

Counting Children in the 2020 Census

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

BASIC FAQS

Should you count children?

Yes, the 2020 Census needs to count everyone, including newborns, babies, and young children. This information is used in formulas that allocate money to states and communities for programs that serve children, including schools, child care, health care, transportation, and housing. When children are missed in the 2020 Census, their states and communities will receive less money for a decade for these programs that help children thrive. That's most of their childhoods.

Where should you count children?

You should count children of all ages where they live and sleep most of the time. If that can't be determined, count them where they are on April 1, 2020.

Where should you count infants?

You should count any baby born before or on April 1, 2020 in the census response for the child's parents or guardians at the residence where the child will live and sleep most of the time, even if the child is still in the hospital on April 1.

How should you count children with undocumented parents or guardians?

The Constitution requires the Census to include every person living in the United States, including citizens, lawfully present immigrants, and undocumented people. Children, and their undocumented parents or guardians, should all be included in the 2020 Census at the place where they live and sleep most of the time. The Census Bureau may not share any information that can be used against you. By law, Census Bureau staff may not share information about individuals or households with anyone public or private, including immigration enforcement agencies, law enforcement agencies, government offices related to eligibility for programs, or landlords. The penalty for sharing information about individual people is very severe. Census Bureau staff who share individual information could go to prison for up to five years and pay a fine of as much as \$250,000.

Where can I find more information about counting young children in the 2020 Census?

You can find greater detail on where people should be counted at [census.gov](https://www.census.gov). Use either [this](#) or [this](#) link.

FAQS ABOUT COMPLICATED LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The questions and answers below clarify where you should count young children who have potentially confusing living arrangements.

How should you count...

... children who split time between households?

A child who splits time between households should be counted where they live and sleep most of the time. If that cannot be determined, the child should be counted where they are staying on April 1, 2020. If they split their time evenly between two or more places, the households should communicate to make sure the child is counted once and only once.

... foster children?

A foster child should be included in their foster parent's census response if the child lives and sleeps in that household most of the time, or if they have no other home. If the foster child is also a relative, please give the family relationship on the form rather than describing them as a foster child. If the child is living in a group home or shelter, the Census Bureau will count that child at that residence.

... grandchildren?

You should count a child who lives and sleeps at their grandparent's home most of the time in the census response of the grandparent. (This is true even if the grandparent is not the legal guardian.)

... stepchildren?

You should count a stepchild where they live and sleep most of the time. If they split their time evenly between two or more places, the child should be counted where they are staying on April 1, 2020. The households where the child spends time should communicate to make sure the child is counted once and only once.

... a girlfriend's or boyfriend's child?

You should count the child of a "significant other" where they live and sleep most of the time. If that cannot be determined, the child should be counted where they are staying on April 1, 2020. This is true even if they are only there temporarily, if they have no other place to live.

... nieces, nephews, cousins, and other child relatives?

You should count children related to the householder where they live and sleep most of the time. If that cannot be determined, the child should be counted where they are staying on April 1, 2020. This is true even if they are only there temporarily, if they have no other place to live.

... children who aren't related to you?

You should count children where they live and sleep most of the time, even if they are not related to the householder. This is true even if they are only there temporarily, as long as they have no other place to live.

... children if you are a housemate, roommate, roomer, or boarder?

You should verify that you and your child are included on the census response where you live and sleep most of the time. If this cannot be determined, you should be counted where you are staying on April 1,

2020. Try to talk to the person where you are living to make sure you and your child are included in the census response.

... your child if you are living with another individual or family?

You should verify that you and your child are included on the census response where you live and sleep most of the time, even if you are living with another individual or family not related to you. If you are not sure where you spend the most time, you should be counted where you are staying on April 1, 2020. Talk to the person where you are living to make sure you and your child are included.

... children living on military bases?

If the child is living outside of the United States on April 1, the Census Bureau will count them using administrative data. If the child is living on a base in the United States, you should count them where they live and sleep most of the time.

... children living in your household temporarily?

If the child has no other place where they live and sleep most of the time, you should count them where they live and sleep on April 1, 2020, even if they are only there temporarily.

... children living in your household who are temporarily away from home?

If your child who lives with you is temporarily away from home, for example on vacation or in a hospital, you should include them on your response even if they are not home on April 1, 2020.

... children living in RV parks, campgrounds, marinas, hotels, and similar temporary residences?

You should count children at the residence (including RV parks, campgrounds, marinas, hotels, and similar temporary residences) where they live and sleep most of the time. If you do not receive a physical questionnaire or invitation letter to respond to the 2020 Census, you can respond by phone or online.

FAQS ABOUT GROUP LIVING SITUATIONS

How will the Census Bureau count children in immigration and customs enforcement (ICE) service processing centers or ICE detention facilities?

The administrative staff at the facility where these children are sleeping and living on April 1, 2020 will count these children.

How will the Census Bureau count children living in group facilities?

The administrative staff at the group facility will count any children living in a group facility or congregate care, such as a group home, a child care institution (including those for children in foster care), or a residential treatment facility. However, you should count a child who is in a hospital temporarily, such as a newborn or someone recovering from an operation, at the place where they live and sleep most of the time.

FAQS ABOUT RESPONDING TO THE CENSUS: SPECIAL SITUATIONS

How should you count yourself and your children if you did not receive a questionnaire or a letter?

There are multiple ways to respond to the 2020 Census if you do not receive a paper questionnaire or an invitation letter in the mail. The invitation letter and the paper questionnaire include a unique identification (ID) code but you can respond by [phone](#) or [online](#), even if you do not have this ID. You can also respond by phone or online without the ID if you receive a paper questionnaire but prefer the phone or do not have the ID handy when you are ready to complete the form. This is called a “non-ID response”.

How should you count yourself and your children if someone in your household submits a response and did not include you or your children?

If you, or someone else in your household, did not include your child in their response, you can submit a separate response without the ID [online](#) or by [phone](#); this is called a “non-ID response.” You should include the address and as much information as possible about everyone in the household, so that the Census Bureau can compare the two responses from the same address to make sure that everyone is counted and no one is counted twice.

Can someone help you complete the census?

Yes, you can ask anyone you trust to help you with your census response.

When will you be asked to respond to the census?

Beginning March 12, the Census Bureau will send out mailings inviting you to respond to the 2020 Census. Starting in May 2020, if you have not responded, someone from the Census Bureau will come to your house to help you respond. However, you can complete the form [online](#), by [phone](#), or by mail until the end of July. Once you submit your response, the Census Bureau will stop sending people to your home.

The rules in this FAQ can be found [here](#) and some examples are [here](#). In a few of the above cases, we asked Census staff to clarify how certain situations should be handled.

