List Continues the Trend of Reducing Fieldwork and Staff			
	2010	2020	2030
Number of Addresses Canvassed Door-to-Door (Rounded)	145 million	53.5 million	As planned, only in rare circumstances, where needed
Number of Temporary Census Workers Hired for Canvassing (Rounded)	150,000	32,000	No hiring of temporary field staff planned

Source: 2010 and 2020 Census operational assessments; Census planning documentation. | GAO-25-107886.

- **Increasing use of administrative records to count people.** In 2020, the Bureau used administrative records from agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service to enumerate roughly 450,000 non-responding households. For 2030, the Bureau plans to use these data more frequently and earlier in its data collection to enumerate people who have not responded to the census.

Also in 2020, the Bureau used administrative records, such as mail delivery failure notices from the U.S. Postal Service, to help reduce unnecessary follow-up visits for 13 percent of the non-responding addresses.⁶ The Bureau plans to continue to refine through research how it can glean information from these and other sources of administrative records to reliably predict at which addresses people live, and thus clarify or further reduce the need for follow-up in 2030.

- **Integrating census data processing with data collection.** In prior censuses, the Bureau identified and resolved suspected concerns about the quality of census responses after it had collected the data. At that time it also attempted to statistically derive values for missing or incomplete data when possible.

For 2030, the Bureau plans to resolve data quality issues, such as duplicate or incomplete responses, in near real time with data collection. The Bureau has researched how to track updates to responses from known addresses during data collection so that staff can verify the

accuracy of the updates before data collection finishes. As we have previously reported, successful implementation of a change like this could add some flexibility to the Bureau's 2030 operational timeline.⁷

- **Modernizing data collection from group quarters (GQ) facilities.** In 2020, the Bureau had difficulty reaching and collecting census data from administrators of GQ facilities.⁸ For 2030, the Bureau plans to allow enumerators to collect responses from GQ residents directly and will invite the subset of GQ residents who live in college or university residence halls to self-respond using the internet.
- **Reducing the number of local field offices.** In 2020, the Bureau managed a nationwide network of 248 local census offices to support about 300,000 temporary census workers to collect data from households that did not respond to the census. In 2010, the Bureau had 494 of these offices. During the 2026 Census Test, the Bureau plans to use only regional offices providing remote management of data collection activity in test areas.

According to the Bureau's high-level operational plan for the 2030 Census, advances in remote work technology as well as streamlining and automating more of the recruitment, onboarding, and training functions for temporary staff will help inform whether the Bureau needs local census offices for 2030. The Bureau intends to eliminate large-scale canvassing to build the address list and may be able to enumerate or delete as nonexistent more non-responding households earlier in data collection. If these efforts are successful, the Bureau could greatly reduce the number of temporary census workers needed to follow up, as well as the number of field offices needed to support them. Testing an approach with less physical office footprint may also be important as the federal government continues to identify and plan for reductions in leased office space.⁹

- **Using enterprise-wide IT systems and solutions to support data collection, processing, dissemination, and privacy protection.** The Bureau's past censuses and surveys, including the 2020 Census, have largely relied on survey-specific IT systems to perform similar functions, which has resulted in many systems performing duplicative activities. For 2030, the Bureau plans to leverage IT systems from several large-scale IT programs that are expected to modernize and consolidate the Bureau's data collection, processing, and dissemination systems.¹⁰

What are some developments since 2020 that could affect the types of data collected for the 2030 Census?

In accordance with the Bureau's authorizing statute, by April 2027 the Secretary of Commerce is to provide to Congress the subjects proposed to be included, and the types of information to be compiled, in the 2030 questionnaire.¹¹ Similarly, the questions proposed to be included in the 2030 Census are due to Congress by April 2028. Since the Bureau collected data for the 2020 Census, there have been multiple developments that could influence what types of data the Bureau collects in 2030.

- In March 2024, the Office of Management and Budget published revised federal statistical standards that, among other things, directed agencies to collect race and ethnicity data through a combined question on federal surveys and added a reporting category of "Middle Eastern/North African" for this question.¹² If the March 2024 standards remain, the Bureau and

other statistical agencies will have until March 2029 to come into compliance with the standards.

- In January 2025, the President rescinded the prior administration's January 2021 executive order that had ceased interagency collection of citizenship data in connection with the decennial census.¹³ From July 2019 until January 2021, federal agencies were required to compile data on citizenship in response to an earlier, unsuccessful administrative effort to have a citizenship question included on the 2020 Census questionnaire.¹⁴ As of June 2025, it is unclear if the Administration is planning to renew this effort in advance of submitting decennial census topics and questions to Congress.

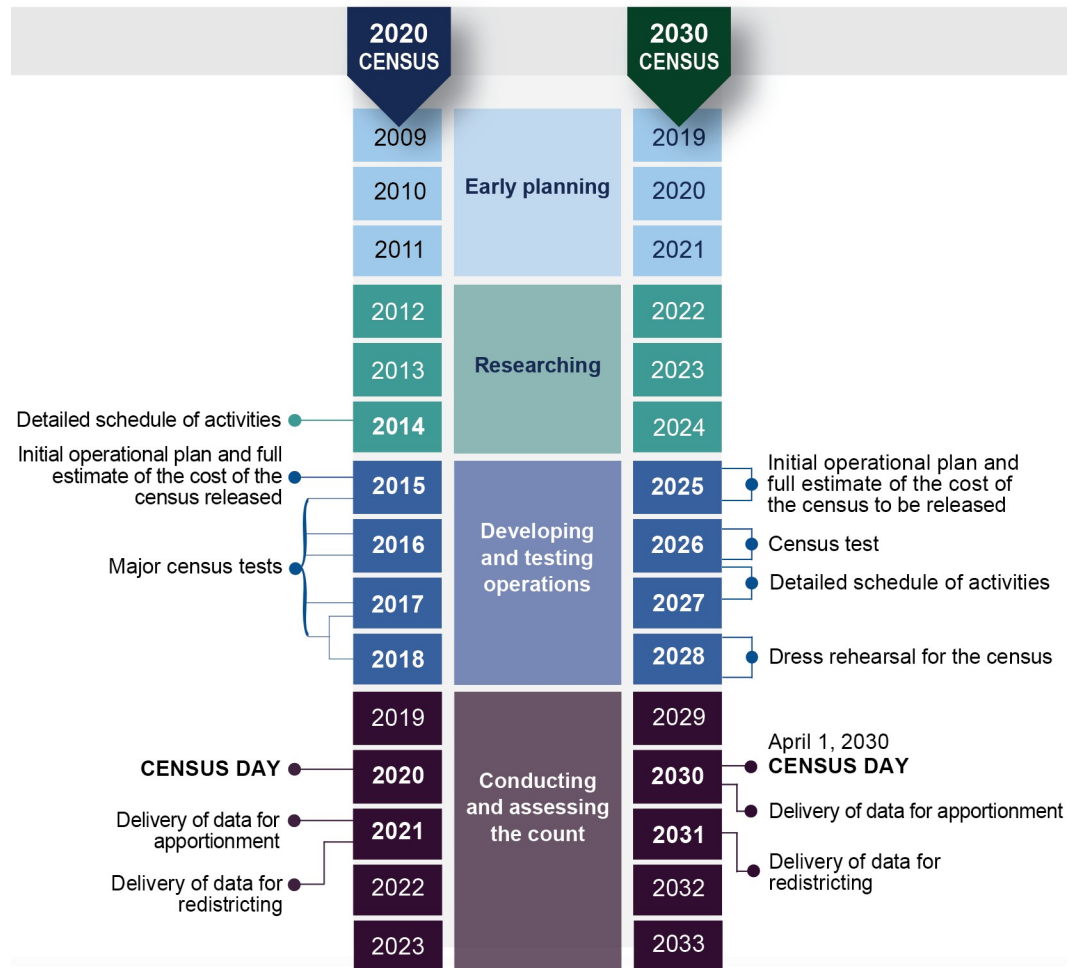
We will continue monitoring as the Bureau develops and submits its 2030 questionnaire content to Congress as required between now and April 2028.

What is the status of the Bureau's preparations for 2030?

By the end of 2024, the Bureau had already completed most of its primary research for the 2030 Census and transitioned to the development and testing of the operational activities it is planning. The Bureau will produce the preliminary cost estimate for the 2030 Census after it publicly releases its 2030 Census Operational Plan, which describes the Bureau's initial census design and informs testing intended to assess the viability of specific operational activities. As of early July 2025, Bureau officials indicated that the design elements we reviewed from the version of the 2030 Census Operational Plan, approved by the Bureau in December 2024, were still current. The Bureau had not, however, publicly released the plan but intends to do so after it is reviewed by the Department of Commerce. The Bureau also plans to update its detailed schedule of activities and milestones after it conducts the 2026 Census Test and to fully define its 2030 operational activities in early 2028.

The Bureau will develop and test operational activities for the 2030 Census until 2029, when planning will transition to conducting and assessing the census itself (see fig. 4).

Figure 4: The Census Bureau Has Begun Developing and Testing Operational Activities for the 2030 Census



Source: GAO analysis of Census Bureau planning documentation. | GAO-25-107886

Note: The Secretary of Commerce is required by law to deliver state population counts for apportionment to the President by December 31, and to deliver counts for redistricting to the states within 1 year after Census Day. Operational delays caused by the COVID-19 national emergency led to the delayed release of these data products for the 2020 Census.

The Bureau plans to release a detailed test plan in advance of the 2026 Census Test. The Dress Rehearsal planned for 2028 will then implement the Bureau's updated operational plan and will inform any final refinements to planned 2030 Census operational activities. The Bureau plans to finalize detailed plans for each of these activities ahead of the count in early 2030.

While the 2030 and 2020 Census planning life cycles are similar, several differences are notable. For example, the Bureau is planning fewer large-scale tests for the 2030 Census while expanding the use of small-scale testing throughout the life cycle to inform design changes. In addition, Bureau officials said that they will define groupings of operational activities into specific, discrete decennial operations later in this decennial life cycle. According to the officials, they learned from the 2020 Census and disruptions caused by COVID-19 that they can make operational changes later in the life cycle than previously anticipated, which creates flexibility to finalize operational activities later in this life cycle than they had originally planned for 2020.

How can lessons learned inform oversight for the 2030 Census?

Lessons learned from past decennial life cycles suggest themes for Congress and other stakeholders to consider when reviewing the Bureau's planned changes as the 2030 life cycle progresses. Our reports highlight some key themes:

- **Budgetary uncertainty.** Budgetary uncertainty can disrupt key research, testing, and operations without adequate planning to mitigate risk to these activities. We previously reported that this uncertainty led the Bureau to cancel or delay many of its planned tests during the 2020 Census life cycle.¹⁵ For example, the Bureau cancelled 14 of its 24 planned field tests in 2013 and reduced the scope of its end-to-end major test in 2018. We also reported that the Bureau later received multiyear funds that, according to Bureau officials, positioned it to better navigate the 35-day fiscal year 2019 lapse in appropriations and carry out 2020 Census implementation activities as planned.¹⁶ According to Bureau documents, the agency is using an iterative approach to census planning that affords greater flexibility and protects census programs from budgetary uncertainty throughout the life cycle.
- **Cybersecurity and privacy.** Evolving cybersecurity threats as well as methodological and technological changes to the census can pose challenges for cybersecurity controls and privacy protections. For example, we previously reported that the Bureau's use of mobile devices to conduct census activities required the implementation of new security controls for the 2020 Census.¹⁷ While the Bureau managed several such threats and technological challenges effectively throughout the 2020 life cycle, it was unable to mitigate others due to compressed time frames to develop or test systems and perform security assessments on them.
- **Managing cost, schedule, and risk.** The Bureau generally made progress during the previous census life cycle in addressing weaknesses in cost estimation, schedule management, and risk management processes across decennial programs. For example, we previously reported that during the 2020 Census life cycle the Bureau established appropriate guidance for developing and documenting cost estimates.¹⁸ Sustaining this progress will better position the Bureau for a high-quality and cost-effective 2030 Census.
- **Data quality and transparency.** Data quality can be put at risk by late changes to census design and operations. For example, we previously reported that altered time frames for population counts and postprocessing of census data may limit the Bureau's ability to detect and address errors before the legally mandated deadlines for delivering apportionment and redistricting tabulations.¹⁹ Further, to ensure confidence in census results, it will be important to communicate changes and their justifications to stakeholders and the public.

In addition to these themes, we are tracking 22 open recommendations made to the Bureau from our prior reports.²⁰

Targeted oversight of 2030 Census planning can help ensure that the Bureau continues to make improvements as it progresses through the 2030 life cycle. The areas listed above prompt oversight questions that we will continue to monitor as part of our subsequent 2030 Census work. These include but are not limited to:

- How is the Bureau planning to ensure resiliency of its key research and testing activities in an uncertain budgetary and staffing environment? What evidence will the Bureau use to support final design decisions if budgetary uncertainty adversely affects plans for testing?
- How does the Bureau plan to address new and evolving cybersecurity threats for the 2030 Census? How will the Bureau make key decisions accordingly on IT systems and data privacy activities?
- How does the Bureau plan to provide information on the estimated level of resources (i.e., labor and equipment) needed to complete planned work within its schedule if operations activities will not be fully defined until late in the 2030 life cycle?
- How, if at all, will making certain design decisions later in the decade affect the Bureau's ability to manage the cost and schedule of the 2030 Census? What effects, if any, might such changes have on data quality?

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Commerce for review and comment. The Department of Commerce did not comment on the report. The Census Bureau provided us technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

How GAO Did This Study

To identify the status of the Bureau's planning for the 2030 Census as well as the known major changes to the 2030 Census from prior decennials, we reviewed preliminary operational planning documentation approved by the Bureau in December 2024 (with public release contingent upon review by the Department of Commerce as of early July 2025). We identified design changes and compared timelines relative to the 2020 Census by analyzing its operational planning documentation.

We selected the major changes to report based on their relationship to prior recommendations, the Bureau's "enhancement areas" for the 2030 Census, or our biennial reporting on our High-Risk List. We also collected testimonial responses from Bureau officials elaborating on the rationale behind preliminary design features and decisions for the 2030 Census.

To identify lessons learned from prior decennial oversight and how those lessons can inform future oversight, we reviewed our and Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General reporting on the 2020 Census and identified themes from recommendations and findings. We also collected and reviewed Bureau documentation of how it tracks and manages recommendations as it makes its 2030 design decisions.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2024 to July 2025 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

List of Addressees

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Andy Kim
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and Census
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
The Honorable Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Commerce, the U.S. Census Bureau, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

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Appendix I: Major Changes Initially Planned for the 2030 Census

Table 2: Early Planning for 2030 Census Indicates Numerous Major Changes from the 2020 Census

Category	Category information
Data Collection	Consolidate certain geography-based contact strategies for in-field enumeration
Data Collection	Simplify internet self-response option to reduce respondent burden
Data Processing	Review data quality as responses are received to better detect and enable correction of errors
Field Infrastructure	Further reduce need for physical presence of offices, staff, and related infrastructure to control cost
Field Infrastructure	Further automate recruitment and payroll services for field offices
Field Infrastructure	Streamline staff onboarding steps and processes
Use of Administrative Records	Increase partnerships with federal and state agencies to obtain data already provided by households (administrative records) to reduce need for Non-response Follow-up
Use of Administrative Records	Join data sets from across the Census Bureau of addresses and peoples' demographic characteristics throughout the decade to reduce need for major updates to address list for the 2030 Census
Use of Administrative Records	Increase use of administrative records to manage contacts with households and to count those not responding
Group Quarters Enumeration	Provide residents of some group quarters (GQ) facilities (such as college or university residence halls) with opportunity to provide own self-response to the census over the internet to improve quality
Group Quarters Enumeration	Reintroduce a separate categorization for certain types of GQ facilities, such as universities, distinct from their constituent living spaces, such as dormitories
IT Systems, Cybersecurity, and Privacy	Expand the use of enterprise-wide IT systems and programs, such as for data collection, processing, and dissemination, instead of relying on survey-specific systems and applications
IT Systems, Cybersecurity, and Privacy	Use enhanced methods to avoid disclosure, protecting respondent privacy in public data releases

Source: Census Bureau planning documentation. | GAO-25-107886.

Endnotes

¹The census also counts U.S. military and federal civilian employees stationed or assigned overseas and their dependents living with them. American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are included in the decennial Island Areas Censuses, whereas the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is part of the stateside decennial census.

²U.S. Constit. art. 1, § 2, cl. 3; amend. XIV, § 2, cl. 1.

³An Act providing for the enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, 1 Stat. 101 (Mar. 1, 1790).

⁴In February 2025, the Secretary of Commerce announced that three advisory committees that had previously met—the 2030 Census Advisory Committee, the National Advisory Committee, and the Census Scientific Advisory Committee—would no longer be meeting to provide new recommendations to the Bureau. In technical comments on a draft of this report, the Bureau informed us that it would no longer be consulting or reviewing the committees' recommendations, although it would still retain them as records.

⁵GAO, *2020 Census: A More Complete Lessons Learned Process for Cost and Schedule Would Help the Next Decennial*, [GAO-23-105819](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 2, 2023).

⁶GAO, *2020 Census: Innovations Helped with Implementation, but Bureau Can Do More to Realize Future Benefits*, [GAO-21-478](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 14, 2021).

⁷[GAO-21-478](#).

⁸[GAO-21-478](#).

⁹Throughout the spring of 2025, the General Services Administration, which manages federal office leases and other assets, announced a series of what it called "accelerated dispositions" to reduce the federal real estate portfolio. Historically, local census offices have functioned through short-term leases.

¹⁰GAO, *IT Modernization: Census Bureau Needs Reliable Cost and Schedule Estimates*, [GAO-24-105979](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 29, 2024).

¹¹13 U.S.C. § 141.

¹²Office of Management and Budget, *Revisions to OMB's Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*, 89 Fed. Reg. 22,182 (Mar. 29, 2024). It is unclear if the current administration is planning additional revisions to SPD-15 that may affect how the Bureau constructs its 2030 Census questionnaire.

¹³Executive Order No. 14148, *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions*, 90 Fed. Reg. 8237 (Jan. 28, 2025) rescinded Executive Order No. 13986, *Ensuring a Lawful and Accurate Enumeration and Apportionment Pursuant to the Decennial Census*, 86 Fed. Reg. 7015 (Jan. 25, 2021).

¹⁴For more information on the disposition of the citizenship question in the 2020 Census, see Executive Order No. 13880, *Collecting Information About Citizenship Status in Connection With the Decennial Census*, 84 Fed. Reg. 33821 (July 16, 2019).

¹⁵GAO, *2020 Census: Lessons Learned from Planning and Implementing the 2020 Census Offer Insights to Support 2030 Preparations*, [GAO-22-104357](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 11, 2022).

¹⁶GAO, *2020 Census: Bureau Needs to Take Additional Actions to Address Key Risks to a Successful Enumeration*, [GAO-19-685T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 24, 2019).

¹⁷[GAO-22-104357](#).

¹⁸[GAO-22-104357](#).

¹⁹GAO, *2020 Census: Census Bureau Needs to Assess Data Quality Concerns Stemming from Recent Design Changes*, [GAO-21-142](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 3, 2020).

²⁰Five of these recommendations come from a report that examined IT management across the Bureau (not specific to decennial functions). See [GAO-24-105979](#).