

Census 2000 Survey of Partners Evaluation

James Poyer, U.S. Census Bureau; Wade Martin, Jennifer Crafts, Joann Sorra, and Sherman Edwards, Westat.
James Poyer, U.S. Census Bureau, Mail Stop 9200, Washington, DC 20233

Key Words: Census 2000, Partnerships, Evaluations, Program Effectiveness

Introduction

The U.S. Census Bureau spent approximately \$125 million on the Census 2000 Partnership Program to encourage mail response and full Census 2000 participation. Given that they frequently interact with their constituents, partners' opinions about this critical program and its components are useful in evaluating its effectiveness. We examine partners' assessments about the dissemination of Census 2000 materials to their targeted population(s), the types of services rendered, the specific partnership activities they conducted, and the helpfulness of the program in reaching their targeted population(s).

Background

In the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses, the Census Bureau partnered with local community organizations to help count their constituents. A review of relevant literature on survey advertising revealed that only Federal statistical agencies have used large-scale paid advertising campaigns to increase response rates in surveys and censuses. The U.S. Census Bureau used the 1998 Census Dress Rehearsal to test the effectiveness of a large-scale advertising campaign to increase awareness and to persuade respondents to mail back their forms. The Census Bureau used only pro bono advertising on a smaller scale in the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses (U.S. Census Monitoring Board, 1999).

The Census Bureau designed a large-scale 2000 Partnership Program to increase mail response and other Census participation, and to provide an accurate count of all groups of Americans. For the 2000 Decennial Census, the Census Bureau partnered with over 100,000 state, local, and tribal governments, local community organizations, national organizations, and business and media. Targeted groups included African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Hawaiians, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Pacific Islanders, Arabs, and recent immigrants from, Africa, Haiti and other Caribbean islands. Partners assisted the Census in many ways; including distributing printed materials, donating time, space, and services, providing operational assistance, and publicizing the Census through media outlets.

In previous decennial census and dress rehearsal evaluations, the Census Bureau measured the general

public's exposure to Census promotion efforts from potential partner organizations in a very limited capacity. Both the 1980 Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Survey and the 1990 Outreach Evaluation Survey found increases in exposure as the Census drew near (from a meeting of a community group) (Moore; 1982; Fay, Bates, and Moore; 1991). The Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal Effectiveness of Paid Advertising Evaluation (Roper Starch, Inc.; 1998) also found that approximately 5% of Sacramento respondents and 9% of South Carolina respondents surveyed during the nonresponse followup period recalled hearing about the Census from a meeting or activity of a community group (a type of partnership activity).

In our research of decennial census and Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal evaluations and internal Census partnership documents, we found only one statistically based survey of Census Bureau partners (U.S. Census Bureau internal document, 1991). After the 1990 Census, the Census Bureau surveyed State Data Centers and Census Information Centers about activities and resources allocated to the 1990 Censuses. The report provided a state-by-state verbal description of these organizations' activities to promote the 1990 Censuses.

The Census 2000 Partnership Program was designed to increase Census participation among several race and ethnic groups found in previous research to be associated with lower mail return rates. Fay, Bates, and Moore (1991) found that African American or Hispanic householders were less likely to mail back their census form in 1990 than white or other householders.

In summary, no prior statistically based evaluations were conducted solely on U.S. decennial census partnership or community-based outreach activities. This study will determine partners' perceptions of the program's effectiveness in reaching targeted groups of Americans (including its materials and activities).

NOTE: This paper reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by Census Bureau staff. It has undergone a more limited review by the Census Bureau than its official publications. This report is released to inform interested parties and to encourage discussion.

Methodology

Sample Design and Selection

For this study, Westat contacted a stratified random sample of 15,803 Census partners in late 2000 and early 2001. The Census Bureau selected the sample using the May 2000 Contact Profile Usage and Management System (CPUMS) list frame of 109,824 organizations, which was supplemented by lists of federal government, business, and non-profit national headquarters establishments. The Census Bureau used 20 strata to select partner organizations to ensure sufficient sample size for comparing targeted populations (e.g., American Indian), in combination with organization type (e.g., media).

Data Collection

The Census Bureau and Westat devised a mixed mode data collection design to maximize the likelihood of response, given the difficulties in reaching this diverse sample. Westat mailed two waves of self-administered questionnaires in October and December 2000. Between the two mail waves, Westat called the nonrespondents to the first wave to update address and contact information, to describe the survey and to remind them to expect a second mail questionnaire within a few weeks. The second mail wave used updated address information from the preceding call, and targeted only first wave mail nonrespondents. Approximately six weeks following the second wave mailout, Westat interviewed mail nonrespondents by telephone using a CATI system.

The survey achieved a 64.7% final response rate using American Association for Public Opinion Research response rate guidelines. We used the following formula for calculating the response rate:

$$\text{Responses, divided by} \\ \text{(Responses + Refusals + Adjustment Factor (eligible} \\ \text{cases + unknown eligibility))}$$

Analysis

This paper summarizes the analysis performed by Westat for the Census 2000 Partnership Program Evaluation. As previously stated, we focused on the program's effectiveness (as perceived by partners) and its materials' and activities' helpfulness in reaching targeted groups of Americans. Westat grouped partners by self-reported organization type (e.g., business, media, other non-government organization), and targeted populations (e.g., Asian-American). Westat analyzed the data using the self-described organization affiliation in the survey instrument.

We designed this evaluation to answer the research questions below, in addition to other research goals:

1. What value did the partners place on the Census printed materials?
2. What value did the partners place on the activities they conducted?
3. Was Census support helpful?
4. How satisfied were partners with their participation in the Partnership Program?

Population of Partners

The "no specific group" followed by "Whites" dominated the populations targeted by the partner organizations, 52% and 29% respectively. Partners were allowed to report all targeted populations, so some partners that targeted Whites also targeted other populations. While partners of all organizational affiliations did not target a specific racial group, government entities, businesses, and media partners primarily classified themselves as "no specific group".

Categorizing by organizational type, local non-government organizations and businesses (36%) and local governments (30%) comprised the two largest groups of partners. Apparently, Census local level partnership staff targeted these partners to interact with their constituents to create a "community-based" network promoting the Census.

Consistent with the theme of a "community-based" network, local, regional, tribal, and state level organizations comprised the largest population of partner organizations (78%). National organizational headquarters, combined with federal government and business headquarters, comprised only 3% of partner organizations.

Limitations

This analysis is limited in several ways. First, partners can only assess the partnership program's effectiveness second-hand, since they do not know if their targeted population(s) returned their Census forms.

Evidence of this limitation first became apparent in the cognitive interviews conducted with a small subset of partners. Partners had difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of the program (and its individual components) in terms of positively affecting response behavior. Since the partners were unable to determine if their constituents responded to the Census, they could not reasonably determine the association between the program

and response behavior. Another finding from the same pretest was that partners were unable to report if their targeted population(s) understood and recalled the promotional material's intended message.

Second, findings from this study are limited because they are only one component of the Census Bureau's comprehensive analysis to evaluate the Census 2000 Partnership and Marketing Program (PMP). Any findings from this study must (and will) subsequently be used as part of a synthesized analysis of the entire integrated PMP, since it was designed as a single program.

Third, this study is limited because the length of time between partnership program initiatives and data collection might limit partners' ability to recall the intended message. The partnership program activities occurred between 1996 and 2000 (internal Census Bureau document, 2000), while Westat administered the survey between October 2000 and March 2001.

Fourth, the response rate (64%) indicates that nonresponse error might be significant. Consequently, these findings are limited in that they represent the opinions of responding partners. It is possible that nonrespondents possess different opinions about the program and its activities and materials.

Results

Helpfulness of Materials Provided by the Census Bureau

The Census Bureau provided partners with many types of written materials, including (but not limited to) fact sheets, posters, non-English informational materials, and example Census 2000 forms. Additionally, the Census Bureau provided partners with informational videos, posters, and promotional items (e.g., buttons, pencils, mugs, etc.). Some materials provided information about Census 2000, while other materials were designed to increase awareness.

In general, partners believed that these materials helped reach their targeted population(s) (see Table 1). Partners rated eleven of the twelve materials in Table 1 as moderately helpful or better. Mean helpfulness ratings ranged from a minimum value of 2.97 for the "Building Partnerships" newsletter to a maximum value of 3.37 for the informational questionnaire.

Table 1
Census 2000 Partnership Materials

Type of Partnership Material	Mean Helpfulness Rating (standard error)
Informational Questionnaire	3.37 (0.02)
Census in Schools Materials	3.34 (0.04)
Posters	3.25 (0.02)
Handbills	3.22 (0.02)
Congregational Packets	3.22 (0.04)
Fact Sheets	3.21 (0.02)
Non-English Informational Materials	3.17 (0.03)
Drop-in News Articles and Newsletters	3.14 (0.03)
Promotional Items (e.g., buttons, mugs, etc.)	3.14 (0.03)
Informational Videos	3.07 (0.04)
Press Releases	3.05 (0.03)
"Building Partnerships" Newsletter	2.97 (0.03)

NOTE: Survey question: "How helpful was each of the following materials in reaching your target population?" IF ORGANIZATION CONDUCTED ACTIVITY) (4 point scale: 1=Not Helpful, 2=A Little Helpful, 3=Moderately Helpful, 4=Very Helpful)

Partners rated the informational questionnaire, the Census in Schools materials, and posters as the three most helpful materials. Perhaps, partners believed that their colorful design, written copy, and graphical layout helped reach their targeted population(s).

Publicity Activities

Table 2
Organization-Sponsored Publicity Activities

Type of Activity	Mean Helpfulness Rating (standard error)
Sponsored Local Radio and TV, etc.	3.46 (0.03)
Printed and Distributed Materials	3.43 (0.03)
Printed Census Messages on Org.'s Products, Bags, etc.	3.41 (0.04)
Used non-English Printed Materials	3.40 (0.02)
Used Print Media	3.36 (0.02)
Included Messages in Utility Bills, Phone Cards, etc.	3.32 (0.04)
Distributed Recruiting Information	3.32 (0.02)
Posted Web Site, Internet, or Other Electronic Media Messages	3.16 (0.05)

NOTE: Survey question: "How helpful was each of the following activities in reaching your target population?" IF ORGANIZATION CONDUCTED ACTIVITY) (4 point scale: 1=Not Helpful, 2=A Little Helpful, 3=Moderately Helpful, 4=Very Helpful)

Census partners sponsored many types of publicity activities in support of Census 2000. In general, the partners believed that all listed activities helped reach their targeted population. Table 2 reveals that partners generally believed that partnership sponsored publicity activities were helpful in reaching their targeted population. Partners rated all eight activities in Table 2 as moderately helpful or better. Mean helpfulness ratings ranged from a minimum value of 3.16 for posting web site, Internet, or other electronic media messages, to a maximum value of 3.46 for sponsoring local radio and television, press conferences, cable, and public service announcements. Partners rated publicity activities (see Table 2) slightly higher than materials provided by the Census Bureau (see Table 1), as evident by the higher mean helpfulness ratings.

Community Activities

Table 3
Organization-Sponsored Community Activities

Type of Activity	Mean Helpfulness Rating (standard error)
Conducted a Telephone Campaign to Promote the Census	3.56 (0.04)
Canvassed Neighborhoods	3.47 (0.03)
Held Public and In-House Meetings	3.45 (0.02)
Held Ceremonial Kick-offs to Publicize the Census	3.44 (0.04)
Distributed Census Promotional Items at Meetings/Events	3.43 (0.02)
Provided Assistance to Census Takers in Hard-to-Enumerate or Culturally Sensitive Areas	3.42 (0.02)

NOTE: Survey question: "How helpful was each of the following activities in reaching your target population?" IF ORGANIZATION CONDUCTED ACTIVITY) (4 point scale: 1=Not Helpful, 2=A Little Helpful, 3=Moderately Helpful, 4=Very Helpful)

Table 3 reveals that partners also rated community activities as moderately helpful or better in reaching their targeted population(s). Mean helpfulness ratings for the six activities listed on the instrument ranged from minimum value of 3.42 (i.e., provided assistance to census takers in hard-to-enumerate or culturally sensitive areas) to a maximum value of 3.56 (i.e., conducted a telephone campaign to promote the Census). Partners rated several community activities higher than publicity activities (see Table 2) and Census materials (see Table 1), as evident by the higher mean helpfulness ratings.

We believe that this difference might be associated with partners' relatively close interaction with their targeted population(s) during these community activities. In other words, partners' helpfulness ratings about activities and materials might be positively correlated with their knowledge about their targeted population's reaction to the activity. This belief is unsupported by the survey data, and should be studied in the future.

Helpfulness of Census Staff and Support

Table 4 reveals the following about Census staff and support:

- The largest percentage of partners (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that their partnership specialist and Census staff were helpful in assisting their organization to promote the Census to their targeted population(s),
- More than half of partners also agreed that Census support for partners’ presentations, meetings, and timelines was helpful (64%), and
- Staff participation for exhibits, conferences, and other events was helpful (55%).

Partners’ Satisfaction With Partnership Program Goals

Table 4 reveals that more than half of partners agreed or strongly agreed that the Partnership Program helped them to achieve several goals commonly held by partners and/or the Census Bureau.

The largest percentage of partners (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that the program increased their targeted population’s understanding of the value of participating in Census 2000. We believe that this finding is consistent with the intended message of the integrated Partnership and Marketing Program (PMP), which primarily focused on education about the value of the Census and personal and community benefit (e.g., “this is your future, don’t leave it blank”).

About two-thirds of partners agreed that the program helped their organization more effectively reach its targeted population. About three-fifths of partners agreed that the program helped minimize their targeted population’s fear of giving information to the government.

**Table 4
Percent of Partners Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing
With Statements About the Census 2000 Partnership
Program**

Statement	Weighted Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing (standard error)
CENSUS STAFF AND SUPPORT	
Partnership Specialist/Census Staff Was Helpful in Assisting My Org.’s Promotion to our Target Population(s)	70% (1.1%)
Census Support (for presentations, meetings, or timelines) Was Helpful	64% (1.2%)
Census Staff Participation (e.g., exhibits, etc.) Was Helpful	55% (1.2%)
PARTNERS’ OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM GOALS	
The Partnership Program Increased Our Target Population’s Understanding About the Value of Their Participation in Census 2000	72% (1.1%)
The Partnership Program Helped My Organization to More Effectively Reach Its Target Population	67% (1.0%)
The Partnership Program Helped My Organization to Minimize Our Target Population’s Fear of Providing Information to the Government	60% (1.1%)

5 point scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Conclusion

According to Census partners, the Census 2000 Partnership Program was effective in its mission. Partner organizations rated the Census 2000 Partnership Program and its materials and activities, as helpful in reaching their targeted population(s). Partners rated all printed materials, partner organization sponsored publicity activities, and community activities as moderately helpful or better in reaching their targeted population(s). Partners gave the highest helpfulness ratings to two community activities, conducting promotional telephone campaigns and canvassing neighborhoods.

More than half of partners also agreed that Census support was helpful in assisting them reach their targeted population(s). Census partnership specialists and other Census staff were particularly helpful in assisting partners promote the Census to their targeted population(s).

More than half of partners also agreed that the program met several common goals. The highest percentage of partners (72%) agreed that the program increased their targeted population's understanding of the value of participating in Census 2000.

Partners' perceptions are only one part in evaluating the Census 2000 PMP. We believe that a much more rigorous assessment of the partnership program would include the following efforts:

- conducting a large-scale sample of Census partnership staff to capture their opinions about the program's effectiveness,
- conducting focus groups with the targeted populations throughout the country to assess the program's exposure and effectiveness, and
- analyzing detailed data that are collected from Census partnership staff about the program, and each partner's activities and materials.

These efforts are designed to incorporate the opinions of several additional key players (i.e., partnership staff and the targeted populations) in the program. All analyses should be included in a comprehensive evaluation of the partnership program.

Bibliography

Bates, Nancy, and Sara K. Buckley, "Effectiveness of the Paid Advertising Campaign: Reported Exposure to Advertising and Likelihood of Returning a Census Form". U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal Evaluation Results Memorandum E1b, April 1999.

Fay, Robert E., Nancy Bates, and Jeffrey Moore. "Lower Mail Response in the 1990 Census: A Preliminary Interpretation". A paper presented at the 1991 Annual Census Bureau Research Conference.

Moore, Jeffrey C., "Evaluating the Public Information Campaign for the 1980 Census—Results of the KAP Survey". U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Census Preliminary Evaluation Results Memorandum No. 31, September 27, 1982.

Roper Starch, Inc., "Effectiveness of Paid Advertising". U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal Evaluation Results Memorandum E1a, December 9, 1998.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Publicity Office. "Plan For Establishing Partnerships For Census 2000", Internal Census Bureau Document, October 8, 1998.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Field Directorate. "Partnership Report 2000 Volume I", Internal Census Bureau Booklet, 2000.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census Monitoring Board, "Report to Congress: October 1, 1999".

U.S. Bureau of the Census, "State Data Centers and Other Coordinating Committees for 1990 Census Promotion and Outreach", Internal Census Bureau Document, 1991.