



2020 Census Message Guide—English

Prepared by Count All Kids

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About the Count All Kids 2020 Census Campaign

The U.S. Census gathers population and demographic data from every person living in every community in the country. This information will help determine how more than \$800 billion in federal funding will be distributed annually to states and communities for the next 10 years,¹ as well as elected representation in government.

Children under age 5 is the largest age group of undercounted people in the United States. And unlike other age groups, the undercount of young children grew between the 2000 Census and 2010 Census.²

An undercount in 2020 could affect how much support programs that serve families and their young children receive, such as schools, child care and early learning, health insurance, hospitals, and food assistance. Recent research found that people who are least likely to complete the Census or count their children are most reliant on these programs, including younger, low-income, immigrant, and rural families, along with people in complex and/or transitional household situations.

The Count All Kids Committee is a group of national, state, and local children's organizations and allies that have joined together to ensure our nation's children are counted in the 2020 Census.

About This Message Guide

This message guide is based on qualitative and quantitative message research that Count All Kids commissioned. **The document is a reference for affiliates and partners to adapt and share messages about the 2020 Census with families that have young children.** Parents/caregivers said in research settings that they want to see posters and flyers in offices of people they trust (e.g., schools, child care centers, and doctor's offices), while individuals with language barriers who also don't use some of these services recommended messages around transportation settings (e.g., buses, metro trains, and billboards). As a result, printable and digital resources accompany this document. The guide and materials are also available in Spanish.

In this document you will find the following sections, each with an introduction in an orange block to explain how to use the content:

- [Core messages](#) to educate and motivate parents/caregivers of children ages 0-5 to include all children in the 2020 Census
- [Frequently asked questions](#) to help answer questions you may receive from families or when conducting an interview with a reporter

If you have questions about the Count All Kids materials, please contact Debbie Stein at dstein@foramericaschildren.org.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2019-10/Handout_for_Partners_CYC.pdf?#

² Ibid.

Core Messages

Parents and caregivers often don't include children ages 0-5 that are living with them on their Census forms. In 2020, it's crucial to ensure a complete count of all children and babies to secure adequate federal funding to support them and their families.

Message research identified the top reasons parents and caregivers might not include young children in their Census responses. These include:

- Unfamiliarity with how the Census can help their children and households
- A lack of understanding about who to include in the household
- Personal fears related to immigration status, overcrowded housing situations, and personal privacy

Below is a three-phase approach to address these factors. Please use these messages as the base for any outreach you conduct with families—whether in individual conversations, presentations, written materials/announcements, and social media messages. You can customize these messages to best meet the needs of the community you serve, including answering questions in the language the community speaks, and highlighting the federal programs on which families most rely.

Value Messages: Why does the Census matter to my children and to me?

- The 2020 Census helps decide how much money your community will get for schools, child care and early learning, health insurance and medical care, early intervention and home visiting programs, food assistance, foster care, housing assistance, and public transport.
 - Your community uses it for planning how many schools and classrooms it needs, and where health care services should be.
- The Census also decides the number of seats your state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives and how many representatives your community will have in your state legislature, county council, and even your local school board.
- Count all kids and babies at your address on the Census. Then, your local programs will get more funding to serve our children today and over the next decade.
- The Census happens once every 10 years. So, if all the children living at your address aren't counted in 2020, they will have fewer services for the next decade. Don't let this happen. Count all kids on your 2020 Census form.

General Awareness Messages: What is the Census and why do you need to count young children?

- The Census happens once every 10 years. It's the only official population count of every person in the U.S.
- The Census counts people at each address—even if those people aren't related, if they are not U.S. citizens, if they live there part time, or are only living there temporarily but have no permanent address.
- The Census doesn't just count adults, it also counts children. This means all babies and children under the age of 5 at your address—even if they're not related to the person who fills out the form.

- Remember, when it comes to the Census, everyone counts. Count ALL kids living at your address. Don't forget to include babies (born by April 1, 2020), nieces, nephews, grandchildren, foster children, and people not related to you (like a friend and his/her child).
- April 1 is Census Day. If a child is staying with you on this day and has no permanent home, make sure you count them.
- Respond to the Census. Visit [2020Census.gov](https://www.census.gov). For more help, call 844-330-2020.

Messages to Address Pain Points: Is it safe to fill out the Census honestly?

- By law, the information you share through the Census cannot be released for 72 years.
 - The Census has the strongest confidentiality guarantees in the federal government.
 - It's against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any survey information that identifies an individual or business with anyone. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.
- The Census doesn't just count people who are U.S. citizens. It counts every single person in the U.S. You should include everyone at your address. Completing the Census in 2020 is a confidential way of making sure you and your family count!
 - **In fact, the 2020 Census will NOT ask if you are a U.S. citizen.** You don't need to worry about your own immigration status, or that of anyone living at your address, when you fill out the 2020 Census. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep all of your information confidential. The Census isn't allowed to share your information with anyone—including other government agencies.
- **Make sure you count everyone living at your home address.** It doesn't matter if they're not listed on the lease or rental agreement. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord.
- While you should try to respond to the Census on time (by April 30, 2020), Census workers will visit addresses that haven't responded to the Census by that date. Census workers are usually members of your community hired by the U.S. Census Bureau. If you would prefer that they not visit your home, make sure you fill out the form by April 30.
 - If you haven't been able to fill it out the Census by April 30, 2020, you can still respond online or by phone or mail through July 31, 2020. Once you respond, Census workers will stop trying to visit your address.
- Filling out the Census form for your address is safe, convenient, and quick.
 - You can respond to the Census online or by phone, in English, Spanish, or 12 other languages. You can even do it on your smartphone!
 - For more help, you can call the English-language hotline at 844-330-2020.³
 - Video and printed guides are also available in 59 non-English languages.⁴

³ Find phone numbers in additional languages: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/language-resources/language-guides.html>

Additional Messaging Tips

- Make sure you mention babies or everyone from birth on. The research Count All Kids commissioned showed many people thought “young children” didn’t necessarily include babies.
- Tell parents/caregivers what to do. Tell them to “count all kids” so they know this is about the Census and not foster care or other children’s issues.
- Use the Census Bureau logo, url, and phone numbers, so parents/caregivers know where to get their questions answered. People trusted the Census Bureau to answer questions about the Census.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are designed to help you address additional topics that may be relevant to people in your local community.

You can use them to answer questions from families or when holding interviews with reporters. As with the other information in this guide, feel free to adapt responses based on your community's needs.

What is the Census?

- The Census is a questionnaire. Think of it like a survey. It only asks nine questions.
- The Census count helps determine how much money your community will get for important programs that support children, including: schools, child care and early learning, health insurance, medical care, food assistance, foster care, housing, and public transportation.
- It counts every adult and child living in the United States at a specific point in time—on April 1, 2020.
- The Census takes place once every 10 years. The next Census after this one will be in 2030.
- The Census counts all people who live at an address. It does not matter if these people are related. If someone—of any age—lives at your address on April 1, 2020, even temporarily, you should include them in the 2020 Census form.

What does the Census ask?

- The Census asks nine questions about the people living at each address. The questions include name, age, country of origin/race, sex, and if the person filling out the 2020 Census form owns or rents the dwelling at that address.
- The Census will **not** ask for your income, social security number, or political party.
- The Census is a count of all people in the U.S., no matter your immigration status. The 2020 Census will **not** ask if you or others at your address are citizens.
 - You may have come across information about this in the news. In the end, a question about citizenship was not added to the 2020 Census.
- By law, information provided to the Census cannot be shared by the Census with other government agencies or a landlord. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.

Why do I need to count my child(ren)?

- The Census helps our government figure out how much money each state should get for important programs for the next decade.
- Counting each and every person—including all children and babies—in the 2020 Census is crucial. It determines how much money our community gets for schools, child care and early learning, health insurance, medical care, food assistance, foster care, housing, and public transportation.
- In 2010, we missed more than 2 million children under age five.

- As a result, states lost over a half-a-billion dollars every year for health care, foster care, and child care.
- On average, schools lost \$1,695 per year for every child missed between the ages of 5 and 18.
- States missed out on funding for many other programs, too.
- The Census only happens every 10 years. That means if we don't count all kids in 2020, they will be shortchanged for the next decade.

When does the Census happen?

- In March, you'll receive an invitation letter in the mail with directions for how to complete the Census online. This will include a unique Census ID that links you to a physical address.
 - You will also get a reminder postcard in the mail at the beginning of April.
- Starting in March, you will be able to fill out the Census form online—on a computer, tablet, or smartphone—or respond by phone.
- If you haven't responded by mid-April, you will get a printed copy of the form in the mail.
- In May, Census workers—usually members of your local community hired by the U.S. Census Bureau—will visit addresses that have not responded to the Census to help fill out the form in-person.
 - If you don't want them to come to your home, make sure to fill out the form by April 30.
 - All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.
- If you're not sure who to count on your Census form, think about who stays/stayed at your address on April 1, 2020. For example, if a child is staying with you this day and has no permanent home, make sure you count them.

Who do I count?⁵

- A single Census form needs to be filled out for each address. The form should include every person living at the address, no matter their age or citizenship.
- Count every adult and every child born by April 1, 2020. This includes newborns who may still be in the hospital, but will live at your address.
- If you're not sure who to count on your Census form, think about who stayed with you on April 1, 2020.
 - If you share custody of a child, you can decide where to count him/her based on the address where he/she stayed on April 1.
 - If a child is staying with you this day and has no permanent home, make sure you count them.
 - If you have a family member who does not live with you because he/she attends college, is in the military, is in jail, or lives in a senior living community, do not include him/her on your Census form. They will be counted separately.

⁵ If you have more questions, check the frequently-asked-questions document in this toolkit. <https://countallkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CAK-Toolkit-2.28.pdf>

- People experiencing homelessness will be counted separately at shelters, soup kitchens, and mobile food vans in spring 2020.
- Remember: by law, all Census information cannot be shared with a landlord or any government agency. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.

How can I respond?

- Filling out the Census form for your address is safe, convenient, and quick.
- Starting in March 2020, you can respond at 2020Census.gov. You can do it on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.
- You will also be able to call the U.S. Census Bureau at 844-330-2020 to answer the Census questions.
 - Census hotlines are available in 13 other languages: Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin), Chinese (Cantonese), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.⁶
- In addition, video and printed guides are available in 59 non-English languages, and there's a printed guide in braille and one with large print.⁷
- You can get help filling out the form, but make sure it's from someone you trust, and that you're putting the information directly into the Census website, not into their computer, tablet, or phone for future uploading. You can learn more about how community groups can help you respond.⁸
- You can fill out the form at our local library, child care center, or other community facility even if you don't have the unique identifying code.⁹
- If you left someone off, you can fill out the Census again without the unique identifying code, and include everyone, just using your address. The Census Bureau will remove all duplicated individuals.

Is my information secure?

- Yes, your information is secure. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep your information confidential.
- The Census has the strongest confidentiality guarantees in the federal government. It's illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to share your information with other government agencies, companies, or your landlord. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.
- A Census worker will never ask for your Social Security number or information about your bank accounts or credit cards. Never share this information with anyone you do not know or trust.
- If you want to make sure the person at your door is really a Census worker, check their badge. All Census workers have an official U.S. Census Bureau ID badge. The badge will include their name, picture, a Department of Commerce watermark,

⁶ https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html

⁷ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/language-resources/language-guides.html>

⁸ <https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2019-10/partners-self-response.pdf>

⁹ https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2020-01/Responding_Without_Census_ID_FAQ.pdf

and an expiration date. They will also be carrying an official bag with the Census Bureau logo and an official letter explaining why they are visiting.

Does the Census ask about citizenship?

- No, the Census will not ask if you're a U.S. citizen.
- You may have heard about this in the news. In the end, this question was not added to the survey. Everyone should respond to the Census, including non-citizens.

Why is the Census asking for my phone number?

- The Census Bureau asks for your phone number in case they have questions about your responses to the questionnaire.
- They will not share your phone number with anyone, including businesses or other government agencies.