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2020 CENSUS PROGRAM MEMORANDUM SERIES: 2017.09

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

From: Lisa M. Blumerman (**signed March 28, 2017**)
Associate Director, Decennial Census Programs

Subject: Submission of *Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and ACS*

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This memorandum officially documents the U.S. Census Bureau's submission to Congress of the *Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS)*.

Overview

Three years prior to every decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau provides the subjects planned for the decennial census program to Congress in accordance with Section 141(f) (1) of Title 13, United States Code (U.S.C.).

The 2020 Decennial Census program, comprised of the 2020 Census and the ACS, will provide an official count through a "short form only" census as well as a portrait of communities across the nation through data collected by the ACS. As stipulated in Title 13, U.S.C., the 2020 Census also will include three U.S. territories (the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and American Samoa. Historically, the Census Bureau has developed and submitted a separate letter to clarify which of the decennial census subjects will be proposed for the island areas. For the 2020 Census submission, we have decided to continue this approach.

The *Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and American Community Survey* handbook, available at <https://www.census.gov/2020Subjects>, explains the data produced from the proposed subjects and how the data benefit communities and federal agencies, explains the relationship between each subject proposed for the 2020 Census and ACS, and the data produced, how federal agencies use the resulting data, and the benefits of the data at the community level.

Background

The submission of these subjects to Congress is a documentation milestone following a long and robust content development and review process. Throughout each decade, regular content reviews are conducted to ensure that all of the information collected through the decennial census program is required by federal programs. Beginning after the 1990 Census, the Office of Management and Budget in conjunction with the Census Bureau, asked federal agencies to provide information describing their data needs. This information, updated each decade by subsequent changes to federal legislative requirements, is used to evaluate content considered for the decennial census program.

In 2011, after the release of its first set of ACS estimates for every area of the United States, the Census Bureau embarked on a comprehensive assessment of the ACS program. In 2012, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Census Bureau chartered the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) Subcommittee on the ACS to “provide advice to the Director of the Census Bureau and the Chief Statistician at OMB on how the ACS can best fulfill its role in the portfolio of Federal household surveys and provide the most useful information with the least amount of burden.” The formation of the ICSP Subcommittee on the ACS and the assessment of the ACS program provided an opportunity to examine and confirm the value of each question on the ACS, and confirm and update the statutory and regulatory authority for the questions on the ACS with federal agencies. This was accomplished through the ACS Content Review, which evaluated each ACS question against 19 decision criteria including the nature of federal uses, geographic level of uses, and respondent sensitivity.

In 2016, using the ACS Content Review documentation of federal uses as a starting point, the Census Bureau informed federal agencies of the process planned to develop and submit these subjects to Congress, and invited them to provide updated information on their data needs. The final *Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and ACS* incorporates the updates received during summer 2016 into a high-level description of the federal uses of each subject.

Many stakeholders share an interest in the 2020 Census and ACS content, including federal agencies (both statistical and non-statistical), state and local governments, those who will respond to the 2020 Census and ACS, academia, businesses, nonprofit organizations, media, data users, and oversight groups. All interested stakeholders will be able to comment on *Federal Register* notices related to the proposed questions at a later date. For more information about the planned public comment periods, please see 2020 Census Program Memorandum 2016.05: *Planned Development and Submission of Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census Program and Questions Planned for the 2020 Census Program* at http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2016_05.html.

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 Census Operational Plan, and other information about preparations for the 2020 Census.