2. Initial Operational Data Quality Metrics in the 2020 Census

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The United States conducted its 2020 Decennial Census during the COVID-19 pandemic and also experienced many other operational challenges, such as wildfires and a very active hurricane season, during data collection. The count of the population to reapportion the U.S. House of Representatives is the first major data product-related milestone. The data were delivered to the President, the Congress and the American people in April 2021.

This first glimpse at the results of the 2020 Census also inspires questions about data quality. In addition to delivering data about the nation's population, the United States, for the first time in history, provided statistics on operational quality metrics at the same time as the population counts. The level of geography for the metrics was the same as for the population counts. Thus data users could review operational quality metrics for the United States, each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. These metrics provided important information about the quality of the census by looking at how a response was obtained for each address. This was completed by examining the final status of addresses in the census and how that status was determined. These data are just one piece of information about the quality of the census, but they offer insight into how often responses were collected from the different census operations. Additional operational quality metrics will be released in the coming months.

This first release of quality metrics included a downloadable table with the 2020 Census numbers, comparable metrics from the 2010 Census, and technical documentation. The metrics were also made available through an interactive, user-friendly dashboard that makes it easy to compare metrics among the nation and its states. Future metrics will be shared in a similar manner, building on lessons learned from this first release.