

Census 2020

Make yourself count: April 1, 2020

a campaign of the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Frequently Asked Questions about the Census

Your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers may have questions about the Census. Here are answers to some of those that most frequently asked.

Are my answers safe and secure?

The Census Bureau collects data only for statistical purposes. It combines your responses with information from other households to produce statistics, which never identify your household or any person in your household. Federal law makes it clear your information is confidential and that the Census Bureau will never identify you individually. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

How do I distinguish between an authentic U.S. Census Bureau contact and fraudulent activity and scams?

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

- Your Social Security number
- Your mother's maiden name
- Money or donations
- Credit card or bank account information
- Your personal information through email

If a field representative comes to your home, he or she will always have official Census ID

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Will my information be kept confidential?

- Yes. Under the law, Census data can only be used for statistical purposes. Title 13 of the U.S. Code requires respondent's information to be kept confidential, and guarantees personal information will not be used against respondents in court or by a government agency.
- Personal census information cannot be disclosed for 72 years (including names, addresses, and telephone numbers).
- Census Bureau staff who have access to personal information are sworn for life to protect confidentiality, and are subject to a \$250,000 fine and/or up to five years in federal prison for wrongful disclosure of information.

When and how do I complete my 2020 Census Form?

It is very easy. In March 2020, every household will receive a mailing from the U.S. Census Bureau with instructions to visit their website. Upon logging onto the Bureau's website, each household will fill out a simple 10-question form.

- Every person, including children, residing in the household needs to be included on the form in order to be counted.
- The information that will need to be provided includes: name, relationship to head of household, gender, age, birthday, Hispanic origin and race, and status as a home owner or renter.
- The form can be completed in about 10 minutes. If a household does not respond, the Census Bureau will mail two reminders and a paper census form in the fourth mailing.
- Other options for completing the form via telephone or mail will be available. Individuals can call 888-839-8632 for more information.
- If a household does not submit a completed census form, then the Census Bureau will send an enumerator to that address to collect the information in person.

TIP

Completing a census form early is the best way to avoid having an enumerator visit your home.

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What does “residence” mean and how do I count the “residents” in my house?

The U.S. Census Bureau defines residence as the place where people live and sleep most of the time, but sometimes that simple definition is not enough. For more information visit:

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

Do I have to respond to the Census?

Yes. If you are living in the United States, you are legally required to respond to the U.S. Census.

Failure to respond or providing false answers could result in a fine, although this is unlikely because the Census Bureau is not a prosecuting agency.

Census Bureau staff work to achieve cooperation and high response rates by helping the public understand that responding to the Census is a matter of civic responsibility and that data from the Census has benefits that span across government, industry, and profession.

How will the U.S. Census Bureau contact me and how am I to respond?

For the 2020 Census, you can respond online, by mail, by phone, or through an in-person interview. Starting in March 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau will begin to contact households through a series of mailings:

March 12-20 Mailing 1: Letter with information to take survey online will be sent to a majority of people, while about 20 percent to 25 percent of the population (with specific demographic characteristics and lower internet connectivity) will receive a letter and paper survey

March 16-24 Mailing 2: Letter to non-respondents

March 26-April 3 Mailing 3: Reminder postcard to non-respondents

April 8-16 Mailing 4: Letter and paper survey sent to non-respondents

April 20-27 Mailing 5: “It’s not too late” postcard to non-respondents

If you do not respond to these mailings, then beginning in early May 2020, U.S. Census Bureau will send enumerators out to knock on the doors of households who have not yet responded. This operation, called **Non-Response Follow-Up**, will begin in early April for colleges and universities in order to capture student data before the spring term ends.

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I filled out a survey from the Census Bureau last year. Why have I been contacted again?

In between each 10-year Census, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 100 surveys of households and businesses across the nation each year.

One of the surveys that is often confused with the decennial Census is the American Community Survey, which reaches one out of every 480 households each year and asks very detailed questions on topics such as employment, income, housing, and place of birth.

State and local governments use data from both to plan and fund such things as school construction, transportation systems, public housing, policy and fire precincts, and future utility needs. Federal law requires participation in both.

What happens in communities in which residents may have limited English proficiency?

The U.S. Census Bureau will make the Census questionnaire and other materials available in multiple languages. The questionnaire will be available in Spanish as a print version and on the tablets of those who go door-to-door in the non-response follow up phase.

The Internet Self-Response Instrument will be available in 12 non-English languages:

Spanish,	Korean,	Tagalog,	Portuguese,
Chinese (Simplified),	Russian,	Polish,	Japanese,
Vietnamese,	Arabic,	French,	Haitian Creole,

The Census Bureau will provide assistance by phone in 12 non-English languages:

Chinese (Simplified),	Russian, Arabic,	French,	Japanese,
Vietnamese,	Tagalog,	Haitian Creole,	Spanish,
Korean,	Polish,	Portuguese,	American Sign Language