CENSUS 101: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The 2020 Census is closer than you think! Here’s a quick refresher of what it is and why it’s essential that everyone is counted.

Everyone counts.
The census counts every person living in the United States once, only once, and in the right place.

It’s about fair representation.
Every 10 years, the results of the census are used to reapportion the House of Representatives, determining how many seats each state gets.

It’s in the Constitution.
The U.S. Constitution mandates that everyone in the country be counted every 10 years. The first census was in 1790.

It’s about $675 billion.
The distribution of more than $675 billion in federal funds, grants, and support to states, counties, and communities are based on census data. That money is spent on schools, hospitals, roads, public works, and other vital programs.

It’s about redistricting.
After each decade’s census, state officials redraw the boundaries of the congressional and state legislative districts in their states to account for population shifts.

Taking part is your civic duty.
Completing the census is mandatory: it’s a way to participate in our democracy and say “I COUNT!”
Census data are being used all around you.

Residents use the census to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life, and consumer advocacy.

Businesses use census data to decide where to build factories, offices, and stores, which create jobs.

Local governments use the census for public safety and emergency preparedness.

Real estate developers use the census to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.

Your privacy is protected.

It’s against the law for the Census Bureau to publicly release your responses in any way that could identify you or your household.

By law, your responses cannot be used against you and can only be used to produce statistics.

2020 will be easier than ever.

In 2020, you will be able to respond to the census online.

You can help.

You are the expert—we need your ideas on the best way to make sure everyone in your community gets counted.
The 2020 Census at a Glance

Counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place.

The U.S. Census Bureau is the federal government’s largest statistical agency. We are dedicated to providing current facts and figures about America’s people, places, and economy. Federal law protects the confidentiality of all individual responses the Census Bureau collects.

The U.S. Constitution requires that each decade we take a count—or a census—of America’s population.

The census provides vital information for you and your community.

- It determines how many representatives each state gets in Congress and is used to redraw district boundaries. Redistricting counts are sent to the states by March 31, 2021.
- Communities rely on census statistics to plan for a variety of resident needs including new roads, schools, and emergency services.
- Businesses use census data to determine where to open places to shop.

Each year, the federal government distributes more than $675 billion to states and communities based on Census Bureau data.

In 2020, we will implement new technology to make it easier than ever to respond to the census. For the first time, you will be able to respond online, by phone, as well as by mail. We will use data that the public has already provided to reduce followup visits. And, we are building an accurate address list and automating our field operations—all while keeping your information confidential and safe.

KEY MILESTONES

2018
- 2018 End-to-End Census Test
- 2020 Census questions sent to Congress by March 31, 2018
- Six regional 2020 Census offices and 40 area census offices open

2019
- Partnership activities launch
- Complete Count Committees establish
- Census takers update address list in person
- Remaining 248 area census offices open

2020
- Advertising begins in January 2020
- Public response (online, phone, or mail) begins
- Census Day—April 1, 2020
- Census takers visit households that haven’t responded
- Apportionment counts sent to the President by December 31, 2020

2021
- Redistricting counts sent to the states by March 31, 2021
Overview of Census Bureau Programs

CENSUSES

• The **decennial census** is the once-a-decade population and housing count of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. The results of the census determine the number of seats for each state in the U.S. House of Representatives and are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts. Federal agencies use the results to distribute more than $675 billion in federal funds each year.

• The **economic census** measures the nation’s economy every five years, providing vital statistics for virtually every industry and geographic area in the country.

• The **Census of Governments** provides comprehensive data about the 90,000 state and local governments in the nation every five years.

SURVEYS

• The **American Community Survey (ACS)** is an ongoing national survey—sampling approximately 3.5 million addresses annually—that provides vital information about our nation’s housing and people. The ACS is the only source of comparable, quality information about the people in all our communities. These data show what the U.S. population looks like and how it is changing. ACS data are used to assess the past and present and to plan for the future.

• **Demographic surveys** measure income, poverty, education, health insurance coverage, housing quality, crime victimization, computer usage, and many other subjects.

• **Economic surveys** are conducted monthly, quarterly, and yearly. They cover selected sectors of the nation’s economy and supplement the economic census with more-frequent information about the dynamic economy. These surveys yield more than 400 annual economic reports, including principal economic indicators.

• **Sponsored surveys** are demographic and economic surveys that we conduct for other government agencies. They include the Current Population Survey, the National Health Interview Survey, and the National Survey of College Graduates.

For more information, go to [census.gov](http://census.gov).
Follow us [@uscensusbureau](https://twitter.com/uscensusbureau)
Contact us at:
What to expect in the mail

When it’s time to respond, most households will receive an invitation in the mail. Every household will have the option of responding online, by phone, or by mail.

Depending on how likely your area is to respond online, you’ll receive either an invitation encouraging you to respond online or an invitation along with a paper questionnaire.

Letter invitation

- Most areas of the country are likely to respond online, so most households will receive a letter asking them to go online to complete the census questionnaire.
- We are working with the U.S. Postal Service to stagger the delivery of these invitations over several days. This way we can spread out the number of users responding online, and we’ll be able to serve you better if you need help over the phone.

Letter invitation and paper questionnaire

- Areas that are less likely to respond online will receive a paper questionnaire along with their package. The package will also include information about how to respond online or by phone.

We understand that you might miss our initial letter in the mail.

- Every household that hasn’t responded will receive reminders and will eventually receive a paper questionnaire.
- If you don’t respond online, by phone, or by mail, we will follow up in person.

What we will send you in the mail:

- **March 12-20**: An invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census. (Some households will also receive paper questionnaires.)
- **March 16-24**: A reminder letter.
- **March 26-April 3**: A reminder postcard.
- **April 8-16**: A reminder letter and paper questionnaire.
- **April 20-27**: A final reminder postcard before we follow up in person.

For more information, visit:

2020CENSUS.GOV

United States Census 2020

Shape your future
START HERE
How the 2020 Census will invite everyone to respond

Nearly every household will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census either in the mail or from a census taker.

95% of households will receive their census invitation in the mail.

Almost 5% of households will receive their census invitation when a census taker drops it off. In these areas, the majority of households may not receive mail at their home’s physical location (like households that use PO boxes or areas recently affected by natural disasters).

Less than 1% of households will be counted in person by a census taker, instead of being invited to respond on their own. We do this in very remote areas like parts of northern Maine, remote Alaska, and in select American Indian areas that ask to be counted in person.

Note: We have special procedures to count people who don’t live in households, such as students living in dorms, people living in nursing homes, or people experiencing homelessness.

2020CENSUS.GOV
The 2020 Census and Confidentiality

Your responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by federal law. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics—they cannot be used against you in any way. By law, all responses to U.S. Census Bureau household and business surveys are kept completely confidential.

Respond to the 2020 Census to shape the future.
Responding to the census helps communities get the funding they need and helps businesses make data-driven decisions that grow the economy. Census data impact our daily lives, informing important decisions about funding for services and infrastructure in your community, including health care, senior centers, jobs, political representation, roads, schools, and businesses. More than $675 billion in federal funding flows back to states and local communities each year based on census data.

Your census responses are safe and secure.
The Census Bureau is required by law to protect any personal information we collect and keep it strictly confidential. The Census Bureau can only use your answers to produce statistics. In fact, every Census Bureau employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life. Your answers cannot be used for law enforcement purposes or to determine your personal eligibility for government benefits.

By law, your responses cannot be used against you.
By law, your census responses cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way—not by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), not by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), not by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and not by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The law requires the Census Bureau to keep your information confidential and use your responses only to produce statistics.

The law is clear—no personal information can be shared.
Under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about individuals, households, or businesses, even to law enforcement agencies.
The law states that the information collected may only be used for statistical purposes and no other purpose.
To support historical research, Title 44 of the U.S. Code allows the National Archives and Records Administration to release census records only after 72 years.
All Census Bureau staff take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information, and any violation comes with a penalty of up to $250,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

2020CENSUS.GOV
D-1254

Shape your future
START HERE ➔
There are no exceptions.
The law requires the Census Bureau to keep everyone’s information confidential. By law, your responses cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way. The Census Bureau will not share an individual’s responses with immigration enforcement agencies, law enforcement agencies, or allow that information to be used to determine eligibility for government benefits. Title 13 makes it very clear that the data we collect can only be used for statistical purposes—we cannot allow it to be used for anything else, including law enforcement.

It’s your choice: you can respond securely online, by mail, or by phone.
You will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone. Households that don’t respond in one of these ways will be visited by a census taker to collect the information in person. Regardless of how you respond, your personal information is protected by law.

Your online responses are safe from hacking and other cyberthreats.
The Census Bureau takes strong precautions to keep online responses secure. All data submitted online are encrypted to protect personal privacy, and our cybersecurity program meets the highest and most recent standards for protecting personal information. Once the data are received, they are no longer online. From the moment the Census Bureau collects responses, our focus and legal obligation is to keep them safe.

We are committed to confidentiality.
At the U.S. Census Bureau, we are absolutely committed to keeping your responses confidential. This commitment means it is safe to provide your answers and know that they will only be used to paint a statistical portrait of our nation and communities.

Learn more about the Census Bureau’s data protection and privacy program at www.census.gov/privacy.