

# CENSUS 2020 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

NC Complete Count Commission

---



---

## **WHAT IS THE DECENNIAL CENSUS?**

The U.S. Constitution requires a Census every 10 years to determine the number of Congressional seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. As the most reliable picture of the population, Census data provides the basis for distributing more than \$675 billion in federal funds annually to communities across the country to support vital programs—impacting housing, education, transportation, employment, health care, and public policy. Data are also used to redraw the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts, as well as other local and state political boundaries.

## **WHY DO WE HAVE A CENSUS?**

The Census is mandated by Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution. The primary purpose of the Census, as mandated in the Constitution, is to determine how seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned among the states.

## **HOW MANY SEATS DOES NORTH CAROLINA CURRENTLY HOLD IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES?**

13, but North Carolina is projected to gain an additional seat if it has a complete and accurate 2020 Census.

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ME?**

Responding to the Census, like jury duty, is mandatory and a civic duty. Being counted in the Census affects the amount of funding your community receives, how your community plans for the future, and your representation in government.

## **WHY DO WE NEED AN ACCURATE CENSUS COUNT? WHAT PROGRAMS ARE AFFECTED BY THE CENSUS COUNT IN NORTH CAROLINA?**

Census data is used to bring over \$675 billion of your tax dollars back to your community. Funding for health care programs (Medicaid and Medicare), infrastructure programs (Highway Planning and Construction Grants and Community Development Block Grants), child services (Foster Care, Title I Education Grants, National School Lunch Program), and more rely on Census data. Census data is also used to support preparation for local planning for schools, roads, water/sewer, and electric needs. Businesses use Census data to determine where to place stores, assess potential workforce, and evaluate markets. Future funding and planning in your community depend on accurate Census data.

## **WHEN IS CENSUS DAY 2020?**

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

---

## WHO IS COUNTED IN THE CENSUS?

Everyone. The Census counts everyone living in the United States, regardless of citizenship status or age.

## WHEN WILL I COMPLETE THE CENSUS?

Census notices will be mailed in mid-March 2020, and you can respond online as soon as you get your Census notice. Census Bureau enumerators will begin visiting households that have not responded yet in mid-April 2020.

## HOW CAN I RESPOND?

The 2020 Census is the first U.S. Census to allow response by smartphone or online. You can choose to respond by phone or by traditional paper questionnaire. Census forms will be available in 12 languages, and Census support and assistance will be available in 59 languages, American Sign Language, braille, and large print.

## WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE REQUESTED?

The Census asks for your name, age, race, sex, Hispanic Origin, household relationship, as well as housing questions. The 2020 questionnaire will essentially be the same as the [2010 form](#). When completing the Census, you should count everyone who is living in your household on April 1, 2020 - including infants.

## WHAT INFORMATION WILL NOT BE REQUESTED?

The Census Bureau will never ask for:

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

If you are visited by someone from the United States Census Bureau, here are some recognition tips to assure the validity of the field representative; Census Bureau enumerators must present an ID Badge that includes their photograph, the Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. In addition to carrying a laptop and/ or bag with a Census Bureau logo, the field representative will provide the following:

- Supervisor's contact information and/or the regional office phone number for verification, if asked.
- A letter from the Director of the Census Bureau on U.S. Census Bureau letterhead.

If in doubt, call the U.S. Census Bureau Atlanta Regional Office at 1-800-424-6974.

## WHAT IF I ALREADY FILLED OUT A CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE THIS YEAR?

You probably received the American Community Survey (ACS) or the American Housing Survey (AHS) from the U.S. Census that is sent out each

---

year to approximately 25% of the population. Those surveys are more comprehensive than the Census questionnaire. The actual 2020 Census questionnaire does not arrive until around March 2020.

**IF I FILLED OUT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY OR THE AMERICAN HOUSING SURVEY, DO I STILL HAVE TO FILL OUT THE 2020 CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE?**

Yes. You are required to complete any questionnaire received from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING A COMPLETE AND ACCURATE 2020 CENSUS COUNT FOR NORTH CAROLINA?**

Many people fear sharing information with a government agency, but Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects all individual responses and information. Your responses cannot be shared with law enforcement, IRS, courts, or ANYONE for 72 years. Anyone breaking this law can be punished with up to 5 years in federal prison and/or a \$250,000 fine. People may also not realize how important the Census is to their neighborhood, city, county, and state. We can all do our part to help the future funding and planning of our communities.

Language, poverty, internet access, literacy, disability, and recent movers

are examples of groups who are at risk of being missed in the Census as well as preschool-aged children. Everyone counts, and there is assistance to help everyone be counted!

**WHAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE LIKELY TO BE MISSED BY THE CENSUS AND WHY?**

Young children ages 0-4 are one of the most likely groups to be undercounted. NC Child estimates that there are 73,000 children at risk of not being counted here in North Carolina in the 2020 Census. This is likely a combination of factors that make children's families hard to count as well as the fact that the family or caretakers of young children often fill out the Census but do not include children under 5 in their household count.

**WHERE ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS, PRISONERS, MILITARY PERSONNEL, AND OTHER PEOPLE LIVING IN GROUND QUARTERS SUPPOSED TO BE COUNTED?**

The Census counts everyone, once, only once, and in the right place. College dorms, prisons, military barracks, and long-term nursing homes are examples of Census group quarters. The Census will work with administrative staff at these places to count everyone. Students or military

---

personnel living in apartments will receive their own Census mailings. Everyone should answer their Census form based on where they usually reside as of April 1, 2020.

## **WILL MY INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects your Census responses. It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any Census information that identifies an individual. Census Bureau employees take a lifelong pledge of confidentiality to handle data responsibly and keep respondents' information private. The penalty for wrongful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years, or both. No law enforcement agency (not the DHS, ICE, FBI, or CIA) can access or use your personal information at any time. Data collected can only be used for statistical purposes that help inform important decisions, including how much federal funding your community receives. The Census Bureau has a robust cybersecurity program that incorporates industry best practices and federal security standards for encrypting data.

## **HAS CENSUS DATA BEEN ABUSED IN THE PAST?**

The U.S. Census, confidentiality laws and protections have evolved with the nation. The original Census counted only free persons, Native Americans

were not counted, and slaves were counted as 3/5 of person. The Census has changed to count everyone equally but also to expand race identification, including multiple race options to reflect the changing face of America.

Census confidentiality has also changed. Private Census data was shared leading to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, but since then laws have been created to secure the confidentiality of responses to the Census. Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect the privacy of Census data, and Title 13 of the U.S. Code sets penalties for disclosure as a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years, or both. No law enforcement agency (not the DHS, ICE, FBI, or CIA) can access or use your personal information at any time.

## **IF IT'S FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION, WHY DO WE HAVE TO COUNT NON-CITIZENS IN THE CENSUS?**

The Decennial Census was established in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution to enumerate U.S. *residents*, not citizens, and it determines more than political representation. Census data informs congressional apportionment, but it also guides billions in federal funding to communities as well as emergency preparedness, school construction, housing development, and job

---

markets. Non-citizens may become citizens but need within communities exists regardless of citizenship status. The American Community Survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau does ask about citizenship, but it's different than the decennial Census that aims to count everyone. There has not been a citizenship question on the "short" Census form since the 1950s.

### **WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE CITIZENSHIP QUESTION ON THE CENSUS FORM?**

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled, and there will be no citizenship question on the 2020 Census. A citizenship question has always been part of the American Community Survey conducted by the Census Bureau.

### **IF I DISAGREE WITH SOME ASPECT OF THIS YEAR'S CENSUS, IS BOYCOTTING THE FORM THE BEST WAY TO SHOW THAT?**

No. Refusing to fill out the entire form will cause an enumerator to be sent to your home for follow-up. While refusing to answer only one question on the Census may not trigger this response, under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, you can be fined up to \$100 for refusing to fill out a Census form and \$500 for knowingly answering questions falsely. Further, incomplete forms will cause your community to have less accurate data and potentially fewer resources long-term.

### **WHY IS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IMPORTANT IN THE CENSUS?**

Census data is important to the planning and funding future of all our cities, towns, and neighborhoods. While the U.S. Census Bureau will promote the 2020 Census, no one knows our community better than us. Local Census advocates can help make sure that everyone is counted and that our tax dollars return to serve our residents.

### **WHAT ROLE DOES THE STATE PLAY IN THE CENSUS?**

North Carolina has a Governor-appointed state Complete Count Commission that consists of 32 members representing a wide range of constituencies. The Commission is chaired by NC Department of Administration Secretary Mabelle Sanders. The Commission provides strategic direction to local Complete Count Committees on messaging, outreach, and coordination as Census Day 2020 approaches.

### **WHAT CAN I DO?**

Participate in the US Census, share Census information with other leaders in your community. In the past, legislation has been introduced that would limit the Census questionnaire to requesting only information required by the

---

Constitution. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) encourages the general public to contact their government representatives to express their opinions about this issue.

### **ADDITIONAL CENSUS RESOURCES:**

- Make NC Count website:  
<https://census.nc.gov/>
- U.S. Census Bureau website:  
<https://www.census.gov/>
- NC Counts Coalition website:  
<https://www.nccensus.org/>
- Follow @nccensus on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for updates!