

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to oppose the current proposal to count prisoners as residents of their prisons instead of the communities from which they hail. I think you know why people think you should count prisoners as part of their home communities, and you just don't care. I think that because of [this post that Director Robert Graves](#) during the 2010 Census. Since then, we have learned that states overwhelmingly do not use your supplementary materials (i.e., early-release prisoner manifests) the way you hoped they would, so that solution should not be considered again.

In that post, you call yourselves a "nonpartisan scientific organization." So I was surprised to read "There are... conceptual issues... [such as d]efining 'usual residence' outside the prison," because it presents a routine task of social science (operationalizing a variable) as an insurmountable obstacle. We all know that isn't true, including you.

In that post, you list five possible ways to operationalize that variable. Pick the best one. Don't know what the best one is? Run a pilot survey with a representative group of prisoners to see which they would pick, and go with that one. Don't have enough money to do that? Tell us that so we can demand change from our lawmakers. Don't think we'll listen? Lobby for change yourselves. It's not "partisan" to request the resources you need to do a scientifically robust census. In fact, it's borderline unethical for you to release a census you know is bad, then release an appendix and expect someone else to combine them for you (the 2010 method).

It took me five minutes to come up with these solutions, but to my mind they're no more flawed than your current methodology is. The only reason to keep the 2020 policy the same as 2010's is because you simply don't care about the growing mountain of evidence and public opinion against that outdated methodology.

So here's my message to you: I hope you change the rules. But if you don't, understand that your game is becoming more and more obvious all the time. It's obviously hard to do the census the way the people you work for (American citizens) want you to do it, but that doesn't make it acceptable or ethical for you to do it some other way instead. As a scientific organization, consider this letter-writing push your peer review. You have not passed through. We're sending the policy back for revision.

Kind regards,
Louis Lagalante