



Highlights of [GAO-10-59](#), a report to congressional requesters

## 2010 CENSUS

### Census Bureau Has Made Progress on Schedule and Operational Control Tools, but Needs to Prioritize Remaining System Requirements

#### Why GAO Did This Study

To carry out the decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) conducts a sequence of thousands of activities and numerous operations. As requested, GAO examined (1) the Bureau's use of scheduling tools to maintain and monitor progress and (2) the status of two systems key to field data collection: the control system the Bureau will use to manage the work flow for paper-based operations, including nonresponse follow-up, and the system used to manage quality control of two major field operations.

GAO applied schedule analysis tools; reviewed Bureau evaluations, planning documents, and other documents on work flow management; and interviewed Bureau officials.

#### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Bureau include resource needs in its schedule for 2020 and implement reliable progress measures of the development of a key system.

In commenting on a draft of this report, the Department of Commerce provided additional details on steps the Bureau is already taking and plans to take to address the intent of GAO's recommendations. GAO agrees that the monitoring efforts the department describes can help assess progress on key system development. GAO maintains that without prioritized requirements and reliable progress measures, the Bureau is unable to fully gauge its progress on system development.

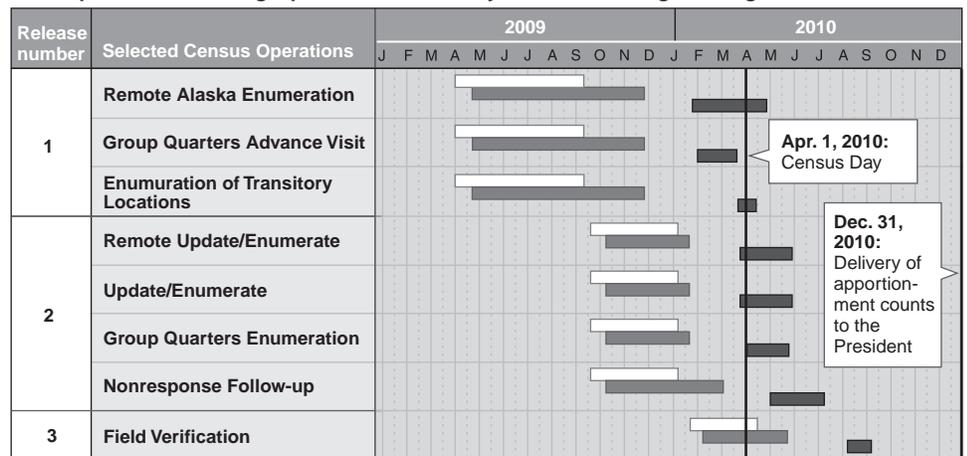
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#### What GAO Found

The Bureau's master schedule provides a useful tool to gauge progress, identify and address potential problems, and promote accountability as the Bureau carries out the census. GAO found that the Bureau's use of its master schedule generally follows leading scheduling practices that enable such high-level oversight. However, errors GAO found in the Bureau's schedule hinder the Bureau's ability to identify the effects of activity delays and to plan for the unexpected. The Bureau has recently begun taking systematic steps to identify and correct remaining errors. However, within its schedule, the Bureau does not identify the resources needed to complete activities, making it difficult for the Bureau to evaluate the costs of schedule changes or the resource constraints that may occur at peak levels of activity. Leveraging the 2010 scheduling experience and including resource needs in the 2020 schedule should facilitate planning for the 2020 Census, already underway.

The automated control system that the Bureau plans to use to help manage major field data collection operations has significant development and testing milestones remaining, with some scheduled to finish shortly before the system needs to be deployed. This aggressive schedule leaves little time for resolving problems that may arise, and without prioritized and final software specifications and reliable progress measures, the Bureau may not get what it needs from the system to conduct the operations. Additionally, development of quality control software for two major field operations faces delays, although detailed specifications and test plans are final.

Development and Testing Operations Control System Proceeding on a Tight Schedule



Legend:  Development dates  Testing dates  Operation dates

Source: GAO summary of 2010 U.S. Census Master Activity Schedule (9/25/2009).