

2024 National Census Survey  
Submitted Under Generic Clearance for Census Bureau Field Tests and Evaluations

**Request:** 1The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for Field Tests (OMB #0607-0971). We will be administering an online mandatory survey with a paper questionnaire sent in a fourth mailing to nonresponding households. The survey purpose is to continue testing enhancements as we move towards the 2030 Census.

**Purpose:** The 2024 National Census Survey is the third iteration (previously conducted 2023 Census Test in March 2023 and 2024 Census Survey in March 2024) under the renewed Small-Scale Response Testing (SmaRT) program. The purpose of the SmaRT program is to initiate and maintain an ongoing and iterative small-scale response testing program by using nationally representative samples or small, thoughtfully selected sites starting in 2023 and continuing with at least two tests per year until 2029. Small-scale tests allow the Census Bureau to gather initial data about proposed census enhancements while plans for any larger census tests that may take place later in the decade are being developed.

The purpose of this next iteration in the SmaRT program is to continue testing enhancements as we move towards the 2030 Census. All 2024 National Census Survey questionnaires and materials being tested are based on the successful results from previous SmaRT iterations, with some changes to account for continued testing of multiple 2030 Census research projects. The information collected in this survey will be used within the Census Bureau and incorporated into 2030 Census efforts. The results may be reported in Census Bureau working papers or in peer-reviewed journal articles.

Results will inform 2030 Census planning, so we are interested in data representing all mailable housing units in the United States. Some of our research questions are for specific subpopulations such as housing units where the respondent self-identifies as Hispanic. We will use stratification and sorting in our sampling methods to be certain we have these subpopulations represented. The 2024 National Census Survey will be available in English and Spanish.

**Timeline:** The internet instrument will be available to collect responses for approximately seven weeks starting from the day of the first mailing scheduled as September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, through the end of the survey period scheduled as October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

The U.S. Census Bureau reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. CBDRB-FY24-DSSD007-002

**Experimental Panel Design:** The 2024 National Census Survey contains five experiments:

1. Sending the first two mailings with Respond By dates versus having no Respond By dates,
2. Testing an 11"x17" paper questionnaire versus the current 11"x18" questionnaire for operational knowledge,
3. Testing an optional "message to future generations" question (known as the time capsule question) in the online questionnaire only vs having no time capsule question,
4. Adding an arrow and language on the paper questionnaire that points to the ID the respondent can use to complete the survey online versus the current questionnaire,
5. Tailoring materials to include a QR code to determine if self-response increases for a Historically Undercounted Population of interest versus using control mail materials.

All online respondents will see one of two questions asking about vacant homes within or outside of their neighborhood.

To summarize all panels in the 2024 National Census Survey, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Panels by Treatments for the 2024 National Census Survey**

Panel	Panel Description	Mailing 1 9/6/24	Mailing 2 9/11/24	Mailing 3 9/20/24	Mailing 4* 10/4/24	Mailing 5* 10/18/24
1/A	Control for Panels 2-4	Initial letter	Reminder letter	Postcard	Questionnaire package	Reminder Postcard
2/B	Respond-by Dates	Initial letter with due date	Reminder letter with due date	Postcard	Questionnaire package	Reminder Postcard
3/C	Time Capsule and Paper Size	Initial letter	Reminder letter with time capsule messaging on envelope	Postcard	Questionnaire package using 11"x17" paper	Reminder Postcard
4/D	Arrow pointing to Census ID on questionnaire	Initial letter	Reminder letter	Postcard	Questionnaire package with arrow pointing to Census ID	Reminder Postcard
5/E	Control for Panel 6	Initial letter	Reminder letter	Postcard	Questionnaire package	Reminder Postcard
6/F	Tailored Contact QR Codes	Initial letter with QR code	Reminder letter with QR code	Postcard with QR code	Questionnaire package with QR code	Reminder Postcard with QR codes

\*Sent to nonresponders only

**Sample:** We will select a sample of 76,500 stateside mailable housing units addresses (Self-Response and Update Leave 2020 Census Type of Enumeration Areas with good addresses as determined by the 2020 Census Address Composition Specification) from most recent extract of the Master Address File. The frame will exclude housing units selected for the American Community Survey and its supplements in 2023 and 2024, those selected for the 2023 Census Test (March 2023 SmaRT), those selected for the 2024 Census Survey (Spring 2024 SmaRT), and those in sites undergoing a Special Census in late 2024.

For each panel, the sample size has been determined based on the following elements of experimental design: alpha level, beta level, design effect, detectable difference, and metric of interest. Alpha and beta parameters were the same for all panels. Other elements varied across panels according to research goals and needs.

Addresses will be divided into two sampling frames after being sorted by geographic identifiers and other demographic and operational data flags. One frame will be for panels 1-4 and the other for panels 5-6. In each frame, a systematic random sample will be taken, and each housing unit selected will be assigned a random number. After sorting by the random number, the housing units will be sequentially assigned to the panels. Housing units will then again be sorted by random number and sequentially assigned to one of the two vacant homes question treatments.

**Recruitment:** We plan to conduct this test with a Census Day of October 1, 2024, and with a maximum of five planned mailings to each housing unit. The mailing strategy begins with an initial letter and FAQ insert in the first mailing. The letter content will differ in the first mailing for the control and treatment groups. Those receiving the second mailing will get a reminder letter that will be different for the control and treatment groups. Those receiving the third mailing will get a reminder postcard. Again, the content will differ across panels. The fourth and fifth mailings are for nonresponders only. Nonresponders will receive a mailing that contains a letter, FAQ insert, paper questionnaire, and return envelope. The fifth and final mailing sent to nonresponders only will be a reminder postcard. The content will differ by treatment group. The survey will close out October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, approximately seven weeks after the first mailing. All mailing materials and the response instrument will be bilingual in English and Spanish. See Appendix 2 through 27 for all contact materials. Those in sample will also be able to call phone numbers with Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone lines (no live agents) with varying content according to the specific experimental panel. Verbatim wording can be found in Attachment 28.

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**Survey Administration:** All sampled housing units will be mailed invitations to respond online, and a paper questionnaire will be sent in the fourth mailing to nonresponding households. The online questionnaire will be administered using the survey platform Qualtrics. Qualtrics has a FedRAMP Moderate approval and a Census Authority to Operate to collect T13 data. Respondents will receive the link to the online survey on all mailing materials.

**Questionnaire:** The online instrument specification and the paper questionnaires are attached (see Attachment 01 and Attachments 21-23). This questionnaire is a version of the 2020 Census questionnaire that has been updated to comply with OMB's Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 and includes the combined race and ethnicity question both on paper and online. The online instrument has two extra questions: one asking about vacant homes within or outside of their neighborhood and an optional question to write a message to future generations.

The “message to future generations” question (known as the time capsule question) would be an additional, open-ended 1,000-character text field question on the online questionnaire only, which would be optional for respondents. The message to future generations question would be captured with the return of questionnaire and publicly released by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) 72 years from the enumeration date (April 1, 2030) with the rest of the census records transferred to NARA. In addition to expected increased response and engagement, allowing respondents the ability to record more than their basic information would create a trove of data and details for future generations to study, use, and enjoy. Responses to the time capsule question are collected under Title 13 and are thereby protected under that section of the law. These data would be treated the same by the Census Bureau as any other data we collect. The responses would have limited access internally. The inclusion of an optional question at the end of the internet instrument for respondents to write an open-ended message (limited to 1,000 characters) beyond the required Decennial questions has the potential to increase response and engagement with the 2030 Census, as well as provide valuable and interesting archival information to the public upon NARA’s release.

This additional optional question can provide a space for the public to share stories and therefore make the mandatory decennial census have a more personalized feel. The Communications Directorate believes that the inclusion of this optional question, when promoted through the integrated communications campaign, could make respondents excited to fill out the 2030 Census and result in increased self-response. The 2023 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey found ancestry was important to certain groups considered by the Census Bureau to be Historically Undercounted Populations (HUP). The inclusion of the question could increase self-response for HUP groups and serve to generate interest through the 2030 Census advertising campaign. With all the anticipated increase in self-response rates and interest in the census, we want to use the 2024 National Census Survey as the starting point for testing to make certain we do our due diligence in testing this additional question. Research exploring adding a time capsule question to the 2030 Census was approved following the review of responses to the Federal Register Notice (Docket ID USBC-2022-0004). Responses to the FRN included recommendations from the public to add a time capsule question.

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As additional background, the 2022 Ireland Census introduced a voluntary “Time Capsule” question to give people an opportunity to record a message for future generations (the Central Statistics Office in Ireland releases census data after 100 years) on paper. Overall, the new question was met with positive public reaction in Ireland. Of the responding occupied households enumerated during 2022 Ireland Census, 19 percent provided a response to the “Time Capsule” question. However, we do not have any research of implementing this type of question online and therefore would be using the 2024 National Census Survey to get quick research results to help us determine how to operationalize the addition of this question later in the decennial census cycle if the question proves successful.

**Informed Consent:** The Census Bureau will conduct the 2024 National Census Survey under the authority of Title 13 United States Code Sections 141 and 193. All respondents who participate in the 2024 Census Survey will be informed that the information they provide is confidential under Section 9 that law. Additionally, respondents will be advised that Section 221 of this same law makes participation mandatory. All collected information that identifies individuals will be held in strict confidence according to the provisions of Title 13 United States Code, Section 9.

**Incentive:** There is no incentive in this survey.

**Length of Interview:** We plan on contacting a sample of 76,500 addresses with up to contacts each. We estimate users will spend 10 minutes on average completing the survey and an average 2.5 minutes reading each mail invitation. The burden estimates in the table below are an upper bound and based on an estimated 40 percent response rate. The total estimated respondent burden for this study is approximately 21,037 hours, assuming everyone reads the contact materials and answers the survey.

**Table 2. Total Estimated Burden**

	Expected Number of Respondents	Max Number of Occurrence	Average Time for each Occurrence	Estimated Burden
Reading mail invitations	76,500	5	2.5 minutes	15,937 hours
Completing survey	30,600	1	10 minutes	5,100 hours
<b>Total Estimate</b>				21,037 hours

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**The following documents are included as attachments:**

Attachment 01: 2024 National Census Survey Online Questionnaire Specification (abbreviated)

Attachment 02: FAQ insert (Mailing 1) for all panels

Attachment 03: FAQ insert (Mailing 4) for Panel 4

Attachment 04: FAQ insert (Mailing 4) for Panels 1-3, 5-6

Attachment 05: Invitation letter (Mailing 1) for Panels 1 and 5

Attachment 06: Invitation letter (Mailing 1) for Panel 2

Attachment 07: Invitation letter (Mailing 1) for Panel 3

Attachment 08: Invitation letter (Mailing 1) for Panel 4

Attachment 09: Invitation letter (Mailing 1) for Panel 6

Attachment 10: Reminder letter (Mailing 2) for Panels 1 and 5

Attachment 11: Reminder letter (Mailing 2) for Panel 2

Attachment 12: Reminder letter (Mailing 2) for Panel 3

Attachment 13: Reminder letter (Mailing 2) for Panel 4

Attachment 14: Reminder letter (Mailing 2) for Panel 6

Attachment 15: Postcard (Mailing 3) for Panels 1, 2, and 5

Attachment 16: Postcard (Mailing 3) for Panel 3

Attachment 17: Postcard (Mailing 3) for Panel 4

Attachment 18: Postcard (Mailing 3) for Panel 6

Attachment 19: Final letter (Mailing 4) for Panels 1-5

Attachment 20: Final letter (Mailing 4) for Panel 6

Attachment 21: Questionnaire (Mailing 4) for Panels 1, 2, 5, and 6

Attachment 22: Questionnaire (Mailing 4) for Panel 3

Attachment 23: Questionnaire (Mailing 4) for Panel 4

Attachment 24: Reminder postcard (Mailing 5) for Panels 1, 2, and 5

Attachment 25: Reminder postcard (Mailing 5) for Panel 3

Attachment 26: Reminder postcard (Mailing 5) for Panel 4

Attachment 27: Reminder postcard (Mailing 5) for Panel 6

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Attachment 28: FAQ phone line information for all panels

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

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