

2020 Census—Frequently Asked Questions

What's the Census for?

The U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 2) mandates a headcount every 10 years, of everyone residing in the United States: in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens, and noncitizens. The first census was conducted in 1790 and has been carried out every 10 years since then. The population totals from the 2020 census will determine the number of seats each state has in the House of Representatives. States also use the totals to redraw their legislative districts. The U.S. Census Bureau must submit state population totals to the President of the United States by December 31, 2020. The totals also affect funding in your community, and data collected in the census help inform decision makers how your community is changing.

[Learn more about why Census 2020 is important.](#)

Why does the U.S. Census Bureau ask the questions they do?

The U.S. Census Bureau asks the questions they do on the surveys because of federal needs and for community benefits. The information the U.S. Census Bureau collects helps determine how more than \$675 billion dollars of [federal funding annually](#) is spent on infrastructure and services. Your answers help federal, state and local leaders make decisions about: schools, hospitals, emergency services, roads, bridges, job training centers, and many other projects that affect your community.

[Learn more about why the U.S. Census bureau ask the questions they do.](#)

Who should be counted?

The 2020 Census will count everyone once, only once, and in the right place.

[Learn more about who should be counted.](#)

How can I respond?

The 2020 Census will still allow for traditional response methods such as phone or mail; however, for the first time, respondents will be able to complete their forms online as early as March 23, 2020. The first mailings for the 2020 Census will go out in mid-March 2020. By the first week of April 2020, most households should have received a letter or a postcard about how to complete the questionnaire online or by phone. Non-responses will be followed up with in-person canvassing. Learn more about how the Census will [invite everyone to respond](#).

Census 2020 Timeline:

- **March 16-23 – U.S. Census Bureau Mailing #1 sent to homes**
- March 20-27 – U.S. Census Bureau Mailing #2 sent to non-respondents
- March 30-April 6 – U.S. Census Bureau Mailing #3 – a postcard – sent to non-respondents
- March – U.S. Census Bureau Service-based enumeration begins (for transitory locations like RV parks and campgrounds, tent cities, marinas, hotels)
- March – U.S. Census Bureau Group quarters enumeration begins (for those living in group quarters like dorms, nursing homes, etc. and for the homeless)
- **April 1, 2020 – National Census Day!**
- Early April-Late July – U.S. Census Bureau Non-response follow-up
- April 12-19 – U.S. Census Bureau Mailing #4 – letter & paper questionnaire sent to those who have not yet responded
- **April 23-30 – U.S. Census Bureau Mailing #5 – It's not too late!**

Learn more [about ways to respond](#).

Where should I be counted?

People who live at two or more residences (during the week, month, or year), such as people who travel seasonally between residences (for example, snowbirds or children in joint custody) are counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If usual residence cannot be determined, they are counted at the residence where they are staying on Thursday, April 1, 2020 (Census Day).

College students living away from their parental home while attending college in the U.S. (living either on-campus or off-campus) are counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time. Those staying in shelter or living outdoors are counted where they are staying on April 1, 2020.

FAQ Continued...

What if I am away from my residence on April 1, 2020?

People away from their usual residence on Census Day, such as on a vacation or a business trip, visiting, traveling outside the U.S., or working elsewhere without a usual residence there (for example, as a truck driver or traveling salesperson) are counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time.

Are my answers safe and secure?

Yes. The data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau is strictly for statistical purposes. Your household, any person in your household, or business are never identified individually. Your information is confidential. The U.S. Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the United States Code, making it unlawful for any Bureau employee to disclose or publish any information that identifies an individual or business. This holds for all government entities as well, such as the FBI: none have the legal right to access this information. And for all census data, the “72-Year Rule” applies: the government is not allowed to release data on individuals for 72 years. All U.S. Census Bureau employees take an oath of nondisclosure and are sworn for life to protect all information that could identify individuals. Any employee who violates the provisions of the oath is subject to severe penalties: a fine up to \$250,000 or a prison sentence up to 5 years, or both.

Furthermore, information is protected from cybersecurity risks and all questionnaires submitted online will be encrypted to protect the responder’s privacy.

[Learn more about Census 2020 and confidentiality.](#)

How does the U.S. Census Bureau help me identify scams?

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

- Full social security number
- Money or donations
- Anything on behalf of a political party
- Your full bank or credit card account numbers

If you are visited by someone from the U.S. Census Bureau, here are some recognition tips to assure the validity of the field representative:

- Must present an ID Badge which contains: photograph of field representative, Department of Commerce watermark, and expiration date.
- Will provide you with supervisor contact information and/or the regional office phone number for verification, if asked.
- Will provide you with a letter from the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau on U.S. Census Bureau letterhead.
- May be carrying a laptop and/or bag with a U.S. Census Bureau logo.

When will the results from the census be available?

The nation should see the very first results from the 2020 Census in the form of total population counts for the nation and each state in late 2020 or early 2021. In 2021 each state receives local-level 2020 Census data on race and the voting age population. As required by law, the U.S. Census Bureau will provide these key demographic data to the states (on a state-by-state basis), so the state governments can redraw the boundaries of their U.S. Congressional and state legislative districts. Public Law 94-171 requires that the redistricting data must be delivered to state officials responsible for legislative redistricting within one year of Census day or no later than April 1, 2021.