

SUPPORTING STATEMENT A
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Special Census Program
Office of Management and Budget Control No. 0607-0368

Abstract

A special census is a basic enumeration of population, housing units (HUs), group quarters (GQs), and transitory locations (TLs) conducted by the Census Bureau at the request of a governmental unit (GU). Title 13, United States Code, section 196 authorizes the Census Bureau to conduct special censuses on a cost reimbursable basis for the government of any state, county, city, or other political subdivision.

A full special census is conducted within an area entirely within the jurisdiction of a GU requesting a special census. A partial special census is conducted using the same methodologies and procedures as a full special census, but it is for a subset of areas within the jurisdiction of the local GU. The areas requested in a partial special census must contain at least one full tract that is completely within the jurisdiction of the GU and can contain additional contiguous tracts or blocks.

Local officials frequently request a special census when there has been a significant population change in their community due to annexation, boundary changes, growth, or the addition of new GQ facilities. Many states use special census population statistics to determine the distribution of state funds to local jurisdictions. Local jurisdictions may use the data to plan new schools, transportation systems, housing programs, or water treatment facilities.

The Special Census Program began accepting requests for cost estimates from GUs on March 30, 2023; requests for cost estimates will be accepted through May 2027. Data collection for the first scheduled special census began in March 2024; all collection activities will conclude no later than September 30, 2028, ahead of the 2030 Census. GUs will complete a Request for Cost Estimate Form (SC-900) to request a special census for submission to the Census Bureau along with an official letter requesting a cost estimate from the GU's highest elected official. Once this form and letter have been reviewed, the GU and the Census Bureau will identify the exact geographic boundaries for its special census. The Special Census Program will then coordinate with participating divisions within the Census Bureau to determine a cost estimate for the special census and present it to the GU. The cost of a special census will vary depending on the GU's housing and population counts and whether a GU requests a full or partial special census. The cost estimate outlines the anticipated costs to the sponsoring entity for staffing, materials, data processing and tabulation. Once a cost estimate is compiled and the GU decides to move forward with a special census, a Memorandum of Agreement is then drafted and sent to the GU for approval with advance payment of the cost estimate transmitted to the Census Bureau, at which point the special census operation will begin for the GU. Additional information about the Special Census Program can be found at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/specialcensus.html><https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/specialcensus.html>

Justification

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The Census Bureau requests clearance for an extension of the Special Census Program for the currently approved collection (OMB Control No. 0607-0368). The legal authority for the Special Census Program is Title 13 U.S.C., Section 196.

Title 13, §196. Special Censuses: The Secretary may conduct Special Censuses for the government of any State, or of any county, city, or other political subdivision within a State, for the government of the District of Columbia, and for the government of any possession or area (including political subdivisions thereof) referred to in section 191(a) of this title, on subjects covered by the censuses provided for in this title, upon payment to the Secretary of the actual or estimated cost of each such Special Census. The results of each such Special Census shall be designated "Official Census Statistics." These statistics may be used in the manner provided by applicable law. (Added [Pub. L. 94-521, §11\(a\), Oct. 17, 1976, 90 Stat. 2464.](#))

The link for Title 13 on house.gov:

<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title13&edition=prelim>

- 2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

The Special Census Program provides a governmental unit (GU) and the Census Bureau with an accurate and complete count of population and housing units by block for the special census area within a GU, and a demographic profile containing similar content as the 2020 Census demographic profile, produced at the tract and/or place level. For partial special censuses, data product allowances would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The respondent categories include residents of HUs, GQs, and at TLs. Information will be collected from people living in HUs, GQs, and at TLs for the special census area within the jurisdiction of a GU. GUs can be of any state, county, city, or other political subdivision within a state. This includes the District of Columbia, American Indian Reservations, Alaska Native villages, Puerto Rico, the Island Areas, and other GUs that require current population data between decennial censuses.

The Special Census Program will ask the same information that was asked in the 2020 Census. The information will be collected via both paper and online. For the Special Census Program, the Census Bureau will use an internet self-response instrument for HU respondents to respond to the questionnaire using a Census Bureau-provided identification number that they will receive by mail. For HUs that do not receive mailed materials, the Census Bureau will conduct field follow-up. Fieldwork will include the listing of all HUs and enumeration of HUs that did not self-respond, GQs, and at TLs using a paper collection mode. As such, respondents will have multiple options to

respond and will be able to provide the requested information online and during face-to-face interviews.

Many states use special census population statistics to determine the distribution of state funds to local jurisdictions. GUs that request a special census will receive the data file(s) and a letter from the Census Bureau director with the official results by email once data processing and disclosure avoidance have been completed. The data will also be posted on the [Special Census Program webpage](#) for public use. The data product(s) delivered are official Census Bureau statistics and may be used in the manner provided by applicable law. The data will not be used to update official 2020 Census data products and apportionment counts, but they may be used to update data in the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program.

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of information disseminated by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau's Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to the information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

For the Special Census Program, the Census Bureau is using an internet self-response (ISR) instrument, which is the online tool through which respondents can answer their special census. Respondents will have approximately 4 weeks to respond to the questionnaire using the ISR instrument. The Census Bureau will send an invitation letter to housing units in the GU's special census area with information needed to respond online. Reminder letters and postcards are also sent to each housing unit to encourage self-response.

After the end of the self-response period, the Census Bureau will conduct follow-up operations in the field to enumerate housing units that did not respond using the ISR instrument as well as housing units that did not receive mailed materials. These HUs will be contacted by a field representative who will conduct a special census interview using a paper questionnaire. Additionally, nonresponding HUs may be contacted by telephone. The field operations will also enumerate GQs and TLs in the GU's special census area using a paper questionnaire. Field representatives will also conduct listing to verify the current address lists for the special census area and add, delete, or update the addresses of living quarters as needed, based on their observation of HUs, TLs, and GQs.

Several quality assurance measures have been implemented for each special census to ensure that high-quality data are gathered using the most efficient and cost-effective procedures. These include edits incorporated into the online questionnaire and the ability to validate potentially erroneous responses in the field. Independent quality assurance checks, such as initial field representative observation and review of completed questionnaires, will be conducted by field supervisors and office staff. Quality control field supervisors will conduct the Dependent Quality Check to verify that production field representatives performed all listing and mapping tasks completely and

accurately. Reinterview of a sample of field questionnaires has also been implemented to ensure the quality of the data collected in the field.

The 2020 Census disclosure avoidance methodology will be used with a few changes for the Special Census Program. The minimum statistical area for which any partial special censuses can be conducted is a 2020 Census tabulation tract. This is different from the special censuses conducted after the 2010 Census where partial special censuses were done by block. Because of this change in methodology, only GUs whose jurisdictions encompass one or more 2020 Census tracts will be able to request a partial special census. Furthermore, this methodological change necessitates that a block or tract can only be included in a special census one time between 2024 and 2028. A GU may request multiple partial special censuses, but they cannot be of overlapping areas. Finally, the geography included in the special census will impact which data products the GU receives based on disclosure avoidance considerations. Some GUs will not receive the full suite of data products; however, for those impacted GUs, the Census Bureau will define the allowable data products that the GU will receive prior to signing the Memorandum of Agreement.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2.

Local jurisdictions request and contract with the Census Bureau to conduct special censuses because similar data are not available to them between decennial censuses. These local GUs use data from their special censuses in order to receive state funds based on the most current population data for their jurisdiction. For some states, distribution of these state funds cannot rely on anything less than a full and complete population census and requires official statistics from the Census Bureau. The data collection for the Special Census Program is not duplicative of any other collection effort (i.e., not a duplication of the 2020 Census). Similar information about the GUs from other surveys (such as the American Community Survey) cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described above.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The collection of information for the Special Census Program has minimal impact on small businesses or other small entities. Data are collected from residents of GQs and TLs, some of which may be small businesses. Only the necessary questions are asked of the residents of these facilities on the GQ and TL special census questionnaires, which contain the same questions as the 2020 Census questionnaires. The field representatives will contact the facility managers of the GQs and TLs in advance of their visit to schedule an enumeration appointment. In addition, field representatives may need some assistance during their visit to coordinate enumeration activities. Facility managers of GQs may also receive a follow-up phone call as a quality check. However, no data about the GQ or TL business operations are collected during the special census. In addition, small businesses in the local jurisdiction may benefit from the data collection by having another source of demographic data for their area.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The collection for the Special Census Program is done at the request of the GU. If the collection is not conducted, then the Census Bureau would not be meeting its legal requirements as outlined in Title 13, Section 196. The Census Bureau is currently conducting the Special Census Program following the 2020 Census, in which special censuses have been conducted in the years following every decennial census since 1915.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;** There are no special circumstances in the Special Census Program that require respondents to report to the Census Bureau more often than quarterly.
- **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;** There are no special circumstances that require respondents to prepare a written response in fewer than 30 days from the start of a special census.
- **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;** There are no special circumstances in the special census that require respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document they submit with their case.
- **requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;** There are no special circumstances in the Special Census Program that require respondents to retain records for more than 3 years.
- **in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;** There are no special circumstances because the Special Census Program is not a statistical survey.
- **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;** The Special Census Program following the 2020 Census asks the same questions as they were asked in 2020, uses the same information systems, uses the same procedures, and follows the 1997 OMB race and ethnicity standards.
- **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use;** The pledge of confidentiality for the Special Census Program is supported by authority established by Title 13 and by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge.
- **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law;** There are no special circumstances that require the inclusion of proprietary trade secrets or other confidential information in the Special Census Program.

In summary, with the exception of race and ethnicity data classifications, there are no special circumstances for this collection.

- 8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

The public had an opportunity to review and submit comments on the Special Census Program during the 60-Day Notice of the Proposed Information Collection. The notice for public comment, titled "Special Census Program," appeared in the Federal Register July 11, 2025, (Vol. 90, No. 131, pp. 30840- 30842) with a consideration period ending September 9, 2025. The Census Bureau received four comments during the review period.

Link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/11/2025-13009/agency-information-collection-activities-submission-to-the-office-of-management-and-budget-omb-for>

Two comments expressed support for the continuation of the Special Census Program, with one of them noting that special censuses provide local officials a critical tool to ensure that funding and planning reflect growth and annexations. The Census Bureau thanks the commentors for their support.

A third comment encouraged the Census Bureau to not include undocumented immigrants in special censuses, if there was a way to do that, while a fourth comment said that the Census Bureau must include everyone in decennial censuses, even immigrants, to be a viable source of information for all states. The Census Bureau appreciates all the comments and notes that the Special Census Program is separate and distinct from the decennial census, and special census results cannot be used for redistricting and apportionment. The questions for special censuses in this cycle are the same as what was used for the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau has no plans to change the questions on special censuses for this cycle.

- 9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

The Census Bureau does not pay or provide gifts to partners that participate in the Special Census Program.

- 10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.**

The information collected in special censuses is voluntary. Respondents are informed that their answers will be kept confidential pursuant to Title 13, United States Code, Section 9. This information is provided in mailing materials and in a Confidentiality Notice (SC-CN(E/S)), which explains how the Census Bureau is protecting respondents' information. The Confidentiality Notice is provided within the internet self-response instrument for respondents that complete the special census questionnaire online. Additionally, field staff are required to give a Confidentiality Notice to each person from who they request special-census-related information.

Personally identifiable information collected includes name, address, telephone/cell phone number, sex, and relationship to a referenced person. Disclosure of the information provided to the Census Bureau is permitted under the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a) and may be shared with other Census Bureau staff for work-related purposes. Disclosure of this information is also subject to all of the published routine uses as identified in the Privacy Act System of Records Notice COMMERCE/Census-3 Demographic Survey Collection (Census Bureau Sampling Frame) (name change from COMMERCE/CENSUS-3, Special Censuses, Surveys, and Other Studies, pending publication in the Federal Register).

Respondent information on paper questionnaires will be stored in a secure location within the Special Census Office (SCO). All SCO staff receive training on data stewardship and Title 13 compliance and will be trained on specific procedures on the proper handling of confidential respondent information and PII. Access is limited to certain populations of the Census Bureau's workforce and limited to Special Sworn Status individuals.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

The content of the questionnaires for the Special Census Program is the same as the 2020 Census. The questions in the 2020 Census include name, date of birth, household population count, age, Hispanic origin, race, relationship, sex, and tenure. A number of these questions could be considered sensitive by some people.

The Census Bureau collects racial and ethnic data in accordance with the 1997 OMB standards on race and ethnicity. Information on race and Hispanic origin is required for many federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights. Racial and ethnic statistics are used in planning and evaluating government programs and policies to ensure they fairly serve the needs of each community and to monitor against discrimination in these programs and in society. Race and Hispanic origin data are also used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial and ethnic disparities in health and environmental risks.

The Census Bureau collects data on the relationship of each person in a household to the householder in order to produce data about families, households, and other groups, and to present other data at a household level. Expanded relationship categories are designed to produce accurate data about households, including coupled households. Relationship data are used in planning and

funding government programs that provide funds or services for families, people living or raising children alone, grandparents living with grandchildren, or other households that qualify for additional assistance.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

Based on previous experience with special censuses and the fact that the special census questionnaires and procedures are similar to (and in many cases the same as) those used in the 2020 Census, we estimate burden hours as shown below.

Table 1: Estimated Annualized Respondent Burden Hours

Operation or Category	Type of Respondent	Estimated Number of Respondents	Burden Hours/Response	Total Burden Hours
Internet Self-Response	Resident of Housing Unit	170,000	10 minutes	28,333
Field Data Collection (Listing and Enumeration)	Resident of Housing Unit, Transitory Location, and Group Quarters	170,000	10 minutes	28,333
Reinterview for Field Data Collection	Resident of Housing Unit, Transitory Location, and Group Quarters	17,000	10 minutes	2,833
Governmental Unit Cost Estimate Request	Governmental Unit	80	45 minutes	60
Total Respondent Burden	-	357,080	-	59,560

The estimated total annual burden is 59,560 hours.

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with the respondent in this information collection. There are no costs to respondents other than that of their time to respond.

Table 2 Estimated Annualized Respondent Costs

Type of Respondent	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response	Hourly Wage Rate*	Total Burden Costs
Household / Facility Respondent	357,000	1	10 minutes	\$31.48	\$1,873,060.00
Governmental Unit Administrator	80	1	45 minutes	\$37.74	\$2,479.20
Total	357,080	--	--	--	\$1,875,539.20

*The wage rate for household respondents is estimated based on average hourly rate among all occupations as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as of May 2023. BLS's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm The wage rate for Governmental Unit Administrators is estimated based on an average hourly rate for Urban and Regional Planners as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as of May 2023.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

The Special Census Program is a cost-reimbursable program where the requesting entity pays the Census Bureau to conduct the special census. Appropriated funds for the Decennial Census Program will pay for the expenses necessary to stand up the Special Census Program. These are the costs necessary to have a Special Census Program regardless of the number of special censuses that might be conducted. Once the infrastructure is created, GUs will be charged for the costs directly related to their special census. This method for funding the program is optimal given that special censuses are requested by GUs, and the Census Bureau cannot know the total number of special censuses that would be conducted in the intercensal years. With initial funds being covered by the Census Bureau's appropriations, the Census Bureau does not have to approximate the per-special-census costs of starting the program using indefinite variables.

Activities that are paid for by Decennial Census Program-appropriated funds include the costs for project management; development of paper materials; system development; system testing; planning for recruiting, hiring, and staffing; training development; and geographic product design. The cost to the federal government from the Special Census Program is the amount of appropriated funds dedicated to the program. The cost of preparation and planning, which happens in FY22 and FY23, is approximated to be \$2.9 million annually. The Census Bureau will continue to use appropriated funds for project management of the Special Census Program. This cost is dependent on the number and scope of special censuses.

Activities and expenses paid for by the GU requesting the special census include the following: identification of the enumeration area; printing, assembly, and shipping of materials; facilities; equipment; recruiting and background check activities; SCO staffing costs; Census Bureau headquarters and regional office staffing costs; and data product creation resources.

Regarding the cost of special censuses, in the Special Census Program following the 2010 Census, the average cost of a special census was \$400,000. The overall costs for special censuses ranged

from \$14,000 to \$4 million for the 2010 decade. The current Special Census Program does not have sufficient-enough billings to produce an average cost for a special census, though the cost estimate has been calculated to an average of \$500,000.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

The Census Bureau is requesting clearance to continue conducting the Special Census Program by requesting an extension of the currently approved collection (OMB Control No. 0607-0368).

Since the previous notice for public comment, entitled “Special Census Program” that appeared in the Federal Register on May 25, 2022, (Vol. 87, No. 101, pp. 31855-31856), the only program change is that nonresponding HUs may be contacted by telephone. OMB approved the use of outbound calling in June 2025 in response to a Census Bureau nonsubstantive change (NSC) request. For the current Special Census Program, the Census Bureau will use an internet self-response instrument for respondents to self-respond to their special census. The internet self-response instrument for the Special Census Program is similar to the one used for the 2020 Census. The internet self-response is a change from the previous Special Census Program, which did not include any internet options for respondents. This program change was made to provide respondents with an additional option for responding to the special census. This change reduced costs for the GUs and improved efficiency of data collection.

At this time, the Special Census Program does not plan on implementing additional automated tools and methods for data collection. If anything changes in the future, a revision or an NSC can be submitted at that time.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

The Special Census Program began accepting requests for cost estimates from GUs in March 2023. Requests for cost estimates will be accepted through May 2027. Please see below for the major milestones for the Special Census Program. Each special census requested by a GU will have a separate data collection schedule based on the timing of their request and the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Data products will be distributed to the GUs and also posted on the [Special Census Program](#) webpage for public use. Data products will be distributed to the GUs and also posted on the [Special Census Program](#) webpage for public use.

Data products for the Special Census Program include a letter from the Census Bureau director that contains the total population and total HU counts for the special census area; a special census data product with counts of the total population and total HUs by block; and tract-level (and above) demographic profiles. Demographic profiles will contain the same content as the 2020 Census demographic profiles. The geography included in the special census will impact which data products the GU receives based on disclosure avoidance considerations. Some GUs will not receive the full suite of data products.

The 2020 Census disclosure avoidance methodology will be used with a few changes for the Special Census Program. The minimum statistical area for which partial special censuses can be conducted is a 2020 Census tabulation tract. This is different from the previous decade’s Special Census Program where partial special censuses were done by block. Because of this change in methodology, only GUs whose jurisdictions encompass one or more 2020 Census tracts will be able to request a partial special census. Furthermore, this methodological change necessitates that a block or tract can only be included in a special census one time between 2024 and 2028. A GU may request multiple partial special censuses, but they cannot be of overlapping areas. Finally, the geography included in the special census will impact which data products the GU receives based on disclosure avoidance considerations. Some GUs will not receive the full suite of data products.

#	Approximate Special Census Milestones	Date
1	Began Accepting GU Request for Cost Estimate (RCE)	3/30/2023
2	Began Self-Response for first scheduled Governmental Unit (GU)	3/27/2024
3	Began Field Data Collection for first scheduled GU	5/10/2024
4	Deliver First Data Product	9/27/2024
5	Final RCE Acceptance	5/31/2027
6	End of Operation	9/30/2028

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The Census Bureau sought and was granted approval to not display the OMB expiration date on the paper questionnaires and materials associated with this information collection. Since the Census Bureau plans to use the same questionnaires and materials for the duration of this decade’s Special Census Program and print them in bulk, we requested to not display the OMB expiration date on the printed questionnaires and materials. This is to prevent wastage, allow the Census Bureau to save on printing costs, and avoid unneeded reprinting. The OMB expiration date will appear on the internet self-response instrument and the SC-900, Request for Cost Estimate Form.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”

The agency certifies compliance with 5 CFR 1320.9 and the related provisions of 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3).

Attachments to the Supporting Statement: Please see Attachment A for the Special Census Materials List