

Operational Considerations for Mailing Materials in Census Experiments

American Association of Public Opinion Research Annual Conference
Virtual | June 11-12, 2020

Jennifer A.L. Hutnick, U.S. Census Bureau

Any views expressed are those of the author and not those of the U.S. Census Bureau.



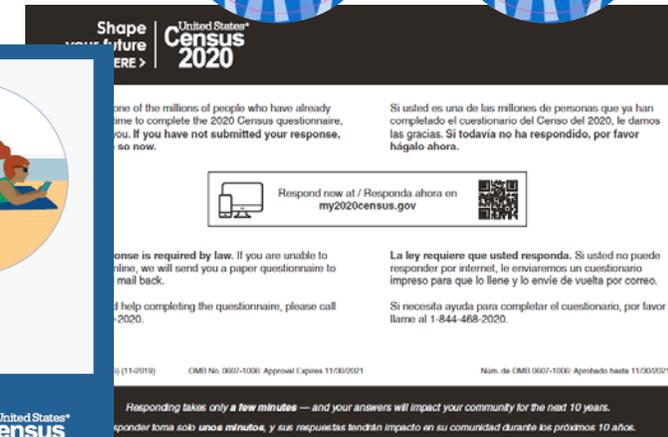
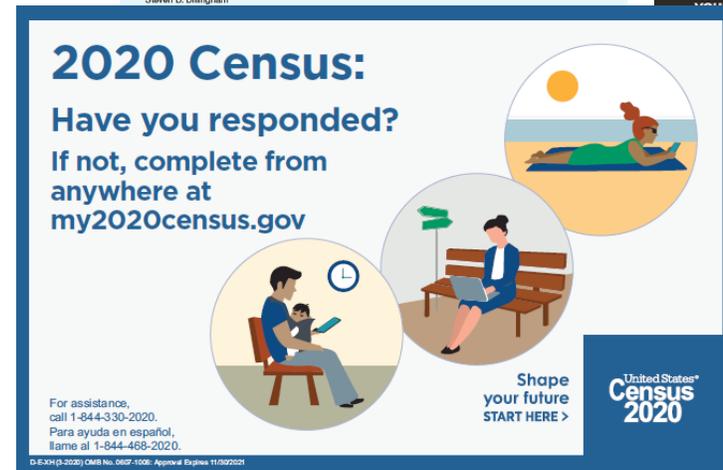
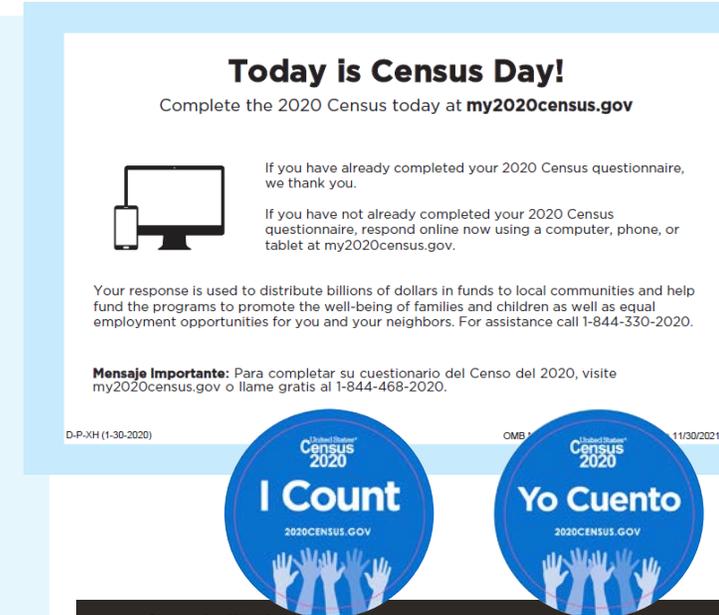
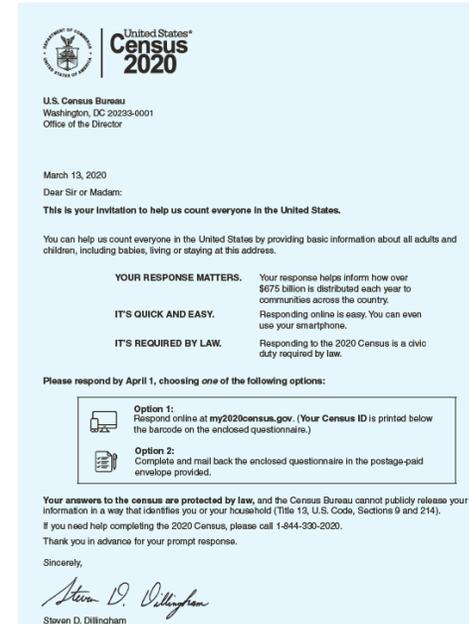
U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Overview

- The households selected for the Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments (CPEX) were mailed letters, questionnaires, and other items to encourage self-response
 - Responses via CPEX materials are the official response to the 2020 Census for the address
- There are four parts to the creation and distribution of these materials:
 - Design and development
 - Testing and review
 - Production
 - Mailing

Design and Development of CPEX Materials

- For some materials, content was unique to the experiment and needed to be developed to facilitate experimental objectives
 - Letters
 - Postcards
 - Sticker
 - Every Door Direct Mailer (EDDM)



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Testing and Review of CPEX Materials

- Cognitive testing
 - Materials examined by individuals recruited in the DC area
 - Research interview conducted by Census Bureau personnel
 - Respondents were asked to assess these materials and their content
 - Respondents were paid for participating
- Internal review
 - Materials examined by parties at the Census Bureau with knowledge of specific documents, processes, and procedures for the 2020 Census and CPEX
- Leadership review
 - Materials examined by 2020 Census and Census Bureau leadership for approvals
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review
 - Materials were part of the 2020 Census OMB package

Production of CPEX Materials

- Original intent was to have all CPEX materials printed, assembled, and mailed by the National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, IN
 - NPC was unable to meet the needs for the original CPEX program due to its complexity and timing
- Anticipated having many different document types
 - 39 letters
 - 9 questionnaires
 - 22 postcards
 - 12 inserts
 - 16 outgoing and return envelopes

Table 1: Mailing Projections for NPC CBDRB-FY20-ACSO003-B0004

	# Versions of Letters	# Versions of Questionnaires	# Versions of Postcards	# Versions of Inserts or Add'l Items	# Versions of Envelopes	Estimated Mailing Sample Size
Shared Control Panels	10	2	6	3	5	83,000
Optimizing Self-Response Panels	11	2	6	6	11	50,000
Extending the Mailing Enviro. Panels	17	2	9	8	9	83,000
Tailored Contact Panels	15	5	10	3	4	132,000
Citizenship Panels	10	4	6	3	5	107,000*
Vacant Crowdsourcing	2	0	2	0	1	778,000
Total	39	9	22	12	16	1,234,000

Source: Estimates provided to NPC for CPEX visit and meetings (February 2019)

Note: Due to disclosure avoidance procedures, values in the table may not add to the total.

*This reflects a tentative sample size. No official sample size was provided to NPC at that time.

Production of CPEX Materials

- To address operational constraints, alterations were made to CPEX printing and mailing plans
 - Reduce scope of CPEX by removing panels or experiments
 - Reduce burden on NPC by moving printing and assembly responsibilities to one or more commercial print vendors
 - Use multiple mailing cohorts to alleviate printing, assembly, and mailing burden

Table 2: Distribution of Printing by Vendor and Document Type, April 2019

CDBRB-FY20-ACSO003-B0004

Vendor	TOTAL		NPC		2020 Census Commercial Printer		Altnerate Commercial Printer	
	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity
Envelopes	17	2,930,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	5	1,450,000	12	1,481,000
Letters	42	2,423,000	20	1,884,000	4	311,000	18	228,000
Questionnaires	10	518,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	*Does not print	*Does not print	10	518,000
Inserts	18	1,101,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	3	752,000	15	349,000
Postcards	25	1,840,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	6	404,000	19	1,437,000
Total	112	8,812,000	20	1,884,000	18	2,916,000	74	4,011,000



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Note: Due to disclosure avoidance procedures, values in the table may not add to the total.

Production of CPEX Materials

- Further refinements were made to the operational plan for printing, mailing, and assembly of CPEX documents
 - Experiments cancelled
 - Changed sample size for remaining experiments
 - Split production of materials between NPC and two commercial print vendors

Table 3: Overview of Printing Requirements, October 2019

CBDRB-FY20-ACSO003-B0004

Document Type	TOTAL		NPC		2020 Census Commercial Printer		Alternate Commercial Printer	
	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity	Number of Unique Documents	Estimated Print Quantity
Envelopes	13	976,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	6	864,000	7	112,000
Letters	23	610,000	10	266,000	4	192,000	9	152,000
Questionnaires	3	314,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	2	259,000	1	54,000
Inserts	7	799,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	3	686,000	4	113,000
Postcards	12	301,000	12	301,000	*Does not print	*Does not print	*Does not print	*Does not print
Total	97	4,899,000	32	833,000	27	3,317,000	39	750,000



U.S. Department of Commerce
 Economics and Statistics Administration
 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Note: Due to disclosure avoidance procedures, values in the table may not add to the total.

Mailing of CPEX Materials

- Production of materials produced by commercial vendors began October 2019
 - Letters, questionnaires, and inserts received at NPC before January 2020
 - Envelopes and assembled packages received at NPC before February 2020
- Production and assembly of materials by NPC began February 2020

Table 4: Mailing of CPEX Materials CBDRB-FY20-ACSO003-B0004

Mailing	NPC Activities Required	Quantity	Description
1	Printing, Assembly, and Mailing	11,500	No Changes, Internet First, English
		40,500	No Changes, Internet First, Bilingual
		12,500	Communications Panel, Internet First, Bilingual
		28,500	Wearable Insert Panel, Internet First, Bilingual
	Assembly and Mailing	12,500	No URL Panel, Bilingual
		12,500	Communications Panel, Internet Choice, Bilingual
		22,500	Wearable Insert Panel, Internet Choice, Bilingual
	Mailing	10,500	No Changes, Internet Choice, English
		39,500	No Changes, Internet Choice, Bilingual
		12,500	2010 Panel, Bilingual
Mailing 1 Total		203,000	
2	Printing, Assembly, and Mailing	11,500	No Changes, Internet First, English
		69,000	No Changes, Internet First, Bilingual
		10,500	No Changes, Internet Choice, English
		62,000	No Changes, Internet Choice, Bilingual
		12,500	Communications Panel, Internet First, Bilingual
		12,500	Communications Panel, Internet Choice, Bilingual
	Mailing	12,500	2010 Panel, Bilingual
		12,500	No URL Panel, Bilingual
Mailing 2 Total		203,000	

Note: Due to disclosure avoidance procedures, values in the table may not add to the total.

Operational Complications – COVID-19

- Production and mailings halted
 - Most panels were not sent reminder postcard intended for mailing 3
 - Impact on planned Every Door Direct Mailers (EDDM)
- Change in mailing strategy
 - Mailing packages for mailings 4 and 5 were sent from the commercial printer that was already sending 2020 materials to the rest of the country
 - Mailing schedule delayed

Table 5: COVID Revised CPEX Mailing Matrix (As of April 2020)					CBDRB-FY20-ACSO003-B0004
	Mailing 1	Mailing 2	Mailing 3	Mailing 4	Mailing 5
Most CPEX Panels					
Most CPEX Panels	190,000	190,000	164,000 [^]	137,000 [^]	126,000 [^]
Mailing Dates	3/12/2020	3/16/2020	N/A	4/25/2020*	5/5/2020*
Materials received by HUs	Experimental	Experimental	N/A	Production	Production
Mailed from:	NPC	NPC	N/A	Commercial	Commercial
2010 Panel					
Mailing Quantities	12,500	12,500	12,500	11,000 [^]	N/A
Mailing Dates	3/6/2020	3/13/2020	3/20/2020	4/25/2020*	N/A
Materials received by HUs	Experimental	Experimental	Experimental	Production	N/A
Mailed from:	NPC	NPC	NPC	Commercial	N/A



U.S. Department of Commerce
 Economics and Statistics Administration
 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Note: Mailing quantities are rounded per disclosure avoidance guidelines

*Expected mailing date
[^]Estimated mailing quantities

Experiments within the 2020 Census Experiments and Evaluation Program Panel Outline

- Overview of Previous Experiments During the Decennial Census
- Overview and Experimental Design of the 2020 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments
- Constructing and Implementing Sampling Procedures in Census Experiments
- Operational Considerations for Mailing Materials in Census Experiments
- Improving Internet response rates for the 2021 Canadian Census of Population

Thank you!

Contact:

Jennifer A.L. Hutnick
jennifer.a.hutnick@census.gov