

2020 Privacy and Confidentiality Evaluation  
Submitted Under Generic Clearance for Census Bureau Field Tests and Evaluations

**Request:** 1The Census Bureau plans to conduct research under the generic clearance for Census Bureau Field Tests and Evaluations (OMB #0607-0971). We plan to administer a nationally representative, multi-mode survey to assess respondents' privacy and confidentiality concerns regarding the decennial census.

**Purpose:** Privacy and confidentiality research addresses key elements in the 2020 Census Operational Plan and the guiding principles for the 2030 Census. As the 2020 Census is the first time that the majority of respondents will be encouraged to respond to the census on the internet, a key element of the Optimizing Self-Response innovation area is assuring respondents that their data is secure and treated as confidential (US Census Bureau, 2017; p. 19). Government and private sector data breaches are salient public events that have potentially weakened respondents' trust in the Census Bureau's ability to maintain privacy and keep data confidential. Respondents need to be sure that their personal information is protected, particularly when responding online. In fact, the public's perception of the Census Bureau's ability to safeguard response data has been identified as a high-level risk to the 2020 Census Program (Blumerman & Fontenot, 2017).

This evaluation is a mail, telephone, and in-person survey of decennial census respondents that focuses on their privacy and confidentiality concerns. The evaluation is an opportunity to measure how the web response option affects privacy and confidentiality concerns of respondents who have had the chance to use this option. Based on previous research, we expect that respondents will have particular privacy and confidentiality concerns associated with responding online (Holzberg & Fobia, 2016; Morales, Holzberg, & Eggleston, 2017). The public perception of how the Census Bureau handles privacy and confidentiality in 2020 will shape how the Census Bureau prepares for and executes a 2030 Census.

The survey has two panels - a Self-Response (SR) Panel, consisting of those who self-responded to the decennial census and a Non-Response Followup (NRFU) Panel, consisting of those who responded to the decennial census in person with an enumerator. We will mail households sampled for the SR panel a questionnaire for them to mail back. A subsample of those who do not respond to the mail survey will be selected for a telephone follow-up. The NRFU panel will be administered an in-person survey at the sampled address.

The full paper and Computer Assisted Interview (CAI) questionnaires are attached (see Attachments I & II). The CAI instrument will be administered over the phone and in-person.

**Population of Interest:** Residents of the United States who responded to the 2020 Census.

**Timeline:** The initial mailout for the survey will begin in mid-July 2020 and continue on a flow basis until December 2020. The telephone follow-up will begin in August and end in December. The in-person component begins in September and ends in February 2021.

**Sample:** The universe for this evaluation encompasses households that responded to the decennial census (omitting households selected for other decennial census experiments and evaluations when necessary), the ACS, and the census Post-Enumeration Survey. The survey has two panels - a Self-Response (SR) Panel, consisting of those who self-responded to the decennial census and a Non-Response Followup (NRFU) Panel, consisting of those who responded to the decennial census in-person with an enumerator.

For the SR panel, we will sample 108,709 households using 2020 Census response data for Person 1. Based on findings from previous research, we are primarily interested in three race/ethnicity groups: Hispanic (any race), White (alone, non-Hispanic), and Black (alone, non-Hispanic).<sup>1</sup> We plan to sample so that we will be able to cross these race groups with age groups (18-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+). We will include both self-respondents and NRFU respondents in our sample. This will be a stratified simple random sample. We expect 30,200 responses from the mail portion of this survey. The sample for the telephone follow-up will consist of 30,000 households of which 3,000 are expected to respond.

The NRFU panel will sample 10,000 respondents using 2020 Census response data for Person 1. The survey will be administered in a nationally representative sample. The target population is the residential population among census NRFU respondents. The sample design is comprised of a three-stage area probability sample that will consist of the selection of:

1. Sixty primary sampling units (PSUs), where the PSUs are counties or groups of adjacent counties. The PSUs will be selected with a stratified probability proportional to size (PPS) design where the measure of size for the PPS selection will depend on the household population size of the PSU and the prevalence of the rarer domains of interest.;
2. Eight secondary sampling units (SSUs) per sampled PSU, where the SSUs are block groups or combinations of adjacent block groups. The SSUs will similarly be selected with a stratified PPS design where the measure of size for the PPS selection

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<sup>1</sup> Previous research has shown differences in privacy and confidentiality attitudes by race, Hispanic origin, sex, and age. See Morales et al. 2017; Fobia et al. forthcoming; Sha et al. 2018; CBSM 2017.

- will depend on the MOS of the SSU, stratified by poverty density estimate; and
3. A probability sample of 10,000 households selected within sampled SSUs to achieve about 3,000 completed cases.

**Recruitment:** Households in the SR panel will be sent a mail package containing an invitation letter, questionnaire, and a return envelope (see Attachments I and III). Those who are subsampled for the telephone follow-up will receive a phone call where a live interviewer will attempt to administer the questionnaire. Households selected for the NRFU panel will receive a postcard notification and they will be given a Privacy Act Notice (see Attachment IV). When phone numbers for these households are available, they will receive phone calls to set up an in-person interview time. If households cannot be reached by telephone, an interviewer will attempt to conduct interviews at the sampled address.

**Survey Administration:** The questionnaire will be administered in three modes: 1) by mail, 2) by telephone, and 3) in-person.

**Questionnaire:** The instrument assesses respondents' privacy and confidentiality concerns. We will ask questions that surround four themes: 1) privacy and confidentiality concerns, 2) opinions on the use of administrative records, 3) concerns about decennial census items, and 4) other related constructs. The paper instrument is enclosed as Attachment I and the CAI instrument is Attachment II.

*Privacy and Confidentiality Concerns.* Respondents will be asked if they have any concerns about their census responses and data. They will be asked to choose a level of concern for different types of privacy and confidentiality concerns that have been found in previous research or identified as emerging issues. We will also replicate questions from privacy and confidentiality studies in past decades. The instrument replicates questions about privacy beliefs, confidentiality concerns, and opinions about administrative records (Singer et al. 1993; Singer et al. 2003).

*Opinions on Administrative Records.* Results from attitude questions about administrative records will inform the research and testing phase of a records-based 2030 Census. The items for this topic will be replicated from the Gallup Nightly Survey as well as previous decennial evaluations of privacy and confidentiality (See Singer et al. 1993; Singer et al. 2003; CBAMS II Final Report). We plan to ask respondents for their income information. Past research has shown that failure to report income on a public opinion survey is highly correlated with reported privacy and confidentiality concerns.

*Concerns about decennial census items.* We will also ask respondents about their level of concern for each of the census items. This data will help us understand whether certain items are more sensitive than others and whether the sensitivity of particular items are associated with different demographic groups.

*Related constructs.* Other questions will replicate those asked in the Gallup Nightly Survey that have been shown in previous studies to be related to privacy and confidentiality concerns. We ask respondents about their knowledge of federal statistics as well as trust in the federal government, the Census Bureau, and other institutions. In previous work, knowledge about the federal statistical system, data use, and belief in the relevance of statistics are important correlates of trust in federal statistics and self-reported response (Childs et al. 2015; Childs et al. 2017; Conrey et. al. 2012). Trust in government has also been identified as an important challenge for the 2030 Census.

**Incentive:** Participants will not receive any payment for their participation in the survey.

**Language:** The survey and mail materials are available in English and Spanish. Households will receive Spanish materials if their decennial response file indicates that they completed the questionnaire in Spanish.

**Length of Survey:** We estimate that the survey will take an average of 10 minutes for each complete response. Each mail piece will take about 1 minute to read. Each household in the mail sample could get up to three mail pieces and we will send mail to 108,709 households (108,709 x 3 minutes). Each household in sample for the in-person follow-up will receive one mail piece (10,000 x 1 minute). **The total estimated burden of this research is 11,637 hours.**

**Table 1. Total Estimated Burden**

| <b>Category of Respondent</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Participation Time</b> | <b>Burden</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Reading mail invitations      | 108,709                   | 3 minutes                 | 5,436 hours   |
| Reading notification postcard | 10,000                    | 1 minute                  | 167 hours     |
| Survey                        | 118,709                   | 10 minutes                | 19,785 hours  |
| <b>Total</b>                  |                           |                           | 25,388 hours  |

The following documents are included as attachments:

Attachment I: 2020 Census Opinions Survey (Paper)

Attachment II: 2020 Census Opinions Survey (CAI)

Attachment III: Invitation Letter, Reminder/Thank You Postcard, Reminder Letter

Attachment III: Notification Postcard

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and the design of this research is listed below:

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