

American Statistical Association Pleased with Decision to Leave Citizenship Question Off 2020 Census

Warns that the Fight for an Accurate Count is Not Over

The American Statistical Association (ASA) supports the conclusion of the 2020 census citizenship question debate, as the President announced in a White House news conference this evening that the administration will not further pursue its efforts to include the question on the form. This decision puts at ease the most immediate threat to the data integrity of the 2020 census. However, the ASA emphasizes there is still much work to be done.

“We are reassured that the form for the decennial Census has been decided. Now we all must make every effort to communicate the vital importance of the census to the U.S., to assure individuals their responses are fully protected by law, and to secure as complete a response as possible,” said ASA president Karen Kafadar.

In particular, even the potential for a citizenship question has already raised concern about the possibility that certain groups will be undercounted, due to the negative publicity associated with the census. It will be critical to the success of the census that individuals understand the data they provide cannot be used to provide information about any individuals, including where they live.

“It is now the responsibility of the federal government to clearly and repeatedly emphasize the security and significance of responses to the census,” said Ron Wasserstein, ASA executive director. “As the 2020 census will inform federal decision-making for the full decade ahead, and the onus is on the government to undo the concern it has instilled with its deliberations.”

The ASA urges the administration to make this point at every opportunity. It also urges all persons to complete the form when it comes to them at their residence, or to assist fully with census enumerators when they follow up at their door.

The census is the backbone of the U.S. data infrastructure, informing decisions across the public and private sectors and determining representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Because of the far-reaching impact it will have for the ensuing decade, extensive care, science and planning are put into each census, starting up to ten years in advance. The ASA and the greater community opposed the last-minute addition of the question because it disrupted the Census Bureau’s careful planning, lacked scientific justification, and compromised data quality.

President Trump’s decision not to add the citizenship question allows the Census professionals to return to the important work of making sure the 2020 Census is as fair and accurate as possible.

###

Contact: Steve Pierson, pierson@amstat.org, (703) 302-1841.

About the American Statistical Association

The ASA is the world's largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

As part of ASA's commitment to support the importance of government statistics for evidence-based policymaking, ASA created [Count on Stats](http://www.countonstats.org). In partnership with over a dozen organizations, the initiative is designed to educate and inform the public about the critically important nature of federal data. Without federal agencies' data collection and analysis, we would not have key insights into nutrition, economic trends, community issues, public safety, agriculture, and countless other facets that are vital to our society. For additional information, please visit the Count on Stats website at www.countonstats.org.