



Technological Issues Observed During the 2026 Census Test

REPORT NO. OIG-26-029-I
September 23, 2026





September 23, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: George M. Cook
Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs,
performing the functions of the Director
U.S. Census Bureau



FROM: Arthur L. Scott Jr.
Assistant Inspector General for Audit and Evaluation

SUBJECT: *Technological Issues Observed During the 2026 Census Test*
Report No. OIG-26-029-I

Attached is the final management alert describing the technological issues identified during our initial site observations of the 2026 Census Test. This management alert results from ongoing work on [our evaluation](#) of the effectiveness of the 2026 Census Test in validating operational, technological, and methodological innovations designed to enhance cost efficiency, data quality, and response rates for the 2030 census. We will post the management alert on [our website](#) per the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. §§ 404, 420).

Please note that we are not providing recommendations or requesting an action plan. However, any action the U.S. Census Bureau takes as a result of this alert will inform our overall report at the conclusion of this evaluation.

We appreciate your staff's cooperation and professionalism.

Attachment





Introduction

The mission of the 2030 Census Program is to determine where everyone in the nation lives, count the people at those locations, and share the results with the President, the states, and the public. On May 1, 2026, the U.S. Census Bureau began its 2026 Census Test. As part of the test, the bureau planned to conduct in-field enumeration (IFE) operations. On June 1, 2026, the bureau began its 2026 Census Test IFE activities in Huntsville, Alabama, and Spartanburg, South Carolina. This operation concluded on August 31, 2026.¹

The bureau's test was not a complete enumeration of the population, but its results will provide evidence for assessing enhancements and innovations to field infrastructure, staffing, and training. In addition, the bureau will evaluate the operational feasibility and cost of using U.S. Postal Service (USPS) mail carriers to enumerate while working mail delivery routes in Spartanburg, South Carolina (Flight A), and as temporary part-time bureau employees while not carrying out postal duties in Huntsville, Alabama (Flight B). The bureau also hired enumerators, census field supervisors (CFSS), and census field managers (CFMs) in both locations.

In this test, both USPS and bureau enumerators visited housing units to obtain demographic information from households that did not complete the test questionnaire online. The enumerators used bureau-provided mobile phones to record household information in an application called MOJO Casey that is connected to the bureau's operational control system. This application allows enumerators to manage aspects of their work, such as identifying addresses to visit, accessing maps to locate addresses, recording responses to the questionnaire during in-person interviews, and documenting work availability, actual time worked, and mileage expenses.

On May 7, 2026, we initiated an evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2026 Census Test in validating operational, technological, and methodological innovations designed to enhance cost efficiency, data quality, and response rates for the 2030 census. During site observations in June 2026, USPS denied us access to conduct direct observations of Flight A USPS mail carriers. On August 4, 2026, USPS granted us access, along with the U.S. Government Accountability Office, to conduct joint observations of Flight A USPS mail carriers on August 11-12, 2026. This management alert only describes the technological issues we observed during our June site visit that impact the 2026 Census Test. Appendix 1 details the scope and methodology we used to perform these on-site observations.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. [Census Takers to Start Visiting Households for 2026 Census Test](#). Accessed July 20, 2026.

Observations

During the weeks of June 15 and June 22, 2026, OIG staff observed 15 bureau-hired enumerators at both sites attempt a total of 205 interviews. We found that enumerators faced technological issues while conducting IFE. Specifically, through our observations and our discussions with the enumerators, CFSs, and CFMs, we found 55 instances² of technological issues with the MOJO Casey application and mobile phones when carrying out IFE and performing administrative functions. The following are the issues we identified:

- Difficulty syncing information obtained from households (17 instances)
- Difficulty using the application and mobile phone (13 instances)
- Inefficient case assignments using the optimizer³ (11 instances)
- Inaccurate housing unit locations provided by the GPS function (5 instances)
- Improper or incorrect setup of mobile phones (4 instances)
- Loss of enumerator availability information used to schedule work assignments (3 instances)
- Untimely⁴ help desk resolution of requests (2 instances)

Regarding the syncing issues, the bureau provided a job aid, the Casey Quick Reference Guide, with instructions on how to potentially resolve the problem as part of training materials. However, we observed that enumerators were unaware of the job aid.

The technological issues we observed impacted the 2026 Census Test in several ways. When the application failed to synchronize, enumerators had to relaunch the application and, in some instances, reperform household interviews. In addition, when an enumerator indicated their work availability in the application, the case optimizer did not always assign cases, resulting in the CFS manually assigning cases. Further, we observed enumerators who had difficulty locating housing units, and they told us that the order of addresses in the case list led to following potentially inefficient routes. As a result, enumerators were delayed in completing cases. If not addressed promptly, these technological issues may impact the overall efficiency of the test by increasing mileage and wage costs, slowing interview completion rates, and affecting the accuracy of results for the 2026 Census Test.

² During interviews, enumerators told us they reported some of these issues to the IT helpdesk and others to the CFS.

³ The MOJO Casey optimizer generates work assignments based on the enumerator's work availability, home address or starting location, and workload location.

⁴ OIG determined resolution was untimely in instances when IT addressed device issues either after a week or the help desk's inability to remotely access the device contributed to delays in resolving issues.

This alert does not include recommendations. OIG conducted additional observations during the week of August 10, 2026. Our analysis from those observations will inform the final report, including recommendations, that we will issue at the conclusion of our evaluation.

Summary of the Bureau's Response

On August 19, 2026, we issued a draft management alert to the bureau. On September 4, 2026, in response to the draft management alert, the bureau provided technical comments. We considered these comments and revised the management alert where appropriate.

Appendix 1. Scope and Methodology

Our evaluation objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the 2026 Census Test in validating operational, technological, and methodological innovations designed to enhance cost efficiency, data quality, and response rates for the 2030 census. To help address this objective, we carried out in-person observations of bureau-hired enumerators from June 15 through June 25, 2026, to gain an understanding of how they carried out IFE procedures. We briefed the observations in this alert to bureau officials on August 4, 2026. Further, we conducted additional site visits during the week of August 10, 2026.

To carry out our observations, we:

- Reviewed training material and completed online bureau-required 2026 Census Test enumerator and supervisor trainings.
- Reviewed 2026 Census Test operational and evaluation plans.
- Reviewed the 2026 Census Test interagency agreement between the bureau and USPS.
- Conducted observations of six bureau-hired enumerators in Huntsville, Alabama, and nine bureau hired enumerators in Spartanburg, South Carolina.
- Interviewed three CFSs and one CFM in Huntsville, Alabama, and four CFSs and one CFM in Spartanburg, South Carolina.
- Interviewed decennial census management and field division managers.

In addition, we assessed internal controls related to IFE operational procedures to gain an understanding of them. This alert identifies specific weaknesses that we have identified to date.

We did not rely on computer-processed data; instead, we relied on information gathered during our in-person observations to support our observations and conclusions. Consequently, we did not perform data reliability procedures on that data.

This management alert is based on observations conducted in June 2026 under the authority of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. §§ 401-424), and Department Organization Order 10-13, as amended October 21, 2020. We conducted observations and interviews in Huntsville and Spartanburg, and interviews with bureau staff at headquarters in Suitland, Maryland, and the regional census center in Atlanta, Georgia.

We conducted this part of the evaluation in accordance with *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020) issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

REPORT

FRAUD & WASTE ABUSE



HOTLINE



Department of Commerce

Office of Inspector General Hotline

www.oig.doc.gov | 800-424-5197