



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the census?

The census is a survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau every 10 years. Not only is the census required by the Constitution, but it’s critically important to communities because census data is used to determine everything from representation in Congress to allocation of federal and state funds. \$675 billion will be distributed annually for schools, roads and other public services, all based on census information. In addition, the demographic data are used by businesses to determine, for example, where to build new supermarkets, and by emergency responders to locate injured people after natural disasters.

How will the census impact my community?

Information learned through the census determines how funds are distributed to states, counties and communities. This money, in turn, can be spent on everything from public schools to hospitals to public works. In addition, after each census, state officials will review and redraw the boundaries of the congressional and state legislative districts in Illinois to account for population shifts.

When does the 2020 Census start?

Most households will receive their census materials by U.S. mail or hand delivery starting in mid-March. Online and telephone response options will be available starting after March 12.

What is “Census Day,” and why is it important?

April 1 is “Census Day.” When you respond to the census, you tell the Census Bureau where you live as of April 1, 2020, and include everyone living in your home on that day (including newborns and anyone staying there who does not have a usual home elsewhere). While April 1 is the reference date, people can submit their questionnaire before or after that date.

When is the last day people can respond?

To avoid a home visit from a Census Bureau employee, people should respond before the end of April 2020. The Census Bureau will begin in-person visits in May, although households can still respond online, by phone, or by mail until July 31.

What we will send in the mail	
On or between	You will receive
Mar 12–20	An invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census. Some households will also receive paper questionnaires.
Mar 16–24	A reminder letter
If you haven't responded yet	
Mar 26–Apr 3	A reminder postcard
Apr 8–16	A reminder letter and paper questionnaire
Apr 20–27	A final reminder postcard before we follow up in person

Census Bureau mailing timeline

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU²

Responding to the 2020 Census

How can I respond to the census?

You can respond to the census online, by phone or on a paper questionnaire. The online and phone questionnaire will be available in 13 languages. You can still complete a paper form, but these forms will only be available in English and bilingual English-Spanish.

Where can I complete the census?

You can complete the Census at home, over the phone or you can come to the Library! Feel free to stop by any time to complete your census at the library -- our staff are here to help you! Check out our [Events Calendar](#) for specific census events here at the library, or see our current [newsletter](#) for details.

What questions does the census ask?

The census asks how many people are in your household and whether the home is owned or rented. You'll be asked to count the number of people, including babies and people who may not have a permanent address, who are living or staying in your home. You'll be asked to answer questions about age, race or ethnic identity, and relationships of people living at your address to you.

How long does it take to fill out the form?

The Census Bureau estimates that it will take about 10 minutes to complete the census questionnaire, depending on the number of people in the household.

Can I refuse to answer a question?

You can skip questions, submit an incomplete census form and still be included in the head count. Returning a partially filled-out questionnaire may result in a follow-up phone call or visit from a census worker.

What happens if I leave some responses blank?

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

What if I don't respond at all?

Everyone living in the United States is required to be counted as part of the Census, and because the data is so important, the Census Bureau will send you a reminder letter if you haven't responded by



April 2020. If you do not respond then, you'll receive a paper questionnaire you can mail back. If you don't respond to the paper questionnaire, you'll receive a visit from a census worker.

In what languages will the paper form be available?

Paper questionnaires will be either in English or bilingual English-Spanish (with Spanish-only forms in Puerto Rico).

Is my Census data safe?

Yes! Information you submit through the census form (either online, over the phone or on paper) is kept confidential by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is a nonpartisan government agency. The Census Bureau will never share information with immigration enforcement agencies or law enforcement agencies.

Please also know that the Census Bureau will never ask you for:

- Your Social Security number
- Money or donations
- Anything on behalf of a political party
- Your bank or credit card account numbers

What should people do if they have a question or problem?

The Census Questionnaire Assistance phone line will be available with live customer service representatives supporting 13 languages and TDD from March 9 through July 31. Call toll-free 844-330-2020 in English, and see page 17 for other languages. People can also find general answers about the 2020 Census at 2020census.gov.

Online response option

How does the online option work?

Almost all households will receive an invitation letter in the mail with instructions for responding to the census online. The invitation will include a unique identification code called a Census ID or User ID. The online form will be optimized to allow people to respond on a smartphone, tablet or computer. Using the Census ID helps the Bureau keep track of responses and prevent duplication. *However, the Census ID is not required in order to respond online or by telephone. **If you don't have your Census ID handy, you can use your address instead.***



[**CLICK HERE TO WATCH A BRIEF VIDEO SHOWING YOU HOW TO FILL OUT THE ONLINE CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE.**](#)

The online questionnaire will be available in 13 languages (Arabic, Chinese [Simplified], English, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese).

The Census Bureau will have a toll-free phone hotline in 13 languages for people who have questions or need help responding to the census. You can also complete the questionnaire over the phone when you call.

Do people have to respond online?

No, households have the option to respond to the census online, by phone, or by mail.

In what languages will the online form be printed? The online form will be available in English and 12 non-English languages: Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Can people respond on a smartphone or tablet?

Yes, the online form will be optimized to allow people to respond on a smartphone or tablet.

Is the online system secure?

Yes, the Census Bureau has taken significant steps to protect online responses. All information entered online is encrypted as soon as the respondent hits “submit.”

How will we know if the census online form was successfully submitted?

Once a respondent completes and submits the online form, a new screen will confirm submission. The respondent may print that page for their records. The Census Bureau will not email or text households to confirm response to the census.

Can library staff help people complete the online form?

In certain ways, yes. Library staff can direct respondents to the response option that best suits their needs: online, phone, mail, or a census taker visit to their home. Library staff can also point respondents to the online questionnaire guides in English and 59 other languages. In addition, library staff can explain basic features of the online form, such as how to navigate the pages or change the language. However, only Census Bureau employees may collect responses directly from individuals, and only they are sworn for life to keep an individual’s responses confidential.



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