

Communicating Privacy and Security to Respondents

Aleia Clark Fobia

Jessica Holzberg

Jennifer Hunter Childs

Center for Survey Measurement

U.S. Census Bureau

Data Sources

- Respondent Messaging
 - 303 online cases; 30 in-person
- Einstein Confidentiality Pledge
 - 360 online cases; 40 in-person
- Data from Focus Groups
 - 2013-2016

Findings

Who has access

- We make sure that the only people who can see your responses are those who need them to perform official Census Bureau duties.
- Only people working on official Census Bureau business can access your survey response.
- By law, the only people who can see your responses are authorized researchers for approved statistical uses.
- The Census Bureau will never share your responses with anyone who is not legally obligated to protect it.

Who has access

Modification

- The Census Bureau will ~~never~~ only share your responses with ~~anyone~~ people who ~~is not~~ are legally obligated to protect them.

Confidentiality

- By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than the statisticians who tabulate it.
- By law, your information is confidential and can not be seen by anyone other than specially authorized statistical researchers
- Your data are confidential, by law, and the people who see your responses are bound by law to protect them.
- We are required by law to protect your information.

Data for Stats Only

- By law, we only allow access to data to conduct research that would help carry out the Census Bureau's mission and benefit the public good.
- The Census Bureau will never use your responses for anything other than statistical research.
- The information we collect can only be used for statistical research.
- Your answers can only be used for statistical research. They cannot be used for any other purpose.

Data for Stats Only

Modification

- The Census Bureau will ~~never~~ only use your responses for ~~anything other than~~ statistical research.

No individual identification

- The Census Bureau will never release your responses in any way that could identify you as an individual.
- Experts review all statistical results before they are released to make sure there is no information that could identify an individual.
- Very few authorized individuals actually see your name or other personal information that could identify you. Most of the time, personal information that could identify you is removed from the file that contains your survey or census answers.

Data Sharing: Benefits and Law Enforcement

- The Census Bureau will only use your responses for statistical research. Responses can never be used to determine whether a person is eligible for a social program or a government benefit.
- We will never share your information with law enforcement or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.

Data Sharing: Other Agencies

- Under tightly controlled circumstances, we sometimes share responses with other federal agencies to further the Census Bureau's work. Those agencies must follow the same laws as the Census Bureau to protect your personal information.
- Sometimes, we give a limited number of employees at other federal agencies access to your data under tightly controlled circumstances. Even in these cases the data can only be used to produce statistics.

Data Sharing: Framing Administrative Records

- Mention a specific agency
- Mention specific data points
- Government cost-savings frame

“The 2010 Census cost over \$10 billion dollars. To reduce this cost for the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau could get your name and age from the Social Security Administration. If this method could save government money, *are you strongly in favor of it, somewhat in favor of it, neither in favor nor against it, somewhat against it, or strongly against it?* ”

Data Sharing: Framing Administrative Records

- Social Good frame

“Census numbers determine where local, state, and federal agencies build new schools, roads, and firehouses. If the Census Bureau could obtain names and ages from the Social Security Administration to get a better idea of where these types of services should be located, would you be *strongly in favor of it, somewhat in favor of it, neither in favor nor against it, somewhat against it, or strongly against it?*”

Website Terms and Conditions

- Almost half of online respondents recalled the term “monitoring”
- Monitoring was “creepy,” “intense,” “scary”
- Term “security experts” problematic
 - “Are they Census security experts making sure my data is secure, or are they folks sitting at the NSA looking at what’s going across the Census desk and figuring out whether or not I’m of the wrong color skin or the wrong national origin?”

Communicating Data Use and Privacy

- Small words
- Be specific about agencies, data points
 - SSA, name, age,
- Stay away from absolute language
- Stay away from vague language

Aleia Clark Fobia

aleia.yvonne.clark.fobia@census.gov

Jennifer Hunter Childs

jennifer.hunter.childs@census.gov