

CENSUS 2000 AND CENSUS MONITORING BOARD MILESTONES

Introduction

Planning for a census begins long before the actual census day or even census year. Each planning cycle brings about its own set of challenges. Census 2000 was confronted by a persistent undercount of minorities and the poor, a number which had increased in the 1990 census. Additionally, 1990 was the first census since 1940 that had not improved coverage over the previous census. The data revealed that of the 4 million net undercount, 4.4 percent of Blacks, 5 percent of Hispanics, 2.3 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders, and 4.5 percent of American Indians were missed compared to 0.7 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

The 1990 results generated several lawsuits, the formation of committees, research studies and reports on how best to remedy the persistent differential undercount. After due consideration of all the findings presented, Dr. Barbara Bryant, Director of the Census Bureau, along with the majority of the Bureau's Undercount Steering Committee, who had assessed the accuracy of the data, recommended that the 1990 census be statistically adjusted. The decision was, however, overruled on July 15, 1991, by Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher.

In light of the 1990 census controversy, a broad range of stakeholders, including those in scientific professions, the Bureau and Congress agreed that review and modification to the existing methodology was needed. The Decennial Census Improvement Act of 1991 required the Bureau to contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to study ways in which to achieve a more accurate count. Additionally, the Address List Improvement Act, enabled the Census Bureau to form partnerships with state, local, and Tribal governments to develop and update address lists to assist with identifying where people could be found.

Numerous panels and advisory committees were organized including: The Task Force for Planning for the Year 2000 Census and Census-Related Activities for 2000-2009, the NAS Panel to Evaluate Alternative Census Methods, and The Panel on Census Requirements in the Year 2000 and Beyond. By the mid 1990s it was evident that the Bureau and the NAS favored a 2000 census design that included greater reliance on statistical methods. NAS, the General Accounting Office, and the Commerce Department's Office of the Inspector General, along with other stakeholders ultimately recommended that the Bureau incorporate dual system estimation methods to achieve high quality statistical correction.

The following are milestones in the Census 2000 operation and the history of the Census Monitoring Board (CMB).

1997

Congress Addresses Funding for Statistical Adjustment and Establishes the Census Monitoring Board

The Census Bureau unveiled its Census 2000 strategy in February 1996, affirming the recommendations of the various groups and including plans for sampling. However, the plan generated heated congressional debate centered primarily on the issue of sampling. As the debate intensified, it consequently spilled onto the FY 1998 appropriation bills. The discussion broke primarily along partisan lines, with Republicans opposing sampling as a method of increasing the rolls of Democratic voters, and Democrats wanting to ensure that the growing net undercount from previous censuses be eliminated. In November of 1997 Congress reached a compromise with the passage of Public Law 105-119. The law allowed the Census Bureau to design a two-track plan, one track was to include sampling, the other would not, which ultimately affected the 1998 Dress Rehearsal. It authorized Congress to challenge the census plan in court, provided for expedited judicial review of any legal challenges to the use of sampling in the census, setting the stage for the January 1999 Supreme Court decision, and established the Census Monitoring Board as an oversight body to observe and monitor all aspects of the preparation and implementation of the 2000 decennial census.

1998

Census "Dress Rehearsal"

In 1998, the Census Bureau began testing its proposed 2000 plan in three sites: Columbia, South Carolina (mainly rural); Sacramento, California (mainly urban); and Menominee, Wisconsin (an American Indian reservation). The plan included a pre-census promotional campaign before mailing out the forms to households; the non-response follow up; a new program called Sampling for Non-Response Follow-up, and the traditional post-enumeration statistical survey to assess accuracy. This process would apply the results of the non-response follow up to the final ten percent of the non-responder population. The rehearsal took place in as near a census-like environment as possible.

Census Monitoring Board Organizes

In June 1998, the Census Monitoring Board was organized and held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. By statute, the Board was divided evenly along partisan lines, with four members appointed by President Bill Clinton and four by the Republican leaders in Congress:

- ◆ Presidentially-appointed members included Tony Coelho (co-chair), Gilbert F. Casellas, Dr. Everett M. Ehrlich, and Lorraine A. Green; and
- ◆ Congressionally-appointed members included J. Kenneth Blackwell (co-chair), Dr. David M. Murray, A. Mark Neuman, and Joe D. Whitley.

The authorizing statute gave CMB the responsibility for monitoring "all aspects" of Census 2000, including operational planning, implementation, and post-censal analysis. The law mandated that CMB report to Congress at least once every six months on its findings and issue a Final Report by September 1, 2001, before ceasing operations on September 30, 2001.

Congress appropriated \$4 million for the Board for its first year – with the money to be shared equally between CMB-Presidential and CMB-Congressional. Each year thereafter, Congress appropriated

\$3.5 million, also to be shared equally between the two groups. The Board was designed to operate as two Boards within one, each with separate Executive Directors and staff.

At its organizing meeting, the Board agreed that an affirmative vote of at least five members of the Board would be required to issue any report or recommendation in the Board's name.

In July 1998, the Board held its first hearing at Census Headquarters in Suitland, Maryland. Acting Census Bureau Director, James Holmes, testified and provided a detailed briefing on the Bureau's "dual track" preparations for Census 2000. One track was designed to include sampling while the other would not.

1999

Supreme Court Rules on Statistical Sampling

The discussion surrounding the use of sampled data intensified over time. It ultimately came to a head when the Bureau announced their plan to use two forms of statistical sampling in the 2000 Decennial Census in an effort to address the issue of the undercount. Two major lawsuits were filed in opposition, which were eventually incorporated into one, the *Department of Commerce et al. v. United States House of Representatives et al.* The suit challenged the legality and constitutionality of using sampled data for the purposes of reapportionment. The U.S. Supreme Court heard the case and in January, in a narrow 5 to 4 majority, the court ruled that current law prohibited the use of sampling methods in deriving the state population totals used for reapportionment of the House of Representatives. Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated that the 1976 amendments to Title 13 U.S.C. (Census Act) changed the provision in law from one that "permitted" the use of sampling for purposes other than apportionment into one that "required" that sampling be used for such purposes if "feasible."

Following the decision, the Bureau issued a revised Census 2000 plan that included expanded efforts to count the population directly for apportionment data and a smaller post enumeration survey to measure the accuracy of that count. It also requested additional funds (\$1.7 billion) to handle the new operation. The post-enumeration survey, this time called the Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (A.C.E.), was designed to survey 300,000 households over 11,000 blocks or block-clusters around the country.

This, however, did not lessen the debate on the issue. Opponents as well as supporters of sampling disagreed regarding whether the Court's interpretation of the Census Act allowed the use of sampling methods to produce numbers to be used for redistricting.

CMBP Report to Congress

On February 1, the CMBP issued its first report to Congress in which it provided information on the six bipartisan public hearings held and discussed the results of the three dress rehearsals. Some conclusions reached were that no matter how sophisticated and well funded a traditional census might be, it will still result in a substantial undercount of minorities and children, and only a timely Post-Enumeration Survey can substantially reduce the differential undercount. The report also endorsed the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program as a superior method for ensuring local review and urged Congress to extend grants to state and local governments to develop standardized address lists.

CMB Issues its First Joint Report

On April 1, the CMB issued its first joint report to Congress. The Report dealt with field office staffing, complete count committees, partnership specialists, questionnaire assistance centers, the "Be Counted" program, questionnaires and language assistance, and targeting how best to reach the hard-to-enumerate population.

Casellas Replaces Coelho as CMB Co-Chair

In May, Co-Chair Tony Coelho stepped down from the Board and was replaced by CMBP member Gilbert F. Casellas. California Lt. Governor Cruz M. Bustamante is later appointed by President Clinton to fill the fourth slot.

CMBP Report on State and Local Operational Plans

On June 9, the Presidential Members provided Congress with a compilation of responses from state and local officials on the Census Bureau's operational plans for 2000. The information represented strong bipartisan support for a full and accurate census utilizing modern statistical methods to adjust for the undercount.

Second CMB Report Focuses on Advertising Campaign

The CMB's second bipartisan report to Congress, issued October 1, focused on the \$167 million paid advertising campaign and "enthusiastically" endorsed the Bureau's efforts. This marked the first time that such a program had been instituted. The objectives outlined by Young & Rubicam, the agency contracted to conduct the campaign, were:

- ◆ to raise public awareness about Census 2000;
- ◆ to motivate Americans to return their census forms;
- ◆ to create an environment that would facilitate the work of the enumerators during the non-response follow-up phase.

The scope of the campaign was appropriately comprehensive for a decennial census and covered diverse populations.

CMBP Releases Public Attitudes Survey Results

On October 26, CMBP published the results of a national nonpartisan opinion survey measuring public attitudes toward the census and tested the effectiveness of the messages contained in the Census Bureau's advertising campaign. Belden Russonello & Stewart in collaboration with Research/Strategy/Management, conducted a non-partisan survey of 1,885 participants in six separate focus groups and identified reasons for participation as well as those factors that inhibit participation in the census.

2000

CMBP Report Details Potential Effects of Unadjusted Census

On March 9, the CMBP issued the first of its 15 research papers, detailing the effects of an unadjusted census. PricewaterhouseCoopers, a CMBP consultant, conducted a comprehensive analysis of how the undercount could affect the allocation of Federal funds among the states, metropolitan areas and center counties of metropolitan areas. The report "Effect of Census 2000 Undercount on Federal Funding to States and Local Areas, 2002-2012," noted that 26 states and the District of Columbia would lose at least \$9.1 billion in federal funds over the next decade if the 2000 census undercount produced a similar undercount rate as that of the 1990 census.

Census Day

April 1, Census Day, Americans are asked to identify where they lived on this day in the year 2000.

April 19, Dr. Kenneth Prewitt, Director of the Census Bureau, announced that the mailback response rate of 65 percent had exceeded expectations and reversed a trend of declining participation, which started in 1980.

Third CMB Report Focuses on Census Preparations

The CMB issued its third joint report to Congress on April 1, and concluded that the Bureau's preparations for Census 2000 had "generally" proceeded well and included detailed findings from a series of joint field observations.

Census Bureau Issues Report on the Feasibility of Using Adjusted Data

In June, the Census Bureau in addressing the matter of "feasibility" (as raised by the January 1999 Supreme Court decision) issued its report "Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation, Statement on the Feasibility of Using Statistical Methods to Improve the Accuracy of Census 2000." The report concluded that traditional census methodologies would not effectively reduce the differential undercount and that the most effective way to increase accuracy was through the use of scientific sampling applications. It also reported that completion of the A.C.E. was operationally feasible and that it would be possible to produce statistically adjusted data prior to April 1, 2001.

Fourth CMB Report Focuses on Partnership and Promotion

The fourth CMB bipartisan report to Congress was presented on October 1. It detailed oversight visits to 51 Local Census Offices. The report focused on the Bureau's partnership and promotion efforts, especially targeting the hard-to-enumerate; recruitment and staffing; mailback response rates; field operations; update/leave, update/enumerate, and list/enumerate operations; data capture, quality assurance, and coverage improvement programs.

On October 6, the Department of Commerce issued a final rule, which gave the Director of the Census Bureau authority to make the final determination regarding the matter of sampling after receiving the recommendations of the Executive Steering Committee for A.C.E. Policy (ESCAP). It further stipulated that the decision of the Director was not subject to review, reconsideration, or reversal by the Secretary of Commerce. The rule was to become effective on November 6, 2000.

Bureau Announces first Population Count Results

On December 28, the Census Bureau announced that the national population of the United States on April 1, 2000, was 281,421,906, up from 248.7 million in 1990. The 281.4 million figure was based on the raw enumeration and did not include any statistical adjustment based on the A.C.E. State-by-state totals were also released at that time.

2001

Census Director Kenneth Prewitt Departs

In January, following the change in Administration, Dr. Prewitt stepped down as Census Director. William Barron was named Acting Director.

Commerce Secretary Assumes Control Over Census Adjustment Decision

In February, shortly after being sworn in, the new Secretary of Commerce Don Evans announced that he was rescinding the Federal regulation that gave the Census Bureau Director and a committee of senior, nonpartisan careerists the authority to decide whether the raw census count should be adjusted. The Secretary of Commerce was restored as the ultimate decision-maker.

Bureau Announces A.C.E. Results

On March 1, the Bureau released the findings and recommendations of the ESCAP. The committee recommended that unadjusted census data should be released to the states in March for redistricting purposes based on the “apparent inconsistency in population growth over the decade as estimated by the A.C.E. and demographic analysis.” Additionally, the committee determined that the differences could not be resolved given the April 1, 2001, deadline for delivering intra-state population figures for redistricting.

The results of the A.C.E. revealed a significant error rate in the raw census count, although not as great as in 1990. According to A.C.E.:

- The total population of the United States was 284.7 million, as compared to the census figure of 281.4 million.
- 6.4 million persons were missed and 3.1 million were counted twice. In other words, the 2000 raw census count produced a net undercount of 3.3 million persons, or 1.2 percent of the population, and a minimum of 9.5 million total errors, or miscounts.
- The undercount continued to be “differential” in nature. Asians were missed nearly twice as often as whites; African Americans missed nearly three times as often, Hispanics four times as often as whites; Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders over six times as often as whites, and American Indians seven times as often as whites.

The following chart summarizes the national 2000 census results:

Raw count in Census 2000:	281.4 million
A.C.E. count:	284.7 million
Number counted twice:	3.1 million
Number missed:	6.4 million
Net undercount:	3.3 million
Net undercount rate:	1.2 %
Undercount rate by group	
Non-Hispanic whites:	.67 %
Blacks:	2.17 %
Hispanics:	2.85 %
Asians:	.96 %
Native Americans and Alaskans:	4.74 %

On March 6, Secretary Evans, in agreement with the recommendations of the ESCAP and the Acting Director, officially announced that the unadjusted numbers would be released to the states for their use in redistricting.

CMBP Analyses Compares 2000 and 1990 Census Errors

On March 9, the CMBP released the first of a series of informational briefs analyzing census data and reporting on the results obtained by CMBP experts. It dealt with the number of errors and uncertain cases contained in the 2000 Census in comparison to those of the 1990 Census. The Bureau responded by providing information on their assessment of the errors, reporting that the 1990 Census contained 12.9 million gross errors, while Census 2000 contained 9.5 million gross errors.

On March 28, the CMBP produced estimates of the number of people missed in the 2000 Census in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five cities.

CMBP Issues Semi-Annual Report to Congress

In its semi-annual report to Congress, issued on April 1, the CMBP published summaries of nine research projects commissioned to analyze and evaluate the results of the 1990 undercount on the populations most affected. Additionally, it provided in-depth information regarding the net undercount of 3.3 million people; levels of error which included the number of people missed, those counted twice, or in the wrong place, as well as information on non-data defined people and re-instated possible duplications. The report also provided a discussion on demographic analysis as one of the components used by the Bureau to determine the nation's population. Dr. Jeffrey S. Passel, demographer and researcher at the Urban Institute, noted that the discrepancy between the Bureau's estimates of the population were due primarily to incorrect assumptions about the level of legal and illegal immigration between 1990 and 2000. The A.C.E. and preliminary demographic analysis estimates of the total population differed by about 5.2 million persons.

Experts Call for Release of Data

On April 18, CMBP convened a panel of noted census experts to discuss their analysis of Census 2000 data and the factors that led the ESCAP and the Acting Director to recommend against adjustment. In presenting their findings, they explained why they had arrived at a different conclusion from the one reached by the Bureau. Dr. Jeffrey Passel, demographer and researcher, argued that “the inconsistency with DA should not be used as a basis for deciding against adjustment because the current estimate underestimates immigration, particularly Hispanic and undocumented immigration.” On the matter of synthetic error, Dr. Joseph Kadane, Professor of Statistics and Social Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University, wondered “why the Bureau used synthetic error as a reason not to adjust when their materials make a case for just the opposite.” Dr. Stephen Fienberg, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, noted “that balancing error was even less a problem in 2000 than in 1990” and went on to suggest “inconsistencies with the Bureau’s methodology when determining the accuracy of populations below 100,000.” The experts concluded by reiterating a call for the Bureau to release all data for further scientific study and review.

CMBP Study Details County-Level Undercounts

Continuing to meet the need for critical information and in the absence of the necessary data being released by the Bureau, in July, the CMBP provided undercount estimates for the nation’s largest counties, those with populations over 500,000.

CMBP Study Shows Fiscal Impact of Not Adjusting Census Count

On August 7, PricewaterhouseCoopers released a study, sponsored by the CMBP, projecting a loss of federal funding of more than \$4 billion in 31 states and the District of Columbia for the 8 programs studied as a result of the 2000 Census undercount. The majority of the funds lost (\$3.6 billion) would be in 58 of the nation's largest counties. On a per capita basis, the funding loss translated into nearly \$3,000 per uncounted person in these counties. The eight programs were: Medicaid, Foster Care, Social Services Block Grants, Rehabilitation Services, Basic Support, Substance Abuse Prevention, and Treatment Block Grants, Vocational Education Basic Grants, Child Care and Development Block Grants, and Adoption Assistance.

CMBP Issues Final Report

In September, CMBP issued their Final Report. The Board is scheduled to close its doors on September 30, 2001, having made every effort to fulfill its statutory responsibilities.