



Frequently Asked Questions about the 2020 Census

Basic

What is the 2020 Census?

The 2020 Census counts every person living in the United States and five U.S. territories. This census is conducted every 10 years by the U.S. Census Bureau, a neutral government agency.

Why is it important?

The results are used to determine how many seats your state gets in Congress. State and local officials also use census counts to draw boundaries for congressional districts, state legislative districts, and school districts. It also determines how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to:

- Hospitals
- Fire departments
- Schools
- Fixing roads
- And many more projects

It's also required by the Constitution. The United States has counted its population every 10 years since 1790.

How will I respond to the census?

By April 1, 2020, households will receive an invitation to participate in the census. You can respond to the census at any time when you receive your invitation. You will then have three ways to respond:

- Online
- By phone
- By mail

This marks the first time that you'll have the option to respond online.

Starting in May 2020, the Census Bureau will begin following up in person with households that have not yet responded to the census.

How long does it take to fill out the census?

It should take about 10 minutes to complete the census.

When can I fill out my census?

When you receive your invitation in the mail, you are welcome to complete your census form online, by phone, or request a physical paper copy.

Why is April 1, 2020 so important?

When completing the census, you'll note where you are living on April 1. The Census Bureau and local partners will celebrate the day with events across the country. Even if you fill your form out early, April 1 is used as a reference point.

Remember:

- If a child spends time between two homes, count them where they stayed on Census Day, April 1
- Parents should include children even if they are in the hospital

Who should I count on my census?

If you are filling out the census for your household, you should count anyone who is living there as of April 1, 2020. This includes anyone who is living and sleeping there most of the time. It is important to remember to count any children who are living with you. This includes:

- All children who live in your household. This might include grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and/or the children of friends.
- Children who split their time between households, if they are living with you on April 1, 2020
- Newborn babies, even if they are still in the hospital on April 1, 2020.

To ensure a complete and accurate count, the Census Bureau counts people where they live and sleep most of the time, with a few exceptions. People who do not have a usual residence should be counted where they are on Census Day (April 1, 2020).

We have special procedures to count people who live in more complex situations, including:

- People experiencing homelessness.
- Student living in group housing such as in a college dorm.
- People in correctional facilities.

- Service members.
- People living in shelters.

For other questions, visit <https://2020census.gov/en/who-to-count.html>

Am I Required to Respond to the Census?

Yes, all people living in the United States, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are required by law to be counted in the 2020 Census.

What Will I Be Asked?

- How many people are living or staying at your home on April 1, 2020.
- Whether the home is owned or rented.
- About the sex of each person in the household.
- About the age of each person in the household.
- About the race of each person in the household.
- About whether a person in the household is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.
- About the relationship of each person in the household to one central person.

Is the census available in languages other than English?

The census only has paper forms in English and Spanish, however, responding online or by phone allows you to respond in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.

There are also language guides, language glossaries, and a language identification card available in 59 languages including a video for American Sign Language.

Can I refuse to answer a census question?

You can skip questions, submit an incomplete census form, and still be included in the head count. But you can be fined for refusing to answer a census question or intentionally giving a false answer, although the penalty has been enforced rarely in the past. Returning a partially filled-out questionnaire may result in a follow-up phone call or visit from a census worker.

Privacy

How are my answers to the census used?

Your personal information is kept **confidential**. The Census Bureau is bound by federal law to protect your information, and your data is used only for statistical purposes.

Your answers can only be used to produce statistics—**they cannot be used against you in any way**. 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 eligibility for government benefits.

The Census Bureau combines your responses with information from other households to produce statistics, which never identify your household or any person in your household.

How does the Census Bureau protect my data?

All data submitted online are encrypted to protect personal privacy, and the Census Bureau's cybersecurity program meets the highest and most recent standards for protecting personal information. Once the information is received, it is no longer online.

From the beginning of the data collection process through the final storage of information, the Census Bureau follows industry best practices and federal requirements to protect your data.

The Legal Duty to Protect Your Information

The Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the U.S. Code to keep your information confidential.

Under Title 13, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about you, your household, or your business, even to law enforcement agencies. The law ensures that your private information is never published and that your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

Safety and Security

How can I avoid scams?

The U.S. Census Bureau will never ask for:

- Your Social Security number
- Your bank account or credit card numbers
- Money or donations
- Anything on behalf of a political party

If a website, e-mail, or person claiming to be from the Census Bureau asks you for one of these things, you may be the target or victim of a scam.

How can I verify the identity of a census worker?

If someone visits your home to collect a response for the 2020 Census, there are steps you can take to verify their identity:

- First, check to make sure that they have a valid ID badge, with their photograph, a Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date.
- Note that they may be carrying a Census Bureau phone or a laptop, plus a bag with a Census Bureau logo.
- If you still have questions, call [800-923-8282](tel:800-923-8282) to speak with a local Census Bureau representative.

How can I avoid being visited at home by census workers?

The best way to avoid being visited at home is to fill out your 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail. Households will receive an invitation to begin participating in the census by April 1, 2020.

This is the first time ever that you'll be able to respond to the census online!

What if you've already submitted but someone still comes to your door?

If you have submitted a paper copy via mail, you might be visited by a census worker. Let them know that you have already submitted via mail.

They might also visit you if there are questions about your answers.

More Information about the census questions:

How many people are living or staying at your home on April 1, 2020. This will help count the country's population, and ensure that people are counted once, only once, and in the right place according to where they live on Census Day.

Whether the home is owned or rented. This will help produce statistics about homeownership and renters. The rates of homeownership serve as one indicator of the nation's economy. They also help in administering housing programs and informing planning decisions.

About the sex of each person in the household. This allows the Census Bureau to create statistics about males and females, which can be used in planning and funding government programs. This information can also be used to enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination.

About the age of each person in the household. The U.S. Census Bureau creates statistics to better understand the size and characteristics of different age groups. Agencies use this information to plan and fund government programs that support specific age groups, including children and older populations.

About the race of each person in the household. This allows us to create statistics about race and to present other statistics by racial groups. This information helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as under the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act.

About whether a person in the household is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. These responses help create statistics about this ethnic group. This is needed by federal agencies to monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those under the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

About the relationship of each person in the household to one central person. This allows the Census Bureau to create estimates about families, households, and other groups. Relationship information is used in planning and funding government programs that support families, including people raising children alone, and other households that qualify for additional assistance.

Timeline and Important Dates

By April 1, 2020, households will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. They have three options for responding: online, by phone, or by mail.

Overall Timeline

Here's a look at some of the key dates:

- **January 2020:** The Census Bureau begins counting the population in remote Alaska.
- **March 12-20, 2020:** Households will receive an invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census. (Some households will also receive paper questionnaires)
 - **When you receive this invitation, you can complete your census.**
- **March 16-24, 2020:** A reminder letter
- **April 1, 2020:** Census Day is observed nationwide. By this date, households will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. You'll then have three options for responding: online, by mail, or by phone.
- **March 26-April 3, 2020:** If you have not responded, you will receive a reminder postcard
- **April 8-15, 2020:** If you have not responded, you will receive a reminder letter and paper questionnaire
- **April 20-27, 2020:** If you have not responded, you will receive a final reminder postcard before a Census taker follows up in person.
- **April 2020:** Census takers begin following up with households around selected colleges and universities. Census takers also begin conducting quality check interviews.
- **May 2020:** The Census Bureau begins following up with households that have not responded.
- **December 2020:** The Census Bureau delivers apportionment counts to the president

Information compiled and adapted from:

<https://2020census.gov/>

<https://www.npr.org/2019/03/31/707899218/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-2020-census>

https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2018_06.pdf