2020 Census Stories & Likely Issues

Covering the 2020 Census
The 2020 census has stories that are new...

Supreme Court To Decide Whether 2020 Census Will Include Citizenship Question

February 15, 2019 - 1:33 PM ET

By HANCOCK WANG

2020 census will include questions about same-sex marriage for the first time

By Herb Scribner @HerbScribner
Published: April 12, 2018 2:44 pm

The 2020 census is going high-tech and online

By Kai Ryssdal
February 14, 2019 | 5:29 PM

Every 10 years, the U.S. government counts every living person in the country. The 2020 head count will be the first U.S. census conducted mostly online. "For more
...And some news from 2010 is still relevant
Putting it all together

• Story ideas from the census timetable
• 2020 census likely new issues
• Sources for census data and expertise
Story ideas from census operations
At every step of the census timetable is a story. At least three, in fact.

• 1. Describe the census operation, and the role it plays in a successful count.
• 2. Interview people and data sources about the metrics of success.
• 3. How does this part of the census speak to a broader story about a community, a state, or the nation?
Census operation: Address list

Our prior work has shown that developing an accurate address list is challenging—in part because people can reside in unconventional dwellings, such as converted garages, basements, and other forms of hidden housing. For example, as shown in figure 1, what appears to be a single-family house could contain an apartment, as suggested by its two doorbells.

Figure 1: Determining an Accurate Address List Includes Identifying Whether a Dwelling Is Single or Multi-unit Housing

Two doorbells could indicate two housing units

Source: GAO | GAO-18-414
Ideas for address list stories

• Compiling a complete and accurate address list is vital for counting everybody because they are tallied where they live. Innovations for 2020 include aerial imagery, etc.

• Metrics: Though the address list is confidential under federal law, local officials have input (via LUCA, Local Update of Census Addresses); ask them about their procedure and results. Check with agencies monitoring the census (GAO, OIG) for their reports.

• The bigger picture: In growing areas, it’s a challenge to keep up with new mailboxes. But in other communities, doubling-up and irregular housing are obstacles. Either one is an interesting story.
Census operation: Outreach to reduce undercount of hard-to-count groups
Recap: Census misses some groups more than others ("differential" undercount)

- Racial and ethnic minorities, but non-Hispanic whites are overcounted
- Renters compared with homeowners (lower incomes play a role)
- Young children (newborns through age 4)
Story ideas about 2020 census outreach

• Hard-to-count outreach plays a role in one-third of 2020 census operations, according to GAO. So it’s part of stories about advertising, community partnerships and language assistance, for example.

• Metrics: Is the government achieving partnership specialist hiring goals in a tight labor market? Are local community groups signing on? How does your state/local hard-to-count population compare with the nation’s?

• The bigger picture: Zoom in on any group in the hard-to-count population to enrich your coverage. And...
...more about hard-to-count outreach

• Some hard-to-count groups, such as Asian Americans, Latinos and immigrants, are growing more rapidly than the U.S. population overall. Explore these communities, and why they might be left out.

• Is there an active “complete count” committee in your state or community, to encourage census participation? Members often come from hard-to-count groups and have something to say. If there is no committee, why not?

• A million young children were left off the census in 2010, some because they live in “complex” households, which are growing in number. Take a look at how U.S. or local households are changing.
A growing share of young children - 40% or more – live in complex households
Operational questions to reduce the undercount of young children and others

1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2020?
   Number of people =

2. Were there any additional people staying here on April 1, 2020 that you did not include in Question 1?
   Mark X: all that apply:
   - Children, related or unrelated, such as newborn babies, grandchildren, or foster children
   - Relatives, such as adult children, cousins, or in-laws
   - Nonrelatives, such as roommates or live-in babysitters
   - People staying here temporarily
   - No additional people

3. What is Person 1’s name? Print name below:
   First Name
   Last Name(s)

4. Does this person usually live or stay somewhere else?
   Mark X: all that apply:
   - Yes, for college
   - Yes, for a military assignment
   - Yes, for a job or business
   - Yes, in a nursing home
Census operation: Partnership program

Measuring America: People, Places, and the Economy
Partner with the U.S. Census Bureau to help America work better through data

#Poynter2020Census
Census operation: Mail-out and response
How did your area do in 2010?

2010 Census Participation Rates

2010

These are the 2010 Census Participation Rates, defined as the percentage of questionnaires mailed back by households that received them. The rates exclude households whose forms were returned by the U.S. Postal Service as 'undeliverable.' For households that did not receive or mail back a questionnaire in 2010, the Census Bureau followed up in person to obtain their data and make sure everyone was counted.

There are no data for those areas of the country that were enumerated by the Update Enumerate methodology in 2010. The Census Bureau used the Update Enumerate operation enumeration approach for about 1 percent of all addresses in the nation. This methodology was used in communities where housing units do not have traditional mailing addresses (for example, no house number or street name), and the geography is very remote or rural. This included places like resort areas with high concentrations of seasonally vacant housing units, selected American Indian reservations, and communities (such as colonias) along the Mexican-American border. For these areas, enumerators updated and verified the
Census operation: Special populations

• Group quarters

• Homeless population (on the street or where they receive services)

• Transitory locations (e.g., RV parks, marinas, hotels)

• Military
Census operation: Nonresponse follow-up
Stories: Following up with nonresponders

• Nonresponse follow-up is the most costly part of the census. It is less expensive, and results are more accurate, if people respond on their own. In 2020, census-takers plan to use administrative records (mainly of vacant homes) to save money by identifying homes where they don’t need to knock on the door.

• Metrics: The Census Bureau will publish % of households that return forms, hinting at the size of the follow-up caseload. Also: Is the bureau meeting goals for hiring a large temporary workforce?

• The bigger picture: Americans increasingly are reluctant to answer any survey. Why, especially among hard-to-count groups?
Likely 2020 census issues
Likely issues for the 2020 census include...

- The citizenship question
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Race and ethnicity
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Rules on where people are counted, including prisoners

#Poynter2020Census
Citizenship question

• Limited research on willingness of people to answer and accuracy of their responses. The Census Bureau will test the question this summer (with intention of guiding its outreach)

• Political implications beyond the obvious: Will officials want to use the data to redistrict within states using only the citizen population?

• Court cases are bringing out more information about the 2020 census planning process as documents are released in lawsuits

• Supreme Court decision expected by summer

• If the question stays, what messages will you hear?
Privacy

• “Why is the Census Bureau asking me these questions?” You as journalists can answer that.

• “I only have to tell you how many people live here. That’s all the Constitution requires.”

• Related: Some questions have been dropped from the American Community Survey (the household survey that asks more detailed questions than the census), and more may be.
Confidentiality

• Some people have always been concerned their answers will not be confidential, despite federal law imposing penalties for disclosure.

• In 2020, most people will be asked to respond online, raising public concern about hacking (and rural areas without broadband)

• Census Bureau will use more internet-connected devices and automation

• Census Bureau exploring new techniques to blur individual data when files are released – and some researchers are unhappy about what they see as too many restrictions on information
Hispanic origin and race

Hispanic origin and race will be two separate questions, despite a proposal to combine them.

White and black respondents will be asked for their origins for the first time.

No MENA (Middle East/North Africa) checkbox

The word “Negro” has been deleted.
Sexual orientation & gender identity (SOGI)

Census will use “same-sex” language for the first time, to reduce overcount of same-sex marriages

However, other changes sought by advocates and researchers didn’t happen

- Keep in mind: Same-sex spouses and partners are not the entire population of this group
- Some government agencies wanted SOGI questions on the census, but changed their minds
- There is interesting research on how to ask about this topic
Residence rules – which define where people are counted – can be controversial

• Example: Where to count prisoners? At their home address, or where they are incarcerated?

• Under census rules, the prison or jail is their “usual residence,” so that is where they are counted

• In some states with large rural prisons, that outcome affects political representation and funding

• The Census Bureau says it’s impractical to count prisoners at their home addresses, but is providing additional data to states that want flexibility in drawing political boundaries within states
Other residence rules of interest

• College students living in dorms will be counted there because that is their “usual residence”

• Deployed troops will be counted in 2020 at their home bases, not overseas, a change from the past

• However, church missionaries serving abroad are not counted in the census, an issue resolved by the Supreme Court

• The 2020 census also won’t count other Americans who do not live in the U.S., except those in the federal or military workforce
Quick quiz: On April 1, 2020, where would you count...

• A soldier based at Fort Bragg, N.C., who is deployed in Afghanistan
• A Central American immigrant being held in detention in Texas
• Someone who lives in Virginia and is on a month-long business trip to Oklahoma
Census news & sources
Census news and sources

• Sign up for Census Bureau news updates, of course
• The Census Project (https://thecensusproject.org/) is a coalition of “private, public, nonprofit and academic sectors”
• Government Accountability Office (Congress): https://www.gao.gov/ (you can search for reports by topic or agency)
• Commerce Department Office of Inspector General: https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/default.aspx
State complete count actions (NCSL)

Click on a state to see legislation detail.

#Poynter2020Census
More Census sources

• Census Bureau National Advisory Committee (general advice, meetings webcast and archived): https://www.census.gov/about/cac/nac.html

• Also Census Scientific Advisory Committee (more technical): https://www.census.gov/about/cac/sac.html

• Congressional Research Service: https://crsreports.congress.gov/

• State Data Centers (official liaisons with Census Bureau): Quality varies but some have state demographers with expertise: https://www.census.gov/about/partners/sdc/member-network.html

• Think tanks (Pew Research Center has a U.S. census topic page)
Specialized sources (some advocacy)

- Brennan Center for Justice posts documents from census litigation (even lawsuits it doesn’t agree with): https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/2020-census

- “Counting for Dollars” (Professor Andrew Reamer tracks census-guided federal funding for the nation and states): https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds

- State news on counting prisoners via the advocacy group Prison Policy Project https://www.prisonpolicy.org/
Basic data & the Census Bureau website
A brief tour of the Census Bureau website

Click on Surveys/Programs at the top of the home page to access 2020 Census information.
2020 census page has news and background

On the left rail, you’ll find...
• “About” has basic information
• “Resources” has more details
• “Research and testing”
• “Library” has photos, videos, background documents
• “News”

Scroll down for updates, graphics, etc
Dive deeper into census operations, Type of Enumeration Area or undercount of children
Click on “Information for...media” on homepage to see Newsroom

Newsroom

The latest news releases and statements from the U.S. Census Bureau. Also, find upcoming events, and useful information for media.

Read More

- U.S. Census Bureau Profile America
- C-SPAN’s America by the Numbers
- Our Leadership
- Embargoed Releases
- En Español
- Economic Indicators

- Events/Release Schedule
- Subscription Requests
- Videos
- Social Media/Blogs

#Poynter2020Census
Other Census Bureau website hints

• **Explore by topic** on the homepage gives you an A-Z index (helpful if you have no idea what you are looking for)

• To find a Census Bureau **staff member’s email/phone**, look under About Us for “Staff directory”

• Under About Us, the history section has **historic photos** that – like other bureau photos – are free to use in news and public information products (but not for commercial use)
Census Bureau data products include

• Decennial census – the basics, but very detailed
• American Community Survey – Household survey with detailed questions about people and housing – topics include births, marriages, commuting, employment, housing costs, immigrants, who moved, military service, income
• Annual population estimates for states, cities, counties, metro areas and population groups (race, Hispanic origin, age, sex)
• Bureau also offers data visualizations
• Quick Facts if you just need one number
QuickFacts: Available for states & counties, as well as towns with at least 5,000 people

Census.gov/quickfacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Topics</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population estimates, July 1, 2018, (V2018)</td>
<td>327,167,424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PEOPLE

#### Population

- Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2018, (V2018): 6.0%
- Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2017, (V2017): 5.5%
- Population, Census, April 1, 2010: 308,745,038

#### Age and Sex

- Persons under 5 years, percent: 6.1%
- Persons under 18 years, percent: 22.6%
- Persons 65 years and over, percent: 15.6%
- Female persons, percent: 49.8%

#### Race and Hispanic Origin

- White alone, percent: 36.6%
- Black or African American alone, percent: 13.4%
- American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent: 0.6%
- Asian alone, percent: 5.8%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent: 0.2%
- Two or More Races, percent: 2.7%
- Hispanic or Latino, percent: 18.1%

#Poynter2020Census
Link is on the census.gov homepage

Access Local Data
Learn about your community, county, state and the U.S. It’s fast, easy and shareable.

#Poynter2020Census
American FactFinder has been the chief Census Bureau data portal, but it’s ending
New Census Bureau data portal – still in progress – is data.census.gov

Explore Census Data

The Census Bureau is the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy.

I'm looking for ...

Advanced Search
Maps are a tool for visualizing hard-to-count
HTC 2020
https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/

Tract 0077.13 in Palm Beach County, FL

Census Self-Response
In 2010, only 59.2% of the tract's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to count the remaining 40.8%. This tract is one of the hardest to count in the country.

Internet Access at Home
In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire).
Explore data for internet access, risk of being undercounted and more...
Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM)
https://www.census.gov/roam
Taking it home
What's new for the 2020 Census

Far fewer paper forms. The Internet and mobile phones are in. Here’s what you can expect.

By Ted Mellnik and Reuben Fischer-Baum  April 2, 2019

Every 10 years, the U.S. government counts every person living in the country. The nation's founders mandated the decennial census in the Constitution.
What You Need To Know About The 2020 Census

March 31, 2019 · 9:05 PM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

HANSI LO WANG
Looking ahead…

• **Story list** with census operation news pegs
• You’ll now be the newsroom **census expert**!
• Engage your **graphics team** in explaining the census
• Social media – especially **Twitter** – for news tips and story sharing
• What **other ideas** do you have?

#Poynter2020Census
Thank you...Stay in touch!

• D’Vera Cohn
  @allthingscensus

dcohn@pewresearch.org