



# American Economic Association

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Committee on Economic Statistics <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/economic-statistics> and  
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## Statement on the Need for Accurate and Reliable Data from the 2020 Decennial Census

The Decennial Census is the source of invaluable data for a wide range of purposes. The count of the population by detailed location and household and person characteristics is a cornerstone of our understanding of the U.S. economy and society. The statistics from the Decennial inform family and business decisions, help guide public policy decisions, and affect countless other aspects of American life. The Census count needs to be accurate, with comprehensive coverage of places and populations, including small places and small subpopulations, and to be carried out with computational integrity. These standards are hallmarks of the U.S. Census. They result from independent Census planning and execution by highly skilled statistical, economic, and demographic experts.

The National Academy of Sciences *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* highlights four key principles that subsequently became incorporated into the Foundations for Evidence Based Policymaking Act of 2018: (1) Relevance to Policy Issues; (2) Credibility to Data Users; (3) Trust Among Data Providers and (4) Independence from Undue Political and Undue Other Influence. Strict adherence to these principles is critical for the activities of all of the U.S. Federal Statistical Agencies including and especially the Decennial Census.

The June 2020 creation of a new Deputy Director of Policy and a Senior Advisor to the Deputy Director for Policy raises questions about the adherence to these principles. These are two new political appointments to advise the Census Bureau on the 2020 Decennial Census. The 2020 Decennial operations are well underway and these appointments are late in a process that has been planned for the past several years by the highly skilled professional staff at Census. It is not clear what the function and intellectual authority of the appointees to these positions are relative to the career senior management and professional staff at the U.S. Census Bureau. Clarity about the role of these appointments is needed as well as assurances that the core principles of credibility and independence of the U.S. Census Bureau in its operations will be maintained in light of these appointments.