

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-602](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The decennial census is a crucial, constitutionally mandated activity with immutable deadlines. To meet these statutory deadlines, the Bureau carries out thousands of activities that need to be successfully completed on schedule for an accurate, cost-effective head count. These activities include opening area census offices, recruiting and hiring a large temporary workforce, and training that workforce.

GAO was asked to review the Bureau's plans for critical logistical support activities. This report (1) assesses the Bureau's progress in opening area census offices; (2) determines the extent to which the Bureau is following its field hiring and recruiting strategy for the 2020 Census; and (3) determines the extent to which the Bureau has followed its plans for training field staff, and whether this training approach is consistent with selected leading practices.

To assess the extent to which the Bureau is following its plans for opening area census offices, recruiting and hiring, and training, GAO reviewed current Bureau planning documents and schedules, and interviewed Bureau officials, including officials at the Bureau's six regional offices. GAO used its guide to training ([GAO-04-546G](#)) as criteria for selected leading practices.

What GAO Recommends

The Secretary of Commerce should direct the U.S. Census Bureau to revise plans to include goals and performance measures for evaluating its new training approach. The Department of Commerce agreed with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-19-602](#). For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff at 202-512-2757 or goldenkoffr@gao.gov.

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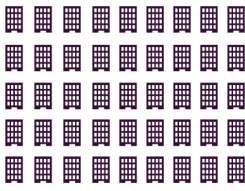


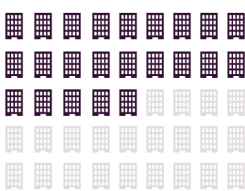


2020 CENSUS

Bureau Is Making Progress Opening Offices and Recruiting, but Could Improve Its Ability to Evaluate Training

What GAO Found

To help control the cost of the 2020 Census while maintaining accuracy, the Census Bureau (Bureau) is making significant changes in three areas—office space, recruiting and hiring, and training—compared to prior decennials. The Bureau is reducing its use of office space, hiring fewer census field staff, and adopting a blended training approach of instructor-led, computer-based, and hands-on training (see figure).

Comparison of Census Bureau 2010 and 2020 Logistical Activities

Year	Office Space	Hiring For Selected Operations	Training
2010	<p>494 offices</p> 	<p>628,000 hired</p> 	<p>Instructor-led</p> 
2020	<p>248 offices</p> 	<p>400,000 hired</p> 	<p>Computer-based instruction</p> 

Source: GAO analysis of Census Bureau data. | GAO-19-602

GAO found that the the Bureau generally appears to be positioned to carry out these activities as planned, if implemented properly.

Opening offices. While the Bureau experienced early delays when regions were trying to find office space and acquire leases, Bureau officials said that the deadlines for the later phases of renovations will allow them to make up time lost. As of June 2019, there were signed leases for 247 of 248 offices.

Recruiting and hiring. As of June 2019, the Bureau was exceeding its recruiting goals for early operations, but identified challenges in areas such as completing background checks and hiring during low unemployment, especially for partnership specialist positions. GAO will continue to monitor these challenges, as recruiting and hiring for the census continues.

Training. The Bureau generally followed its training plans for 2020 and generally followed selected leading practices for its training approach. However, GAO found that the Bureau does not have goals and performance measures for evaluating its new training approach. Without goals and performance measures the Bureau will not be able to accurately assess the cost and benefits of its new training approach.