

## 1990 CENSUS PLANNING FOR DATA PRODUCTS

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KEY WORDS: Recommendations, timing sequence, content

### INTRODUCTION

We will conduct the 21st Decennial Census on April 1, 1990. The main purposes of the 1990 census are to provide the population counts needed to apportion seats in the House of Representatives and determine State legislative district boundaries. Census information will also be used to meet critical national and local data needs for the next 10 years.

Long before Census Day, the Census Bureau must make important decisions about the types of data products and their content. An important part of the census planning is defining the 1990 Census Tabulation and Publication Program. In planning the program, we looked for ways to improve the data products that we release. This paper discusses our efforts at planning the data publication processes for the 1990 census.

We began our planning process for the data products earlier in the census cycle than we did in 1980 and we expanded our outreach efforts. The program and the design and content of the data products evolved through a three-phase process that includes a continuing dialogue with the data user community.

The three phases discussed in this paper are:

1. Soliciting user recommendations for designing the tabulation and publication program,
2. Designing the content of the data products, and
3. Providing users with final 1990 product plans and 1990 prototypes.

### PHASE 1

During the first phase, 1984 through 1988, we gathered recommendations from census data users. We wanted to assess user needs so that we could incorporate their requirements into the design of the tabulation and publication program.

In sixty-five Local Public Meetings in major cities and/or State capitals, we sought advice from the public on planning the 1990 census, including recommendations on data products. The Census Bureau held these meetings in conjunction with the State Data Centers.

We solicited comments on the timing, sequence, and general content of the data products. Our primary vehicle for eliciting comments from users were two issue papers--"1990 Census Products Issues" for the 100-percent products and "1990 Census Data Products Based on Sample Information." These papers were distributed to users and served as a basis for discussion at the following data product meetings.

- o The 10 regional 1990 Census Product Meetings held in Washington, D.C.; Knoxville, TN; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Portland, ME; Los Angeles, CA; Seattle, WA; Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; and New York, NY. Later, the Census Bureau held a National Conference on Data Products to gather additional recommendations to refine the proposals discussed at the regional meetings.
- o Other conferences or meetings, professional organizations, census advisory committees, correspondence, and so forth provided further recommendations. These included groups such as the Population Advisory Committee, Statistical Resources for Librarians, State Data Center Steering Committee, Association of Public Data Users, American Statistical Association, and the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics.

The overwhelming message voiced by data users was to get the products out faster than 1980, develop a release schedule early, and stay within that schedule. We designed the 1990 Census Tabulation and Publication Program with these as major goals.

Examples of the types of comments and suggestions that we received at the planning meetings follow.

- o Users felt that media flexibility was important and suggested that the Census Bureau not limit itself to a single technology. (For 1990, we will issue selected products on CD-ROM (Compact Disk-Read Only Memory) and microfiche in addition to computer tape and reports.)
- o Users did not support combining most population and housing reports. (We will issue selected reports separately in 1990.)
- o The majority opinion on the amount of data to be published for race and Hispanic origin was that the 1980 treatment was the minimum that would be acceptable for 1990. There were different comments reflecting the racial/Hispanic origin composition of the area. (We are adopting this recommendation as the content of the products is being developed.)

Also, during the first phase, we examined current and emerging legislation that could affect the requirements for census information, evaluated the tabulations and publications released from previous censuses, and evaluated new dissemination media.

As the last part of the first phase, we developed a list of proposed data

products using the information we gathered. We again went to various user groups such as the Association of Public Data Users, American Statistical Association, American Demographics, and our census advisory groups to elicit comments on our proposed products. User comments included suggestions such as "produce fewer microfiche products" and "release more data products on the new dissemination media--CD-ROM." However, users indicated that enhancements to the data products, such as presenting information on new dissemination media and providing historical data in reports, should have a lower priority than issuing summary tape files and printed reports with the basic 1990 census data.

We developed our final list of data products (see Table 1) using suggestions from the user groups. The 1990 general-purpose data products will be similar in geographic coverage and overall data content to those of the 1980 census. However, as described in the following list, we have restructured some of our early release products to be able to provide data quickly.

- o We have expanded the subject detail of the first 100-percent and sample summary tape files (Summary Tape Files 1 and 3) so that users will have more data earlier in the decennial cycle.
- o In some cases, we will issue products in a different sequence to provide the earliest possible release of a wide range of data.
- o We will limit the historic data in the initial reports. Preparing the historic counts has, in previous censuses, delayed the release of reports.
- o We will not include totals for metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and urbanized areas (UAs) that cross State boundaries in the earlier reports. These areas are defined on the basis of the census results and often have component parts in more than one State. Including these cross-over areas in State reports complicates processing and delays the release of the State products. To avoid such delays, data summaries for entire MSAs and UAs will appear in separate reports rather than in the State products as they have in the past. ("Metropolitan statistical areas" is used as a generic term to represent metropolitan statistical areas, primary metropolitan statistical areas and/or consolidated statistical areas.)

The final product list and a complete description of the 1990 tabulation and publication program are provided in the Census Bureau report "1990 Census of Population and Housing Tabulation and Publication Program." To obtain copies of the

report, contact Ms. Cheryl Landman, Decennial Planning Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, telephone 301-763-3938.

#### PHASE 2

Our second phase, designing the content of the 1990 data products, again requires input from the data users. In 1988, we developed a mailing list of over 500 users that includes the Census Bureau's distribution of the publication "Census and You," our data product meeting attendees, and other census data user groups. We are now mailing the proposed summary tape file tally outlines and report table outlines on a flow basis to these users to elicit comments on the specific content of each product. This process will continue for about another year.

Using the recommendations that we receive from the users, we are fine tuning the content of the data products. For example, some changes that we are making to our Summary Tape File 1 based on user comments follow.

- o Expanded age data
- o Matrices providing new derived measures such as persons per family
- o Expanded the amount of data on housing characteristics

#### PHASE 3

Providing users with final 1990 data product plans and selected 1990 prototype data products is our third phase. It is ongoing at this time and will continue through 1990. The purpose of this phase is to educate users so that they are aware of what data will be available from the 1990 census products and how they can plan ahead for using the products. This phase supports our 1990 census strategic planning goal of "expanding public awareness" of the census by making the public aware that participating in the 1990 census is beneficial to them. We want to promote awareness that useful data will be prepared from the 1990 census and that the Census Bureau is available to help users.

During our last phase, we will release key 1990 prototype products with data from our 1988 Censuses of Eastern Washington and East Central and St. Louis City, Missouri. These products include the redistricting data file and Summary Tape File 1A. If we have time, we plan to release Summary Tape File 3A for sample data. The prototypes will parallel the 1990 products and enable the user community to have their information systems and software in place before the first 1990 census files are released.

Also during our last phase, we want to expand our outreach activities to reach the experienced, novice, and potential data users by producing materials ranging from short, easy-to-understand summaries to a detailed explanation of the program and various training materials. We will distribute the materials through existing

census programs such as the National Services Program, at meetings and conferences with organizations (for example, professional groups, racial and ethnic groups, and the Association of Public Data Users), Census Promotion Office activities, and other meetings with the public. Although some of this was done in the past, we plan to expand and structure the activities to maximize contact with data users and ensure that consistent and accurate information is provided to the various segments of the user community.

#### CONCLUSION

Advances in technology have given data users access to computing power at their desks that previously was available only in a mainframe environment. The public and the media demand for statistics continues to increase. While it is impossible to anticipate all user needs in a changing environment for census data, we have designed the 1990 census tabulation and publication program to meet a variety of data needs for different segments of the data user community--Federal, State, and local governments (including American Indian and Alaska Native governments); academicians; researchers; business and marketing firms; and private organizations and individuals. With our expanded outreach efforts to elicit comments from

data users, we believe that we are developing a data product program that will meet the primary data user needs for the decade of the 1990's.

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**TABLE 1--1990 CENSUS DATA PRODUCTS**

**Summary Tape Files**

**100% Data Files:**

P.L. 94-171 Redistricting File  
STF 1: Files A, B, C, and D  
STF 2: Files A, B, and C

**Sample Data Files:**

STF 3: Files A, B, C, and D  
STF 4: Files A, B, and C

**Reports**

**100% Data:**

Summary Population and Housing Characteristics  
Population and Housing Unit Counts  
General Population Characteristics  
-States  
-Metropolitan Areas  
-Urbanized Areas  
-American Indian and Alaska Native Areas  
-U.S. Summary  
General Housing Characteristics  
-States  
-Metropolitan Areas  
-Urbanized Areas  
-American Indian and Alaska Native Areas  
-U.S. Summary

**Sample Data:**

Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics  
Social and Economic Characteristics  
-States  
-Metropolitan Areas  
-Urbanized Areas  
-American Indian and Alaska Native Areas  
-U.S. Summary  
Detailed Housing Characteristics  
-States  
-Metropolitan Areas  
-Urbanized Areas  
-American Indian and Alaska Native Areas  
-U.S. Summary

**Reports**

**100% and Sample Data:**

Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas  
Population and Housing Characteristics for Congressional Districts of the 103rd Congress

**CD-ROM**

P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data      STF 1A and 1C  
Block Statistics                      STF 3A, 3B, and 3C

**Microfiche**

Block Statistics  
STF 1A  
STF 3A

**Other Products**

Subject Reports and Summary Tape Files      Special Computer Tape Files  
Supplementary Reports                      User-Defined Areas Data  
Public-Use Microdata Samples              Special Tabulations