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November 11, 2022

U.S. Census Bureau  
Decennial Census Management Division  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Suitland, MD 20746

Sent via email to: DCMD.2030.Research@census.gov

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the organizations we lead, the Population Association of America and Association of Population Centers, we are pleased to submit comments in response to the agency's Federal Register Notice (FRN) "Soliciting Input or Suggestions on 2030 Census Preliminary Research."

Our organizations jointly represent about 3,000 individual population scientists—including demographers, economists, sociologists, and epidemiologists—as well as approximately 40 federally funded interdisciplinary research centers. Population scientists study the individual, societal, and environmental implications of population change—and thus contribute key findings that help inform evidence-based policy making in the public and private sectors. Population research centers facilitate interdisciplinary research on a range of topics including mortality, morbidity, fertility, adolescent health, aging, population forecasting, immigration, labor and workforce policies, family dynamics, and human-environmental interactions. They also train emerging and early career scientists.

The Census Bureau is the primary source of data that population scientists rely on to conduct their research and research training. Therefore, we have a vested interest in ensuring the 2030 Census is conducted accurately, inclusively, and effectively.

Below are our comments on targeted sections highlighted in the 2030 Census RFN.

## *A. Reaching and Motivating Everyone*

**Background:** Ethnographic research from the Census Bureau and outside experts has shown that the undercount of certain racial and ethnic subgroups as well as young children may be due in part to respondent confusion about

whom to include and exclude as household members on the census form.<sup>1</sup> This confusion stems from the increasing diversity and fluidity of living arrangements and the growth in complex households. In particular, the roster instructions may not be sufficiently clear for individuals who divide their time between households, including children who may split their place of residence between parents who do not co-reside (or with other relatives), leading to confusion about which household roster should include these children and increasing the likelihood of such children being omitted from the census. While the Census Bureau conducted research in the 2022 ACS Content Test on alternate instructions, probes, and questions for creating the household roster—in part to address the undercount of young children<sup>2</sup>—additional research is needed for the 2030 Census given the difference in residence rules between the ACS and the decennial census.

**Recommendation:** To help address the ongoing decennial census undercounts of historically undercounted racial and ethnic groups and young children due to changes in living arrangements and complex household structure, PAA and APC recommend that the Census Bureau conduct additional research to improve the instructions, questions, and probes that respondents use for creating household rosters in the 2030 Census.

**Recommendation:** To reduce the undercount of young children, PAA and APC recommend that the Census Bureau use vital statistics birth records to target families with young children for additional instructions and outreach, and develop and test outreach and education efforts/materials targeting childcare facilities, pediatricians, WIC/SNAP program offices, and other agencies or facilities that provide services to families of young children.

## ***F. Other***

### **1. Adding New Questions to the 2030 Census**

#### **a) Capturing Household Interrelationships**

**Background:** The 2020 Census continued to ask only about each household member's relationship to Person 1 (one of the people in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented), and not about the relationships of other household members to each other. This results in inaccurate and inconsistent classifications of household structure depending on which adult is arbitrarily designated as Person 1. For example, the same cohabiting couple

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: M. de la Puente, "Census 2000 Testing, Experimentation, and Evaluation Program Topic Report No. 15," TR-15, Census 2000 *Ethnographic Studies*, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC: March 2004; L. Schwede, R. Blumberg, and A. Chan (eds), *Complex Ethnic Households in America*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005; E. Jensen, L. Schwede, D. Griffin, and S. Konicki, "Investigating the 2010 Undercount of Young Children – Analysis of Complex Households," U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC: December 2018.

<sup>2</sup> E. Jensen, "[Census Bureau Expands Focus on Improving Data for Young Children](#)," U.S. Census Bureau: March 2022.

household could be classified as a family or a non-family household depending on whether a resident child is reported as an “own” child or an “unrelated” child, which can be a function of which unmarried partner is listed as Person 1.

**Recommendation: To improve respondent reporting and collect more complete data on household relationships, PAA and APC recommend that the Census Bureau test the addition of a relationship grid (similar to the SIPP) or some other question(s) to capture the relationships of household members to each other in addition to their relationship to Person 1. We further recommend that these data be used to classify and report household structure more accurately and consistently.**

## **b) Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation**

**Background:** With the increasing social and political visibility of sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations, there is a growing need for data on the characteristics, geographic distribution, and well-being of these groups. Recently, questions to measure SOGI were added to the Census Bureau’s [Household Pulse Survey](#). Adding such questions to the 2030 Census and the ACS (since 100% items much match between the census form and ACS survey in 2030), would enable researchers to use the extensive social and economic data in the ACS, along with data on disability, to analyze the characteristics and well-being of SGM populations as well as regional differences in economic and health disparities for these groups.

**Recommendation: Drawing on the experience with the Household Pulse Survey, extensive research conducted by a Federal Interagency Working Group,<sup>3</sup> and the recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine,<sup>4</sup> PAA and APC recommend that the Census Bureau conduct additional research to evaluate the potential addition to the 2030 Census and the ACS of new questions that measure sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.**

## **2. Research and Consultation with Outside Experts**

**Recommendation: PAA and APC recommend that the Census Bureau: 1) Make robust investments in research throughout the decade that addresses each of the five topic areas detailed in the FRN; and 2) Consult with outside experts including members of CSAC, NAC, the ACS Data Users Working Group, and PAA and APC, in designing the research and analyzing the results.**

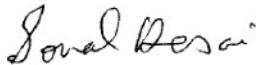
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<sup>3</sup>Federal Interagency Working Group on Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys. 2016. “Toward a Research Agenda for Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys: Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps.” [https://nces.ed.gov/FCSM/pdf/SOGI\\_Research\\_Agenda\\_Final\\_Report\\_20161020.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/FCSM/pdf/SOGI_Research_Agenda_Final_Report_20161020.pdf).

<sup>4</sup>National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2022.

Thank you for considering our views as the Bureau begins preparations for the 2030 Census. Our organizations look forward to engaging with the Bureau throughout the decade and working with the agency to ensure the success of the next decennial census.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonal Desai".

Dr. Sonalde Desai  
President  
Population Association of America

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara R. Curran".

Dr. Sara R. Curran  
President  
Association of Population Centers