

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-104071](#), a report to congressional addressees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The execution of the 2020 Census was largely a local endeavor, carried out by hundreds of thousands of short-term workers reporting to temporary census offices around the country. How this workforce is managed can affect the cost and quality of the census.

This report examines how the Bureau managed its field data collection operations at the local level for the 2020 Census, and how area census office managers' (ACOM) perspectives can inform planning. GAO performed the work under the authority of the Comptroller General to evaluate the 2020 Census to assist Congress with its oversight responsibilities.

GAO surveyed the Bureau's 248 ACOMs six times during the 2020 Census, reviewed Bureau documents related to management and operations, and interviewed Bureau officials. The number of questions asked varied across waves of the survey, and the wording of some questions changed.

Concurrent with this report, GAO is issuing online supplemental material that presents regional and national aggregations of survey responses.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Bureau (1) use relevant data from GAO's 2020 ACOM survey to inform planning for 2030, (2) use perspectives of selected ACOMs to inform planning for 2030, and (3) develop a plan with defined tasks and milestones to increase coordination with the partnership program. The Bureau concurred and provided technical comments we included where appropriate.

View [GAO-21-104071](#). To view the supplement online, click on [GAO-21-105237](#). For more information, contact Yvonne D. Jones at (202) 512-6806 or [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov).

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## 2020 CENSUS

# Office Managers' Perspectives on Recent Operations Would Strengthen Planning for 2030

## What GAO Found

The Census Bureau executed its most labor-intensive field data-collection activity through 248 area census offices, relying on managers of these offices (ACOM) to oversee field work and ensure its timely completion. ACOMs had a unique vantage point on the census, working at the intersection of regional management and the massive temporary field workforce they oversaw.

### Area Census Office Managers' Position in the Census Workforce



Source: GAO review of Census Bureau documents. | GAO-21-104071

ACOMs responded to GAO's 2020 survey with perspectives on topics ranging from work environment to automation to the Bureau's pandemic response. Such perspectives can inform planning for 2030 and help the Bureau achieve its objectives. Further, as the Bureau moves forward with its planning, it could solicit the views of selected former ACOMs. Similar to the Bureau's use of other advisory groups, former ACOMs' views could be valuable in informing upcoming 2030 design decisions, particularly regarding the most effective and efficient options in the area offices that have been pivotal to successful censuses.

In 2010, GAO recommended that the Bureau develop mechanisms to increase coordination between its area census offices and its Community Partnership and Engagement Program. This program is designed to build community relationships and access hard-to-count populations. However, the Bureau has not fully implemented this recommendation. Accordingly, GAO's survey showed that only 26 to 56 percent of responding ACOMs were very or generally satisfied with aspects of coordination with the program. Developing a plan with defined tasks and milestones could help the Bureau address this and more fully implement the recommendation.