

# Administrative Records Use

**Discussant Comments**

**John Czajka – CSAC Member**

September 17, 2020

Shape  
your future  
START HERE >

United States<sup>®</sup>  
**Census**  
**2020**

# At last!

**Potential administrative records use in the decennial census has been discussed for decades, dating back to proposals to conduct an administrative records census**

**Only minor uses prior to 2020**

**NRFU use in 2020 capitalizes on the data captured in tax returns—primarily**

**While tax data have a number of limitations . . .**

**These are addressed by restricting the scope of the application**

**The Census Bureau's application confronted and dealt with an unexpected limitation for 2020—a filing and processing delay induced by a pandemic**

# An atypical filing season

**Fewer returns filed and a smaller than usual fraction of these returns processed by key dates in the original NRFU schedule**

**By May 1, 11% fewer returns received and 16% fewer processed than in 2019**

**Return count boosted by typical non-filers who filed to obtain economic impact payments**

**A mixed blessing, as such returns would not have been included in prior modeling**

**Not until July 10 had the IRS processed as many returns as the end of April 2019**

**In another week, with a processing surge, the IRS caught up to its 2019 processed returns**

**This coincided with the soft start of NRFU**

# Adapting to changing circumstances

**Successive updates to its tax return database and modified rosters enabled the AR occupied, vacant, and delete modeling to “catch up” by the time NRFU actually started**

**9.1 million AR occupied through August**

**9.1 million AR vacant through August**

**3.4 million AR delete through August**

**Extension of AR modeling to close-out operations (cases unresolved after maximum visits) yielded an additional 1.6 million AR occupied and 1.1 million AR vacant or delete**

**Addition of American Indian Reservation modeling supported by prior evidence—expanding AR use to reduce potential undercoverage**

# Counting students in the right place

The “right place” this year is where they should have been but weren’t—on a much bigger scale than in prior censuses

Census Bureau messaging was prominent and to the point

The Census Bureau elected to obtain information on off-campus students directly from schools (as done for on-campus students)

1,300 schools selected after screening on relevant characteristics of student population

600 responded with information the Bureau is determining how best to use

Weak area for tax returns

If students file, they may use their home address

If parents claim them as dependents, they are likewise associated with their home address

If they have at-school employment, perhaps their W-2s show a school address

# Recommendations

**A thorough assessment is a critical follow-up and should include:**

**Estimated cost savings—potential visits saved**

**Estimated accuracy**

**For the set of addresses where prospective AR households were replaced by late self-response, can counts and composition be compared? (Are there enough of these?)**

**For self-responding addresses that, if NRFU, would have qualified as AR Occupied**

**Model stability over 10 years**

**Re-estimate the predictive models on 2020 data to assess model stability; are 10-year old data good enough?**

**How can the roster building and predictive modeling be improved?**