

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.

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.



Laws protecting personal census information have withstood challenges.

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed that even addresses are confidential and cannot be disclosed through legal discovery or the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). In 2010, the U.S. Justice Department determined that the Patriot Act does not override the law that protects the confidentiality of individual census responses. No court of law can subpoena census responses.



Counting Young Children in the 2020 Census



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

An estimated 5 percent of kids under the age of 5 weren't counted in the 2010 Census. That's about 1 million young children, the highest of any age group.

We need your help closing this gap in the 2020 Census. Here's what our research tells us about why young children are missed and what you can do to help make sure they are counted.

Common situations where young children aren't counted



The **child splits time between two homes**.

The child lives or stays with **another family or with another relative such as a grandparent**.

How you can help?

- Emphasize that the census counts **everyone where they live** and sleep most of the time, even if the living arrangement is temporary or the parents of the child do not live there.
- If the child truly spends equal amounts of time between two homes, count them where they stayed on **Census Day, April 1**. Coordinate with the other parent or caregiver, if possible, so the child is not counted at both homes.
- If it's not clear where the child lives or sleeps most of the time, count them where they stayed on Census Day, April 1.



The child lives in a **lower income household**.

- Explain to service providers and families that responding to the census helps determine **\$675 billion in local funding** for programs such as food stamps (also called the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). When children are missed in the census, these programs miss out on funding that is based on the number of children counted.



The child lives in a household with **young parents or a young, single mom**.

- Explain that filling out the census yourself, on your own schedule, is easier than having to respond when a census worker knocks on your door. Remind these households that the form should **only take about 10 minutes** to fill out and can be done online or over the phone, in addition to mailing it back.
- Encourage moms with young children to ask other household members to count them and their children on the form if others live in the household.



The child is a **newborn**.

- Emphasize that parents should **include babies** on census forms, even if they are still in the hospital on April 1.
- **Encourage facilities** providing services to newborns to remind parents about the importance of counting their children on the census form.
- Highlight the fact that the census form only takes about 10 minutes to complete, and parents can **fill it out online or over the phone in addition to paper** at a time that works best for them.

Common situations where young children aren't counted

How you can help?



The child lives in a household that is **large, multigenerational, or includes extended or multiple families**.

- Remind the person filling out the form to count all children, including nonrelatives and children with no other place to live, even if they are only living at the address temporarily on April 1.
- Spread the word that the census **counts all people living or staying** at an address, not just the person or family who owns or rents the property.



The child lives in a household that **rents or recently moved**.

- Encourage renters and recent movers to complete their census forms **online or over the phone**, right away. That way they don't need to worry about paper forms getting lost in the move.
- **Focus efforts** on multiunit buildings that are likely to have renters.



The child lives in a household where they're **not supposed to be**, for one reason or another.

- Please explain to those that have children living in places where they aren't allowed (for example, grandparents in a seniors-only residence that have a grandchild living with them, a family with more people, including children, than the lease allows) that they should include the children because the **Census Bureau does not share information** so it can't be used against them.
- Emphasize the Census Bureau's legal commitment to keep census **responses confidential**.
- Explain that the Census Bureau **will never share information** with immigration enforcement agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), law enforcement agencies like the police or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or allow this information to be used to determine eligibility for government benefits.



The child lives in a **non-English or limited-English speaking** household.

- **Conduct outreach** and create resources in non-English languages that highlight the importance of counting young children.
- **Encourage non-English speakers to self-respond** to the census and let them know that for the 2020 Census, the online form and telephone line will be available in 13 languages, including English. Language guides will be available in 59 languages other than English.



The child lives in a household of **recent immigrants or foreign-born adults**.

- Work with community members to conduct outreach in neighborhoods with recent immigrants. **Focus efforts** on the **community's gathering places** like local grocery stores, places of worship, and small restaurants.
- Emphasize the **Census Bureau's legal commitment** to keep census responses confidential. Explain that the Census Bureau will never share information with immigration enforcement agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), law enforcement agencies like the police or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or allow this information to be used to determine eligibility for government benefits.

Why We Ask

The 2020 Census is easy. The questions are simple.

Responses to census questions provide a snapshot of the nation. Census results affect your voice in government, how much funding your community receives, and how your community plans for the future.

When you fill out the census, you help:



Determine how many seats your state gets in Congress.



Inform how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year.



Create jobs, provide housing, prepare for emergencies, and build schools, roads and hospitals.

The 2020 Census will ask for the following information:

Number of people at address

We ask this question to collect an accurate count of the number of people at each address on Census Day, April 1, 2020. Each decade, census results determine how many seats your state gets in Congress. State and local officials use census counts to draw boundaries for congressional districts, state legislative districts, and school districts.

Any additional people living or staying there

Our goal is to count people once, only once, and in the right place according to where they live on Census Day. Keeping this goal in mind, we ask this question to ensure that everyone living at an address is counted.

Owner/Renter

We ask about whether a home is owned or rented to create statistics about homeownership and renters. Homeownership rates serve as an indicator of the nation's economy and help in administering housing programs and informing planning decisions.

Phone number

We ask for a phone number in case we need to contact you. We will never share your number and will only contact you if needed for official Census Bureau business.

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Name

We ask for names to ensure everyone in the household is counted. This also helps us to keep ancestry records. Listing the name of each person in the household helps respondents include all members, particularly in large households where a respondent may forget who was counted and who was not.

Sex

We ask about the sex of each person to create statistics about males and females. Census data about sex is used in planning and funding government programs, and in evaluating other government programs and policies to ensure they fairly and equitably serve the needs of males and females. These statistics are also used to enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination in government programs and in society.

Age and date of birth

We ask about age and date of birth to understand the size and characteristics of different age groups and to present other data by age. Local, state, tribal, and federal agencies use age data to plan and fund government programs that provide assistance or services for specific age groups, such as children, working-age adults, women of childbearing age, or the older population. These statistics also help enforce laws, regulations, and policies against age discrimination in government programs and in society.

Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

We ask about whether a person is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin to create statistics about this ethnic group. The data collected in this question is needed by federal agencies to monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

Race

We ask about a person's race to create statistics about race and to present other statistics by race groups. The data collected in this question is needed by federal agencies to monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

Whether a person lives or stays somewhere else

Our goal is to count people once, only once, and in the right place according to where they live on Census Day. Keeping this goal in mind, we ask this question to ensure individuals are not included at multiple addresses.

Relationship

We ask about the relationship of each person in a household to one central person to create estimates about families, households, and other groups. Relationship data is used in planning and funding government programs that provide funds or services for families, people living or raising children alone, grandparents living with grandchildren, or other households that qualify for additional assistance.

For more information, visit:

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50 WAYS CENSUS DATA ARE USED

- Decision making at all levels of government.
- Drawing federal, state, and local legislative districts.
- Attracting new businesses to state and local areas.
- Distributing over \$675 billion annually in federal funds and even more in state funds.
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Planning for hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and the location of other health services.
- Forecasting future housing needs for all segments of the population.
- Directing funds for services for people in poverty.
- Designing public safety strategies.
- Development of rural areas.
- Analyzing local trends.
- Estimating the number of people displaced by natural disasters.
- Developing assistance programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Creating maps to speed emergency services to households in need of assistance.
- Delivering goods and services to local markets.
- Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly, or children.
- Planning future government services.
- Planning investments and evaluating financial risk.
- Publishing economic and statistical reports about the United States and its people.
- Facilitating scientific research.
- Developing “intelligent” maps for government and business.
- Providing proof of age, relationship, or residence certificates provided by the Census Bureau.
- Distributing medical research.
- Reapportioning seats in the House of Representatives.
- Planning and researching for media as backup for news stories.
- Drawing school district boundaries.
- Planning budgets for government at all levels.
- Spotting trends in the economic well-being of the nation.
- Planning for public transportation services.
- Planning health and educational services for people with disabilities.
- Establishing fair market rents and enforcing fair lending practices.
- Directing services to children and adults with limited English-language proficiency.
- Planning urban land use.
- Planning outreach strategies.
- Understanding labor supply.
- Assessing the potential for spread of communicable diseases.
- Making business decisions.
- Understanding consumer needs.
- Planning for faith-based organizations.
- Locating factory sites and distribution centers.
- Distributing catalogs and developing direct mail pieces.
- Setting a standard for creating both public and private sector surveys.
- Evaluating programs in different geographical areas.
- Providing genealogical research.
- Planning for school projects.
- Developing adult education programs.
- Researching historical subject areas.
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans.

How the 2020 Census will invite everyone to respond





Every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone.

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

 **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 university housing or people experiencing homelessness.

How the 2020 Census will invite everyone to respond



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 mail, or by phone.

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 you to go online to complete the census questionnaire.
- We plan on 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 invitation. The invitation will also include information about how to respond online or by phone.

WHAT WE WILL SEND IN THE MAIL

On or between	You'll receive:
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.
	If you haven't responded yet:
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.

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

- Every household that hasn't already responded will receive reminders and will eventually receive a paper questionnaire.
- It doesn't matter which initial invitation you get or how you get it—we will follow up in person with all households that don't respond.