

Remarks on Proposed 2020 Census Data  
Products Plan for NAC

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# Intro & Overview

- Thanks to Jason & Cynthia & Census for sharing ongoing problem solving with the NAC and soliciting our input early in the process
- I will try to briefly do three things:
  - Share my understanding of some of the issues raised
  - Pose some questions for clarification
  - Invite the input of my NAC colleagues

- As a researcher, I understand the tension between gathering data to address important questions and the need to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the persons interviewed
- As members of the NAC this is a tension we are familiar with.
  - We are interested in insuring that we have the best and most complete information possible on the “hard to count” groups covered by the census, including groups that are often quite small and among the most vulnerable and marginalized.
  - At the same time, we want to protect the safety and integrity of these population groups and their individual members from any threats and dangers.

- The proliferation of data and the increased capacity to process large quantities of data presents new dangers regarding the ability to identify and disclose the identity of persons and households interviewed.
- On the other hand, a major goal of the Census bureau is to provide and disseminate the vital information it collects on and to all members of U.S. society.
- What we are being presented with is a series of dilemmas regarding the dissemination of data from the 2020 census and how to do so in a way that prevents disclosure of the individuals who provide it.

# Questions/clarifications:

- I'm trying to understand the issues related to moving between the household and individual data. Why does this pose such problems?
  - This comes up on several slides. Since census data is collected at the level of the household, why is this a problem?
- Given the tension between detail on specificity of (smaller) groups, group size, and finer-grained geographic areas, please explain the trade offs between reporting at the census tract level vs. larger units such as “minor civil divisions” and largest places?
  - What are the relative sizes of these units?
  - Why is not possible to provide more detailed counts of smaller national origin groups and Alaskan Native/Native American tribes at these higher levels?

# Final remarks & invitation to rest of NAC

- While I am not a frequent direct consumer of Census data & reports, I benefit quite directly from the use of these data by colleagues. The decennial census data is a major resource for calibrating and contextualizing the data from smaller surveys. E.g.,
  - Sampling for surveys is dependent on detailed census data
  - Weighting of data from all probability surveys depends on census data
  - Having counts of specific hard to count populations is essential
- Many of us on the NAC represent constituencies directly affected by tabulations and data.
  - This is our chance to communicate our specific needs and questions.
  - What are your specific needs and concerns?
- Thanks again to Census for inviting our input at this early stage!