

DOC - US CENSUS BUREAU

**April 30, 2024
2:00 pm EDT**

Coordinator: Welcome, and thank you for standing by. All participants are currently in a listen-only mode. There will be a question-and-answer session at the end of today's presentation. To get in queue to ask a question, you may press Star 1 now. Again, no questions will be taken until the conclusion of today's presentation. The webinar is being recorded. I'd now like to turn this conference over to Michael Cook, who will be hosting us through today's presentation. Michael?

Michael Cook: Good afternoon. And thank you for joining us for today's event where we'll share important updates about our preparation for the 2030 Census. My name is Michael Cook, and I'm the Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications in the Director's Office at the Census Bureau.

Today, we will be talking about an important step in the 2030 Census planning, the 2026 Census Test. We'll discuss how we're testing new and enhanced features and paying special attention to the inclusion of the hard-to-count and historically undercounted populations. Speaking today about the 2026 Census test will be Robert Santos, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau; Deborah Stempowski, Associate Director of Decennial Census Programs; and Jennifer Reichert, Chief of the Decennial Census Management Division.

Immediately following the presentation, we'll take your questions. Please note, if you are watching today's webinar via YouTube, you'll need to dial into the phone line to ask a question. That phone is listed on your screen now. If you already know what you'd like to ask, you can get in line now to ask a question by dialing Star 1. Without further ado, I now turn it over to the Director, Director Santos. Director?

Robert Santos: Thank you very much Michael. And hello, everyone. Thank you all for joining us today. As you know counting everyone and every resident in the United States is an incredibly complex undertaking. That's why it takes over 10 years to prepare for a decennial census. And even then unexpected situations can crop up to challenge the implementation, as we saw with the pandemic in 2020. That's why our operational plans need to be solid and robust. Our plans need a strong foundation that can withstand whatever stresses might arise.

And as I hope that you will see today, our planning and testing is indeed creating a strong foundation to support the enormity of the 2030 Decennial Operation. Now, our planning is necessarily informed by lessons learned, by evaluations of past census operations, by research to test new and enhanced methods, and importantly, by stakeholder input and partnerships.

Today, we'll share our plans for testing strategies to increase overall response and participation as well as for creating efficiencies. Please note that we'll be paying special attention to the inclusion of hard-to-count and historically undercounted populations. After all, counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place means we need to hone in on those who historically have been undercounted.

The 2026 census test represents an important step in our efforts to achieve a complete count. And beyond those test, there'll be additional research, additional testing, and much learning that lie ahead in the coming years. We'll also be continuing our research efforts throughout the decade to build trusted messenger networks across our nation and to listen to your ideas and concerns. And in the spirit of transparency, we'll continue to share preparations with the public as we're doing today. We invite you to come along with us and help write the story of the 2030 Census.

And I do mean our Census. We can't achieve our mission without you, so please continue participating in these webinar updates. Please tune in to our 2030 Census Advisory Committee. Those meetings start later this - in summer. And please subscribe to our Census updates on [census.gov](https://www.census.gov). We need diverse voices and perspectives to make our work the best that it can be. Working together will literally advance our democratic principles by fulfilling the charge bestowed upon us by our wonderful U.S. Constitution. Thank you for listening. And I'll now turn the presentation over to Deborah Stempowski, Associate Director for Decennial Census Programs. Deb?

Deborah Stempowski: Thank you, Director Santos. And thank you all for joining us for today's webinar. We will start off by recapping the 2030 Census Planning Updates that were provided during previous webinars, including the 2030 Census Testing Strategy. This will set the stage for today's main topic, the scope of the 2026 Census Test, which is the first of two major field tests in preparing for the 2030 Census. We will present an overview of the test and then dive into the changes and enhancements that will be tested during the test. Last but not least, we will review the next step for this test.

At the end of today's presentation, we hope to have left you with an understanding of how we are using the 2026 Census test to evaluate the

effectiveness of new and enhanced features of our operations to reach the historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations, people, and households that we have had the most difficulty enumerating. We want you to see and understand that our focus on accurately enumerating historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations and our 2026 Census test research intersect, even if the research does not include the term historically undercounted population.

We also want you to understand how the 2026 Census test, one of our two major field tests, along with small-scale tests throughout the decade, prepare us to conduct an accurate and complete Census. This is the third webinar in our 2030 Census webinar series. Our previous webinars have covered key updates about our preparations for the next Census, such as the public feedback received through the Register - Federal Register Notice, the 2030 Census Timeline, our Census Research Projects, and our Testing Strategy, including the 2026 Census Test.

Our previous webinars are posted on the 2030 Census webpage and will be linked in this presentation. Now, let me quickly recap our Testing Strategy as context for today's announcement about the 2026 Census test scope. Our testing strategy reflects this decade's focus on enhancing the 2020 Census design. This strategy builds on the lessons learned from the 2020 Census and is tailored to the anticipated level of IT and operational risk, as well as the level of modernization that is required for the 2030 Census.

For the 2030 Census, our testing strategy involves two components, ongoing small-scale testing and two major field tests. The ongoing small-scale testing is being conducted throughout the decade to refine the operations and technologies that work successfully for the 2020 Census, as well as to introduce and test additional innovations for the 2030 Census. These small-

scale tests allow us to gather swift, well-defined results, and give us the ability to leverage approaches that do not require major field tests.

Additionally, small-scale tests allow us to identify whether certain innovations require additional field testing. We plan to conduct major tests in 2026 and 2028. These are the tests, the 2026 Census test and the 2028 Dress Rehearsal. This approach will allow us to integrate new and enhanced features and ensure end-to-end operational viability and cohesion.

Now, let's turn our attention to our first major field test. The 2026 Census test provides the opportunity to rely on enhancements proven in the 2026 Census, so that we can refine and focus our efforts on a complete and accurate count of all segments of the population. This test serves as an opportunity to examine new and enhanced processes and methods in the field and in the office that we're looking to implement for the 2030 Census. The Census Bureau has established the scope of the test or specific areas of change that we want to test and developed broad plans for what will be tested.

Our next step is to develop a detailed plan to implement the scope by documenting design elements, requirements, and resources. In a moment, I will hand it over to Jennifer Reichert, Chief of Decennial Census Management Division, to talk about the scope of the test. We will be sharing a lot of information today, but don't worry, the information we share will be made available after the webinar. You'll be able to find resources including a blog and a recording of this webinar on our website with a dedicated webpage to the 2026 Census test as well as on our 2030 Census webpage. Without further ado, I now turn it over to Jennifer Reichert.

Michael Cook: All right, Jennifer. Did you unmute yourself, please?

Jennifer Reichert: Sorry, I thought I hit the button. Apologize. Thank you, Deb. The 2026 Census test will allow us to study changes in several operational areas to ensure the operational viability of new and enhanced processes and methods that are proposed for the 2030 Census. The key changes that will be tested in the operational areas of self-response, in-field enumeration, group quarters enumeration, communication, partnerships, and engagement, cross-operational support and infrastructure, and near real-time response processing.

Now, let me explain what we mean by scope for the test. When identifying the operations that would be in scope, or to say it in another way, operations that would be included for the 2026 Census test, we established clear criteria to help us optimize the design of the test. First, the operation must include improvements or innovations that require an investigation of the operational viability of those changes. In other words, is it possible to conduct these changes?

Second, the operation must be feasible based on available budget, systems, and other resources. In-scope operations represent our key objectives for the 2026 Census test, that is, to ensure that we can and should continue pursuing the key innovations and enhancements coming from our early research efforts. Now, let's look at each of the in-scope operational areas and what we'll be testing in more detail. I will share what change or changes we're implementing for the 2026 Census test.

Important to note, of the six operational areas with elements being tested in the 2026 Census test, four of them include testing of changes designed to enhance enumeration of historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations. First up, we have self-response. Increasing the number of people who take advantage of self-response options, such as responding online or completing a paper questionnaire and mailing it back to the Census Bureau,

can contribute to a less costly census with higher quality results.

During the 2026 Census test, we will focus on innovations designed to make it even easier for people to respond on their own. This includes improvements to the way in which we contact people to encourage them to self-respond and to the online questionnaire itself. For example, we're implementing revisions to our mailed materials that help communicate the importance of responding and provide quick access to the questionnaire response website. Within the online questionnaire, we've redesigned some portions to make it faster and easier to provide the information requested.

We are also testing our ability to send paper questionnaires to respondents upon request, an option that was not available in the 2020 Census. All of the self-response innovations being tested in the 2026 Census test were recommended during the research phase of 2030 Census planning, and aimed to increase the overall self-response rate and participation among historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations.

In order to increase self-response, we are engaging with external communication specialists, partners, and advocates for historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations, studying and monitoring the various ways to communicate and share information, and participating in community events. This will help us identify additional opportunities to reach the public and encourage self-response to the Census. For example, social networking, strategic partnerships, advertising, et cetera.

The next operation I'd like to talk about is In-Field Enumeration. In the past, we have conducted our In-Field Enumerations through a series of independent operations. We're now thinking about the operation in broader, more integrated terms, so we're changing the name to reflect that. The design of the

In-Field Enumeration operation combines three different 2020 Census operations into one consolidated operation for collecting data from housing units. It combines the non-response follow-up operation, or NRFU, that was used to follow up with households that didn't self-respond, with the enumeration function of the Update Leave and Update Enumerate operations, two operations that were used to count people and households in areas that were difficult to reach by mail.

Our ability to integrate these operations rests on a few innovations that we have planned. These innovations relate to how we contact households, how we improve our address list, and how we automate our work in collecting data in-person. For example, one of the enhancements we'll test in 2026 is improving enumerators' ability to make basic changes to the address list using improved limited listing functionality. With this improved functionality, enumerators will be able to review surrounding addresses, link duplicate addresses, and identify addresses that should be added or deleted at the same time as they're contacting households to do interviews.

The In-Field Enumeration operation will also feature additional innovations to improve responses during data collection. As part of the 2026 Census test, we are introducing and testing the concept of in-field self-response. During data collection at the door, respondents will be given the option to provide responses on their own, with an enumerator there to guide them through the questionnaire.

We will pilot two ways of accomplishing this, including A: sharing a quick response, or QR code, with the respondent, so they can complete their response on their own device, either while the enumerator is there or after the visit; and B: allowing the respondent to fill out the questionnaire on the enumerator's device. Offering these methods to encourage self-response

during In-Field Enumeration promises to streamline field data collection and incorporate the improved quality achieved through self-response.

The 2026 Census test will also be a proving ground for the training and implementation of multi-operational enumerators. These enumerators would be able to collect data from both housing units and group quarters. During the 2020 Census, when a Group Quarters facility was erroneously placed in the housing unit workload, field enumerators did not have a way to send that case to the Group Quarters Enumeration operation. Recognizing those limitations, this decade, we are developing and testing a solution to train enumerators and provide them with automated tools for moving cases between operations. The 2026 Census test will be our first opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of those processes.

Finally, we will test an updated contact strategy that includes early In-Field Enumeration. Last decade, we planned for an early enumeration operation in college and university areas where students were expected to go on break during the field data collection phase. The intention was to count these students before they left, but that effort was de-scoped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This decade, we once again plan to conduct early enumeration in college and university areas, but the new In-Field Enumeration operation will expand that early enumeration to include additional areas that our data show would benefit from earlier in-person contact, such as areas that are historically hard-to-count and areas with high seasonal vacancy.

Speaking of historically hard-to-count areas, it's important to note that each of the new and enhanced features within our In-Field Enumeration operations, directly or indirectly, involve improving our enumeration of historically undercounted people and their households.

Now, let's talk about the Group Quarters Enumeration operational area. Group quarters residents make up an important and unique hard-to-count population that requires specialized methods for enumerating. Group quarters or GQs are places where people live or stay in group living arrangements that are owned or managed by entities or organizations, providing housing and or services for the residents.

Residents of GQs are usually not related to one another. In 2020, GQs were counted by field staff who contacted each GQ by phone or in-person. The GQ administrators would then respond for their GQ by e-response where data were electronically transferred to the Census Bureau in a standardized template, paper response, or in-person with an enumerator. In-person enumeration of GQs was conducted using paper questionnaires.

During the 2026 Census Test, we will explore allowing enumerators to count GQ residents using an automated survey instrument on a mobile device. This will allow us to easily link individual responses to the group quarters. We'll also test improved contact strategies for GQ administrators and residents, including allowing residents of some non-institutional GQ types, such as college students to self-respond through a specially designed GQ internet self-response option.

The 2026 Census test will also include a test of improved methodologies for GQ administrators to assist with data collection, such as a web-based dashboard where they can update information about their GQ and determine the method of enumerating their GQ residents.

Another focus of the 2026 Census Test is our approach to communication, partnerships, and engagement. Our communications focus for the 2026 Census test is to measure the effectiveness of improved methods of reaching

historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations, including non-English-speaking households. Our objectives are around developing community-specific messages, raising engagement in local areas, and implementing messages directed towards GQ populations.

Our partnership focus will incorporate networking and meeting with community leaders, advocacy groups, organizations, and trusted messengers to promote awareness, education, and response for the 2026 Census Test in the communities they serve. The partnership team will be doing this by assessing outreach strategies, focusing on hard-to-count and historically undercounted populations, and determining tools and needs of each community in order to support the efforts in promoting response.

Another component of our communications, partnerships, and engagement efforts is supporting the Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Operation, or MQA. MQA occurred during the 2020 Census, but looked very different than initially planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the 2026 Census Test, we will test the use of technology that predicts or helps us to identify the most critical location to host MQA events.

Using this method, we will be better able to support respondents in completing the 2026 Census Test, particularly respondents in areas with limited ability to self-respond due to low internet access, low literacy rates, or language barriers. We want to overcome barriers to participation to ensure that everyone living in the United States is counted in the Census.

A successful Census requires a strong infrastructure and several functions to work together across operations. Cross-operational functions include important activities such as address frame development, content design, data processing, and the recruiting, hiring, and training of field staff. The 2026

Census Test will utilize these cross-operational functions. I'd like to highlight a few of them that differ from past Census operations and demonstrate an evolution in our thinking about cross-operational support.

In support of all operations, the 2026 Census Test will provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of virtual office infrastructure with administrative and IT support staff working from home. This infrastructure design will include virtual hiring processes, mailing of equipment and informational materials directly to employees' home addresses, and providing virtual training for staff. These innovations are largely the result of positive lessons learned from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were all doing most things from home.

For the 2026 Census Test, we will also begin building and testing our infrastructure for administrative data. We will test ways of gathering and storing information from administrative records and secondary sources, like information collected in prior censuses, into a single repository. We will then use that repository of data to analyze and understand trends, patterns, or predictions that will help inform our operational decisions.

For example, analysis of the administrative data will inform us on things such as how much administrative data are accessible, what locations and people are represented in the data and how reliable or accurate the data are. The quality of the results from the data collection process, including how complete a response was. Information that could impact our operational design or data collection efforts, such as the likelihood or tendency of households to provide responses on their own.

These data will be aggregated and modeled to derive information that will assist us with making decisions, such as which mail strategy to apply to a

household or geographic area, or the number of field visits a non-responding housing unit should receive during In-Field Enumeration. The 2026 Census Test will be a proving ground for the development of those models, allowing for an analysis of their potential impact on operational efficiency, coverage, and data quality.

Finally, let's talk about how we process all of the data we collect during the Census. The 2026 Census Test will be the first opportunity to improve the way we process response data during the Census. Traditionally, most processing of data for the Census occurred as a final step in the census timeline once all data collection was complete. A major innovation under development for 2030 is to integrate the collection, processing, and analysis of the response data. This integration will allow us to address suspected irregularities and improve data quality in near real-time.

Processing the data during the data collection period provides important additional opportunities for addressing data quality issues such as additional in-field data collection efforts.

Now, that we have reviewed operations that are in-scope for the 2026 Census test, I want to acknowledge that many operations and significant activities are out of scope for the test. These operations and activities are out of scope because they do not directly support the needs or the objectives of the 2026 Census test.

However, just because they aren't included in the 2026 Census Test does not mean that there isn't important work going on to improve the operation in preparation for the 2030 Census. The full suite of operations will be considered for inclusion in the 2028 Dress Rehearsal, which will be our final opportunity to bring all of the operations and solutions together to ensure a

well-integrated design and architecture.

Examples of operations that are excluded from the 2026 Census test include enumeration of transitory locations and service-based enumeration. Enumeration of transitory locations and service-based enumeration operations are out of scope because improvements for these operations are being researched through small-scale efforts. Also, the lessons learned in the testing of enhancements in our group quarters enumeration operation will be used to support enumeration of transitory locations and service-based enumeration.

The Post-Enumeration Survey. This operation is out of scope, because we are currently redesigning elements of the operation to reduce costs while maintaining quality results. Based on the requirements of the operation once the redesign is finalized, decisions will be made about how best to test the proposed changes.

Data products and dissemination. This operation is out of scope because research around data products and dissemination for the 2030 Census is just beginning, as the final 2020 Census data products are just completing this year. More information on our vision for data products for the 2030 Census will be shared at a later date once the research has gotten underway.

In addition to those operations, there are also some significant activities associated with some of the in-scope operations that are out of scope for the 2026 Census Test, including property manager visits of multi-units like large apartment buildings during In-Field Enumeration, field verification of non-ID self-responses that could not be matched to an address, and count and characteristic imputation.

These activities, as seen listed on the right side of the slide, despite being

important components of in-scope operations, were determined to be out of scope for the 2026 Census Test because they do not involve significant innovations or changes that require testing for operational viability. While there may be changes and improvements to those activities throughout the decade, they are likely to be largely unchanged and will be implemented in the future in line with the processes used in the 2020 Census.

Now, I would like to give an overview of the steps we will use to determine where to conduct the 2026 Census Test. The scope of the 2026 Census Test that we have shared with you today will help determine the sites where the tests will be conducted. We will review the high-level requirements for each element we are planning to test to identify the criteria that would need to be present to test each element most effectively. We will compile these into a consolidated set of criteria, covering the full scope of the test.

A team of experts will then use these criteria to identify all possible candidates for sites. After conducting a rigorous examination of all possible sites, the team will recommend the optimal test sites to the Census Bureau's senior leadership for approval. Once senior leadership has approved our test site selection, which we anticipate happening this summer, we will host our next webinar to provide you with the details of the data-driven criteria we use to select the sites and announce the locations. In 2025, we will finalize the design of the 2026 Census Test, including specific details around how the operations will be implemented during the test. Back to you, Deb.

Deborah Stempowski: Thank you, Jennifer, for walking us through the 2026 Census Test today.

That was a lot of information. For everyone who joined us, we thank you for your time today and for giving us the opportunity to review the 2026 Census test work up to this point, highlight key initiatives that will be tested, inform you of our ongoing work in preparing for the 2026 Census test, and highlight

the interconnectivity of the initiatives being tested and the work we are doing to improve how we collect and present information on historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations. We look forward to briefing you again during our next webinar in the series. And I'm now going to hand it back over to Michael, so we can take your questions. Michael?

Michael Cook: Thank you, Deb. We're ready to begin taking our questions. Taking your questions today are the presenters, Jennifer Reichert and Deborah Stempowski. Operator, can you please give instructions on how people can submit their questions?

Coordinator: Thank you. If you would like to ask a question, please dial Star 1. Unmute your phone and record your name and organization clearly. If you'd like to withdraw your question, dial Star 2. Again, to ask your question, dial Star 1. It will just take a few moments for the first question to come through.

Michael Cook: Thank you, Operator. As we wait for our first question to come in, we want to highlight a few resources for today's release. We can - you can find them on our homepage, census.gov. There you'll find a banner that has hyperlinks to our 2026 Census Press Kit. Operator, do we have our first question?

Coordinator: Our first question comes from Michael Schneider with the Associated Press. Your line is open.

Michael Cook: Hello, Mike.

Michael Schneider: Hi. So, you guys have given us a cliffhanger as to where the site location is going to be. We're going to have to tune in, right, for the next webinar?

Michael Cook: Yes, sir.

Michael Schneider: But I have a question for Director Santos. For the 2026 test, I was wondering, and this is for anyone who wants to chime in, really, but what kind of education or outreach will there be regarding the changes to the OMB race and ethnicity categories? If I could continue on this point, for the 2026 test or other current Bureau surveys or censuses, what do you say to some groups who feel they are either mis-categorized or not represented in the categories?

And as an example, Armenian-Americans are unhappy with being omitted from the new MENA category or members of the Hmong community who feel they should be classified as South Asian instead of - Southeast Asian instead of East Asian. So my question is, how would you respond to their concerns as they participate in the 2026 test and other Census Bureau surveys or censuses?

Michael Cook: Well, Mike, unfortunately, the director is not here at the present time.

Michael Schneider: Okay.

Michael Cook: So, I'll take this, but I'll walk you through, as well as all of the other listeners, about the SPD-15. For those who don't know, that's the Statistical Policy Directive Number 15, OMB. That is their standards on how the Census Bureau and other federal statistical agencies collect race and ethnicity data. And so, we follow OMB standards, and yes, they have updated those standards in the way that we collect race and data. Since 1997, they just updated it this year.

The Census Bureau itself, we have begun reviewing that update and we will develop plans to implement it in our censuses and our surveys. We definitely want to keep the public informed with regular updates, and we definitely look

forward to engaging with the communities and organizations around the nation to discuss specifically how we will collect and tabulate future race and ethnicity data to ensure that at the end of the day the resulting statistics, they yield a meaningful and useful information for the public, researchers, programmers, and also policies from all across many spectrums. So, I hope that addresses your question about SPD-15, but wanted to follow up just to see if you have any questions about the 2026 Census test specifically for SMEs today. Did I lose you, Mike?

Michael Schneider: No. I'm sorry, that - I mean, that was pretty much it. Just I guess, you know, you guys kind of hit on it, but as far as technology, I know you're building on the 2020 Census innovations, but do you see any changes in technology, either changes in tablets, changes anything like that as far as the technological aspect?

Michael Cook: Thanks for that question on technology. I'll turn that over to our SMEs to address the test, the census test technology.

Michael Schneider: For the test, yes.

Jennifer Reichert: This is Jennifer Reichert. Yes, I mean, we do anticipate that technology changes. That is sort of the standard that will always be changing. We always strive to take advantage of whatever is the most current technology that we can incorporate into our design. Right now, lots of those detailed decisions are still to be made as we work out our solutions and our design for the 26 test, but certainly we have a lot of experts around the Census Bureau who are keeping an eye on where the technology is and what the best solutions will be for our particular design for 26 and then moving beyond 26 as well. But a lot of those decisions are still to be determined as we finalize our design.

Michael Cook: Thanks for that response, Jennifer. Operator, do we have our next caller?

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Hansi Lo Wang with NPR. Your line is open.

Michael Cook: Hi, Hansi. Thank you.

Hansi Lo Wang: Hi, Mike. I wanted to follow up some comments that Jennifer Reichert made that the determination of whether or not an operation of the 2026 Census test would be in-scope is depending if the operation is feasible based on an available budget. Given the funding uncertainty facing the Census Bureau in the coming years, how is the Bureau going to make its plans and then finalize its plans? Are you going to have kind of a low-budget, high-budget, medium-budget option?

Jennifer Reichert: Well, right now what we're doing is, we're designing the test for '26, as to reflect our need for ensuring the viability of some of the proposals that are coming out of our research and from the public input to the FRN. So, as of now, our current plans are within our existing budget understanding. And so, we don't have any plans right now to make any changes. Should that happen in the future, then we will use normal prioritization processes that we always use to make sure that we can operate what we need to operate within the available budget, but right now what we have designed is within what we have available to us in terms of the budget.

Hansi Lo Wang: If I could ask as a follow-up question, I understand there's a distinction between small scale tests and the major field tests, which is what the 2026 Census test is. What kind of results can a major field test provide that small scale tests cannot?

Jennifer Reichert: The biggest impact of being able to do something on the ground in the field is being able to incorporate all of the aspects, such as, you know, dealing with large-scale public response to a particular change or being able to hire, you know, like, for example, what I said in my presentation, one of the things we're hoping to test is the use of a virtual infrastructure. We can simulate that, but until we actually try to put it into action in the field with real in-field data collection, it's hard to be certain of the viability of some of those options.

So, we make use of simulation and sort of in-house small-scale stuff to the extent we can, but it is very important to get out into the field to see that everything is integrated well together in terms of the systems and sizing up for a larger type of a field operation. So, it's mostly just to sort of test it on the ground with people that we have hired in the field to do the operations.

Hansi Lo Wang: Thank you.

Michael Cook: Thank you. And Operator, we're ready for our next caller.

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Daniel Ichinose with OC Action. Your line is open.

Michael Cook: Hi, Daniel.

Coordinator: Daniel, you may need to unmute your line. We're still not able to hear you, Daniel.

Daniel Ichinose: I'm sorry, can you hear me now?

Michael Cook: We can, loud and clear.

Daniel Ichinose: Great. Apologies. Yes, Daniel Ichinose with OC Action in Orange County, California. I was wondering if it might be possible to share a more concrete and detailed timeline with respect to the steps that you'll be taking to identify where the 2026 Census test will take place?

Jennifer Reichert: More information on the timeline? Our goal right now is to have all of the sites selected and approved by this summer. And then we would hold a webinar like this later in the summer to announce the process that we used as well as the actual sites. So, within the next probably three to four months, I would expect that will be done.

Daniel Ichinose: Gotcha, thank you, that's helpful.

Michael Cook: Thank you. Operator, do we have another caller?

Coordinator: Thank you. As a reminder, if you would like to ask a question, please press Star 1. One moment.

Michael Cook: If I may, while we wait for other questions to come in, we'd like to highlight a few of our own upcoming releases at the Census Bureau. On May 9, the Census Bureau released a report on the data from the annual release of American Families and Living Arrangements. This report will provide a demographic profile of the households and living arrangements of those who live in the United States and how these have changed over time.

On May 4, 14 rather, the Census Bureau will release a new data - new data tables from the 2023 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. These tables will provide information on marital status, educational attainment, employment status, occupation, earnings, and other social and economic statistics by age, sex, and Hispanic origin.

And for the Asian alone, Asian alone or in combination, Black alone, Black alone or in combination, older and foreign-born populations. Also, on May 14, our embargo will begin for the Vintage 2023 Total Population Estimates. For incorporated places and minor civil divisions and housing units estimates for the nation, states, and counties. That data will be publicly released on May 16.
Operator, do we have another caller.

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Kathy Lentz with Federal Insights. Your line is open.

Michael Cook: Hi, Kathy.

Kathy Lentz: Yes. Hey, nice to meet you. Can you hear me?

Michael Cook: Loud and clear.

Kathy Lentz: All right, awesome. My question is about for the 2020 census, it was a huge contact center operation, but that was based upon the fact that everything was bricks and mortar. But now we all know the world has evolved for it being now, you know, virtual, like you spoke about the virtual infrastructure. Are you assuming that, that contact center operation will be completely virtual, or what is your model for the future for that?

Jennifer Reichert: We are not assuming anything. We are obviously trying to take the lessons that we learned in 2020 to hopefully be able to reduce the footprint and have a more cost-effective approach to that. We have research projects within our research agenda, as you can see on our Research Explorer tool, related to using a work-at-home model for what we call Census Questionnaire Assistance, which is the contact centers that you are referring to, but none of

those decisions have been made yet. I mean, we'll have to let the research and the testing play out before decisions are made. But certainly, we want to take advantage of those positive lessons learned from 2020, 100%.

Kathy Lentz: Yes, I noticed that you did an RFI in December of 2022 going out to industry. Didn't get a lot of response on that. Are you going to be doing any follow-up to that? Or if you didn't participate in that, which is almost a year and a half ago, is there a way to get engaged with you to give you feedback and ideas? Or is that kind of done now?

Jennifer Reichert: We don't. So, we had our federal register notice that was out there. If you're talking about with respect to a future contract around central, the census questionnaire assistance, we'd have to get you in touch with, you know, the appropriate contact people for those future efforts. But yes, we did have the RFI, which was supporting that one research project that I was mentioning about, but we can get you in touch with the appropriate people for future efforts around those major contracts.

Kathy Lentz: Do I reach out to you or how do I get connected to you?

Michael Cook: What you can do, caller, if you could please reach out to the Public Information Office at pio@census.gov. That's pio@census.gov. And they'll be able to follow up with you and give you everything that you need, okay?

Kathy Lentz: You're the best. Thank you.

Michael Cook: All right.

Jennifer Reichert: Thank you.

Michael Cook: Operator, we're ready for our next caller.

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Ellen Hopkins with OSPI. Your line is open.

Michael Cook: Hi, Ellen. Can you hear me, Ellen?

Ellen Hopkins: Hello, can you hear me?

Michael Cook: I can, loud and clear.

Ellen Hopkins: All right. This is Ellen Hopkins from OSPI of Washington State, the State Education Department. We hear in the field from our educators that, of course, our agricultural and migrant communities see a disconnect sometimes between the census numbers reported and what they see on the ground. Has that population risen as a hard-to-count population? And do you have any strategies that you might employ to capture those number?

Deborah Stempowski: Jennifer, do you want me to jump in.

Jennifer Reichert: Yes, jump, yes.

Deborah Stempowski: I was going to say - and thanks for the question. So, the first thing that comes to mind when I heard your question is that we are looking at different definitions for different groups of people and the migrant workers are in there. So, we have better understanding of who we're counting and what that means that we can do a better design to ensure that they're counted. We've got other research projects going on that probably touches on those communities.

Just because some - a group is or is not in historically undercounted or the

hard-to-count doesn't mean that our overall research isn't going to improve the quality of the census. So, I think you can rest assured that every group is reflected in our research, whether or not it's called out specifically or not. Jennifer, if you wanted to add anything else on that.

Jennifer Reichert: No, I think that's it for the day. I was just going to say that's one of many buckets of hard-to-count that we are trying to address in our design, yes.

Michael Cook: Thanks for that. Operator, we're ready for our next caller.

Coordinator: Thank you. At this time, if you have another question, please press Star 1. Again, if you do have another question or would like to ask a question, please press Star 1. One moment, please. We did have another caller come through. One moment while I gather information.

Michael Cook: While we wait, I'll just mention for those that are listening. We've talked earlier a little bit about or had some questions about the SPD-15 update from OMB. I encourage folks who aren't aware of the Census Bureau's latest information that we've published about that to visit our blogs on census.gov, the director of the Census Bureau, Director Santos, has a blog in the director's blog addressing that topic, as well as subject-matter experts in our population division that have put together a blog that maps out how we plan on reviewing those standards and those updates and then implementing them throughout all of our censuses and surveys at the Census Bureau. Operator, do we have a caller now or are we done?

Coordinator: I do apologize. We are complete at this time. I'll hand it back to you.

Michael Cook: Thank you. So, again, if you have additional questions after today's webinar, please contact the Public Information Office at 301-763-3030 or email them at

pio@census.gov. Or if you have more general questions, please contact our Customer Service Center. And a reminder, you can find resources from today's webinar in our 2026 Census Press Kit in our newsroom. I'd like to thank everyone who took part in today's webinar. I'm Michael Cook, thank you for joining and have a great rest of your day. Thanks, everyone.

Coordinator: That concludes today's conference. Thank you for participating. You may disconnect at this time.

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