

2020 Census - Talking Points

“Participating in the 2020 Census is a civic duty and good for your community.”

The very first responsibility of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution is a count of all persons living in the United States to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. But your participation in the census impacts a much broader range of decisions, from how legislative districts at all levels of government are drawn, to where roads and transit are built in the future, to how more than \$800 billion in federal funding is distributed annually across the country.

“How does the Census help my community?”

- Communities use the information to plan bus routes, draw school district boundaries, and offer community services.
- Businesses use census data to decide where to put a store, office, or plant. These new locations create jobs and support the community’s economy.
- Businesses use the information to determine what to sell in their stores so communities get what they need.

“An accurate census helps ensure fair representation at all levels of government.”

The primary constitutional purpose for the decennial census is to determine how many congressional representatives each state will have for the next decade and to ensure equal representation in the redistricting process. For instance, congressional districts and the boundaries of your city ward are determined by census numbers.

“The census directly impacts the funding your city will receive over the next decade.”

Population counts and statistics derived from both the decennial census and other surveys determine the annual allocation of more than \$800 billion (\$1,400/per person/per year) in federal investment across states, counties and cities. While many financial assistance programs and block grants, like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), are distributed to cities based on American Community Survey (ACS) statistics, the benchmark for all ACS data is the decennial census.

“The census provides the most reliable and complete data for research, decision making and planning for both the public and private sectors.”

Academic institutions, medical facilities, businesses of all sizes and all levels of government rely on census data to inform their research, decision making and planning. While the decennial census only asks a few basic questions, the population counts and demographic data that it produces serve as a benchmark for most other current statistics that help us gain deeper insights into our communities.

“Census data are widely and wisely used.”

Census data are used in many ways. Some examples include:

- Distribution of more than \$675 billion annually in federal funds back to tribal, state, and local governments.
- Redistricting of state legislative districts.
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans.
- Assisting federal, tribal, state, and local governments in planning and implementing programs, services, and emergency response.
- Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly, and children.

See an extended list of how Census data is used here:

http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodsv/census/50_Ways.pdf.

“Your personally identifiable information (PII) is protected by law and cannot be shared outside of the Census Bureau.”

Census Bureau employees are sworn to uphold the confidentiality of your data for life. Your responses can only be used to produce statistical information, and your personal information cannot be seen or used by other government agencies or the courts. The Census Bureau will never share a respondent’s personal information with immigration enforcement agencies, like ICE; law enforcement agencies, like the FBI or police; or allow it to be used to determine their eligibility for government benefits. The results from any census or survey are reported in statistical format only.

In addition, under Title 13, U.S. Code, all Census Bureau employees swear a lifetime oath to protect respondent data. It is a felony for any Census Bureau employee to disclose any confidential census information during or after employment, and the penalty for wrongful disclosure is up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$250,000.

“There are multiple ways to be counted in the 2020 Census.”

In mid-March 2020 most addresses in the United States will receive a mailing with instructions to participate online, but you will also have the option to respond via phone or mail. Through spring and summer 2020, Census Bureau employees will follow up in-person at addresses that have not yet been counted.

“English language proficiency is not required to participate in the 2020 Census.”

The complete online census questionnaire will be available in twelve languages other than English. Telephone responses will be accepted in the same additional 12 languages. Paper forms will be printed in English and Spanish. Language guides and glossaries will be available in 59 non-English languages, plus Braille.

“If you don’t have access to the internet in your home, you can still be counted.”

The online questionnaire can be completed on a smartphone, and desktop internet kiosks may be available at local post offices, libraries and other community centers. Households identified as having limited internet access and households that do not respond to initial census mailings will also be given the opportunity to complete the census through the traditional paper questionnaire. A telephone response option will also be available for the first time.