

# 59<sup>th</sup> World Statistics Congress

## Special Topic Session #017

### *Alternative Census Methods, Lessons Learned from the 2010 round, Projects for the 2020 Round*

#### **Innovations in Census Taking for the United States in 2020**

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The 2010 Census produced exceedingly high quality data, but at the cost of \$94/housing unit. This was an increase of over 34% relative to 2000. Unless we make significant changes to the way we conduct the census, the cost will continue to rise at a similar rate in 2020. These escalating costs are unsustainable. The United States Census Bureau has embarked on a research and testing program to develop innovations in a wide range of operations designed to reduce costs while maintaining a high quality census. This includes leveraging the Internet and new communications strategies to improve self-response, determining the extent to which we can conduct a targeted address canvassing operation, and developing methods to use administrative records to enumerate a significant portion of the households that do not return a census questionnaire. We are also developing new methodologies that integrate and automate the conduct and management of field activities. Mounting the staff needed to check addresses and conduct face-to-face interviews is the most expensive component of the census. While we know an extensive field staff will be needed regardless of the breakthroughs we make with administrative records and targeted address canvassing, the more we can cut back on this staff, enable them to work more efficiently, and streamline management, the more we can contain the costs of the census. This paper will provide an overview of the research and testing activities underway in each of these areas. Lessons learned from the 2010 Census, success criteria for the research program, and the possible operational and methodological innovations that can deliver a high quality 2020 Census at or near the cost per housing unit of the 2010 Census adjusted for inflation.

Key words: administrative records, address listing, self-response, field operations