



July 2021

# 2020 CENSUS

## Office Managers' Perspectives on Recent Operations Would Strengthen Planning for 2030

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-104071](#), a report to congressional addressees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The execution of the 2020 Census was largely a local endeavor, carried out by hundreds of thousands of short-term workers reporting to temporary census offices around the country. How this workforce is managed can affect the cost and quality of the census.

This report examines how the Bureau managed its field data collection operations at the local level for the 2020 Census, and how area census office managers' (ACOM) perspectives can inform planning. GAO performed the work under the authority of the Comptroller General to evaluate the 2020 Census to assist Congress with its oversight responsibilities.

GAO surveyed the Bureau's 248 ACOMs six times during the 2020 Census, reviewed Bureau documents related to management and operations, and interviewed Bureau officials. The number of questions asked varied across waves of the survey, and the wording of some questions changed.

Concurrent with this report, GAO is issuing online supplemental material that presents regional and national aggregations of survey responses.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Bureau (1) use relevant data from GAO's 2020 ACOM survey to inform planning for 2030, (2) use perspectives of selected ACOMs to inform planning for 2030, and (3) develop a plan with defined tasks and milestones to increase coordination with the partnership program. The Bureau concurred and provided technical comments we included where appropriate.

View [GAO-21-104071](#). To view the supplement online, click on [GAO-21-105237](#). For more information, contact Yvonne D. Jones at (202) 512-6806 or [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov).

July 2021

## 2020 CENSUS

# Office Managers' Perspectives on Recent Operations Would Strengthen Planning for 2030

## What GAO Found

The Census Bureau executed its most labor-intensive field data-collection activity through 248 area census offices, relying on managers of these offices (ACOM) to oversee field work and ensure its timely completion. ACOMs had a unique vantage point on the census, working at the intersection of regional management and the massive temporary field workforce they oversaw.

### Area Census Office Managers' Position in the Census Workforce



Source: GAO review of Census Bureau documents. | GAO-21-104071

ACOMs responded to GAO's 2020 survey with perspectives on topics ranging from work environment to automation to the Bureau's pandemic response. Such perspectives can inform planning for 2030 and help the Bureau achieve its objectives. Further, as the Bureau moves forward with its planning, it could solicit the views of selected former ACOMs. Similar to the Bureau's use of other advisory groups, former ACOMs' views could be valuable in informing upcoming 2030 design decisions, particularly regarding the most effective and efficient options in the area offices that have been pivotal to successful censuses.

In 2010, GAO recommended that the Bureau develop mechanisms to increase coordination between its area census offices and its Community Partnership and Engagement Program. This program is designed to build community relationships and access hard-to-count populations. However, the Bureau has not fully implemented this recommendation. Accordingly, GAO's survey showed that only 26 to 56 percent of responding ACOMs were very or generally satisfied with aspects of coordination with the program. Developing a plan with defined tasks and milestones could help the Bureau address this and more fully implement the recommendation.

---

# Contents

---

Letter		1
	Background	3
	The Bureau Could Further Leverage Area Census Office Managers' Perspectives in Designing Future Efforts	6
	Conclusions	23
	Recommendations for Executive Action	24
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	24
Appendix I	Methodology for Survey of Area Census Office Managers	28
Appendix II	Comments from the Department of Commerce	32
Appendix III	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	33
Tables		
	Table 1. Area Census Office Managers' Ranking of the Most Important Competencies for Their Jobs.	9
	Table 2. Examples of Topics Area Census Office Managers Commented on in Our Survey of Them Regarding 2030 Planning.	17
	Table 3. Survey Response Rates by Region and Survey Wave	29
Figures		
	Figure 1. Census Bureau Relied on 248 Area Census Offices in Six Regions of the U.S.	4
	Figure 2. Area Census Office Managers Worked at Nexus of Two Groups of Staff	7
	Figure 3. Area Census Office Manager Rates of Satisfaction with Partnership Program Varied by Region	21

---

---

## Abbreviations

ACO	area census office
ACOM	area census office manager
Bureau	U.S. Census Bureau
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
IT	information technology
NRFU	Non-Response Follow-Up
RCC	regional census center
RO	regional office

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The published product may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.

July 27, 2021

### Congressional Addressees

The decennial census produces data vital to the entire nation. However, despite its national scope, the U.S. Census Bureau's execution of the census is largely a local endeavor, carried out by hundreds of thousands of temporary workers reporting to area census offices (ACO) the Bureau stood up in cities around the country. The offices are overseen by area census office managers (ACOM) who have a valuable vantage point on the conduct of the census, working at the intersection of decennial management and the massive temporary field workforce.

For three consecutive decennials (2000, 2010, and 2020) we have surveyed office managers during the census to obtain their opinions as stakeholders on how the work is going and how to improve.<sup>1</sup> We have used the results of these surveys to provide oversight of the census including in testimony before congressional oversight committees and reports on census operations. We have also provided near-real-time feedback to senior Bureau officials to facilitate corrective actions, where appropriate.

This report examines how the Bureau managed its field data collection operations at the local level for the 2020 Census, and how ACOM perspectives can inform planning of future decennial censuses. We performed our work under the authority of the Comptroller General to evaluate the 2020 Census to assist Congress with its oversight responsibilities.

To address our objective, we asked ACOMs their views on various aspects of ACO management, reviewed Bureau documents related to management and operations, and interviewed Bureau officials to better understand the Bureau's management approach and actions for the 2020 Census, as well as their approach for planning the 2030 Census. We also canvassed managers of the Bureau's 248 ACOs six times during the production of the 2020 Census. We administered web-based questionnaires approximately every 6 weeks from late February 2020 through early October 2020. In our survey, we asked the managers to

---

<sup>1</sup>The ACOM position replaced the "local census office manager" position in prior censuses.

---

rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the management of field data collection, such as work environment, information technology, enumeration operations, and the Community Partnership & Engagement Program. Highlights of the results of selected topics are included in this report. The response rates for the six waves of our survey ranged from 67 to 76 percent of ACOMs.

Due to varying rates of survey participation and ACOM attrition over time, the group of individuals who responded differed from one survey wave to the next. The results of the survey are point-in-time perspectives reported in response to different questionnaires in six waves. Thus, observed survey responses in one wave cannot be directly compared to survey responses in another wave. The views of ACOMs who responded to each wave of our survey also cannot be considered representative of the views of the managers who did not respond. ACOM comments presented in this report represent notable perspectives repeated among the comments provided in response to the survey.

Concurrent with this report we are publishing online regional and national summaries of our survey of the managers. These summaries can provide insights for the Bureau's planning of future censuses where they are relevant to the designs being considered for 2030. Accordingly, we compared the information we gathered to key practices for using available data, incorporating stakeholder perspectives in planning and tracking progress toward goals.<sup>2</sup> For more information on the methods and results of this web survey, see appendix I and the electronic supplement [GAO-21-105237](#).<sup>3</sup>

We conducted this performance audit from January 2020 to July 2021 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.

---

<sup>2</sup>See for example, GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington D.C.: June 1, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>GAO, *Supplemental Material for GAO-21-104071 - 2020 Census Survey of Area Census Office Managers*, [GAO-21-105237](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 27, 2021).

---

## Background

The Bureau made changes to the 2020 Census to leverage available technology and reduce the Bureau's physical temporary office-space footprint. Changes included moving from paper forms to mobile devices to collect respondent data, changing its methods for assigning cases to enumerators, and halving the number of census offices across the country. In 2010, the Bureau relied on 494 local census offices across the country, each of which served as a central location for conducting the count in their assignment area. For the 2020 Census, the Bureau replaced local census offices with 248 ACOs that generally covered larger geographic areas than in 2010. According to Bureau officials, the Bureau based the number of ACOs for 2020 on the expected number of enumerators needed for the 2020 Census according to its projected workload for the Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) operation and the locations of group quarters in different areas.<sup>4</sup>

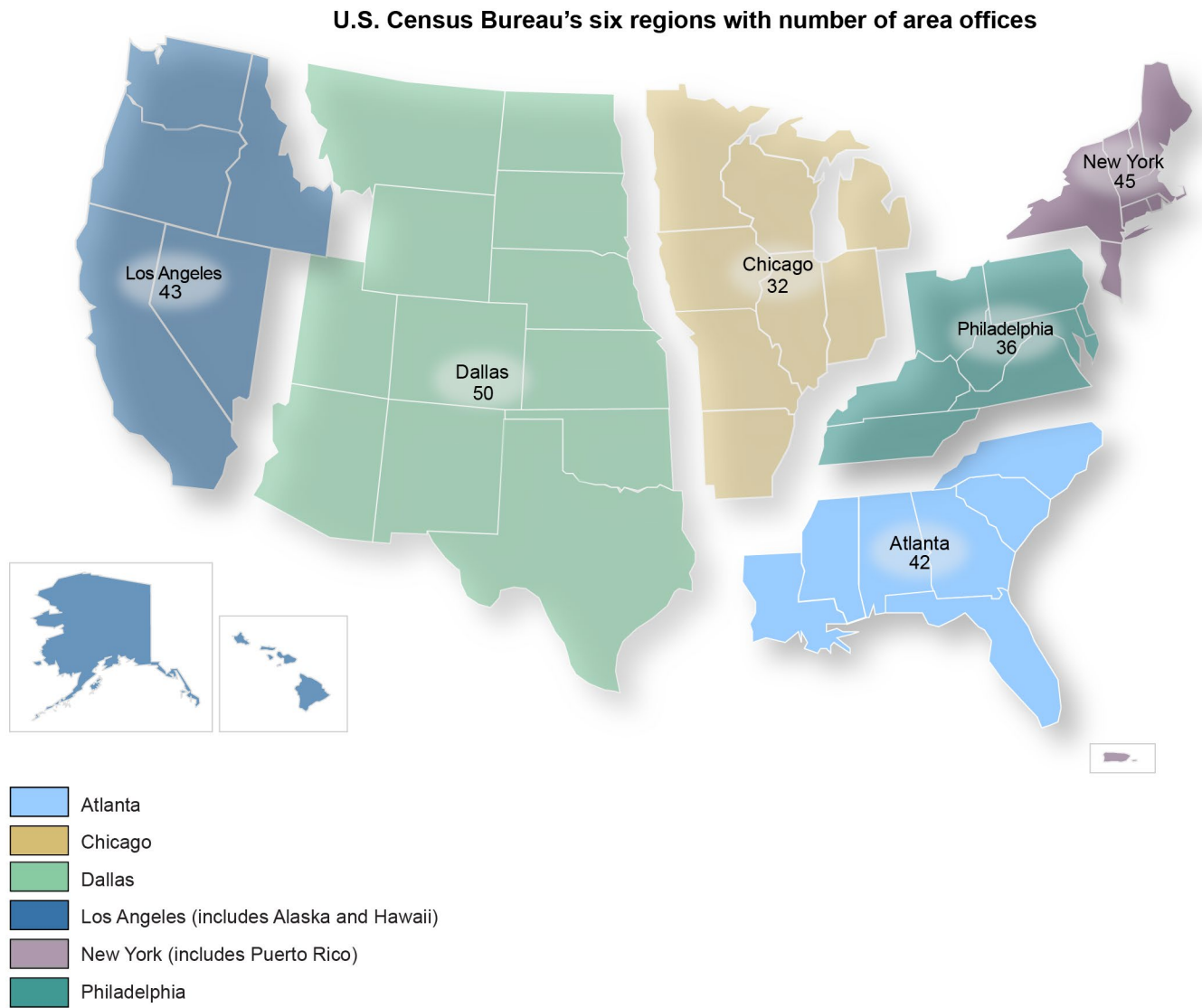
As shown in figure 1, the Bureau divided the 248 ACOs among six census regions, which oversaw the multiple offices and operations within their boundaries.<sup>5</sup> According to Bureau documents, the Bureau used criteria such as state boundaries, city locations, and transportation networks to delineate the areas that each office would cover. An ACOM oversaw each office and its administrative, information technology (IT), and management staff, as well as the about 700 enumerators working out of each office. As part of the Bureau's key initiatives for the 2020 Census, the total number of NRFU cases the enumerators at each ACO completed increased from about 95,000 cases in 2010 to about 250,000 cases in 2020.

---

<sup>4</sup>NRFU is the most labor-intensive decennial field operation that involves hundreds of thousands of enumerators going door to door to collect census data from households that have yet to respond to the census. Group Quarters are group living arrangements, such as university dorms, correctional facilities, and skilled nursing facilities.

<sup>5</sup>The Bureau has six regional offices (RO) and six regional census centers (RCC). The ROs are permanent, and conduct continuous surveys (other than the Decennial Census) to supply the nation with important statistics on people, places, and our economy. The six RCCs are temporary to oversee the decennial operations of the hundreds of ACOs nationwide. The ROs and RCCs are located in the same cities and referenced by the name of the city in which each office is located (Atlanta, Chicago, etc.). In the Denver/Dallas region, the RO is located in Denver and the RCC in Dallas.

Figure 1. Census Bureau Relied on 248 Area Census Offices in Six Regions of the U.S.



Source: GAO review of Census Bureau documents. | GAO-21-104071

The Bureau has six regional offices (ROs) and six regional census centers (RCCs). The ROs and RCCs cover the same states and go by the same names (Atlanta, Chicago, etc.) with the exception of the Denver RO (which has the Dallas RCC as a counterpart). In this graphic, the regions are shown, and labeled according to the name of the RCC overseeing them.



---

The Bureau opened its first 39 ACOs by March 2019 to help with the earliest nationwide field data collection activities as the Bureau was checking its address list in selected areas. The Bureau opened the remaining 209 offices beginning in June 2019 in preparation for the 2020 enumeration. The Bureau closed the last office and released remaining temporary staff from the ACOs in February 2021, after the enumeration was completed.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that affected the United States in 2020 introduced stressors unlike those that the Bureau typically prepares for, such as temporary office closings nationwide and multiple operational re-plans that changed timelines for operations by months and delayed the planned delivery of the final population counts for redistricting purposes until September 2021.<sup>6</sup> As such, the Bureau, its ACOs, and the ACOMs who oversaw them had to adjust operations to address the realities of conducting the census during a pandemic to ensure that a complete and accurate count took place.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>The Bureau originally planned to deliver these counts by April 1, 2021.

<sup>7</sup>GAO, *2020 Census: Census Bureau Needs to Assess Data Quality Concerns Stemming from Recent Design Changes*, [GAO-21-142](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 3, 2020).

---

## The Bureau Could Further Leverage Area Census Office Managers' Perspectives in Designing Future Efforts

---

### ACOMs Were Tasked with Managing Local Operations; Surveyed ACOMs Were Mostly Satisfied with the Work Environment

To manage field data collection at the local level, the Bureau relied on ACOMs to manage the staff and operations at ACOs, and ensure the timely completion of data collection. The ACOMs also oversaw recruiting, office space, general administration, and the provision of IT support locally. At the regional level, the Bureau assigned Area Managers to oversee ACOMs, placing ACOMs at the intersection of the Bureau's permanent and temporary organizational structures, as shown in figure 2. According to Bureau planning documents, each Area Manager oversaw, on average, about five ACOMs and their respective ACOs.

**Figure 2. Area Census Office Managers Worked at Nexus of Two Groups of Staff**



Source: GAO review of Census Bureau documents. | GAO-21-104071

Across all six waves of the survey we conducted, the rate of ACOMs reporting in our survey that they were very or generally satisfied on the three questions we asked related to how their immediate supervisor treated them and other employees ranged from 86 to 91 percent. Most responding ACOMs reported satisfaction on the three questions we asked related to RCC attention to ACOM issues and opinions (ranged from 55 to 86 percent), and on the two questions we asked about how effectively their skills were utilized (ranged from 86 to 91 percent).

Despite observed rates of reported satisfaction with their work environments, some ACOMs identified frustrations with their work environment in the open-ended comments they provided. Some ACOMs reported that they felt they were not given latitude to address problems that arose at their offices as they felt necessary and thus lacked authority to be effective managers.<sup>8</sup> This contrasts with messaging provided to

<sup>8</sup>When we discussed these comments with Bureau officials, they noted that standardization of established procedures is important for ensuring a consistent census across the nation.

---

ACOMs in written guidance they receive from the Bureau—that ACOMs are responsible for solving major problems if and when they occur, and exercising initiative in identifying possible problem areas and taking preventive actions.

We also received comments from some reporting ACOMs that they felt they were ignored by those above them in the chain of command when they made suggestions or requests and shared perspectives. For example, one ACOM wrote: “RCC moved the training dates up, [but] they ignored our requests to also ensure device ship dates [were] moved up, and so we ended up doing training without devices.”

Some responding ACOMs reported similar issues when managing the COVID-19 pandemic. We received some comments from ACOMs who reported that their concerns about increased risk of exposure to their office and staff were not taken into account when the Bureau made decisions about the workplace in response to the pandemic. For example, some ACOMs reported not being allowed to take the temperatures of staff and other people entering the office to supplement other safety measures the Bureau implemented, and having to conduct fingerprinting inside their offices despite staff concerns about exposure to the public.<sup>9</sup> Such uncertainties in the work environment can complicate local planning or decision-making.

ACOMs also provided insights into other aspects of their work environment in our survey:

### **Hiring criteria.**

To refine its recruiting of managers for the 2020 Census, the Bureau changed the criteria it used to hire and recruit census office managers for the 2010 Census. A 2010 survey of ours that was similar to the one we conducted in 2020 found that the Bureau hired census office managers based on three of the nine management competencies we had identified at that time: supervision, human resource management, and external relations. In 2020, we presented ACOMs with a list of these nine competencies and asked them to identify three as the “most important” among them. We found that the competencies the Bureau had added to

---

<sup>9</sup>Senior Bureau officials stated that their decision regarding temperature checks was based on research and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. They instead opted to focus on other safety precautions at the ACOs, such as masks and social distancing.

its hiring materials for 2020 (time management, change management, and knowledge management) were among the most common responses, offering validation of the Bureau’s changes, as shown in table 1. Bureau officials told us that this change to their hiring material was made in response to results from our 2010 work. They added that changes to the census office manager position since 2010 related to the reduction in the number of census offices and the increase in the area covered by each office.

**Table 1. Area Census Office Managers’ Ranking of the Most Important Competencies for Their Jobs.**

ACOM Ranking	Management Competency	Number of Respondents Who Ranked the Competency in the Top 3 “Most Important” (N=159)	Appeared in 2010 Recruiting and Hiring Materials	Well Represented in 2020 Recruiting and Hiring Materials
1	Change Management	92	No	Yes
2	Team Building	68	No	No
3	Knowledge Management	67	No	Yes
4	Time Management	65	No	Yes
5	Supervision	55	Yes	Yes
6	Morale Building	46	No	No
7	Conflict Management	46	No	No
8	Human Resource Management	33	Yes	Yes
9	External Relations	3	Yes	Yes

Source: GAO survey of areas census office managers and analysis of Census Bureau documents. | GAO-21-104071

Note: We determined that a competency is “well represented” when we mapped three or more different statements to it from the Bureau’s 2020 recruiting and hiring material.

While ACOMs rated “team building” highly, based on our review, this competency was not well represented in recruiting and hiring materials the Bureau provided us. This discrepancy could be explained by subjective differences between how we and Bureau officials might map its recruiting and hiring criteria to general management competencies. ACOMs also ranked “change management” highly, which according to the Bureau may have been due to the abnormal amount of change to the workplace that census workers experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

We have previously reported on the value to an agency of surveying its staff about the competencies and skills needed for their jobs.<sup>10</sup> We discussed these survey results on management competencies with senior Bureau officials who stated that they believe that ACOM perspectives will help them refine the job description and criteria for the position.

**Attrition.** Despite the observed rates of reported satisfaction previously described with its work environment, the Bureau experienced higher attrition in the ACOM position than it had expected. Bureau officials told us that for the 2020 Census they had initially assumed that ACOM attrition would be about 25 percent during the time that ACOMs were onboard. We calculated one measure of ACOM attrition during 2020 based on changes to ACOM contact information the Bureau provided to us during our survey. We found that 44 percent of ACOs experienced at least one change at the ACOM position between our first survey in February 2020 and our last survey in October 2020. In the individual regions, the percentage of ACOs experiencing a change in ACOM during our survey ranged from 28 percent in the Chicago region to 60 percent in the Los Angeles region.

While this overall rate of 44 percent is notably higher than the Bureau's anticipated attrition rate of 25 percent, the COVID-19 pandemic may have played a part in increasing ACOM attrition beyond expectations. Unwanted attrition in the management workforce can disrupt continuity in communication and planning in the data collection operations.

During our audit we discussed the attrition rate with Bureau officials who indicated that they had not tracked ACOM attrition during the 2020 Census. They stated that such data will be important to planning staffing decisions and that they would retroactively calculate turnover and build in efforts to track it in future censuses.

**Telework.** The Bureau did not originally plan for its temporary decennial staff to telework. According to some managers responding to our survey, this hampered the operations of some ACOs at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bureau officials told us that there was no telework policy in place for field staff before the pandemic because much of the work that

---

<sup>10</sup>See GAO, *Key Principles for Effective Strategic Workforce Planning*, [GAO-04-39](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 11, 2003).

---

those employees do historically requires their physical presence (e.g., handling forms).

The Bureau implemented a policy in mid-March to allow some remote work, and repurposed laptops to allow staff to telework. In comments to our survey beginning with the questionnaire administered in April, some ACOMs initially noted lacking access to devices for telework, having to report to the office during a pandemic in conflict with local guidance, and being unable to telework. However, ACOMs responding to our survey in late August reported a satisfaction rate of 68 percent with the sufficiency of hardware and systems to support ACO staff working remotely.

**Overtime.** ACOMs reported some uneven application of the Bureau's overtime rules. The Bureau allows some paid overtime work if the workload requires it, and if the request for overtime is approved in advance by the appropriate manager.<sup>11</sup> However, some ACOMs commented that their supervisors expected them to work unpaid overtime, or that members of their staff were not allowed to work overtime, even if the staff or ACOM thought that the workload required it. The Bureau relied on overtime to help ensure its field data collection was completed timely; to the extent overtime procedures may not have been evenly understood, the effectiveness of it as a management tool could have been weakened.

When we discussed these ACOM comments with Bureau officials, they maintained that overtime guidance was provided to managers to ensure appropriate use of overtime.

---

### The Bureau Increased Automation in Assigning Cases to Enumerators, but Some ACOMs Expressed Dissatisfaction with It

The Bureau used an automated case assignment and routing system (a capability known as the "optimizer") to manage work assignments for the 2020 Census. The Bureau's optimizer assigns and routes cases algorithmically to determine the most efficient order in which to enumerate

---

<sup>11</sup>Bureau guidance on overtime gives the Regional Directors discretion to decide the level at which overtime may be approved in their region, but may not be below the level of a manager (e.g., census field managers, administrative managers, ACOMs, etc.).

---

households and is part of the Bureau's automated case assignment approach.<sup>12</sup>

The Bureau considers the efficiency of the optimizer to be one of its notable successes of the 2020 census. According to the Bureau, the optimizer helped the Bureau exceed its expected NRFU productivity rate—cases per hour—potentially keeping the costly field follow-up operation from being more expensive.<sup>13</sup>

However, when asked about the optimizer during our survey, 40 percent of respondents reported that they were satisfied in late August, and 22 percent of respondents reported that they were satisfied in early October. These are among the lowest satisfaction rates reported by ACOMs on any of the six waves of our survey.

Both ACOMs and the Bureau offered explanations for ACOM frustrations with the optimizer. Some ACOMs reported that when the optimizer would assign enumerators to visit addresses of households that had already responded, it could result in inefficiencies and some hostile encounters with members of the public who were frustrated about being contacted multiple times. Bureau officials acknowledged that unexpected overstaffing late in the NRFU operation may have contributed to some dissatisfaction among field staff.<sup>14</sup> According to Bureau officials, there were not enough remaining cases towards the end of NRFU to assign staff members the volume of cases they would like to work on in these instances. This led to some frustrations with the optimizer. The Bureau also acknowledged that an incomplete understanding of how the optimizer works may have contributed to some of the ACOMs'

---

<sup>12</sup>The optimizer assigns and routes cases to minimize enumerator travel and improve the timing of when households are contacted to when a respondent is expected to be home. The optimizer uses a number of inputs to ensure efficient case assignment, which includes variables like the enumerator's starting address, work availability, the location of open cases, and best time to contact probabilities from administrative record modeling.

<sup>13</sup>Bureau officials stated that they were expecting a productivity rate of 1.55 cases per hour, but achieved a productivity rate of 1.92 cases per hour. We reported on the Bureau's use of performance metrics for the optimizer in *2020 Census: Innovations Helped with Implementation, but Bureau Can Do More to Realize Future Benefits*, [GAO-21-478](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 14, 2021).

<sup>14</sup>Typically, the Bureau would begin reducing enumerator staff numbers as NRFU drew to a close. However, Bureau officials stated that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting timeline changes and legal disputes prevented the Bureau from winding down NRFU in the time frame it had planned, and that the Bureau could not reduce its staff as the NRFU workload lessened, as it otherwise would have.



---

dissatisfaction with the optimizer, as the routes and cases it assigned were more optimal than they might have appeared.

---

**The Bureau Relied on Regional Offices to Communicate with ACOMs, Who Reported Satisfaction with Communication but Raised Concerns about Early Pandemic Guidance**

To manage communications, the Bureau had ACOMs serve as a bridge between the ACO staff and RCC management. ACOMs oversaw the general supervision and administration of the office and handled problems that arose, according to the 2020 ACO administrative manual. ACOMs communicated with their regional supervisors and technicians providing support when they had questions about operations. The supervisors maintained regular direct communication with ACOMs through text messages, in person meetings, and direct phone calls, which were supplemented by periodic alerts, emails, and group phone calls from headquarters staff.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced communication challenges between regional census centers and ACOs, which were reflected in our quantitative and qualitative survey results. These challenges appeared to be less problematic for ACOMs later during operations. When we first asked about ACOM satisfaction with the communication and guidance that the ACOM has received on the pandemic in early April 2020, respondents' satisfaction rates ranged from 32 to 47 percent on the various aspects we asked about, such as communication timeliness, clarity, and adequacy.

In the comments, some responding ACOMs elaborated on the issues they were experiencing. These issues included receiving instructions with little time to implement the directed changes, receiving guidance later than they wanted it, and not receiving clear instruction on how to address potential or actual COVID-19 cases among the staff in their offices. In contrast, in early October, 59 to 64 percent of the ACOMs responding to the survey reported being generally or very satisfied with the timeliness, clarity, and adequacy of communication and guidance that they received on the pandemic.

Some ACOMs also reported that ACO staff did not fully understand some procedural changes made in response to COVID. For example, beginning in May 2020, some reported that they lacked clear information on COVID pay for staff. Also, starting in response to our survey from late June to early July, we received comments from some ACOMs who felt guidance about how to respond to potential COVID cases among staff was unclear. Later, in response to our final survey that spanned from late September to early October, some ACOMs reported some confusion about the purpose

---

of pay awards the Bureau implemented to incentivize enumerators to work more hours.

---

### The Bureau Had Regional Staff Train ACOMs, but Some ACOMs Had Concerns They Were Unprepared for Their Job

According to Bureau officials, the Bureau managed training by first providing training to hundreds of regional staff from the RCCs, who then provided the same training to ACOMs and their respective management teams. This meant there would likely be staff available to train newly hired ACOMs or those promoted to the position after initial management training sessions. This was an attempt to address an issue the Bureau discovered after the 2010 Census in which managers received incomplete training if they were hired after the training offered by headquarters. Bureau officials told us that headquarters did not have a separate mechanism to track whether ACOMs received the intended training and that RCCs were responsible for ensuring that staff hired for or promoted to the ACOM position received the appropriate training. Bureau headquarters officials told us they used and provided a tool to regions to track when training was taking place but that this tool was not intended to track individual ACOM participation in trainings.

Our survey found that ACOMs responding to later waves of the survey reported higher satisfaction with how their training prepared them to do their job than ACOMs responding to earlier waves. The organized training ACOMs received included reviews of manuals and documented procedures, a 2-day census manager overview training, and a series of “just-in-time” training sessions on specific census operations that were scheduled shortly before the operations began. In late February, 47 percent of ACOMs responding to our survey agreed with the statement, “Training I receive as ACOM is preparing me to do my job.” In subsequent waves of the survey, rates of agreement ranged from 59 to 62 percent.

We did not collect data to indicate the reasons for the higher reported satisfaction rate later in operations. However, among the possible reasons for this are such factors as:

- ACOMs getting more comfortable with their roles and feeling better about training they had received;
- ACOMs more greatly valuing the training received later, possibly including the later “just-in-time” trainings or cumulative on-the-job experience;
- ACOMs that responded to later waves perhaps differing from those responding earlier; or

- 
- a combination of any of the above, or other unknown factors that are not addressed in our survey.

ACOMs raised several concerns about the training they received in their comments. In each of the six waves, some responding ACOMs reported they had received no training, or indicated that they had ideas about how changes to the training timeline could have better prepared staff. ACOMs had other suggestions for improving training, including training staff earlier in the census process and conducting more hands-on training. According to Bureau officials, the Bureau is assessing its field operations and will report on what it found from its debriefing of census managers, including ACOMs.

---

### The Bureau Uses Data to Inform Future Census Planning, but Does Not Elicit ACOM Perspectives on Design Plans

The Bureau has already begun preparing for the 2030 Census while still concluding the 2020 Census. Bureau officials told us that the planning phase for the 2030 Census is from 2019 to 2024, but design decisions will continue to evolve after that.<sup>15</sup> According to the Bureau, its planning and design decisions will draw on the successes and challenges identified in its assessments of the 2020 Census, as well as on input from outside sources, such as from its advisory committees and experts through the National Academy of Sciences and recommendations from GAO and the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General.

One source of outside data available to the Bureau is our survey of census managers discussed in this report and for which we are issuing supplementary information separately.<sup>16</sup> Bureau officials told us that they are aware of many of the census implementation issues from 2020 that our survey covered, including issues such as hiring, recruiting, training, and clearances, and that our survey can help inform design for the 2030 Census. We are publishing aggregate results at the regional level, which Bureau officials told us can help them understand the difference in strategies across regions. Our survey canvassed census managers at all 248 census offices. It provides six snapshots of opinions spanning major census field operations and the COVID-19 pandemic. Incorporating quality information that the Bureau views as valuable into planning efforts can help the Bureau achieve its objectives for future censuses.

---

<sup>15</sup>For comparison, Bureau officials told us that major design changes were made as late as 2016 when planning the 2020 Census.

<sup>16</sup>[GAO-21-105237](#).

---

One additional measure the Bureau takes to inform planning is to solicit feedback on procedures and implementation from ACOMs and other temporary staff hired for the census during the closeout of decennial field activity. Specifically, the Bureau conducted in-person or self-administered online debriefings with staff hired for the 2020 Census to identify opportunities for improvement in future censuses. Further, the Bureau required ACOMs, operation supervisors, and all other managers at the ACOs to submit final reports to the RCC before closing the ACOs.<sup>17</sup> These reports are intended to cover the important happenings in each manager's respective area, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of the various procedures, the completeness of coverage obtained, and areas that need improvement.

According to Bureau officials, they routinely provide census designs and operational plans they are considering to the regional field staff for comment. Staff representing regional field operations participate in cross-team task forces and in other project teams developing proposals, plans, and designs of future censuses. For example, when planning for the 2020 Census, field staff participated in research project groups that, among other things, assessed the quality, coverage, gaps, and risks associated with administrative records; investigated how the Bureau could modernize and increase the efficiency and use of the field operational infrastructure; and improved identification, collection, capture, and processing of personnel and response data.

However, the Bureau does not systematically seek the specific views of former ACOMs on their experiences, insights, or comments on design proposals when planning for future censuses. For this cycle, the close-out feedback received from ACOMs occurred in early 2021. That feedback comes before the Bureau begins to formulate many of the possible design changes it is considering for the next census.

When we discussed this observation with Bureau officials, they noted:

- The Bureau's permanent field staff includes former office managers from prior censuses.

Yet the officials acknowledged that some of the staff may not have been office managers during a recent census and that staff are not tracked or

---

<sup>17</sup>For the 2020 Census, the ACOs were closed by February 11, 2021.

systematically sought out for their perspectives as former office managers.

- During the largest census site tests leading up to a decennial, the Bureau will often hire a census office manager for a temporary office at a test site, and these managers are routinely debriefed before they leave.

Yet officials acknowledged that these temporary managers would typically not be informed about other designs under consideration and not being tested at that time. Further, we observed each of the five major census field tests for the 2020 Census, and the largest number of test sites was three—one test had two sites, and the others each had one site each.

Therefore, the uniquely local interests and expectations embodied in the experiences of a broad range of local managers are not readily available to inform planning decisions during later stages of the decennial life cycle preceding the hiring of local managers for the next census.

ACOMs who responded to our survey provided hundreds of open-ended comments. ACOMs wrote about many topics that could be relevant to the Bureau when planning how it will design and manage data collection of the next census when we prompted them to think about 2030, as shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Examples of Topics Area Census Office Managers Commented on in Our Survey of Them Regarding 2030 Planning.**

<b>Workforce Management</b>	<b>Office Management</b>	<b>Operations Management</b>
Hiring strategies	ACO site criteria	Information technology
Human resources support	Office openings	Internal controls
Pay policies	Role of ACO(M)	Operations procedures
Training	Work environment	Regional management culture
Workforce development		Travel support
Workforce structure		

Source: GAO survey of area census office managers. | GAO-21-104071

Leading practices in strategic planning state that involving employees and other stakeholders in planning, and basing these plans to a large extent on the interests and expectations of stakeholders, is important to help agencies ensure that their efforts and resources are targeted at the

---

highest priorities.<sup>18</sup> The Bureau has included a planned emphasis on communication with stakeholders in its priorities for 2030 planning. Collecting and considering ACOM perspectives on specific design or implementation options for the 2030 Census would help identify these priorities and inform decisions the Bureau makes about the resulting design. For example, Bureau officials have indicated that they intend for the 2030 census to continue expanding the Bureau's reliance on alternative data sources such as administrative records, further reducing its data collection workforce. Selected former ACOMs with direct experience managing a data collection workforce of hundreds and multiple operations locally could provide valuable input on any significant changes to the plan for the 2030 Census.

The Bureau could provide a stronger link between census designs and procedures and its temporary decennial staff by actively soliciting and using selected former ACOMs' perspectives on the planning of the 2030 Decennial Census. This could also produce cost and quality benefits.

---

### Long-standing Challenges Integrating the Partnership Program with ACOs Persisted in 2020, despite Some Bureau Actions to Address Them

The Bureau provides support to ACO census efforts at the local level through its partnership program. This helps the Bureau conduct the enumeration, build relationships with communities, and access hard-to-count populations. However, ACOMs who responded to our survey regularly reported low satisfaction with the partnership program. This mirrors a consequence of the lack of integration we have reported on in previous censuses. In both the 2000 Census and the 2010 Census we reported on challenges the Bureau faced in coordination and communication between the partnership program and staff at local census offices.<sup>19</sup>

Following the 2010 Census, we recommended that the Bureau develop mechanisms to increase such coordination, such as offering joint training opportunities or establishing coordination protocols. Although the Bureau generally agreed with the recommendation and has taken some steps to

---

<sup>18</sup>See GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 1996).

<sup>19</sup>See GAO, *2010 Census: Key Efforts to Include Hard-to-Count Populations Went Generally as Planned; Improvements Could Make the Efforts More Effective for Next Census*, [GAO-11-45](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2010), and *2000 Census: Review of Partnership Program Highlights Best Practices for Future Operations*, [GAO-01-579](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 20, 2001).

---

implement it, it has not fully implemented the recommendation. For example:

- In March 2019, the Bureau informed us that it was assigning at least one partnership specialist to each ACO. Yet during multiple waves of our survey we heard from ACOMs who had not had significant communication with their partnership specialists.
- Bureau officials responsible for the partnership program provided to us evidence of various trainings they said were held at some RCCs that their partnership staff were involved in and that may have included ACOMs. These trainings varied by region and some occurred before all ACOs were scheduled to be open. The Bureau could not readily identify for us to what extent ACOMs had participated in the trainings.

Strong coordination between the partnership and local offices can improve the effectiveness of the local enumeration efforts. However, the Bureau has not developed a plan with defined tasks and milestones to implement our recommendation and thereby increase coordination between ACOs and the partnership program. One key element of doing this would be to document formal expectations for how partnership staff should work with ACO staff throughout the census. However, such expectations have not been set.

Our 2020 survey results are consistent with the lack of implementation of our recommendation. According to the survey results, continuing issues exist related to integrating the partnership program with the activity of the ACOs. Across the six waves of our survey, 26 to 56 percent of responding ACOMs nationally were “very” or “generally” satisfied with the facets of the partnership program we queried, such as

- partnership responsiveness to ACO requests,
- helpfulness to ACO operations,
- assistance with local challenges,
- communication and coordination,
- clarity of roles and responsibilities,
- opportunities to provide feedback,
- identification of mobile questionnaire assistance center sites, and

- 
- assistance in communicating with the community on pandemic-related operational details.

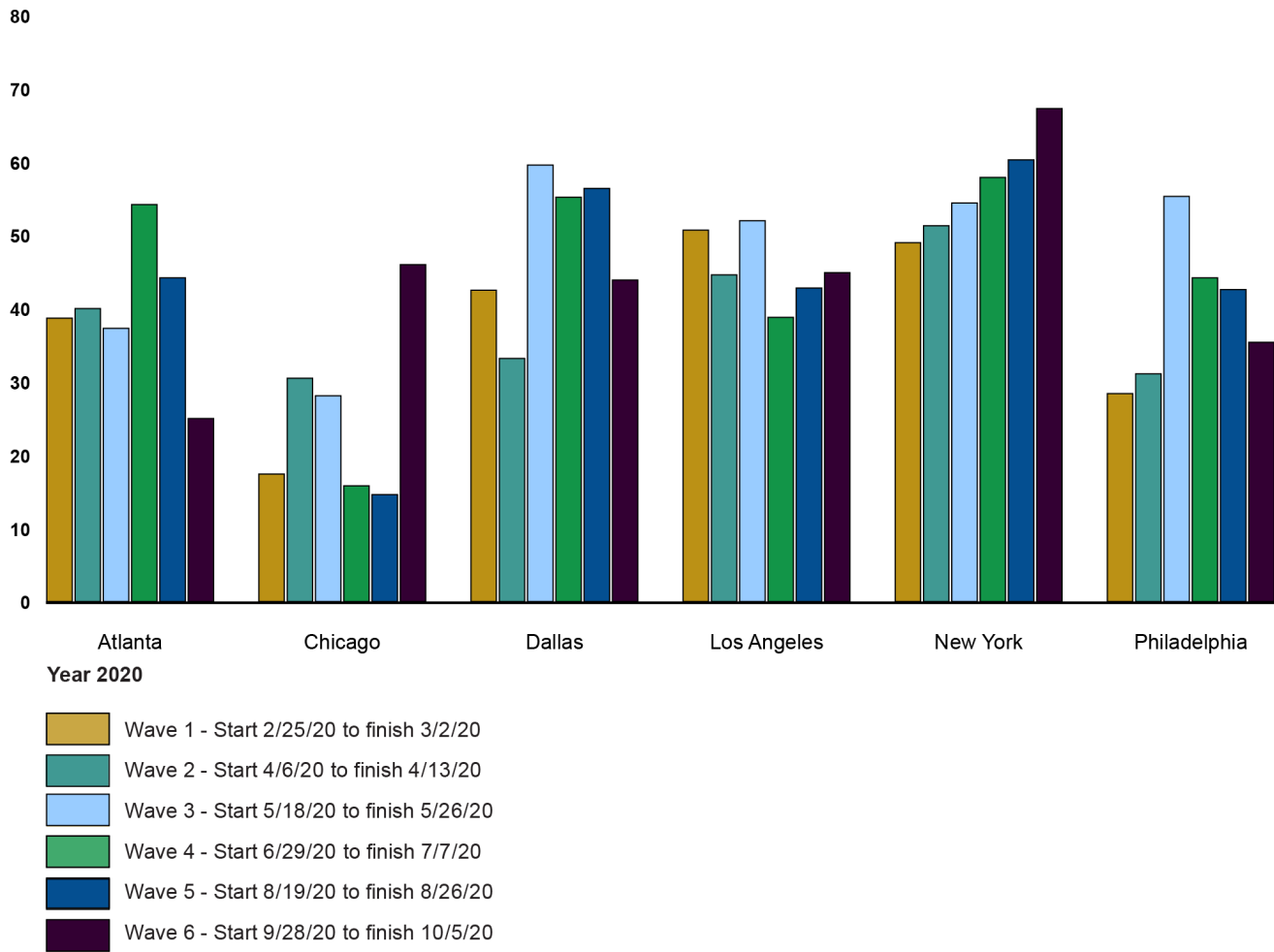
In each of the six waves of our survey, some ACOMs reported general concerns about the integration of the partnership program with their work. Some ACOMs in our survey reported specific problems with the partnership program. They said they had no contact with their partnership specialists, received no responses from partnership specialists when they tried to establish a relationship and obtain assistance with operations, or did not get the help they expected from the partnership program to access buildings or restricted communities.

Our survey results indicate that the experiences of responding ACOMs with the partnership program have varied regionally, as shown in figure 3.



**Figure 3. Area Census Office Manager Rates of Satisfaction with Partnership Program Varied by Region**

Percent of responding area census office managers “very” or “generally” satisfied



Source: GAO survey of area census office managers during the 2020 Census. | GAO-21-104071

Note: The number of questions we asked about partnership varied across waves of the survey, and the wording of some questions changed. We found similar patterns of response when we examined results for three questions that appeared on five of the six waves and for nine questions that repeated on the four middle waves of the survey.

We calculated the average rate at which responding ACOMs reported they were “very” or “generally” satisfied across all survey questions related to the partnership program in each wave. The average satisfaction rate of each wave reported by ACOMs responding to our survey across all questions we asked on partnership varied from a high range in the New York region of 49 to 67 percent to a low range in the Chicago region

---

of 15 to 46 percent. Further, as shown in the figure above, the average satisfaction rating reported by ACOMs responding in the New York region increased in each wave. In contrast, patterns of reported satisfaction varied over time in each of the other regions.<sup>20</sup>

As demonstrated in the text box, however, the lack of satisfaction with the partnership program was not universal among commenting ACOMs, as some reported that they were very pleased with their partnership specialists and the work that they did to help the ACO.

**Lack of ACOM Satisfaction with the Partnership Program Was Not Universal.**

“We have had challenges with some gated communities allowing us to enumerate. Partnership has been extremely helpful in getting us inside.”

“Our area has some hard to enumerate areas but with the help of the Partnership Specialist it has made a huge difference.”

“Partnership has been a very helpful tool to bridge the gap in the community and create awareness to our presence in the community.”

Source: GAO survey of area census office managers. | GAO-21-104071

Integrating the partnership program with census offices has been a long-standing issue for the Bureau. The Bureau is carrying out operational assessments of its partnership program as part of its overall assessment of the 2020 Census. However, our body of work has shown that plans with timetables, milestones, and interim steps can be used to show progress toward implementing efforts or to adjusting those efforts when necessary. Defined tasks and milestones help an agency set priorities,

---

<sup>20</sup>The number of questions we asked about partnership varied across waves of the survey, and the wording of one question changed. We found similar patterns of response when we examined results for three questions that appeared on five of the six waves and for nine questions that repeated on the four middle waves of the survey.

---

use resources efficiently, measure progress, and provide management a means to monitor this progress.<sup>21</sup>

The development of an action plan that defines tasks and milestones could help the Bureau address the long-standing issues with coordination in the partnership program. As part of this effort, Bureau officials could plan to identify and assess the factors that contributed to the New York region having higher and ever-increasing scores compared to the other regions.<sup>22</sup>

---

## Conclusions

While the Bureau has yet to release the final population counts for redistricting purposes from the 2020 Census, its planning for the 2030 Census is already underway. The Bureau intends to base its approach to designing the 2030 Census on information it collects about the successes and challenges of the 2020 Census. The Bureau plans to supplement this information with input from external experts as well. While these sources are highly valuable for informing the Bureau's decisions, it will also be important for the Bureau to seek input from its former ACOMs, who gained first-hand experience in the field during the 2020 Census. Supplementing the Bureau's planned efforts with insights obtained from results of our 2020 ACOM survey can help inform relevant design and implementation decisions for the 2030 Census. Further, leveraging their ACOM perspectives—in a capacity such as an advisory group—on future design options will help the Bureau ensure that its plans for the 2030 Census build on lessons learned from the 2020 Census.

The partnership program has served an important role in helping the Bureau conduct the enumeration, build relationships with communities, and access hard-to-count populations. However, since the 2000 Census, we have reported on communication and coordination challenges with the

---

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, GAO, *Defense Health Care Reform: Actions Needed to Help Ensure Defense Health Agency Maintains Implementation Progress*, [GAO-15-759](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2015); *Streamlining Government: Key Practices from Select Efficiency Initiatives Should Be Shared Governmentwide*, [GAO-11-908](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2011); *Biobased Products: Improved USDA Management Would Help Agencies Comply with Farm Bill Purchasing Requirements*, [GAO-04-437](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 7, 2004); and *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003).

<sup>22</sup>The Bureau provided us an overview from its Chicago region of collaboration efforts undertaken there. These activities appeared similar to those described in earlier partnership planning documents we have reviewed, underscoring the potential value of identifying and assessing the factors that contributed to regional variation in perspective reported by responding ACOMs.

---

partnership program. While the Bureau has taken some steps to address those challenges, we have seen them continue to emerge in ACOM responses to our survey. Developing an action plan can help address long-standing communication issues that have been limiting coordination between ACOs and the partnership program.

---

## Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following three recommendations to the Department of Commerce.

The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau should use relevant data from our 2020 survey of area census office managers to inform planning decisions for the 2030 Census. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau should collect and consider perspectives of selected former area census office managers on future design options and their implementation and use them as formal input to the planning of the 2030 Decennial Census. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau should develop and document a plan to address our long-standing recommendation that the Bureau develop mechanisms to increase coordination and communication between the partnership program and census office staff. (Recommendation 3)

---

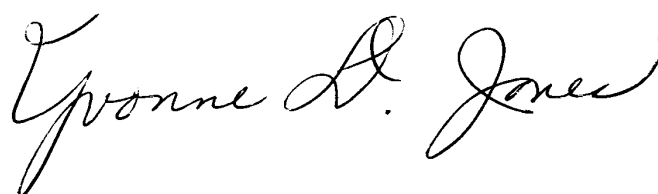
## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Commerce. In its written comments, reproduced in appendix II, the Department of Commerce agreed with our findings and recommendations and the Bureau provided technical comments, which we have incorporated where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Commerce, the Undersecretary of Economic Affairs, the Acting Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, and the appropriate congressional committees. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

---

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact Yvonne D. Jones at 202-512-6806 or by email at [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne D. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "Y" and a long, sweeping tail on the "J".

Yvonne D. Jones  
Director, Strategic Issues

---

*List of Addressees*

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

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chair  
The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
The Honorable James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jamie Raskin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Matt Cartwright  
Chairman  
The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

---

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly  
Chairman  
The Honorable Jody Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government Operations  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Judy Chu  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Raul Ruiz  
House of Representatives

---

# Appendix I: Methodology for Survey of Area Census Office Managers

---

To address our objective, we canvassed managers (ACOMs) of the Census Bureau's 248 area census offices six times during the production of the 2020 Census. We administered web-based questionnaires in late February to early March, early April, late May, late June to early July, late August, and late September to early October. Results of this survey and the survey instruments have been published in [GAO-21-105237](#), an electronic supplement to this report, which can be found on our website.

We developed the survey questions based on our audit objectives, our prior work, and discussions with Bureau officials. Specifically, we asked ACOMs to rate their satisfaction with various topics, such as work environment, information technology, enumeration operations, and the partnership program. Because the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic occurred during the planning of our second questionnaire, which was administered in early April, we adjusted subsequent questionnaires to include pandemic-related topics in addition to our previously planned topics.

Because this was not a sample survey, it has no sampling errors. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, difficulties in interpreting a particular question or different sources of information available to respondents can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in developing the questionnaire, collecting the data, and analyzing them to minimize such nonsampling error.

We also took several steps to increase the response rate. Specifically, we (1) selected survey topics so they aligned with census operation scheduling; (2) pre-tested the questionnaires with ACOMs; (3) designed questionnaire skip patterns so that the managers would not be asked about activities that were irrelevant to their ACO at the time of a given wave of our survey; (4) worked closely with Bureau officials to identify the appropriate contact at ACOs prior to launching each wave of our survey; and (5) made multiple follow-up attempts when emails were returned to encourage respondents to complete each of the six questionnaires.

Prior to conducting each of the six waves of our survey, we conducted one to three pretests with ACOMs, a total of 13 pretests across all six administered surveys. For each round of pretests, we selected respondents that represented ACO locations from different parts of the country. In selecting pretest participants starting with our second survey, we also considered disruptions in operations caused by the Coronavirus



Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. When appropriate, we attempted to pretest each instrument with managers of ACOs whose operational statuses were likely to differ to help determine whether our questions could be answered by managers in different circumstances.

Pretests were conducted over the phone. To minimize the time required of any individual manager, each pretest focused on questions unique to the upcoming survey wave, and questions were evaluated to determine how respondents interpreted our questions, whether respondents would be able to answer with minimal effort, whether our language was clear and understandable, and whether any questions or answer choices caused confusion. We revised our questionnaire content and wording as needed to improve the clarity and relevance of our questions based on feedback from each pretest.

The response rates for the six waves of our survey were 68, 73, 76, 73, 67, and 68 percent. The following table provides the survey responses for each region by each wave of the survey. Survey responses included all responding ACOMs who provided a response to at least half of the questions we asked about each survey topic.

**Table 3. Survey Response Rates by Region and Survey Wave**

Region	Wave 1 - Start 2/5/20 to finish 3/2/20	Wave 2 - Start 4/6/20 to finish 4/13/20	Wave 3 - Start 5/18/20 to finish 5/26/20	Wave 4 - Start 6/29/20 to finish 7/7/20	Wave 5 - Start 8/19/20 to finish 8/26/20	Wave 6 - Start 9/28/20 to finish 10/5/20
Atlanta	64%	74%	95%	71%	76%	67%
Chicago	78%	75%	69%	56%	66%	63%
Dallas	74%	82%	86%	80%	72%	72%
Los Angeles	56%	63%	67%	86%	53%	70%
New York	64%	73%	67%	69%	69%	71%
Philadelphia	75%	69%	69%	67%	64%	64%

Source: GAO survey of area census office managers. | GAO-21-104071

Note: The Bureau has six regional offices (ROs) and six regional census centers (RCCs). The ROs and RCCs cover the same states and go by the same names (Atlanta, Chicago, etc.) with the exception of the Denver RO (which has the Dallas RCC as a counterpart). In this table, the regions are listed according to the name of the RCC overseeing them.

The satisfaction rates we report represent the percentage of respondents that answered they were “very” or “generally” satisfied. Due to varying rates of survey participation and attrition of ACOMs over time, the group of individuals who responded differed from one survey wave to the next.

After conducting all six waves of the survey and learning more about the response patterns of respondents, we finalized our criteria for determining which responses had sufficient information to be deemed usable for our analyses. These determinations differed in small ways from those made when we were reporting regularly on the survey during 2020. Some satisfaction rates or response rates reported here may differ from those we reported previously.

For results we reported on ACOM perspectives on the partnership program, we averaged the percentage of respondents that answered they were “very” or “generally” satisfied across all partnership questions asked in each wave for ACOMs in each region, region by region. Since these aggregate measures were based on a different number of partnership questions asked in different waves, we tested whether similar patterns were observable in subsets of the questions and waves where there was no variation in number of questions or their wording. Changes across waves in average satisfaction by region were similar when using the full set of questions about the partnership program or two subsets of questions that were asked the same way across only subsets of waves. This suggests that the patterns of change across waves we report on do not reflect changes across waves in the questions we used to measure satisfaction.

In addition, the ACOMs responding to each wave varied. So, the results may reflect changes in the composition of respondents. Consequently, the results of the survey are point-in-time perspectives reported in response to six different questionnaires. Thus, observed survey responses in one wave cannot be directly compared to survey responses in another wave. The views of ACOMs who responded to each wave of the survey also cannot be considered representative of the views of the managers who did not respond.

We also reviewed open-ended responses provided by the ACOMs as part of this survey. In our report, we noted some themes that appeared in the comments, and shared illustrative examples of comments. We defined the modifier “some” to quantify ACOMs’ views to represent three or more ACOMs.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2020 to July 2021 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

---

**Appendix I: Methodology for Survey of Area  
Census Office Managers**

---

the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Commerce



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Office of the Acting Chief Financial Officer and**  
**Assistant Secretary for Administration**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

July 15, 2021

Ms. Yvonne Jones  
Director, Strategic Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Jones:

The U.S. Census Bureau appreciates the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report entitled, "2020 Census: Office Managers' Perspectives on Recent Operations Would Strengthen Planning For 2030." (GAO-21-104071).

The Census Bureau agrees with the summary of GAO's survey results and with its three recommendations. The U.S. Census Bureau will prepare a formal action plan addressing all three recommendations upon GAO's issuance of the final report.

Thank you for your continued interest in and efforts towards increasing the benefits from the 2020 Census and improving future census planning.

Sincerely,

WYNN  
COGGINS

Digitally signed by WYNN  
COGGINS  
Date: 2021.07.15 08:58:18  
-0400

Wynn W. Coggins

Acting Chief Financial Officer & Assistant  
Secretary for Administration

---

# Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

---

## GAO Contact

Yvonne D. Jones, (202) 512-6806 or [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov)

---

## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Ty Mitchell (Assistant Director), Sam Gaffigan, Emmy Rhine Paule (Analysts-in-Charge), Ann Czapiewski, Alan Daigle, Kevin Dooley, Alice Feldesman, Rob Gebhart, Serena Lo, Carl Ramirez, Kate Sharkey, Dylan Stagner, Jeff Tessin, and Peter Verchinski made key contributions to this report.

---

---

## GAO's Mission

The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

---

## Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through our website. Each weekday afternoon, GAO posts on its [website](#) newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence. You can also [subscribe](#) to GAO's email updates to receive notification of newly posted products.

---

## Order by Phone

The price of each GAO publication reflects GAO's actual cost of production and distribution and depends on the number of pages in the publication and whether the publication is printed in color or black and white. Pricing and ordering information is posted on GAO's website, <https://www.gao.gov/ordering.htm>.

Place orders by calling (202) 512-6000, toll free (866) 801-7077, or TDD (202) 512-2537.

Orders may be paid for using American Express, Discover Card, MasterCard, Visa, check, or money order. Call for additional information.

---

## Connect with GAO

Connect with GAO on [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).  
Subscribe to our [RSS Feeds](#) or [Email Updates](#). Listen to our [Podcasts](#).  
Visit GAO on the web at <https://www.gao.gov>.

---

## To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact FraudNet:

Website: <https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-does/fraudnet>

Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7700

---

## Congressional Relations

Orice Williams Brown, Managing Director, [WilliamsO@gao.gov](mailto:WilliamsO@gao.gov), (202) 512-4400, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548

---

## Public Affairs

Chuck Young, Managing Director, [youngc1@gao.gov](mailto:youngc1@gao.gov), (202) 512-4800 U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149 Washington, DC 20548

---

## Strategic Planning and External Liaison

Stephen J. Sanford, Managing Director, [spel@gao.gov](mailto:spel@gao.gov), (202) 512-4707 U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7814, Washington, DC 20548



Please Print on Recycled Paper.