



Analysis: Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request for the U.S. Census Bureau

On May 28, the Biden Administration released additional details regarding its proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget. [The proposal](#) recommends that the Census Bureau receive \$1,442,402,000 in FY 2022, a 30 percent increase (or approximately \$336 million more) above the Bureau's FY 2021 enacted level of funding.

The budget table also proposes a budget restructure, combining discretionary appropriations from the "Current Surveys and Programs" and the "Periodic Censuses and Programs" appropriations into a new, two-year appropriation entitled "Censuses and Survey Programs." This consolidation provides a more comprehensive, unified, and simplified overview of Census Bureau operations, eliminating an outdated bifurcation of data collection that no longer reflects current methodologies. The mandatory appropriation for the State Children's Health Insurance Program will remain in what was the Current Surveys and Programs account under the new title, "Supplemental Surveys."

The two-year authority would allow for spending across a two-year period, if necessary, to allow for flexibility as circumstances shift (such as in a pandemic); the Census Bureau will still be subject to annual appropriations like any other agency.

The "Censuses and Survey Programs" account would be divided into four parts: (1) Economic Statistics, which would include Current Economic Statistics (business, construction, manufacturing, etc.), the Economic Census, and the Census of Governments; (2) Demographic Statistics, which would include Current Demographic Statistics (including SIPP, the Current Population Survey, and the Supplemental Poverty Measure) and the American Community Survey; (3) Decennial Census, including the 2020 and 2030 Censuses; and (4) Enterprise Enabling Programs, which would include Bureau-wide data collection, management, processing, and dissemination programs.

Highlights

- **2020 Census** -- \$949.7 million (\$616.7 million below FY 2021). In FY 2022, the 2020 Census will continue to release data products from the 2020 Census, results from its coverage measurement program, and findings from evaluations and assessments.
- **2030 Census** -- \$151.6 million (\$151.6 million above FY 2021). The Census Bureau requested this funding level to formally begin planning for the 2030 Census, which will include a "program of research and testing centered on developing a 2030 Census design, capitalizing on innovations such as the way that the address list is developed and maintained, the use of administrative records as a source of data for enumeration, and

making field operations more efficient.” The Bureau warns that, absent “sufficient” early funding for the 2030 Census, it will be unable to “work on research and innovations for the 2030 Census,” sacrificing “the cost and risk reduction benefits of further innovations aiming to streamline and simplify the 2030 Census.”

- **Economic Census and Census of Governments** -- \$153.1 million (\$7.8 million above FY 2021). In FY 2022, the Bureau will finalize releases from the 2017 Economic Census, while conducting the 2022 Economic Census and Census of Governments. With respect to the Economic Census, for which the budget suggests approximately \$141 million (\$6.236 million above the FY 2021 level), the Bureau will focus on developing electronic instruments and implementing machine learning process. Meanwhile, the Bureau plans to expand the use of existing government administrative records and test innovative methods and strategies for data collection for the Census of Governments in FY 2022.
- **High Frequency Data Program** -- \$10 million (not budgeted before). Building upon the success of the “pulse” surveys, which the Bureau conducted in response to the COVID-19 crisis to measure the economic and societal impacts, the agency proposes spending additional funds in FY 2022 for other innovative ways to produce timelier and more relevant economic and demographic statistics.
- **Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)** \$47 million (\$1 million less than FY 2021) Funding for SIPP is provided as part of the Bureau’s Household Surveys program. In FY 2021, SIPP received approximately \$48 million. The Bureau proposes to decrease the SIPP budget by \$1 million in FY 2022, given this amount was used in FY 2021 for a National Academies study evaluating “financially sustainable collection methods or alternative sources of comparable data on the economic well-being of Americans and program participation.”
- **Administrative records research and integration** -- \$10.3 million (\$997,000 above FY 2021). Administrative records research is an enterprise-wide effort to expand the use of administrative records to improve sample survey operations, data quality, and data products across the Census Bureau and reduce respondent burden by developing alternatives to survey data collection.
- **American Community Survey (ACS)** -- \$330.2 million (\$2.5 million above FY 2021). The budget proposes a minor increase for the ACS as a whole, with a slight increase (\$48,000) aimed at maintaining the survey’s frame and sample (\$1,242,000 for FY 2022).
- **Frames Initiative** -- part of Geographic Support’s \$89.663 million (\$13.354 million more than FY 2021). As part of the Bureau’s enterprise-wide improvements to data infrastructure, sharing, and dissemination, the Frames Initiative will help break down silos between surveys and programs by seeking to unify the Bureau’s sample frames. — For the 2030 Census, that will mean the potential ongoing address files that could make

the next decennial more accurate and less costly (by reducing the amount of necessary fieldwork). In tandem with “refinement” of other internal and external data sources, this will help determine where administrative records could allow enumeration in-office instead of additional visits in the field and fewer field offices, saving money over the decennial life cycle without sacrificing data quality. The integration of agile, accessible sample frames across the Census Bureau (including Geospatial, Business, Job and Demographic frames) will allow for all Bureau programs to benefit from: “• Integration of already-existing data to create full counts of persons, places, jobs, and businesses; • Advancing of federal government efforts to exhaust already existing administrative data before burdening survey respondents; • Increased ease and usability of federal statistical data while decreasing duplicative efforts; • Enhanced quality of federal statistical products about the nation’s people and economy; and • Facilitation of more precise analyses of the nation’s population, geography, and economy.”

Stakeholder Concerns and Questions

[The Census Project recommends that the Bureau receive \\$2 billion \(in multi-year funding\) in FY 2022](#), reflecting what census stakeholders believe the agency needs to not only sustain current operations, but also to aggressively pursue long overdue technical and operational innovations.

We appreciate the Administration support for increased funding in FY 2022 and for prioritizing completion of the 2020 Census, accelerating 2030 Census preparations, and supporting 2022 Economic Census operations. However, the Census Project has several questions and concerns regarding the Administration’s proposal:

ACS

A major component of the Census Project’s funding recommendation is the need for an increase in the American Community Survey (ACS) sample size, which has been flat since 2011. The current sample size is not sufficient to provide reliable and robust data for rural, remote regions and small population subgroups, including American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Bureau should expand the ACS sample size starting in FY 2022. Bureau officials have confirmed that it would cost only \$45 million to increase the ACS sample by at least 1 million households. As the needs of the 2020 Census diminish, the Bureau needs resources to enhance the ACS overall. Given questions and concerns raised about shortcomings in the 2020 count, reliable, timely, and representative data from the ACS will be even more necessary to give state and local data users data to fill any gaps in the 2020 count.

SIPP

SIPP should receive no less in FY 2022 than it did in FY 2021, which is approximately \$48 million in discretionary funding, especially given the uneven funding levels for SIPP historically. Rather than proposing a \$1 million reduction in the SIPP, the Bureau should reinvest those funds to address long term erosion of the survey’s funding and response rates, putting that money toward increased non-response follow up. SIPP is an essential tool for Congress to measure the

efficacy of many components of the CARES Act, the American Rescue Plan Act, and other measures to address the pandemic and related economic recession.

Budget Restructure

The Census Project supports giving the Census Bureau greater flexibility to adapt in response to disruptions to survey collection. However, the restructuring of Census Bureau accounts makes it more difficult to compare funding across any prior years, so Congress should require the Census Bureau to map funding under the new budget structure to prior year levels.

The Census Project generally supports the Bureau's initiative to provide the ACS discrete budget authority, especially given the need to expand the sample size to provide more robust data on an annual basis for rural areas, neighborhoods, and small population subgroups. Having replaced the decennial "long form", the mandatory nature of the ACS produces higher levels of response and therefore quality data on a much timelier basis for data users.

The Census Project (<https://thecensusproject.org>) is a broad-based coalition of national, state, and local organizations and companies that support an inclusive and accurate 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census "long form"). Its 900+ member organizations and companies, representing the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors, rely on objective data that the Census Bureau produces to inform evidence-based investment, policy and planning decisions.