



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Office of the Director  
Washington, DC 20233-0001

January 13, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Peggy E. Gustafson  
Inspector General

FROM: Steven D. Dillingham  
Director  
U.S. Census Bureau

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven D. Dillingham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "D".

SUBJECT: Reply to Request for Information

Yesterday afternoon, on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, you dispatched and posted on your office website a letter to me requesting information and sharing U.S. Census Bureau staff concerns about their ongoing work. Upon learning of these concerns, I followed best management practices and immediately informed the career Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer that those involved should “stand down” and discontinue their data reviews. Today, I am providing the requested information.

**BACKGROUND:**

On July 11, 2019, the President issued Executive Order 13880, entitled: “Executive Order on Collecting Information about Citizenship Status in Connection with the Decennial Census.” The Order, announced publicly and published in the Federal Register, tasks the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) to instruct the Census Bureau to develop “complete and accurate data on the number of citizens, non-citizens, and illegal aliens in the country.” To do this, additional administrative data from other federal agencies would be collected that may be helpful in estimating populations in the United States. The Census Bureau was tasked by the DOC to undertake this data collection responsibility for statistical purposes and consistent with law, including confidentiality protections.

The Census Bureau has been engaged in collecting and processing the requested administrative data for almost a year and a half. No data has been publicly posted or published. The background of your information request relates to a very recent effort to ascertain whether administrative data now being processed is responsive to the purposes outlined in the Executive Order and meets Census Bureau quality and accuracy requirements for potential public release. On January 12, 2021, the Census Bureau’s career Deputy Director reported that

the latest review indicated problems with the data that would require additional work. The Director informed him that there is no deadline for the data and that he should ensure that staff felt no time pressures in pursuing this work. To date, this effort has provided valuable information on the quality and characteristics of these administrative data.

The Census Bureau's highest priority continues to be the production of a complete and accurate 2020 Census, which involves processing the data collected this past year and identifying and resolving issues. All Census reports will be consistent with the Census Bureau's standards for data quality and integrity.

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

The following answers are provided in response to questions from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), in the order asked:

1. The production of data responsive to the Executive Order has been a topic of ongoing discussion and study for more than a year. A request was made in recent days to resume the data review to determine whether data is available that would be helpful in developing estimates pursuant to the Executive Order. The Director did not direct the production of a technical report. A technical report was suggested by the career Deputy Director as a proper mechanism to compile relevant data and explain its limitations.
2. The Census Bureau's career Deputy Director was asked by the Director to coordinate the resumption of data reviews being performed by career analysts that were selected by the Deputy Director and staff supervisors. Upon a resumption of this work, the career Deputy Director provided brief progress updates to the Director.
3. As decennial data continues to be processed, this was the latest opportunity to determine whether and when available data potentially responsive to the Executive Order might be forthcoming.
4. There is no report or data tabulation deadline. Prior to receiving the OIG letter of concern, the Director informed the career Deputy Director that the matter should be continued in the normal course of business and no one should feel pressured. Upon learning of the OIG letter on the evening of January 12, 2021, the Director immediately informed the career Deputy Director that those involved should "stand down" and discontinue their data reviews.
5. No.

6. Any product must be consistent with the Census Bureau's standards for data quality and integrity. It was clearly communicated by the Director to the Census Bureau's Deputy Director that any potential use of the data would clearly explain all limitations on its use. He agreed with the approach. The Census Bureau will continue to perform reviews of data quality (which this activity involved) and adhere to data integrity standards.
7. No.
8. The reference to "number one priority" referenced by the Director in a short email to the career Deputy Director reflected the short time frame, about a week or so, to ascertain whether basic data tables would soon be available in response to the Executive Order. Earlier, the Director received an estimate that such work might be accomplished in a couple of days.
9. The Census Bureau has many priorities that are critical to the agency and the 2020 Census. Presently, the Census Bureau's highest priority is to successfully complete 2020 Census data processing in order to produce a complete and accurate count for the nation.
10. As we complete the 2020 Census data processing, we make adjustments in work assignments as needed. The Director was informed this effort would not create a void in the ongoing work to process 2020 Census data and identify and correct anomalies, which has been a major priority.
11. The Director was not informed that work by three analysts for a short period this past week would negatively impact work on apportionment data processing which extends over many months and is performed by far more than a hundred staff. The Director has confirmed with the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer and the Associate Director for Decennial Programs that this recent work did not impact the apportionment data processing schedule.