

Census 2020 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q: Is everyone in the United States required to take the census?

A: **YES!** The census is conducted once every 10 years. It is a constitutionally required count of every person living in the United States.

Q: Why is taking the census important?

A: Taking the census is important because the data obtained is used to:

- Determine representation in Congress and the Electoral College;
- Redistrict boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts;
- Make decisions about how and where to spend more than **\$675 billion** dollars in federal money, each year, for programs and services that communities rely on including but not limited to:
 - **LIBRARIES;**
 - Schools;
 - Infrastructure such as roads;
 - Neighborhood revitalization;
 - Public safety/emergency preparedness;
 - Economic development;
 - Etc.

Q: Can census responses be shared with law enforcement or other government agencies?

A: **NO!** *Title 13 of the U.S. Code* protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information provided in census responses, including citizen status. Federal law prohibits the Census Bureau or any of its employees from sharing personally identifiable information with other government agencies. Census employees take a **lifetime oath** to protect census responses, with severe penalties for violations. The law prohibits personally identifiable information collected by the Census

Bureau from being used against respondents by any government agency or court.

Q: When will Census 2020 begin?

A: On March 12, 2020, the Census Bureau will begin to mail census materials to 95% of homes. This will be sent in the form of a letter, from the United States Census Bureau. Below is the Census Bureau's logo:



Q: Can you still complete the Census if you don't receive a letter?

A: Yes! The Census can be completed online by entering the household's address.

Q: Will the Census Bureau ever contact an individual by e-mail or text?

A: The Census Bureau will not e-mail or text people. The Census Bureau or any of its employees will **NOT** ask for a:

- Bank or credit card number;
- Social Security Number;
- Payment;
- Donation.

Q: What should someone do if they receive an e-mail or text by someone claiming to be with the Census Bureau or if they have a question/concern about the authenticity of someone purporting to be an official Census Bureau employee?

A: Call the New York Regional Office - (212) 584-3400 OR 1-800-991-2520; TDD: (212) 478-4793.

Q: How can someone identify an official Census Bureau employee in person or over the phone?

A: Census workers must present an identification badge (ID) that includes their photo, the U.S. Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. Another way to verify is to contact Census Questionnaire Assistance [ENTER PHONE # HERE] OR enter the name into the Census Bureau Staff (online) Search at:

<https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/main/email.cgi> OR contact the New York Regional Office (212) 584-3400 OR 1-800-991-2520; TDD: (212) 478-4793.

Q: What is the timeline for Census 2020?

A: Timeline:

- **March 12, 2020** – Census Bureau will begin to mail out letters that will include an ID code for online and telephone response.
 - Self-response to the census questionnaire continues through July 31, 2020;
- **March 30, 2020** – Service-Based Enumeration (SBE) will begin. This three-day/night enumeration occurs at shelters, locations that provide services for people experiencing homelessness, and targeted outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness sleep;
- **April 1, 2020** – CENSUS DAY!
 - CENSUS DAY is the Census Bureau’s national launch to “submit your census based on who is living/residing in your household on April 1, 2020”;
 - Respondents do not have to wait until April 1 to respond to the Census;
 - Respondents should include anyone who will be a “usual resident” on April 1, 2020 in their household response – regardless of when they respond to the Census (before April 1, on April 1, or after April 1);
- **April 8, 2020** – Beginning on this date, reminders (to complete the Census) will include a paper questionnaire;
- **April 2020** – Group Quarters will be counted during this month.
 - Group Quarters are defined for example as college student housing, prisons, military barracks and nursing homes. The facility administrator will work with local 2020 Census office staff to collect this information;
- **May 13, 2020** – Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) will begin. During NRFU, the Census Bureau will follow up with households that did not self-respond to the census by mailing reminders and/or visiting in person. NRFU will continue through July;

- **May 14, 2020** – Enumerators sent out. NOTE: Prior to May 14, 2020 “early” enumeration will occur in neighborhoods surrounding college campuses.
- **June – September 2020** – Post Enumeration Survey – an independent sample of census responses to measure accuracy and produce undercount/overcount estimates; in-person visits will occur;
- **July** – By the end of July 2020 all in-person enumeration is expected to cease;
- **Spring – Fall 2020** – follow-up, editing, data processing and tabulation is done by the Census Bureau;
- **BY DECEMBER 31, 2020** (as required by law) – the Census Bureau will transmit State population totals and congressional apportionment data to the President;
- **December 31, 2020** – all area Census Offices close.

Q: How are people counted in the census?

A: The census questionnaire will ask questions about all the people who live and sleep in a household most of the time – including babies and anyone who has no other permanent place to stay and is staying in the household – as of April 1, 2020. Only one (1) census form will be completed for each **HOUSEHOLD**. Everyone living in the household will need to be listed on the **ONE** form.

Q: How will the census be taken?

A: 80% of households will be asked to complete the census online using a unique code; 20% of households will receive a paper questionnaire. All households will also receive information on how to take the census via telephone.

Q: Is the Census Bureau’s online system secure?

A: **YES!** We have been told by representatives of the Census Bureau that the Census Bureau is actively working with cybersecurity experts to keep the site protected and functioning properly. All information entered online is encrypted as soon as the respondent hits “submit.”

Q: What about the public access computers at Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL), are they secure?

A: B&ECPL's public access computers are maintained with the latest software and patches for virus protection and the B&ECPL uses industry standard encryption for connection to websites such as <https://census.gov/>. When someone uses a B&ECPL public access computer, all traces of their use is automatically removed when they log off of the computer.

Q: Can someone respond to the online census using their personal smartphone or tablet?

A: **YES!** The online form will be optimized to allow people to respond on a smartphone or tablet.

Q: Will there be a Census App?

A: The Census Bureau has indicated there will not be a Census App.

Q: Does the census have to be taken online?

A: **NO!** Respondents may take the census online, by using a paper questionnaire or by phone. The phone number will be listed in the mailings.

Q: Will there be a telephone number for people to call for assistance with the census?

A: **YES!** This is being called **Census Questionnaire Assistance**. Respondents may call **XXXXXXXXXX**.

Q: Will Census Questionnaire Assistance be available in languages other than English?

A: **YES!** **Census Questionnaire Assistance** will be available via telephone in 13 languages: Arabic, Chinese [Simplified], English, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Mandarin and Cantonese may also be available. People will also be able use their Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) when calling.

Q: Will the online census questionnaire form be available in languages other than English?

A: **YES!** The online form will be available 13 languages: Arabic, Chinese [Simplified], English, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Q: What if another language is needed?

A: The Census Bureau is creating Language Guides, which can be viewed online or downloaded, in 59 non-English languages. The language guides cannot be used to respond to the census, but can help respondents fill out the actual form in English.

Language Guides available online and for download will be available in the following languages:

Albanian, American Sign Language, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Chinese, Creole, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Greek, Haitian, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong,, Hungarian Igbo, Ilocano, Indonesia, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Lithuanian, Malayalam, Marathi, Navajo, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala, Slovak, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yiddish, Yoruba.

Q: What about assistance for the visually impaired?

A: Language guides will be available in American Sign Language, Braille and large print.

Q: What happens if system used for the online Census crashes (goes off-line, fails to work, etc.)?

A: We have been told by Census Bureau representatives that the Census Bureau is actively working with cybersecurity experts to keep the site protected and functioning properly. A network of partners and communication tactics are being leveraged to assure the public that

responding to the 2020 Census is easy, safe and important. The Census Bureau is confident that the Census will be completed on time and on budget with little to no interruptions.

Q: Can someone call and request a paper Census (questionnaire)?

A: Yes. Paper Census (questionnaire) are available and can be requested at: **XXXXXXXXXXXX.**

Q: The paper questionnaire only has room for 10 members in a household. My household has more than 10 living in it. Does this mean I only have to list 10 people?

A: No, everyone is to be counted. A person with more than 10 living in their household should be directed to take the Census online or by telephone.

Q: Can my library have copies of the official paper Census' for patrons to complete?

A: At this time, we have been told the Census Bureau will not provide an avenue for libraries or other organizations to distribute paper copies of the Census for patrons/constituents to complete. Paper copies can be requested (by individuals) by calling: **XXXXXXXXXXXX.**

Q: Is there a question regarding citizenship status in the 2020 Census?

A: **NO!** In June, 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked the citizenship question from being included in the 2020 Census. **NOTE:** The American Community Survey (ACS) is also sent out by the Census Bureau and considered a census. It **DOES** have a Yes/No response citizenship question. It is answered: Yes, I am a citizen **OR** No, I am not a citizen. All information provided on the ACS is protected under *Title 13 of the U.S. Code.*

Q: What is the American Community Survey and am I required to take if I receive one?

A: The American Community Survey (ACS) is a separate, sampling done by the Census Bureau. It, too, is constitutionally required as it is considered a census. It is described as the equivalent to the long

version of earlier censuses. All information provided on the ACS is protected under *Title 13 of the U.S. Code*.

Q: What is new in the *Household Relationship* question in the 2020 Census?

A: For the first time, the census offers a way for the person filling out the form to indicate a same-sex relationship with another household member. This change is expected to improve national statistics on same-sex couples.

Q: How long will it take to fill out the census?

A: Although the time it takes to complete the census may vary with the size of a household, the Census Bureau estimates it will take about 10 minutes [to complete the questionnaire].

Q: What happens if a person misses a question?

A: The Census Bureau strongly encourages respondents to answer every question for every person in the household, but will allow submission of incomplete questionnaires. Census Bureau staff may follow up on incomplete submissions.

Q: What happens if the census form is not completed online or via telephone?

A: Several reminder letters will be sent to the household. If a (self-response) form is not completed - online or via telephone. Beginning April 8, 2020, the reminder will include a paper questionnaire.

Q: And if the paper questionnaire is not returned?

A: After May 2020 the household may receive a phone call or an in-person visit from a Census Bureau employee. This is being called the "FOLLOW-UP" period. Households can continue to self-respond online, via telephone or paper questionnaire during the "FOLLOW-UP period."

Q: Where can I learn more about the 2020 Census?

A: The Census Bureau website is filled with information on the 2020 Census including a sample questionnaire:

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census.html>

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