



We Count! 2020 Census Basics

What is the U.S. Census?

The census is a snapshot of who we are as a country and is foundational to our democracy. It is a survey required by the U.S. Constitution that counts every person living in the U.S. – all ages, races, and ethnic groups; all citizens and non-citizens. The 2020 Census will happen this spring and every household should complete a census form (online, by mail, or phone) and include all people living in the household on April 1, 2020.

Why does the 2020 Census Matter?

Participating in the census is a demonstration of our collective power. The census is used to allocate representation, resources, and power. This is about more than one person filling out a form and being counted, it is about entire communities and allies standing up and declaring that we matter! We count!

Representation in Our Democracy

- Every ten years, census data is used to determine how many members of Congress each state will have and to draw new legislative maps for Congress, state legislatures, and local governments.
- A complete census count brings political power to our communities by making sure the makeup of Congress and state legislatures reflects our interests, our voices, and the increasing strength of our communities.
- The current Administration's unsuccessful attempt to add a citizenship question and to intimidate our full participation is intended to undermine the power of Black, brown, and immigrant communities. If our communities are undercounted, we will be deprived of our voice and influence at every level of government.

Resources in Our Communities

- The 2020 Census will determine how more than \$800 billion in federal funds every year are distributed among states and localities.¹
- Census data will inform where schools, roads, hospitals, childcare centers, senior centers, and other services are built and where investments are made.
- Major federal programs rely on data and allocations derived from the census, including:
 - Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Part B, Highway Planning and Construction, Section 8, Title I Grants, Special Education Grants (IDEA), State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and Head Start.²
- Census data are indispensable for monitoring discrimination and the enforcement of a broad range of civil rights laws.
- We must not let this Administration or the Supreme Court weaponize the census to prevent our communities from getting our fair share of much-needed resources.

Continued on back.

¹ Andrew Reamer, *Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, Report #2: Estimating Fiscal Costs of a Census Undercount to States* (GW Institute of Public Policy, March 19, 2018), <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/GWIPP%20Reamer%20Fiscal%20Impacts%20of%20Census%20Undercount%20on%20FMAP-based%20Programs%2003-19-18.pdf>.

² Andrew Reamer, *Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, Initial Analysis: 16 Largest Census-Guided Financial Assistance Programs* (GW Institute of Public Policy, August 18, 2017), <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-initial-analysis>.



When and How Do I Participate in the 2020 Census?

It is very easy. In March 2020, every household should receive a mailing from the U.S. Census Bureau with instructions on how to fill out the census form. Here are some key details about how to participate:

- How do I fill it out? In March 2020, you'll receive a mailing from the U.S. Census Bureau with instructions to visit the census website. Upon logging onto the Bureau's website, each household will fill out a simple 10-question form online. Other options for completing the form via telephone or mail will be available. Individuals can call 888-839-8632 for more information.
- What information should I include: For every person in the household, the survey will ask for their name, relationship to head of household, gender, age, birthday, race, ethnicity, and status as a homeowner or renter. Be sure to include every person residing in the household, including children.
- How long will it take? It should take about 10 minutes to complete the census form.
- What happens if I don't fill it out? If a household does not respond, the Census Bureau will mail two reminders and then a paper census form in the fourth mailing. Thereafter, the Census Bureau will send an employee – called an enumerator – to that address to collect the information in person.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Probably Yes. There are strong laws protecting census data, including:

- Census Bureau employees with access to protected data are sworn to keep information confidential for life under threat of criminal penalty.
- Census employees are prohibited from disclosing census data to federal agencies, immigration authorities, law enforcement, and courts of law.
- Personally-identifiable data may ONLY be used for purely statistical purposes. Law enforcement is not considered a statistical purpose.

Key changes to the 2020 Census (from past Censuses):

- Online Response: For the first time the Internet will be the primary way that people will submit their census forms.
- Reduced Home Visits: the U.S. Census Bureau will only visit homes that do not respond to the census form. Census takers, also known as enumerators, will visit non-responding households starting in late-April through early-July of 2020.
- Two-Part Race & Ethnicity Question: The Census Bureau will continue to use two separate questions to collect data on race and ethnicity (despite its own research showing a single, combined Hispanic origin and race question produces better data).
- Fewer Resources for Bureau: The Census Bureau has been mandated by Congress to conduct the 2020 Census at a lower cost per household than in 2010, resulting in less outreach efforts than in 2010 as well as fewer local census offices, field staff, and overall field "presence" in 2020.

The Power to Fight Back and Be Counted

This Administration is stoking fear in our communities, especially by telling immigrants and undocumented people that their voices do not matter and that they should not be here. This Administration is trying to control who counts and matters in this country and who does not. They want to erase people of color, immigrants, and people with low incomes off the map. We will not allow this Administration to rig the census and deny visibility and services to immigrants and communities of color. ***Together we will fight for a fair census.***