Question about citizenship in the US Census can redefine Congress

Trump measure would inhibit immigrant participation and reduce the weight of Democratic states

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Danielle Brant

NEW YORK  The simple question has the power to generate inflamed reactions: Are you an American citizen? That's what the 2020 Census wants to know. In Donald Trump's USA, those words do not sound innocuous.

As in Brazil, the Census foreseen in the American Constitution is realized every decade since 1790. The objective is to estimate the population. The data is used to define the representativeness of each district in the Chamber. Therefore, the questionnaire is not only applied to citizens. Districts with larger populations receive more seats and more federal resources.

This is what concerns minority advocacy organizations who are wary of the government's justification for including the question of securing everyone's right to vote. For activists, the question will chase away illegal immigrants or even naturalized American citizens with relatives without permission to remain in the United States.
"We live in a climate of great hostility to Latinos, blacks, illegal immigrants," says Silvia Pedraza, a professor of sociology and culture at the University of Michigan.

Chayenne Polimedio, deputy director of the New America study center, believes that many immigrants may stop participating for fear that the information will be shared, for example, with the Justice Department or with immigration agencies.

"They fear the government will know their addresses. They are in a delicate situation."

Without the answers of this portion of the population, the accuracy of the Census is compromised, says Laurence Benenson, assistant director of the National Immigration Forum. The direct effect is the underestimation of the US population, which would undermine demographic monitoring.

There would still be an impact on the design of districts. Very populous states are divided into more districts so that the population can have greater representation. With 19.85 million inhabitants, New York has 27 districts - or 27 seats. Vermont, with 623,657 inhabitants, has 1.
New York is an example of the impact of the Census. The state lost two representatives after being redesigned as a result of the 2010 survey.

"If you are in an Arizona district and have 8,000 people who do not respond to the census, the state may lose a seat," estimates Benenson.

The effect is greater in places with a high share of immigrants, such as New York and California - states that tend to elect Democratic deputies.

"If you want to disadvantage places with immigrants, that's a way." "Even if both parties lose out there, Republicans get a seat somewhere with fewer migrants."

Still, the impact remains bipartisan, says Angela Manso, director of Naleo, a nonpartisan association. Even areas that vote mostly for Democrats have Republican residents.
"Whoever thinks it's only going to hurt a group does not understand how the Census works."

The redesign of districts threatens to reduce federal resources to these areas, making them impoverished. "You have communities of the same size, but federal funding is not enough because money takes into account the number of people," says Manso.

"It's problematic in areas that need schools, roads. They will have to live with this money for ten years," he says, noting that the next Census would only come in 2030.

In addition to potentially nullifying a large portion of the population, inclusion of the question would also make research more expensive. To ensure that the majority of the population respond, there are a series of steps that the Census follows, such as submitting a form by the Post Office and follow-up by phone or visit.

The budget foreseen for the 2020 Census is US $ 15.6 billion (R $ 65 billion). According to the Census's own research director and methodology, John Abowd, the extra cost of adding the question would be at least $ 27.5 million, as estimated in a January memo to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross.

The question about citizenship is not unprecedented. But the last time all selected households were questioned about the topic was in 1950. From there, the question was moved to a longer form and it was sent to one in six households.

The question of the question in the 2020 Census is the path by which it was included. In March, the Commerce Secretary announced that the questioning would occur, at the request of the Department of Justice, which sought to prohibit discriminatory practices against voters. Congress delegates to Ross the authority to determine Census questions.

"We later heard of White House talks to include the question with individuals like Kris Kobach and Steve Bannon," says Manso, citing anti-immigration advisers.
Census data is confidential, but there are precedents: historian Margo Anderson of the University of Wisconsin and Statistician William Seltzer of Fordham University found evidence that Census officials handed over to the government data of Americans of Japanese descent in World War II.

About 120,000 of them were sent to internment camps after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941.

The 2020 survey will include the question, "You're an American citizen," a move that can chase away illegal immigrants and give Republicans political breathing.

CENSUS 2020

The Constitution says that every ten years, there must be a Census to determine the number of representatives each state will receive. It is not necessary to be a citizen to participate in the Census.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The number of seats distributed to each state in the Chamber of Deputies is based on the population count made by the Census.

WHAT ARE DISTRICTS?

The congressional districts are the 435 areas of which the members are elected to the Chamber of Deputies. The drawing, in theory, seeks to balance the strength of each local population (whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans) in order not to exclude any voice.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CHANGE?

With a 1% * underreporting, the projected loss of federal resources ** for medical care would be:
$291.9 million in Texas

$221.7 million in Pennsylvania

$177.8 million in Pennsylvania

$139 million in Ohio

$122.2 million in Illinois

* based on the 2010 Census; ** based on fiscal year 2015 resources

Source: GW Institute of Public Policy

President Trump during White House Event - Susan Walsh-12.set.18 / Associated Press

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