

An Accessible 2020 Census

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY ABOUT CENSUS OPERATIONS

ERIKA HUDSON & JAE JUNE LEE

ABOUT THE 2020 DECENNIAL CENSUS

Once a decade, the federal government undertakes the constitutionally-mandated task of counting every person living in the United States. The decennial census is the federal government's largest peacetime mobilization, and no data collection effort is more vital to American democracy. Your responses to the 2020 Census will help us understand who we are as a nation today and shape our collective future. Our nation will rely on 2020 Census data to inform funding for critical public services and programs, to ensure fair political representation, and to guide the decisions our communities make every day.

HOW TO RESPOND TO THE 2020 CENSUS

WHEN & HOW WILL I BE INVITED TO RESPOND?

In the spring of 2020, most households will receive an invitation in the mail with instructions for [how to respond](#) to the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census will [invite](#) the majority of households to respond online—but every household may also choose to respond by phone or by mail. Every household that does not self-respond either online, by mail, or by phone, will receive reminders from the Census Bureau. [Census enumerators](#), also referred to as census takers, will visit all households that do not self-respond to collect responses in person. When a census taker visits your household, you can request a census taker who communicates in [American Sign Language](#).

WILL THE 2020 CENSUS BE ACCESSIBLE?

The Census Bureau is working to ensure that the census will be [accessible](#) for everyone.

- **Online.** The bureau has assured the public that the online response option will meet the latest [web accessibility guidelines](#), so you should be able to navigate through census materials online without a mouse and use assistive technology such as a screen reader. A video guide in American Sign Language will also be available to help you complete the census online.
- **By Phone.** Census Questionnaire Assistance phone lines will be available in English and [12 additional languages](#) if you want to self-respond by phone or have any questions related to the census. You can also complete the census in English via a phone line that uses [Telephone Device for the Deaf](#) (TDD/TTY) technology.
- **By Mail.** Braille and large print guides will be available to assist you with completing the paper questionnaire. The braille and large-print English language guides, as well as non-English language guides, will be available on the [bureau's website](#). The Census Bureau will also distribute copies of the accessible guides at partner events, conferences, and meetings.

IF DESIRED, CAN SOMEONE ASSIST ME IN FILLING OUT THE 2020 CENSUS?

You can ask someone to help you fill out the 2020 Census. This could be an individual you trust such as a family member or trained caregiver, among others. You can also ask for assistance from Census Bureau staff by calling the Census Questionnaire Assistance [phone lines](#) available in English (844-330-2020), Spanish (844-468-2020), and 11 additional languages, as well as an English-language line that uses TDD/TTY (844-467-2020).

HOW WILL I BE COUNTED IF I LIVE IN A GROUP FACILITY?

People in group living situations will be counted through a process known as the [Group Quarters](#) (GQ) operation. GQ facilities include skilled nursing facilities, group homes, residential treatment centers, college/university student housing, prisons, military barracks, shelters for people experiencing homelessness, and vocational training facilities. For the 2020 Census, census staff will work with GQ housing administrators to set an agreed-upon date, time, and preferred method of enumeration. The bureau will not directly invite individuals living in GQ facilities to self-respond. If you are unsure if you are being counted in the GQ operation and your household did not receive a census mailing, ask your housing administrator or [self-respond online or by phone](#).

YOUR RESPONSES ARE IMPORTANT AND KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

WHAT INFORMATION WILL I BE ASKED TO PROVIDE ABOUT MY HOUSEHOLD?

The 2020 Census form will include a [small number of basic questions](#) about yourself and all household members living with you on April 1, [including](#) young children, relatives, and nonrelatives such as roommates. The 2020 Census will ask for information including your name, sex, date of birth, and race and ethnicity. While questions related to disability will not be covered in the 2020 Census, disability-related questions are asked in the [American Community Survey](#) (ACS), a more detailed survey which is only sent to a small sample of the population. If you receive the census and ACS forms, please complete both forms—[your responses are important](#) and required by law.

HOW WILL MY INFORMATION BE USED?

A fair and accurate decennial census is crucial for people with disabilities—and, indeed, for every person in the United States. Your responses to the 2020 Census will help determine how many [seats in Congress](#) each U.S. state will receive, influence where the [boundaries of legislative, school, and voting districts](#) are drawn, and guide how [\\$1.5 trillion](#) in federal funds are allocated every year. This includes funding for programs such as [Education Grants to States for Students with Disabilities](#), [Medicaid](#), and [Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities](#). Your responses to the 2020 Census are also crucial for helping enforce civil rights laws and guide community decision-making.

WILL MY RESPONSES BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The Census Bureau is committed to keeping your responses [confidential](#). It is illegal for the bureau to disclose a respondent's identity and personal information to the public or to any other government agency, including law enforcement agencies. Under federal law, the bureau can only use your responses for statistical purposes—and prohibits any government agency or court from using your responses against you. Your individual responses cannot, for example, be used to determine your eligibility for public benefits. If you suspect any census [fraud](#), "phishing," or other scams, please contact your [Regional Census Office](#) or the [National Processing Center](#).

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS

For more information, read our [explainer](#) on the 2020 Census operations and why the census matters for people with disabilities. More resources about the upcoming census can be found on the [Georgetown Center on Poverty & Inequality](#) and [National Disability Rights Network](#) websites and at [censuscounts.org](#). Support a fair and accurate 2020 Census by joining or supporting the work of a local Complete Count Committee.