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2020 CENSUS PROGRAM MEMORANDUM SERIES: 2017.06

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

From: Lisa M. Blumerman (**signed January 9, 2017**)
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Subject: Release of Alternative Futures for the Conduct of the 2030 Census Report

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This memorandum releases the final version of the Alternative Futures for the Conduct of the 2030 Census Report. The views, opinions, and/or findings contained in this report are those of the MITRE Corporation and the JASON group and should not be construed as an official government position, policy, or decision, unless designated by other documentation.

The JASON group is a cooperative effort between the Department of Defense (DoD) and a select group of private sector individuals. JASON representatives span academia, senior scientists, engineers, and technical experts. Members are brought together on a short-term basis to provide high-level technical and analytical subject matter expertise via directed studies and reports which are delivered to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering OASD(R&E) and other Government agency sponsors. The JASON group's collective expertise enhances the formulation of DoD's understanding of the impact scientific research can have on national security.

Every ten years the Census Bureau faces intense pressure to efficiently and effectively conduct an accurate and precise decennial census. The magnitude of a decennial census is such that it requires planning and development to begin at least 8-10 years ahead. At the same time social, economic, demographic, political, environmental, and technological factors change often significantly in the intervening ten-year period. These changes lead to significant differences in how the public perceives trust in government and the use of private information by the government, the public availability of personal data and how these data may be used by others, privacy vs. security, and the advancement and acceptance of technology. One example of how these changes can be manifested is that in the most recent decennial censuses the public response rate has declined from nearly 80% to the mid-60% range resulting in huge increases to the non-response follow-up efforts and costs. This trend is also seen across Census' current surveys, such as the American Community Survey (ACS), that have similarly led to

higher costs. For proper and effective planning of the 2030 decennial census to begin, the Bureau requires a meaningful understanding of the underlying dynamics affecting the country in specific ways that in turn could influence the conduct of the decennial census in 2030.

The research question before the JASON group was:

What are the possible alternative futures that could affect the conduct of the 2030 decennial census?

Many factors can affect that development of a cost effective, accurate decennial population count.

Examples of factors to consider may include:

- social, economic and demographic shifts,
- political and environmental changes,
- technology advancement and acceptance,
- privacy vs. security,
- the public availability of personal data and how these data may be leveraged, and
- acceptance of the use of private information by the government

The JASON group had a broad scope to evaluate the potential trends and factors that would shape distinctly different possible futures. Outputs could include an appropriate number of alternative futures that might range from the conservative to the more unlikely. And based on those proposed futures, identifying

- 1) leading indicators to watch – those that would tip or shape the futures
- 2) factors that Census can monitor, manage and plan for now, and
- 3) key factors/approaches/concepts for testing in 2020.

This study could constitute a starting point from which the Census Bureau can begin to develop a 2030 strategy.

This report is being issued in the 2020 Census Memorandum Series in accordance with efforts to inform stakeholders of important actions related to the decennial census program, as outlined below.

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series documents significant decisions, actions, and accomplishments of the 2020 Census Program for the purpose of informing stakeholders, coordinating interdivisional efforts, and documenting important historical changes.

A memorandum generally will be added to this series for any decision or documentation that meets the following criteria:

1. A major program level decision that will affect the overall design or have significant effect on 2020 Census operations or systems.
2. A major policy decision or change that will affect the overall design or significantly impact 2020 Census operations or systems.

3. A report that documents the research and testing for 2020 Census operations or systems.

Visit 2020 Census on [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov) to access the Memorandum Series, the 2020 Operational Plan, and other information about preparations for the 2020 Census.