



Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-779T](#), testimony before the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The decennial census is a Constitutionally-mandated activity that produces data used to apportion congressional seats, redraw congressional districts, and allocate billions of dollars in federal assistance. The Census Bureau (Bureau) estimates the 2010 Census will cost \$11.3 billion, making it the most expensive in the nation's history. This testimony discusses the Bureau's progress in preparing for the 2010 Census to (1) implement operations to increase the response rate and control costs; (2) use technology to increase productivity; (3) hire and train temporary staff; and (4) plan an accurate census in areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The testimony is based on previously issued GAO reports and work nearing completion in which GAO observed recruiting, hiring, and training practices in the 2006 test, and visited localities that participated in the Local Update of Addresses Dress Rehearsal as well in the Gulf Coast region.

What GAO Recommends

At this time, GAO is not making new recommendations, but past reports recommended steps for the Bureau to enhance the mobile computing devices and promote an accurate census in areas impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Bureau generally agreed with these recommendations and has acted to implement some of them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-779T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mathew J. Scire at (202) 512-6806 or sciremj@gao.gov.

2010 CENSUS

Design Shows Progress, but Managing Technology Acquisitions, Temporary Field Staff, and Gulf Region Enumeration Require Attention

What GAO Found

The Bureau has made progress towards implementing a re-engineered census design that holds promise for increasing the response rate, thereby controlling the cost of the census while promoting accurate results. The re-engineered design includes a short form only census designed to increase the response rate by about 1 percent and a targeted second mailing, which is expected to increase response by between 7 to 10 percent. Both of these initiatives are new, have been tested, and will be a part of the 2010 Census design. According to Bureau officials, a 1 percent increase in the response rate can save \$75 million, making these initiatives critical to the new design.

Uncertainty surrounds a keystone to the reengineered census, the mobile computing device (MCD). The MCD allows the Bureau to automate operations and eliminate the need to print millions of paper questionnaires and maps used by census workers to conduct census operations and to assist in managing payroll. The MCD, tested in the 2004 and 2006 census tests, was found to be unreliable. While a contractor has developed a new version of the MCD, the device will not be field tested until next month, leaving little time to correct problems that might emerge during the 2008 Dress Rehearsal.

Timeline of Selected Key Decennial Events

Dates	Decennial activity
Jan. 2007–Jan. 2010	Local Update of Census Addresses (localities assist in updating address lists and maps)
Feb. 2006–Jan. 2009	2008 Dress Rehearsal (Bureau's rehearsal of all planned decennial operations)
Jan. 2008	Opening of 12 Regional Census Centers
Oct. 2008	Opening of about 455 Local Census Offices
Apr.–Sept. 2009	Address Listing Activities (staff validate address lists and maps)
Apr. 1, 2010	Census Day
Apr.–July 2010	Nonresponse Follow-up (field staff follow-up in person at housing units of nonresponding persons)
Dec. 31, 2010	Delivery of apportionment counts to the President
Mar. 31, 2011	Complete delivery of redistricting data to the states

Source: GAO summary of Census Bureau data.

The Bureau faces challenges in recruiting, hiring, and training an estimated 600,000 temporary employees. For example, opportunities exist for the Bureau to hone its recruiting efforts to identify individuals who would be more likely to be effective at census work and willing to work throughout an operation. Also, census workers indicated a need for additional training on reluctant respondents as well as location-specific challenges they encounter. The Bureau must also be prepared to accurately count the population affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Bureau has contacted local officials in the Gulf Area and is developing a plan that includes workshops and special staffing considerations.