

# Plain Writing Act Compliance Report Template: 2016

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## Agency: U.S. Census Bureau

**Explain what specific types of agency communications you have released in a format consistent with the plain writing guidelines.**

Type of document or posting and how it is made available to the public	Intended user and approximate number of potential users	What has changed by using Plain Writing	Bureau
<p>Census Bureau Home Page (<a href="http://www.census.gov">www.census.gov</a>)</p>	<p>Intended for all users.</p> <p>To date in 2016 (Jan. through Nov.): 4.8 million page views, during 3.6 million visits, by 2.8 million visitors identifiable as unique for the year. The site has handled, and can handle, much higher traffic. Current levels average 1 million visits per week.</p>	<p>In 2013, the Census Bureau launched a new website with topic-based navigation, which users say they prefer. We drew on years of feedback and testing in designing this theme-based approach. The migration to this format continues through 2016 and is scheduled to complete in FY2017.</p> <p>We continue to improve our search features (In 2015, <a href="#">Smart Search</a> to speed customers to our most popular statistics; in 2016, faceted search to help users intuitively narrow their searches.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>

<p><a href="#">Web Tools</a></p>	<p>Intended for all users. Overall, in 2016 to date, our web data tools on census.gov have been part used in 40 million visits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>QuickFacts</i> has received nearly 10 million user visits to date in 2016.</li> <li>• <i>U.S. World and Population Clock</i> has received nearly 3 million user visits to date in 2016.</li> <li>• Embedded Census web apps on other sites have reported more than half a million views in 2016 to date.</li> </ul>	<p>The Census Bureau has developed or enhanced several popular web tools to simplify the public’s search for our data. In 2015, we significantly enhanced our popular <a href="#">QuickFacts</a>, adding powerful new functions that make it easier for customers to display data in different ways. In 2016, we improved existing tools based on user input. We launched a new tool, <i>My Tribal Area</i>, based on our popular app <i>My Congressional District</i>. We also continue to add new features and functions to <i>Census Business Builder</i>, launched in mid-2015, striving always for plain language clarity based on user feedback.</p> <p>In line with the President’s digital strategy, these tools are all “customer-centric.”</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<p><a href="#">Press releases, media advisories, tip sheets, Facts for Features and other media documents</a> – available online and disseminated through wire service and media mail list.</p>	<p>In 2016 we released 257 and 48 news graphics. Intended for all users; audience varies by topic.</p> <p>News releases, visualizations, and other newsroom content have been part of nearly two million visits in 2016 to date.</p>	<p>The Census Bureau has long used plain writing in press materials. The Public Information Office has long had a senior editor who reviews material for plain language compliance.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>

<p><a href="#">Postings</a> on a number of social media venues</p>	<p>Intended for all users.</p> <p>As of late 2016, the Census Bureau had followers on these platforms:</p> <p>Facebook: 128,700 Twitter: 72,374 LinkedIn: 15,555 YouTube: 3,891 Instagram: 1,392 Pinterest: 1,205</p>	<p>From the first use of social media during the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau has used plain language, since these media help us communicate with a general audience not tuned into traditional or professional media.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
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<p><a href="#">Blogs</a></p>	<p>Intended for all users. Postings on our four blogs numbered as follows:</p> <p><i>Director’s Blog: 28</i> <i>Random Samplings:42</i> <i>Global Reach: 29</i> <i>Research Matters: 43</i></p> <p>Interest varies by topic. Our blogs as a group have been part of 282K visits in 2016 to date.</p>	<p>The Census Bureau has four blogs with varying audiences. Like our other digital tools, the apps are “customer-centric.” Great stress has been placed on using a conversational style.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<p><a href="#">Mobile Apps</a></p>	<p>Intended for all users. More than 190K users have downloaded our apps to date)</p>	<p>The Census Bureau has released three mobile apps designed for the user who accesses information on mobile devices. Like our other digital tools, the apps are “customer-centric.” Great stress has been placed on plain language.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<p><a href="#">Infographics and Data Visualizations</a></p>	<p>Intended for all users.</p> <p>Census.gov infographics and data visualizations have been included in more than 202K visits in 2016 to date.</p>	<p>Our Plain Language Team’s usability and cognitive testing showed that infographics do improve up users’ comprehension and retention of data. The testing helped us isolate needed improvements.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>

<a href="#">Plain Language Web Glossary</a>	<p>Intended for all users, especially anyone who needs to understand our technical terms.</p>	<p>Created by the Plain Language Team as a guide to terminology, with a plain language focus. This application is available on every Census Bureau Web page for easy access.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<a href="#">“Stat of the Day”</a>	<p>Daily statistic. Intended for all users. Nearly a million visitors per year click this teaser on our home page, which usually goes to census.gov content but occasionally features content from other agencies.</p>	<p>Since December 2011, the Census Bureau website has prominently featured a short “Stat of the Day,” that entices readers in a few short sentences to learn more about a data program.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<a href="#">Videos</a>	<p>Intended for all users.</p> <p>Census.gov pages related to, or including embeds of, video content were included in 16K+ visits in 2016 to date. The Census channel on YouTube has nearly 4K subscribers.</p>	<p>Our videos focus on helping the public understand our programs and scripts reflect a strong commitment to plain writing.</p> <p>We use video also to educate our employees about innovations the agency is pursuing; again, they show a strong commitment to plain language. Staff in the videos are encouraged to describe concepts in their own words to keep the message clear.</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>
<a href="#">Profile America Daily Radio Feature</a>	<p>Intended for all users; primary customer base seems to be media groups.</p> <p>Profile America sound files have been downloaded or listened to during half a million visits in 2016 to date.</p>	<p>For 28 years, the Census Bureau has released a series of daily radio features for use by radio program directors across the country. Each <i>Profile America</i> is a 60-second feature using interesting vignettes for that day to highlight information collected by the Census</p>	<p><i>U.S. Census Bureau</i></p>

		Bureau. Great emphasis on conversational style.	
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## **Train staff in plain writing techniques.**

In 2016, the Census Bureau offered employees six writing courses to improve employees' writing skills where the emphasis was on plain writing. These courses trained 118 employees.

Many Census Bureau employees have received extensive training in data visualization and plain language is a key message conveyed in this training. All Census Bureau employees from top management on down have clear communication as a part of their performance plans.

## **Evaluate customer satisfaction after experiencing plain writing communications.**

The Census Bureau uses usability, cognitive testing, and focus groups on an ongoing basis to measure respondent and customer experience. These tests help us understand how respondents interpret questions on our surveys and how easily users navigate our web site. In 2014, the Plain Language Team did extensive usability testing on our *Measuring America* infographics to determine how understandable our words and images are to the public.

We routinely consult our Web user metrics to study how successful users are in searching our site.

Since 2007, we have used an ongoing pop-up survey to measure the customer satisfaction. We conduct more detailed studies of key sites such as the American Community Survey and use the results to improve user access.

We have created a Customer Experience Management system using a blend of metrics from various sources (customer calls, Web metrics, Web satisfaction survey, social media, partnership efforts, etc.) to gain a more rounded understanding of customer experience.