



# Report in Brief

March 13, 2025

## Background

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 130 surveys of households and businesses each year. The bureau employs thousands of field representatives (FRs) to interview respondents for some of its largest surveys, including the American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The bureau's Field Division plans and carries out the field data collection program for the surveys. Regional offices are responsible for recruitment, hiring, and retention of FRs for surveys in their regions. The bureau struggles to recruit and retain FRs in some areas, resulting in high FR attrition. This has led to staffing shortfalls for the ACS, CPS, and NCVS.

If the bureau does not recruit and retain enough quality employees for FR positions, it will not have sufficient and capable staff to complete interviews and collect social and economic data the federal government, businesses, and other groups need. The bureau includes FRs in its mission-critical occupation (MCO) list. Agencies consider MCOs as core to carrying out their missions and without which they cannot complete their mission-critical work.

## Why We Did This Review

Our objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies the bureau uses to support its recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees in mission-critical positions. Specifically, we reviewed staffing requirements and strategies intended to ensure the bureau recruits, hires, and retains enough FRs to collect survey data.

## U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The Census Bureau Did Not Develop a Workforce Plan to Address Field Representative Staffing Gaps

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## WHAT WE FOUND

We found that the bureau does not have effective strategies to address staffing gaps and high vacancies in FR positions. Specifically, the bureau did not:

- Meet its staffing goals for ACS, CPS, and NCVS.
- Implement a process to track and assess vacancy information from the regions.

Without a workforce plan, the bureau lacks a comprehensive strategy to ensure it has the necessary FR staff to help accomplish its mission of providing high-quality data. Unaddressed FR staffing gaps increase the risks of lower response rates on surveys and higher attrition of other field staff, who bear the burden of increased workloads. Developing and implementing a workforce plan for FRs will help the bureau address the issues we identify in this report.

## WHAT WE RECOMMENDED

We recommended that the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau develop and implement a comprehensive workforce plan for FRs that includes the following:

- Setting strategic direction.
- Conducting workforce analysis.
- Developing, implementing, and monitoring the workforce action plan to meet the bureau's workforce needs.