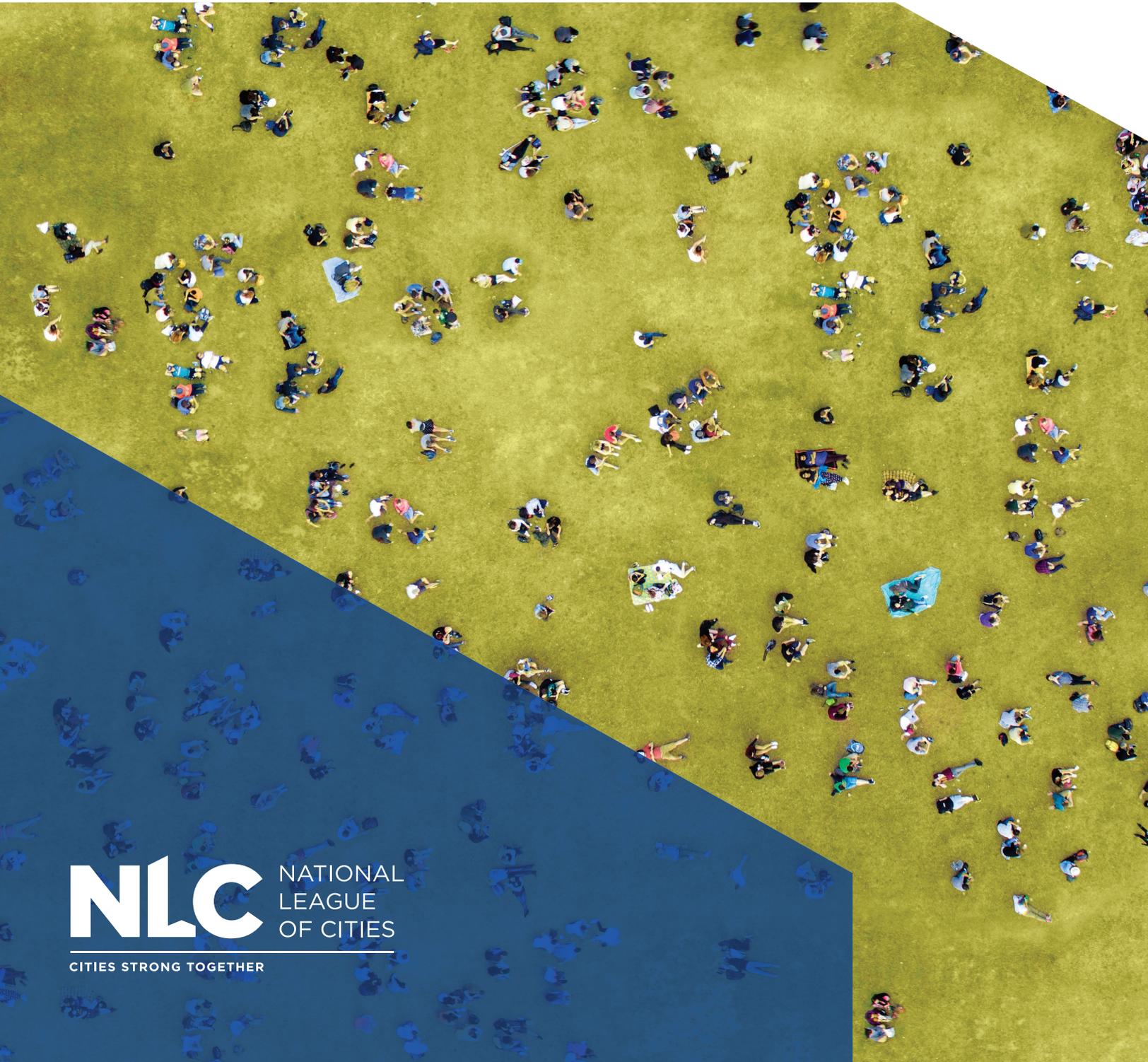


MUNICIPAL ACTION GUIDE

# Preparing for the 2020 Census



**NLC** NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES  
CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

### About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the nation's leading advocacy organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. Through its membership and partnerships with state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource and advocate for more than 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans.

### About the Authors

Alex Jones is the manager for NLC's Local Democracy Initiative and Brian Egan is the principal associate for federal advocacy.

### Acknowledgements

NLC would like to thank Terri Ann Lowenthal for her invaluable contributions in making this report a reality. We would also like to thank Emily Collins, Meri St. Jean, Christiana McFarland, David Park, Patrick Hain, Lenna Wilson, Kitson Jazyuka and Kelly Martin.

### NLC Census Advisors

We would also like to thank the local elected officials who helped inform this guide, including: **Councilmember Erica Spell** of the City of Hyattsville, Maryland; **Mayor James Diosa** of the City of Central Falls, Rhode Island; **Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda** of the City of Seattle, Washington; **Councilmember Victoria Farrar-Myers** of the City of Arlington, Texas; **Tim Burton**, Executive Director of the Montana League of Cities and Towns; **Joseph Salvo**, Director of Population Division, Department of City Planning City of New York, New York.

---

## About the Guide

It is never too early to begin planning for the 2020 Census, but we must note that the Census Bureau has not finalized all census operations, while others are subject to refinements based on the 2018 End-to-End Census Test (essentially a “dress rehearsal”) and additional recent research. This guide should serve as a high-level primer to help local leaders better understand the importance of a decennial census and what they can expect over the next two years. The guide is designed to be read either cover-to-cover or by flipping through its contents as a reference guide.

**Visit [nlc.org/census](https://nlc.org/census) to stay updated on the 2020 Census.**

All photos courtesy of Getty Images 2018 unless otherwise noted.  
© 2018 National League of Cities. All Rights Reserved.

# Foreword & Introduction

Even before the U.S. Constitution fully outlines the powers of the three branches of the government, it mandates a decennial count of all persons in the country. In 1790, U.S. Marshalls counted fewer than 4 million people through simple paper tallies during the first census. Today, a diversifying culture, new technologies and demand for greater efficiencies have pushed the U.S. Census Bureau to innovate and adapt as it prepares to count more than 330 million people in 2020. As a local leader, understanding how your city, town or village will be counted and what you can do now to improve results in 2020 is paramount to the completion of a successful census in your community.

Municipal governments have an important relationship with the census — both as consumers of the invaluable data it gathers and as partners in ensuring the complete and accurate count of our cities. Data produced by the census not only remain foundational to our democratic system, but also improve our ability to understand who we are and to function as one of the world's largest countries and economies.

Census figures are the basis for defining our federal, state and local political districts. Census figures also fuel medical, economic and social research on communities, and inform much of our local infrastructure planning and

decision-making processes. Perhaps most importantly, the data play a crucial role in determining how more than \$800 billion of federal funding is distributed and allocated annually across state and local governments.

The National League of Cities (NLC) supports the Census Bureau's mission to "serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy." We also understand the many ways in which Census Bureau data impact a city. This guide has been carefully created to provide local leaders with objective information about and resources for the upcoming census. We hope the contents of this guide inspire and empower you to take an active role in preparing your city for 2020.

Finally, we would like to thank the numerous city and municipal officials, partner organizations and census advocates who helped inform, shape and produce content for this useful and shareable document.

**Sincerely,**



**Clarence E. Anthony**  
CEO and Executive Director  
National League of Cities

---

## Table of Contents

<b>About the Guide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Foreword and Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section One: What City Leaders Need to Know</b>	<b>6</b>
Why Does the Census Matter to Cities?	7
What's New for the 2020 Census?	8
Where are People Counted?	10
Which Populations Are Historically Hard-to-Count?	12
How Can People Respond?	14
<b>Section Two: How City Leaders Can Help</b>	<b>16</b>
Collaborate with the Census Bureau	17
Integrate City and Municipal Departments	20
Involve your community through Complete Count Committees	22
<b>Section Three: Quick Resources</b>	<b>24</b>
Fast Facts and Talking Points for Constituents	25
Specific Community Considerations	26
City Census Checklist	28
Contacts	29
Timeline of 2020 Census Operations	30
Definition of Terms	32

# Section One: What City Leaders Need to Know

- ➔ Why Does the Census Matter to Cities, Towns and Villages?
- ➔ What's New for the 2020 Census?
- ➔ Where are People Counted?
- ➔ Who is Hard to Count?
- ➔ How Can People Respond?

In striving to count every person, the census process will impact every city and every household.

Section One provides a brief background on the 2020 Census and a rundown of how operations will impact a city and its residents.

## Why the Census Matters to Cities, Towns and Villages

### **An accurate census helps ensure fair representation at all levels of government.**

The primary constitutional purpose for the decennial census is to determine how many congressional representatives each state will have for the next decade and to ensure equal representation in the redistricting process. For instance, congressional districts and the boundaries of your city ward are determined by census numbers.

### **The census directly impacts the funding your city will receive over the next decade.**

Population counts and statistics derived from both the decennial census and other surveys determine the annual allocation of more than \$800 billion<sup>1</sup> in federal investment across states, counties and cities. While many financial assistance programs and block grants, like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), are distributed to cities based on American Community Survey (ACS) statistics, the benchmark for all ACS data is the decennial census.

### **The census provides the most reliable and complete data for research, decision making and planning for both the public and private sectors.**

Academic institutions, medical facilities, businesses of all sizes and all levels of government rely on census data to inform their research, decision making and planning. While the decennial census only asks a few basic questions, the population counts and demographic data that it produces serve as a benchmark for most other current statistics that help us gain deeper insights into our communities. Following are just a few of the ways our communities rely on census data:

### **Governments (Local, State and Federal)**

- Demographic composition of a community and constituency
- Education planning
- Procurement and provision of services
- Infrastructure & transportation planning
- Allocation of resources and a way to provide financial assistance where needed
- Emergency preparedness, disaster relief, and resiliency planning
- Characterization of built structures for zoning and permitting processes
- Measurement of the success and outcomes of local programs or initiatives

### **Major Community Stakeholders (Universities, Medical Facilities, Nonprofits, Utilities)**

- Medical research and planning (public health tracking, vaccinations, disease control, etc.)
- Socioeconomic research on communities
- Design of educational curricula
- Statistics and metrics used in journalism and news reporting

### **Business Community**

- Supply chain and logistics management
- Determining new markets and where to expand
- Forecasting sales and growth projections
- Location of retail outlets and logistics facilities
- Workforce development

<sup>1</sup>Reamer, Andrew. "Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds." The George Washington University Institute of Public Policy. 24 July 2018. Web Access: <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>

### What's New for the 2020 Census?

#### **The 2020 Census will be the first to offer options for internet and phone responses.**

In previous modern-day censuses, people could submit their responses by mail using a paper questionnaire or, if they failed to self-report, they could respond in-person to an enumerator. In 2020, the Census Bureau will encourage households to respond through an online portal. This new response method may raise citizen concerns around data privacy and confidentiality. The Census Bureau houses some of the most secure servers within the federal government and is working with the Department of Homeland Security and other federal cybersecurity experts to ensure that its systems are up-to-date with current threats. The 2020 Census will also allow people to provide their responses over the phone for the first time. Learn more about the internet and telephone response options under the “How Can People Respond” section.

#### **There will be a greater reliance on technology to prepare for and execute the count.**

The census continues to reinvent itself to take advantage of new technologies with each passing decade, but the 2020 Census will feature significant technological advancements that local leaders should be aware of:

■ **Lead-Up Activities:** The Census Bureau has increasingly relied on its partnerships with state and local governments to update its Master Address File (MAF) and ensure that every living quarter in the U.S. is included in the census universe. The Census Bureau has also turned to aerial imaging software from the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency and other agencies to supplant a large portion of costlier “in-field” activities, such as in-person canvassing of every street and road, to finalize the address file. These advance-

ments will limit the presence of census employees in cities prior to the enumeration (or counting) process in 2020.

■ **Enumeration:** In addition to a new online response portal, the Census Bureau is also introducing greater automation into the enumeration process. Census takers will be equipped with smart devices, and all door-to-door visits (called Nonresponse Follow-up, or NRFU) will be conducted digitally instead of with pen and paper as in previous decennial censuses. The electronic devices will allow enumerators to transmit the data they collect in real time, directly to the Census Bureau's IT systems. Census takers will also receive their daily assignments and report their hours worked electronically, reducing the need for a larger number of local census area offices.

#### **The country is experiencing a period of heightened fear and deliberate misinformation.**

Most of the changes that will make the 2020 Census different from previous censuses are positive advancements. However, there are unmistakable challenges related to the current heightened climate of fear in many communities, ongoing misinformation campaigns and database hacking attempts — both domestic and foreign. Trust in government remains at a historic low, which compounds these challenges. Census advocates will spend the next two years preparing to counter misinformation campaigns that are designed to suppress response rates, exacerbate undercounts of certain populations, weaken American democracy and generally disrupt institutional processes. As the level of government most trusted by the public, local leaders can serve as invaluable trusted voices and champions by using both the bully pulpit and city social media channels to instill confidence in the census process and counter false information.



### Where are People Counted?

#### Residence Criteria for the 2020 Census:

- The Census Bureau seeks to count all people residing in the United States at their usual residence, which is the place where they live and sleep most of the time, on or around Census Day, which is April 1, 2020.
- People who do not have a usual residence, or who cannot determine one, are counted where they are present most on Census Day.

#### Specific Situations:



#### Homeowners, Renters and Household Members with One Residence

Will be counted at this residence, even if they are not physically there on April 1, 2020 due to a temporary visit elsewhere.



#### Temporary Residents, Vacationers, Multi-Home Owners and “Snowbirds”

Each housing unit will receive census mailers, but the “head of household” will respond using the address of their usual residence. **Children under shared-custody** will be counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. In cases of equally-shared custody, children will be counted where they are present on April 1, 2020.



#### Non-Citizens

If they are **living in the U.S.**, they will be counted at their

usual residence. Tourists, business travelers or other temporary visitors will not be counted.



#### Residents of Group Facilities

They will be counted at the facility in which they are housed or living on Census Day. For example, a resident of a nursing home will be counted at the facility where he or she lives.



#### Active Military Personnel and Families

If they are **stationed at a military installation in the U.S.**, they will be counted at their usual residence either on-base or off-base. If they are **stationed overseas**, they will be counted as part of the federally-affiliated overseas population, conducted in partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense using administrative records. If they are **stationed stateside but deployed overseas during the census**, they will be counted at their usual residence in the U.S. If they are **aboard a military vessel**, they will be counted at either their usual U.S. residence or as a part of the federally-affiliated overseas population — depending on whether the vessel’s homeport is in the U.S. or overseas.



#### College and Boarding-School Students College students living on campus or in off-campus housing

will be counted at school facilities or at their off-campus housing, even if they visit

Federally-affiliated individuals are included in their respective state’s count only for congressional apportionment.



home on holidays and breaks. If they **commute**, they will be counted at their usual residence. If they are **attending a school outside the U.S. and living abroad**, they will not be counted. **Boarding school students** will be counted at their parents' home.



#### **Persons Living Abroad and Expats**

If they are **living abroad as part of a federal mission**, they will be counted as part of the federally-affiliated overseas population. If they are **otherwise living abroad**, they will not be counted. If they are **traveling overseas temporarily**, they will be counted at their usual residence in the U.S.



#### **Persons in Shelters and Those Experiencing Homelessness**

**If they still have a usual residence,**

they will be counted where they live and sleep most of the time. If they **do NOT have a usual residence** on April 1, 2020 (i.e. it was destroyed by disaster or they otherwise lost possession) but are staying at a temporary shelter or residence, they will be counted at that shelter or residence. **If they reside outdoors with no shelter** on April 1, 2020, they will be counted at the outdoor location where they are present on Census Day. Census enumerators will only visit targeted outdoor locations identified in advance with the help of municipal officials and nonprofit organizations.



#### **Incarcerated Persons**

Will be counted at the prison or jail in which they are incarcerated on April 1, 2020.

### Which Populations Are Historically Hard-to-Count?

The census is never perfect, but it has become more accurate over time. In 2010, there was a statistically-insignificant net national overcount, meaning that the number of people over counted was not significant and that the population count as a whole was considered accurate. However, undercounts of specific population subgroups are a recurring challenge, with some groups missed at disproportionately high rates as opposed to other groups which are often over counted. These inaccuracies in the census can have negative implications both for these communities and their respective municipal governments. Local leaders can play a critical role in reducing undercounts in their cities by helping the Census Bureau identify and focus on hard-to-count (HTC) communities within their municipalities. You will learn more about how cities can mobilize to provide this assistance under the Complete Count Committees section.

#### Barriers to Being Counted:

- Language barriers
- Mistrust in government
- Privacy/cybersecurity concerns
- Physical barriers such as inaccessible multifamily units and gated communities
- Nontraditional living arrangements
- Lack of reliable broadband or internet access

#### Known HTC Groups:

- Children under 5 years old
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Non-English speakers
- Immigrants
- Renters and residents who move often
- Alternative or overcrowded housing units
- Gated communities and publicly inaccessible multifamily units
- Persons displaced by natural disasters
- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Young mobile adults
- Single-parent headed households

#### Mapping Your City's HTC Communities

The U.S. Census Bureau's mapping tool, the Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM), includes a layer that helps identify tracts that are historically hard to count. The City University of New York's (CUNY) Mapping Services has also developed mapping tools to help determine where HTC communities may exist in your city, based on several different criteria.

**ROAM:** [www.census.gov/roam](http://www.census.gov/roam)

**CUNY HTC Interactive Database:**

[www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us](http://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us)



### How Can People Respond

#### Self-Response Options

When the census starts in 2020, about 80 percent of addresses will receive an invitation letter with instructions on how to respond online or by telephone using a unique ID. The remaining 20 percent of addresses — selected because they are less likely to have or use the internet — will receive both an invitation letter (with a unique ID) *and* a paper questionnaire with postage-paid return envelope. After three mailed requests to complete the census online or by phone, unresponsive households will receive a paper questionnaire and return instructions on the fourth mailing.

#### ■ Online Response

All households will have the opportunity to complete the 2020 Census online or via smartphone, identifying themselves through either the unique ID included in the mailing or their household address.

*Libraries, post offices and city-owned buildings may choose to install online response kiosks for census submissions. These response kiosks can be as simple as a laptop locked to the census-response portal site and are low-cost efforts that can help increase self-reporting within your city. Cities can share portal locations via social media.*

#### ■ Phone Response

The 2020 Census will be the first U.S. census in which people can respond to the census by telephone with their unique ID or household address. Respondents can also call the toll-free Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) with questions about other response methods or about the census in general.

#### ■ Paper Questionnaire

As noted above, only 20 percent of households will receive a paper ques-

tionnaire (with postage-paid return envelope) in the first census mailing. This “Internet Choice” mailing will include both a paper questionnaire and instructions on how to respond online or by telephone.

#### Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU)

Around May 9, 2020 the Census Bureau will begin NRFU, to count households or determine the status of housing units that did not self-respond. This is the costliest census operation, so the Census Bureau strives to obtain the highest self-response rate possible.

#### ■ Vacant Housing Units

The Census Bureau will use administrative data, primarily from the U.S. Postal Service, local governments, and third-party commercial vendors, to identify and remove vacant housing units from the NRFU universe. The Census Bureau will mail a final postcard to those addresses, inviting someone to respond or contact the Census Bureau if the home is, indeed, occupied.

#### ■ In-Person Enumeration

Enumerators will visit all non-responding households (that is, occupied housing units that haven’t responded) at least once. If no one answers the door or if the “head of household” is unavailable, the enumerator will leave a “Notice of Visit,” a note explaining the attempt and encouraging the occupants to self-respond. Unlike previous decennial censuses, census enumerators will use smart devices to collect data, instead of the traditional pen and paper. Subject to the rules described below, enumerators can visit an unresponsive household up to six times.

*University Cities: NRFU will begin earlier in April, to ensure an accurate count of the community’s April 1, 2020 population prior to off-campus students leaving after the spring semester.*

### Use of Administrative Records

The Census Bureau has tested the use of high-quality administrative data, previously collected by other federal government agencies for other purposes or from previous census surveys, to enumerate some households that do not respond to the first in-person visit. The Census Bureau estimates that it could count about five percent of all households (or about 15 percent of unresponsive households) this way, but it has not announced a final plan for using this method at the time this report went to press.

### Proxy Interview

If three in-person attempts to count a household are unsuccessful, enumerators will attempt to conduct an interview with a proxy respondent if they determine the proxy has sufficient knowledge of who lived in the housing unit on April 1, 2020. Proxies can include:

- Neighbors
- Relatives of the occupants
- Landlords or building managers
- Real estate agents and new occupants (if the residents moved around the time of Census Day)
- Local government employees (clerks, tax collectors and other administrative staff)
- Utility workers or postal service employees

Otherwise, enumerators can make up to three additional contacts in person or by telephone (no more than six in total) to complete the census form.

### Records Matching

Once all attempts to count a housing unit have been exhausted, the Census Bureau will use federal and local administrative records to fill in missing information. Examples of administrative records include:

- IRS documents (1040 Forms)
- Medicare and Medicaid records
- Social Security Numerical Identification System records
- U.S. Post Office files
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Records from previous Census Bureau surveys

If high-quality administrative data are not available, the Census Bureau will use statistical imputation methods to count households that appear to be occupied.

**After three mailed requests to complete the census online or by phone, unresponsive households will receive a paper questionnaire and return instructions on the fourth mailing.**

# Section Two: How City Leaders Can Help

- ➔ Collaborate with the Census Bureau
- ➔ Integrate City and Municipal departments
- ➔ Involve Your Community Through Complete Count Committees (CCC)

For a successful decennial census, planning and preparation begin years in advance. City leaders can lay the groundwork for an accurate count by engaging with the Census Bureau, coordinating within city government, and bringing together community stakeholders early and often. Section Two provides several suggested steps and actions a city can take to better ensure its community is accurately counted in the 2020 Census.

## Collaborate with the Census Bureau

The Census Bureau relies on local governments to assist with preparations for the enumeration and to help “get out the count” (GOTC). Collaboration with local governments is managed through the Census Bureau’s network of local offices: 6 Regional Census Centers opened in spring 2018 and an additional 248 field offices (called Area Census Offices, or ACOs) will open across the country throughout 2019. After a multi-year phase of testing, the Census Bureau starts its operational phase roughly three years prior to Census Day with four major steps:

### 1 Establish Where to Count

One of the first tasks is to validate, update and locate every address in the country that needs to be counted. This information comprises the Master Address File (MAF) and Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) mapping database and determines which addresses will receive mailings (or hand-delivered materials in some rural areas) in mid-March.

Local governments play a huge role in ensuring accurate and updated address files by participating in the **Local Update of Census Addresses program (LUCA)**, which runs from 2018 to 2019. During LUCA, local governments (most often, planning offices) review and revise the MAF for their communities. This is your only opportunity to ensure current addresses are complete and comprehensive. In many cases, your county or state will also participate in LUCA, providing an additional layer of address verification, but this does not preclude local governments from ensuring every housing unit in your own community is accurately recorded.

The 2020 Census also offers a separate, voluntary program, the **New Construction program**. This program enables cities to add residential units to the MAF that have been built after LUCA reviews, but prior to Census Day in 2020.

### 2 Motivate People to Respond

Increasing the number of self-responses can significantly decrease the cost and difficulty of achieving a complete count and increase the quality of data that will be available from the census enumeration. Beginning in the fall of 2019, the Census Bureau will launch an expansive communications campaign, targeting various communities and populations, as well as the national audience, to encourage self-response. City social media and communications channels can help amplify these messages. For city leaders, getting a high level of self-response can ensure that time and resources can be preserved to address your hard-to-count communities.

### 3 Count the Population

During the self-response phase of the census, households can respond online, by phone or by mail with the paper questionnaire. The most resource-intensive phase of the census is the in-person NRFU. For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau estimates that up to 500,000 temporary workers, referred to as enumerators, will be required to reach all these households. Local governments can be valuable partners in recruiting this temporary workforce and ensuring that enumerators will be effective representatives for the 2020 Census in their communities.

### 4 Release Census Results

The final step of the 2020 Census for the Census Bureau is releasing the results. In December 2020, the Census Bureau will

deliver the “apportionment counts,” or state population totals, which determine the number of representatives for each state in Congress, to the President. More detailed data are transmitted to the states by April 1, 2021, for use in the redistricting process, and are publicly available. The Census Bureau will begin releasing complete census data for governmental units, including cities, in May 2021, and continuing through spring of 2023.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

**1. Participate in the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) and the New Construction Program** to ensure that the MAF for your community is as com-

plete and accurate as possible. Even if your city did not participate in LUCA, you should check to see if your state or county did.

**2. Develop a communications link with the regional Census Bureau leaders**, in an effort to coordinate and cooperate on activities to “get out the count!”

**3. Use city-run social media and communications channels to amplify the Census Bureau’s communications campaign** to maximize the self-response rate in your city. This also may include the communication of more tailored messages that are customized

### Spotlight on Enumerator and Address Canvasser Recruitment

In 2020, the Census Bureau will hire as many as 500,000 temporary workers to help carry out peak operations. Most of these openings are for enumerators, who will go door-to-door to non-responding households.

During the 2010 Census, despite relatively high unemployment rates across the country, the Census Bureau reported difficulty

recruiting and retaining qualified applicants for the plentiful temporary employment opportunities available during peak operations. For the 2020 cycle, the Bureau faces a bigger challenge, with a significantly tighter labor market and higher demands for technology proficiency to perform the job.

Local government will be a critical partner in filling these jobs by complementing efforts to recruit field and office staff. Examples of specific strategies:

■ **Engage your local workforce development agencies and community colleges** to promote job openings and to assist candidates in completing the application process, which must be done on-line.

■ **Partner with local service providers or senior centers to provide digital skills training** in advance of the recruitment period to ensure that seniors are familiar with the technology required to apply for and succeed in these jobs. Traditionally, older workers and those who have transitioned out of the fulltime workforce comprise an important part of the census workforce.

■ **Conduct focused recruitment efforts in your HTC communities.** Conducting outreach and door-to-door enumeration may be more effective if temporary employees are from the communities that need to be counted.

**Job applications available at:**  
<https://2020census.gov/jobs>

for the population of your municipality.

**4. Support the enumerator and address canvasser recruitment processes**

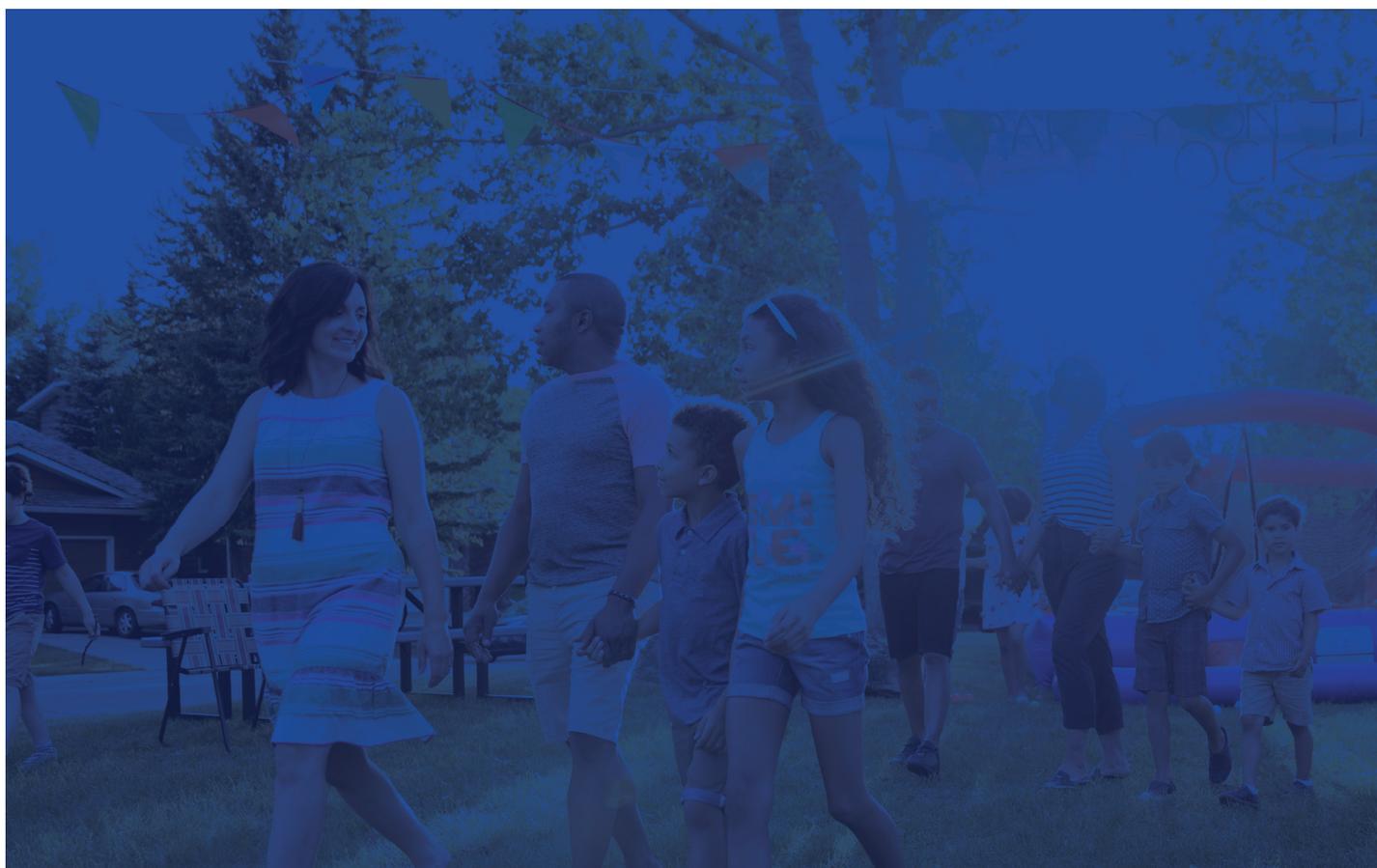
by having city workforce development boards identify viable candidates and provide application assistance.

These efforts help provide the Census Bureau with qualified applicants who are representative of the communities in which they will be working.

**5. Use census data in public materials to show their value.**

Once results of the 2020 Census are released, you'll be able to use the most authoritative and complete data on your city to inform policy and the broader community.

**By December 2020, the Census Bureau will deliver the state population totals, which determine the number of representatives for each state in Congress.**



### Integrate City and Municipal Departments

Due to the scale and complexity of the operations, the impact of the 2020 Census will be felt in many departments of city government. By getting out ahead, city leaders can minimize disruptions to day-to-day business and leverage various departments to ensure a smooth and successful census operation in your community.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1. Use your own position to “get out the count.”** Local elected officials are often the most trusted government representative that residents hear from on a regular basis. Remind your constituents why participation in the 2020 Census is so important for themselves as well as

their families, their neighborhoods and for your city.

- 2. Start an interdepartmental team and designate a lead coordinator from within existing staff** to facilitate an organized and integrated outreach effort. Choose someone from whom agency leaders can get answers to questions and guidance on efforts to support the 2020 Census.
- 3. Check to see if your city participated in LUCA.** Typically, the highest-elected official (the mayor) must enroll a city in LUCA, but sometimes a city’s planning office handles the task. Be sure your city also participates in the **New Construction Program**.
- 4. Leverage your Office of Communications and Public Affairs** to amplify

### Spotlight on Digital Communications

As the 2020 Census approaches, your constituents will have a lot of questions. It’s important that they can easily find answers from reliable and accurate sources, especially online. As the most trusted level of government, your city’s social media and web presence is an invaluable source of information.

Providing a steady stream of accurate and searchable content is especially important given the threat of misinformation. It is highly likely that there will be some attempts to spread false information and stories during the run-up to 2020, but cities can help normalize the Census online in several ways:

#### ■ Put all your content online.

Videos, photos, fact sheets and infographics — even if your primary goal is print content, adding this content to your city’s webpage and social pages will help increase the amount of quality content available online even if people consuming it live outside your city.

#### ■ Optimize your content for digital spread.

Most online content is accessed via search engines, so you want to make sure your content stands out. Use key words in your posts that predict search criteria from your target audience.

#### ■ Share and repurpose material from other cities and trusted sources.

You don’t need to create all of your own content. Sharing information from other sources, such as knowledgeable stakeholder organizations, helps to inform your city and to increase the online visibility of that organization’s content and saves time.

Census Bureau messaging and to counter potential disinformation. Your media presence and social media accounts may be especially trusted by members of your own community.

- 5. Work with local utility companies to include alerts and reminders in monthly mailings.** Utility records can be one of the best sources of accurate address information. In addition, their monthly service mailings can also be designed to include reminders for Census participation during the early part of 2020.
- 6. Connect your schools and educational institutions with the Statistics in Schools program** where teachers can find classroom resources about the importance of the census and being counted so

that students might learn and take the message home.

- 7. Host internet kiosks at libraries and other public buildings** to facilitate internet response to the census. Easy access to online submission portals is the best way to mitigate the broadband access gap for certain communities. Libraries, community centers, or social-service buildings and other community hubs can be places for residents to both get information about the census and get counted.
- 8. Alert your local law enforcement, emergency response and dispatch services** to handle calls from the community during in-person NRFU. During this time, enumerators will be canvassing door-to-door, potentially leading to increased 911 calls.

## Spotlight on Community Events

**Census Day is a great opportunity for community celebrations, especially in smaller cities and hard-to-count neighborhoods.** In 2010, hundreds of communities hosted “March to the Mailbox” events on Census Day. In 2020, community rallies and parades could feature spots along the route where residents who don’t have internet access can use a computer or tablet to fill out a census form online.

Communities during the self-response period are ideal for smaller cities because they can be an efficient, one-stop-shop to increase awareness within the community and to provide the opportunity for residents to get counted. By recruiting cosponsors from the local business, faith, and education community, you can bring all your town’s trusted voices together in one place to attest to the importance of census participation.





### **Involve Your Community through Complete Count Committees**

To ensure a complete and accurate count, you need to engage your community and develop trusted voices to provide information and motivation to residents of your city. One proven tool is the Complete Count Committee (CCC), a volunteer organizing body created at the local level to increase awareness of and participation in the census. In the 2010 cycle, more than 10,000 CCCs were formed around the country.

The Census Bureau encourages both state and local governments to create CCCs, so you may be able to identify partners at the state or county level. But it is still important to commit local time and resources to your own CCC. You know your community best and involving your own residents and local organizations will ensure you have a CCC that is trusted and effective.

CCCs will look different in every city. Large cities may have dozens of members with several different subcommittees. Smaller cities may only have 3 to 5 members, representing the local school, church and community development organization. At the highest level, the goals of every CCC are the same: identify HTC populations in your community, develop strategies to increase their likelihood of participation, and conduct outreach to those communities through trusted voices, whether that is faith-based institutions, immigrants' rights groups, or local service providers and business leaders.

The Census Bureau offers direct support to CCCs via partnership specialists. These employees do not directly manage or participate in local CCCs, but are available to offer expertise and informational materials, and to help identify what activities will be most effective in your community.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**1. Organize a local government CCC in your jurisdiction** and appoint a chairperson to lead the committee. Other potential members include:

- Business leaders
- Developers
- Religious and faith leaders
- Educators and librarians
- Workforce development experts
- Nonprofits (such as the United Way)
- Community advocates
- Local media (particularly outlets serving non-English-speaking populations)
- Social media/technology specialists.

CCCs can be organized with specific subcommittees that focus on topics such as enumerator recruitment, media and messaging, or business participation.

**2. Connect with CCCs that have been organized by your state or county** to avoid duplication of efforts and to leverage their larger scale. Often, your state may have resources, such as geographic/historic data that local CCCs can use to avoid recreating redundant materials.

**3. Identify your HTC communities**

and barriers that may prevent them from participating. Maybe you have new immigrant communities with uncertainty about participating in the census, large gated communities or closed high-rise buildings where enumerators will struggle to canvass, or lower-income or elderly populations with limited internet access. By identifying these hurdles early, you can better overcome them. The Census Bureau's ROAM tool ([www.census.gov/roam](http://www.census.gov/roam)) is a great place to start. The site can help you map and target potential HTC communities for outreach.

**4. Develop your CCC plan of action.**

Now that you have your stakeholders established and you know the challenges facing your community, develop a plan for the 2020 Census. It could include strategies such as targeted messaging campaigns for HTC communities or plans for community events such as parades or rallies around Census Day. Census Bureau partnership specialists can be a great resource for information or additional strategies.



*To learn more about how to establish a CCC in your city and how a CCC can promote participation, check out the **2020 Census Complete Count Committee Guide and Training Manual**, available at [census.gov/2020completecount](http://census.gov/2020completecount) or at [nlc.org/census](http://nlc.org/census).*

# Section Three: Quick Resources

- ➔ **Fast Facts and Talking Points for Constituents**
- ➔ **Specific Community Considerations**
- ➔ **Census City Checklist**
- ➔ **Timeline of Operations**
- ➔ **Definition of Terms**
- ➔ **Census Contacts**

Residents frequently turn to local leaders with questions and concerns related to the census. Section three provides quick resources to address your community's challenges.

## Fast Facts and Talking Points for Constituents

### **“Participating in the 2020 Census is a civic duty and good for your community.”**

The very first responsibility of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution is a count of all persons living in the United States to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. But your participation in the census impacts a much broader range of decisions, from how legislative districts at all levels of government are drawn, to where roads and transit are built in the future, to how more than \$800 billion in federal funding is distributed annually across the country.

### **“There are multiple ways to be counted in the 2020 Census.”**

In mid-March 2020 most addresses in the United States will receive a mailing with instructions to participate online, but you will also have the option to respond via phone or mail. Through spring and summer 2020, Census Bureau employees will follow up in-person at addresses that have not yet been counted.

### **“Your personally identifiable information (PII) is protected by law and cannot be shared outside of the Census Bureau.”**

Census Bureau employees are sworn to uphold the confidentiality of your data for life. Your responses can only be used to produce statistical information, and your personal information cannot be seen or used by other government agencies or the courts. Title 13 of the U.S. Code imposes steep

penalties for anyone who shares personally identifiable information (PII).

### **“Data security is the highest priority for the Census Bureau and extensive protections are in place to protect the integrity of the 2020 Census.”**

Online responses are secured by multiple layers of encryption and isolated from online access as soon as you hit submit. And by working with the federal intelligence community and private industry, the Census Bureau can quickly identify and respond to any external threats to its databases.

### **“English language proficiency is not required to participate in the 2020 Census.”**

The complete online census questionnaire will be available in twelve languages other than English. Telephone responses will be accepted in the same additional 12 languages. Paper forms will be printed in English and Spanish. Language guides and glossaries will be available in 59 non-English languages, plus Braille.

### **“If you don’t have access to the internet in your home, you can still be counted.”**

The online questionnaire can be completed on a smartphone, and desktop internet kiosks may be available at local post offices, libraries and other community centers. Households identified as having limited internet access and households that do not respond to initial census mailings will also be given the opportunity to complete the census through the traditional paper questionnaire. A telephone response option will also be available for the first time.

### Specific Community Considerations

Every community faces different census-related challenges. Here are some key points of consideration for your city if it falls into any of the categories below.



#### Rapidly Growing Cities

If your community is rapidly building more housing units, your city's participation in the New Construction Program is critical. Your involvement with the program will ensure housing units built between the conclusion of the LUCA program (Summer 2018) and Census Day (April 1, 2020) are included in the Census Bureau's Master Address File (MAF).



#### Cities with High Immigrant / Non-Native-English-Speaking Populations

Civic engagement tends to be lower for immigrant and non-native-English-speaking communities. City leaders should make engaging with these communities a priority. Be sure to include trusted voices – such as religious leaders, educators, nonprofit service providers and non-English media – in your complete count committees (CCC).



#### College / University Cities

Be sure to reference the “Where People are Counted?” section to determine how your student population will be counted. It is important to note that while NRFU is scheduled to start in May 2020, the Census Bureau will begin the NRFU process earlier in areas with a concentration of college students living off campus, to account for students leaving after the spring semester. College students are also good job candidates for enumerators.



#### Cities with or Near Military Bases

Be sure to reference the “How Are Different Populations Counted” section to determine how your military and federally-affiliated population will be counted. The Census Bureau has recently changed how deployed military personnel serving overseas during the census are counted, to better ensure an accurate count of military communities.



#### Vacation Destinations & Cities With “Snow Birds”

Be sure to reference the “How Are Different Populations Counted” section to determine how temporary or part-time residents are counted in your community.



# City Census Checklist

## 2018

- Enroll in the Local Update of Census Address (LUCA) program.
- Receive, update and return my city's LUCA review materials.
- Form a Complete Count Committee (CCC), or more than one if needed.
- Hold our first CCC meeting.

## 2019

- Develop a CCC action plan for our city.
- Ensure our city's workforce board is making our community aware of enumerator and other field and area office positions and is facilitating applications.
- Participate in the New Construction Program.
- Meet with census officials or partnership specialists from a regional, area or national office to discuss my city's readiness, share our action plan and discuss our HTC populations.

## 2020

- Install online response kiosk(s) in a publicly-accessible city building such as city hall or library.
- Use our city's social media presence to amplify messages about the upcoming census.
- Hold a public event to promote civic engagement and 2020 Census participation.

# Contacts

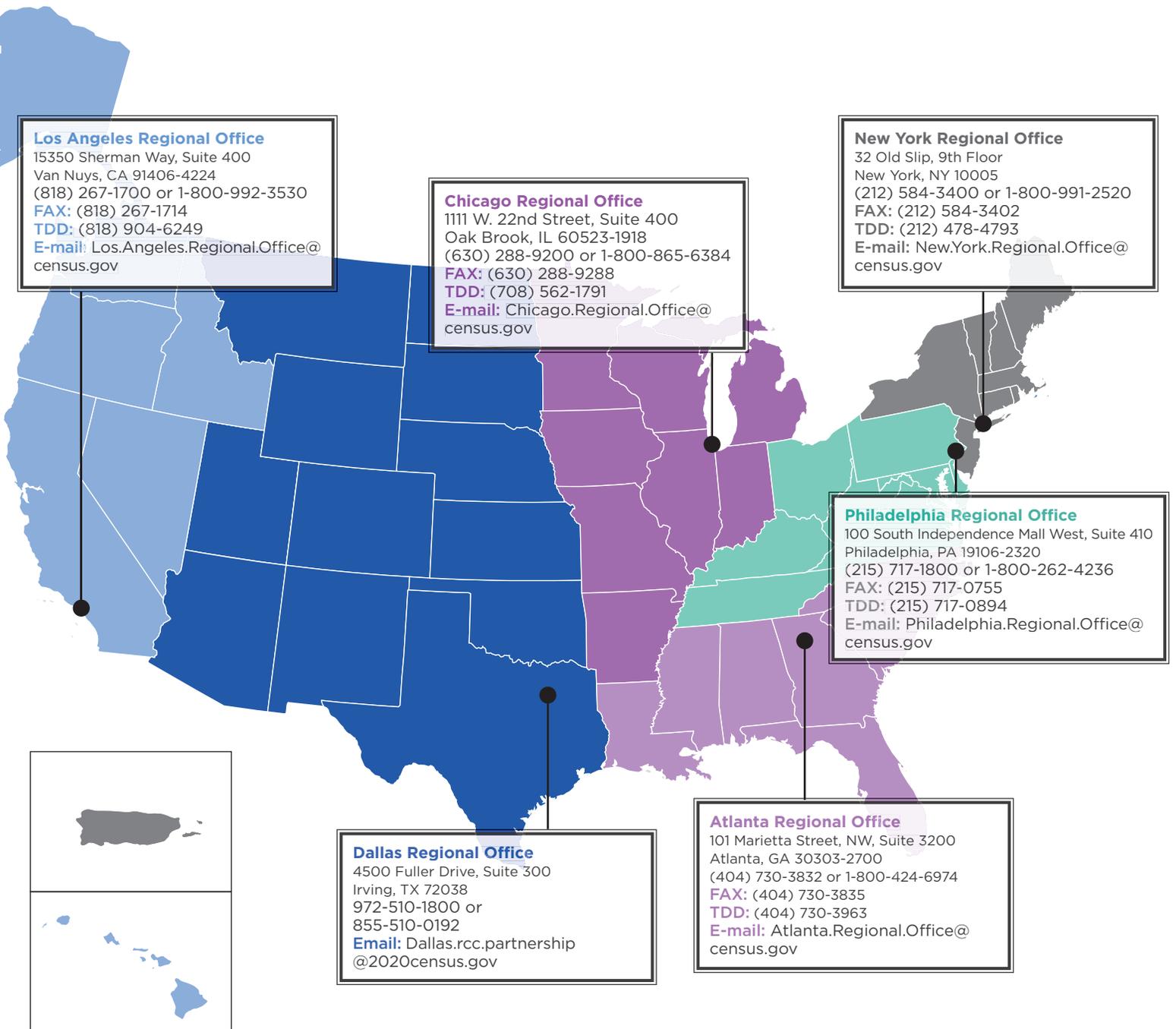
## General Inquiries, Questions and Resources

**CALL:** 301-763-INFO (4636) or 800-923-8282

**VISIT:** [ask.census.gov](http://ask.census.gov)

## Job Applications

[2020census.gov/jobs](http://2020census.gov/jobs)



# Timeline of 2020

## 1 2013 – 2015: Research, Design and Testing Phase

*Bureau tests content and methods to boost self-response rates.*

**LABELED ENTRIES** = Key Dates for Census Bureau Interaction with Cities

### MARCH 2017

#### Question Topics Finalized:

→ Census questionnaire topics submitted to Congress.

### DECEMBER 2017

#### LUCA Applications Due:

Deadline for cities to register to participate in the Local Update of Census Addresses program.

### JANUARY 2018 – JULY 2018

#### LUCA Review:

Participating cities review preliminary Bureau address lists and verify or update with correct information and newer housing stock.

#### Regional Census Centers:

Open 6 Regional Census Centers. (See list under “Contacts Reference” section).

### FEBRUARY 2018

#### Where People Are Counted:

→ Finalize “Residence Criteria” indicating where people are counted.

### NOVEMBER 2019

#### Enumerator Recruitment:

Bureau begins the process of hiring about 500,000 enumerators and other field staff for peak census operations.

#### Get Out the Count:

Census communications campaign begins.

### AUGUST – OCTOBER 2019

#### In-Field Address Canvassing:

Bureau conducts local canvassing, covering about 30 percent of addresses, primarily in high-growth and less-stable areas. Cities participating in LUCA review the final address lists for the 2020 Census.

### JUNE – AUGUST 2019

#### Area Census Offices:

← Remaining ACOs open.

### MARCH 2020 Self-Response Starts:

Peak operations in cities begin, with all households receiving either an invitation to respond online, or an invitation plus a paper questionnaire, the third week of the month.

### FEBRUARY – APRIL 2020 Group Quarters Enumeration:

Census staff contact (February) and then enumerate (April) group facilities, such as college dorms, skilled nursing homes and prisons. This includes several nights in late March when an enumeration of persons in service-based locations (e.g. shelters, mobile food vans, soup kitchens) is conducted. During this period, an effort also is made to enumerate persons in Targeted Non-sheltered Outdoor Locations (TNSOLs). Starting in late 2019, Census Bureau staff will work with local officials and use other sources of information to identify these locations.

### MAY 2020 – JULY 2020

#### Nonresponse Follow-Up (NRFU):

Bureau conducts in-person visits (“door-to-door knocking”) and uses administrative records and other methods to fill in gaps from households that don’t self-respond. For most households, NRFU visits will start in early May; however, in neighborhoods with large college student populations, NRFU will begin in early April.

### NOVEMBER 2020

#### Tabulation:

→ Bureau completes processing of census data.

# Census Operations

## 2 2016 – 2018: Operational Development and Systems Testing

*Bureau builds and tests the systems needed to conduct the 2020 Census. Cities collaborate with the Bureau to ensure property addresses in its databases are up-to-date and to identify hard-to-count (HTC) areas.*

### MARCH 2018

**Questions Finalized:** Final decennial census and American Community Survey questions submitted to Congress.

### JUNE 2018 – APRIL 2020

**Complete Count Committees:** States, cities and tribal governments form Complete Count Committees to support and supplement the Bureau's efforts to promote participation, especially in hard-to-count communities.

### MARCH 2018 – DECEMBER 2018

**End-to-End Census Test:** Full-scale test run (often called a "dress rehearsal") of census operations, conducted in Providence County, Rhode Island.

### APRIL 2019 – JANUARY 2020

**New Residential Construction Program:** Bureau works with local governments to include addresses of new housing stock expected to be closed to the elements by Census Day.

### SPRING 2019

**Address Canvasser Recruitment:** Bureau begins securing applicants to handle "in field" address canvassing later in the year.

### JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2019

**First Wave of Area Census Offices:** Bureau begins opening 40 Early Area Census Offices (ACOs) to oversee address canvassing.

### DECEMBER 2020

**Total Population Counts:** Bureau reports state population totals and resulting congressional apportionment to the President by December 31.

### FEBRUARY – MARCH 2021

**Redistricting Data:** States receive detailed population counts, by voting age, race and ethnicity, for redistricting purposes.

### SPRING 2021

**Detailed data:** Bureau begins releasing detailed population and characteristics data for all governmental units, including cities, on a flow basis.

## 3 2019 – 2021: Implementation

*Bureau activities peak as it completes final lead-up activities for the 2020 Census and conducts the actual enumeration. Cities play a critical role by amplifying Bureau communications and messaging, promoting participation and facilitating access to online response opportunities.*

### JUNE 2021–JUNE 2023

**Count Question Resolution:** As it did in 2000 and 2010, the Bureau will provide an opportunity for local governments to challenge the accuracy of their final 2020 Census counts. The Bureau expects to release an initial operational plan for this program in Fall 2018. It is not yet known if the Bureau will accept challenges both to population and housing unit counts, or only the latter. Revised census counts are not used for congressional reapportionment or redistricting.

# Definition of Terms

## **Address Canvassing:**

The program implements methods to improve and refine the U.S. Census Bureau's address list and related digital maps in advance of the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau needs the address and physical location of each living quarter in the United States and Puerto Rico to conduct the census and accurately tabulate the data. An accurate list ensures that residents will be invited to participate in the census and that the census counts residents in the correct location. For the 2020 Census, much of the address canvassing is being conducted "In-Office," using aerial imagery, third-party (commercial) data, and administrative records from federal, state, and local sources. About 30 percent of census blocks will be canvassed "In-Field" in late summer of 2019 by address listers. In-Field address canvassing will not be conducted in rural areas with non-city style addressing, remote areas, on tribal lands or in Puerto Rico.

## **Area Census Office (ACO) / Field Office:**

A temporary office established to oversee census operations in a specific area. These operations include address listing field work, local recruiting, the Group Quarters operation, and visiting households to conduct the 2020 Census.

## **American Community Survey (ACS):**

Legally part of the decennial census, the ACS is an ongoing, representative survey of approximately 3.5 million homes a year (295,000 per month). The ACS replaces the older census "long form" and asks more questions than the decennial questionnaire to produce annually-updated estimates of key social and economic characteristics down to the census tract level, including data on local economies, health and housing. Like the census, response to the ACS is mandatory.

## **Block:**

Statistical areas bounded by visible features, such as streets, roads, streams, and railroad tracks, and by nonvisible boundaries, such as selected property lines and city, township, school district, and county limits and short line-of-sight extensions of streets and roads. Generally, census blocks are small in area; for example, a block in a city bounded on all sides by streets. Census blocks in suburban and rural areas may be large, irregular and bounded by a variety of features, such as roads, streams, and transmission lines. In remote areas, census blocks may encompass hundreds of square miles. Census blocks cover the entire territory of the United States, Puerto Rico and the

---

Island Areas. Census blocks nest within all other tabulated census geographic entities and are the basis for all tabulated data.

**Block Groups:**

Statistical divisions of census tracts that are generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people and are used to present data and control block numbering. A block group consists of clusters of blocks within the same census tract that have the same first digit of their four-digit census block number. For example, blocks 3001, 3002, 3003, . . . , 3999 in census tract 1210.02 belong to BG 3 in that census tract. Most BGs were delineated by local participants in the Census Bureau’s Participant Statistical Areas Program. The Census Bureau delineated BGs only where a local or tribal government declined to participate, and a regional organization or State Data Center was not available to participate.

**Census of Governments:**

A collection of information from all state and local governments in the United States conducted twice a decade in years ending in “2” and “7.” Participation of all state and local governments – including counties, cities, townships, special districts and school districts – is mandatory.

**Complete Count Committee:**

A volunteer committee established by tribal, state, and local governments, and/or community organizations to include a cross section of community leaders, including representatives from government agencies; education, business, and religious organizations; community agencies; minority organizations; and the media. The committees are tasked with developing and implementing a 2020 Census outreach, promotion, recruiting, and enumeration assistance plan of action designed to help the Census Bureau target and address the unique needs of their communities.

**Dress Rehearsal (2018 End-To-End Census Test):**

A dry run of the census process conducted in Providence County, Rhode Island, in 2018. The dress rehearsal was held to test the integration of IT systems and most operations in a census-like environment and identify problems prior to the actual census in 2020.

**Enumerator:**

A Census Bureau employee who collects census information by visiting households during census field operations.

### **Hard to Count (HTC):**

Groups or populations who have historically been undercounted and/or traditionally have not responded well to the decennial census questionnaire, such as ethnic/ minority populations, renters, and low-income households.

### **Local Update of Census Address (LUCA) Program:**

A voluntary program conducted two to three years prior to the decennial census, during which state and local governments review and help update the Census Bureau's master address file (MAF). A government's highest elected official must register a jurisdiction's participation in LUCA. The Census Bureau must offer the program, by law.

### **Master Address File (MAF):**

A Census Bureau database of every residential address, including household living quarters and group facilities, that is used to conduct the decennial census and other household surveys. This address file is updated throughout the decade and is supplemented by information provided by tribal, state, and local governments.

### **New Construction Program:**

To ensure the most accurate address file possible, the Census Bureau typically affords local governments the ability to add addresses for new construction built after

the final address canvassing concludes in the fall of 2019. The program will likely run between April and January 2020.

### **Non-Response Follow Up (NRFU):**

A field operation designed to obtain a completed interview from households that do not self-respond to the census. Enumerators will make personal visits to these households to obtain completed interviews. The enumerator will collect respondents' answers to the census questions or information. If all attempts to contact the individuals of a household are unsuccessful, an enumerator will try to obtain as much information as possible about the household from a neighbor, building manager, or another reliable source.

### **Partnership Specialist:**

Takes a lead role in outreach and promotional efforts before and during census operations. Main duties include increasing awareness and outreach in communities and gaining cooperation and participation from those communities.

### **Regional Census Center (RCC):**

One of six temporary Census Bureau offices that direct and advise local census offices for the 2020 Census. There also are six permanent Regional Census Offices that will assist with the 2020 Census operations and also conduct one-time and ongoing

---

Census Bureau surveys, such as the Current Population Survey (CPS), which collects monthly labor force data, and the American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey designed to obtain information similar to the previous census long form data and to provide communities a fresh, more current look at how they are changing.

**Respondent:**

The person who answers the Census Bureau's questions about his or her living quarters and its occupants. The respondent is usually the member of the household who owns or rents the living quarters (the "householder" or Person 1 for purposes of a census form).

**Response Area Outreach Mapper (ROAM):**

A web-mapping application developed to make it easier to identify hard-to-count areas and to provide a socioeconomic and demographic characteristic profile of these areas using American Community Survey estimates available in the Census Bureau Planning Database.

**Self-Response:**

When households complete and return their census questionnaire in a timely manner, directly to the Census Bureau, without requiring a census worker to visit the house to obtain their responses in person. Self-response—by internet, mail, or phone—is significantly less costly than in-person follow-up.

**State Complete Count Commission (SCCC):**

Like a local CCC, state governments typically enter into this kind of formal partnership with the Census Bureau. The commission is composed of tribal, state and local government officials and private or nonprofit organization leaders and provides the structure and support to engage the state's stakeholders and encourage participation in the census.

**Title 13 (U.S. Code):**

The collection of laws under which the Census Bureau operates (also known as the Census Act). This law guarantees the confidentiality of personal census information and establishes strict penalties for disclosing this information. It also provides the authorization for conducting censuses in Puerto Rico and the Island Areas.

**Tract:**

Small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity that are updated by local participants prior to each decennial census as part of the Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program. The Census Bureau delineates census tracts in situations where no local participant existed or where state, local, or tribal governments declined to participate. The primary purpose of census tracts is to provide a stable set of geographic units for the presentation of statistical data.

**NLC** NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES