TRACKING 2020 CENSUS PROGRESS IN "REAL TIME"

Census funders and practitioners can track the progress of the 2020 Census in "real time" by monitoring self-response rates. **Self-response rates do not tell us how accurate the census is**, although low self-response rates suggest the possibility of higher undercounts in the final results.

SELF-RESPONSE RATES: Self-response rates reported *during the Self-Response Operation* will reflect the percent of all residential housing units on the Census Bureau's Master Address File (for a given geographic area) that responded to the census online, by phone, or using a paper questionnaire. **Self-response rates do not represent the percent of *people* who have responded**, which means we won't know the percent of families with young children or Black households, for example, that have self-responded. However, we can look at the demographic characteristics of census tracts, based on American Community Survey estimates and even 2010 Census data, to understand the *types of communities* where response might be lagging, to inform GOTC efforts for those areas.

The denominator is all housing units on the address file — occupied, vacant, or possibly nonexistent. Census takers will confirm occupancy status for unresponsive homes during the door-knocking operation, when they will enumerate remaining households.

UNIVERSE FOR SELF-RESPONSE RATES: The Census Bureau's current plan is to report self-response rates daily from March 20 through June.[1] Self-response rates will be reported for governmental units and census tracts for all areas where households receive census materials by US mail or hand- delivery (Update/Leave Operation), *including most American Indian reservations and Puerto Rico*. The Census Bureau will report separate rates for online self-response, in addition to overall self-response rates for each area.

- **Lag time:** Households that self-respond online or by phone *without the ID assigned to their address* (a "non-ID response") will be incorporated into the self-response rates after the Census Bureau has verified the address and removed duplicate responses from the same address.[2]
- ☒ **Self-response rates do not include** the enumeration of group quarters (such as college dorms, prisons, skilled nursing homes, homeless shelters), transitory locations, and military installations and vessels.
- ☒ **There are no self-response rates** for Remote Alaska and other areas in the Update/Enumerate Operation (such as remote Maine) or for the Island Areas, because these households are counted in person by census enumerators.[3]

COMPARING PROGRESS TO 2010 CENSUS: Funders and practitioners can compare 2020 self-response rates to 2010 Census self-response rates, which the Census Bureau is tweaking to be definitionally comparable to the rates it will publish in 2020. Major design differences between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses, including more ways for households to self-respond and staggered delivery of census materials in 2020, will make comparing rates on a day-to-day and even weekly basis less meaningful.[4]

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[1] Households can self-respond through July 31, even though the Self-Response Operation ends April 30 and the door-knocking phase starts May 13. Daily self-response rate reports will include weekends through May and shift to Mon-Fri. in June.

[2] The Census Bureau will ensure later in the process that *all unique persons* are included in the count for each address, even if more than one form is submitted for the address.

[3] Only about 35,000 housing units are in the stateside Update/Enumerate Operation.

[4] The Census Bureau and CUNY Census 2020 HTC Map will post the 2010 Census "goalposts" by the end of February.