



Statement In Response to Final 2026 Census Test Design

On behalf of the hundreds of organizations representing data users in the public, private, non-profit, and research sectors that submitted comments to the Department of Commerce and U.S. Census Bureau regarding proposed changes to the 2026 Census Test, we are writing to express our concerns and disappointment in the March 23 announcement about the final test design.

In response to the 30-day comment period, which closed on March 5, the Department of Commerce and Census Bureau received 336 extensive, well-constructed comments from individuals, government officials, and organizations expressing concerns about the potential operational and cost implications of the agency's proposed changes to the 2026 Census Test. These changes included, among other things, eliminating four of the six original sites, fielding the American Community Survey rather than the decennial census questionnaire, and proposing the use of postal carriers as enumerators. While comments from individuals and organizations may have focused on different facets of the proposed changes, the responses, overall, expressed concern about the exclusion of the only sites

covering rural, remote regions and key group quarters populations, specifically the only military installation and prison in the initial test design.

Based on the final details released on March 23, it is apparent that our comments were not considered nor used to inform any changes to the 2026 Census Test and the design continues to suffer from the same infirmities as were elucidated in these comments. Should the 2026 Census Test proceed as currently planned, it will not produce scientifically valid results that can inform improvements to the operations of the 2030 Census and towards achieving the Census Bureau's mandate of counting every person.

We urge Congress to assert its oversight authority and work intentionally with the Department of Commerce and Census Bureau to revise its plans for the 2026 Census Test, so preparations for the 2030 Census can continue on a path that leads to an accurate, cost-effective, and inclusive constitutionally mandated decennial census.

Association of Population Centers
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
The Census Project
Insights Association
NALEO Educational Fund
Population Association of America
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights