

Concerns over Census 2020

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Causes for Concern

- Funding for the ramp up years was less than normal.
- Among other things, this caused the Bureau to cancel the Dress Rehearsal in 2 of 3 locations.
- Leadership
- Security
- Various internal goals and measures have not been met (see various GAO reports).
- Citizenship question

Will the Citizenship Question Affect the Census?

- Yes! Response rates and overall quality will decline slightly, but not so much as to be alarmed.
- Adding any question to the census will decrease self-response rates and affect quality.
- The key question to ask is what will the difference in the response rate be with the question and without the question.
- Response rates are already low among undocumented workers. This will lower it further, but the overall response rates *DUE TO THIS QUESTION* will not be that much lower.
- If the question is on the census, we cannot attribute all of the decline in 2020, relative to 2010, to the citizenship question since response rates are declining independent of the question.

How the Census Works

- While the census counts people, it counts them by household.
- So the “to-do” list for the decennial is the Master Address File (MAF). When all 140 million addresses have been enumerated or declared vacant the census is over.
- Postcard/Invite to answer over internet
- Census forms mailed
- NRFU begins
- Enumerate: directly, via administrative records, by proxy, or by imputation
- The overwhelmingly majority of people that are missed or do not want to be counted do get ACCOUNTED for.

Citizenship Question Common

- Citizenship question has been on census since 1820.
- Since 1950-ish is has been on the long form and now the ACS.
- While these are *only* given to a sample of the population, the samples are gigantic.
- Long form in 2000 – roughly 50 million people
- ACS over last 15 years has asked the question to over 80 million people.
- Adding the question is not a radical change to the decennial.

Miscellany

- Ron Jarmin, the Acting Director, said the question might decrease response rates by 1 percent.
- Jarmin also emailed in response to a CNN article raising the alarm on the citizenship question with the comment “The lack of understanding and hysteria are amazing.”
- The Bureau does an incredible job on outreach and they will need to do that particularly well with Hispanic groups this time.
- The data are protected by law and there is no indication of immigration status, just citizenship.
- The quality of census data decays quickly with time. I can't imagine it would be of much use to any law enforcement org.









