

Request to OMB**Department: Commerce****Agency: U.S. Census Bureau****Title: 2026 Operational Test in Support of the 2030 Census****OMB Control Number: 0607-0936****Expiration Date: 06/30/2028**

Request: The U.S. Census Bureau is requesting approval to conduct the 2026 Operational Test in Support of the 2030 Census (Test), an American Community Survey test using the American Community Survey Methods Panel Tests framework. The Test is a major test planned to help the Census Bureau prepare for the 2030 Census. The Test is not an end-to-end test of all operational work. Instead, it is a scaled-down version of the selected aspects of the census allowing us to test in real world situations and on a larger scale than research simulations allow.

The total estimated response burden for the Test is 64,417 hours.

Background: The Test will test the viability of new and revamped systems and methods researched and developed for the census; to identify, document, and address potential challenges. Additionally, the Test will evaluate and assess the use of United States Postal Service (USPS) staff to increase efficiency in various capacities typically performed by temporary Census Bureau field workers.

Method: This test will be conducted in two test sites, Spartanburg, SC and Huntsville, AL. Housing units in the test sites will be invited to self-respond to the survey, and if they do not, will be contacted in person during in-field enumeration.

Enhancements to recruiting, selecting, and hiring applicants will focus on evaluating how well improved processes and solutions work. Specifically, the test will evaluate the effectiveness of a new online job application and onboarding solution for recruiting, a virtual hiring process and revised supervisory assessment for selecting and hiring applicants.

Self-Response collects respondent information via the internet for a housing unit (HU). An HU is a private residence for a person or small group of people (such as a family or group of roommates). Each HU must have a separate entrance that provides direct access to the outdoors or to a common space within a building (such as a hall, lobby, or stairwell) without having to pass through the living quarters of any other people. A living quarter (LQ) is typically a structure that is intended for residential use. However, any structure or place where someone is living (or where someone is sleeping without having a usual home elsewhere) is also considered a LQ, even if it is not intended for residential use.

Internet Self-Response (ISR) allows the public to respond online. ISR was available for HUs for the first time in a decennial census in the 2020 Census, and nearly 80 percent of all self-responses were collected via the ISR instrument. For the Test, ISR will be available in English.

In-field Enumeration (IFE) is a field activity that collects responses in person. IFE captures the status of HUs and enumerates HUs through in-person interviews. IFE also includes follow-up with nonmailable addresses. For the Test, IFE will be collecting information to create cost and staffing estimates to help inform 2030 Census IFE estimates. Additionally, the Test IFE will implement numerous enhancements to streamline data collection, reduce time in the field, and improve data accuracy. These capabilities (on a mobile device) include functionality that provide field staff an address list with a map, allows users to add and delete addresses, view surrounding addresses, and flag addresses as duplicates.

Analysis Metrics: A variety of metrics will be used to assess the Test. These metrics may include self-response rates, missing data rates, comparisons to benchmarks and administrative data, and productivity rates.

Sample: The Test will be conducted in two test sites, Spartanburg, SC and Huntsville, AL, totaling roughly 155,000 housing unit addresses. Group quarters facilities are out of scope for the test.

Timeline: The test will be conducted between April and September 2026.

Use of Incentives: None.

Burden: This field test will require a total sample of 154,600 housing units. Self-responding housing units have an average burden of 40 minutes for the interview. Approximately 77,300 of these housing units will require an in-field follow-up interview, which has an estimated burden of 10 minutes. The response burden for the Test is 51,533 hours for the self-responding housing units and 12,883 hours for the in-field follow-up interview, for a total of 64,417 hours.

Contact Information:

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