

FAITHFUL DEMOCRACY - UNHEARD VOICES
CHAPTER 3



2020
CENSUS
TOOLKIT

Chapter Three: The 2020 Census

April 1, 2020, National Census Day, is just a few weeks away. Every ten years, the federal government is required to count every person living in the United States. That count lays the foundation for our democratic representation, the distribution of public funds in communities around the nation, and an understanding of the makeup of our people.

As people of faith, we believe that every person has inherent dignity and worth, ordained by God. When we respond to the Census and encourage those in our community to do so, we declare that we are part of “we the people”. A complete count is each person claiming their value in the foundation of our democracy.

This toolkit is designed to equip faith leaders and people of faith with resources, messaging, and action steps to help ensure that every person in your community is counted, regardless of race, faith tradition, immigration, or economic status. Faith leaders are among the most trusted messengers in our communities and are positioned to play a key role in ensuring that everyone is counted in the 2020 Census.

Census: Counting We the People

The Guarantee of Representation

The census was one of the first things the country’s founding fathers mandated. It differed sharply from the Colonial censuses, which were designed as tools for the powerful to control and tax the population and exploit natural resources. The American census drastically changed that objective, instead building on the Boston Tea Party mantra of “No taxation without representation.” For the founders, the right to representation is as fundamental as the right to vote. While the latter was restricted to adult white male property owners at the time, the right to representation was due to all people residing in the newly formed nation. The Census counted women, children, and people of color, including slaves since it was first carried out in 1790.¹ It is the foundation of representation for people across the nation, no matter their race, socioeconomic status, or citizenship and serves as a decennial building block for our democracy. The U.S. Constitution empowers Congress to carry out the Census as the basis for allocating power to the people over their government.²



What is the Census?

The Census is a nationwide count of how many people live in the United States of America; the Census Bureau conducts it every 10 years.³ The Census aims to count every person residing in the United States so as to draw electoral districts. In the 20th Century it also became the basis for determining how, where, and to whom crucial federal dollars should be allocated.⁴

Census data reflects all the information that individuals provide as anonymous, aggregate statistics, which are crucial to understand the changing needs of the nation.⁵ The personal information provided in the Census remains confidential for 72 years after the information is provided.⁶

Learn about Census data security and privacy protection in this [webinar](#)⁷ by the Presbyterian Church USA.

“But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices in it.”
(1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

What’s at Stake

Every state and community has a stake in making sure that everyone is counted. Communities that are undercounted could lose political influence and civil rights safeguards, as well as resources that contribute to individual well-being and thriving communities.⁸



The 2020 Census will determine how many representatives your state will send to Congress.⁹ State and local governments also use Census data to redraw state legislative districts. Being counted ensures political representation and undercounted communities are at risk of losing that representation.

The census count impacts civil rights protections, as well, like those found in the Voting Rights Act. The administration of antidiscrimination laws created in the 1960s and gender equality laws enacted over the years very often require a baseline count to demonstrate discriminatory impacts. For example, if the African American population is 12% but only account for 2% of university student populations, we have an unfairness problem. The social justice advances in the last half-century draw from data provided by the federal statistical system — data on employment, wages, access to health, education opportunities, livable housing. All of these survey-based statistics utilize the basic population count provided by the Census.

The Census figures are used to determine where hundreds of billions of dollars in public and private sector funding is spent on infrastructure, health care, schools, roads, and more. Over \$800 billion in federal government funding will be determined by the 2020 Census count.¹⁰ The 2020 Census will impact how many teachers are hired in our local schools and how many nurses and beds are in our local hospitals. From roads to food assistance, when people are not counted, our communities lose out.

Who is Hard to Count?

Certain groups have been consistently undercounted in past Censuses and therefore are classified as Hard to Count (HTC). When these communities are undercounted, their voice is diminished in important local, state and national policy decisions. The Hard To Count populations often live in vulnerable, under resourced communities that need public investment the most. Find which areas in your community are hard to count with the [Census Bureau's Hard to Count Interactive Map](#).¹¹ Who tends to be Hard to Count?

❖ Children under age 5

Many people filling out the Census do not realize that they are supposed to count everyone in their home, including young children and babies.¹² In the 2010 Census, over 2 million young children were not counted.¹³

Find out [here](#)¹⁴ why counting young children in the 2020 Census is so important!

❖ People living in poverty

Over 29 million people living in or near poverty reside in hard-to-count Census tracts.¹⁵ Low-income households have a number of characteristics making them more vulnerable to being undercounted, such as being renters or living in group quarters.

❖ People experiencing homelessness

People experiencing homelessness could be undercounted due to their transitional lifestyle. The Census counts people experiencing homelessness through probe questions on the Census and three days of reach out to homeless shelters and community centers, where they are more likely to reside. Still, it is more difficult to count people experiencing homelessness accurately and fairly.

❖ Immigrant communities

Due to the policies and rhetoric of the Trump Administration, many immigrant communities are on high alert for government agencies, fearing for their safety and livelihoods in the United States.¹⁶ With strong fears of their data being shared with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) and resulting in deportation, immigrant communities are at higher risk than ever of not responding to the census.

❖ Those with Limited English Proficiency

The Census does have options for people who do not speak English as their first language. However, in many places these resources are limited and only cover the most popular languages spoken in one given area. This exposes people with limited or no English language capacity to being undercounted.

Find the entire list of language resources and assistance hotlines for the 2020 Census [here](#)¹⁷

❖ **Those without high speed internet access**

The 2020 Census will unveil a new online option to fill out the Census questionnaire.¹⁸ This is how most people will choose to fill out their Census form. Unfortunately, this means that people who live without access to a high speed internet will be more difficult to count, as they will not have easy access to the online Census form.

Learn more about the 2020 Census' new [Internet Self Response Portal](#)¹⁹

❖ **Religious minorities**

Many religious groups live in communities together and may not receive standard Census marketing or outreach.²⁰ This could make it more difficult to raise awareness of Census operations and ultimately count people in these enclaves accurately.

Many of these characteristics overlap in communities and can increase the odds of undercounting their populations. In addition, these characteristics are much more prevalent in communities of color, specifically African-America, Latinx, and indigenous populations. When the Census undercounts these Hard to Count populations, it is unfairly discounting the value and voice of communities of color. When properly carried out, the Census can be an important tool in the fight for racial justice and inclusion. When the Census count is incomplete, it perpetuates structural racism and discrimination in our nation.

Learn about the disturbing history of black people being undercounted in the Census [here](#).²¹

- ✓ Join a 2020 Faithful Census Webinar on March 12 from 2 - 3 p.m. ET sponsored by Faith in Public Life, Skinner Institute, National Coalition on Black Civic Engagement, and other clergy working to count all African Americans. [Register here](#).²²
- ✓ Watch a recording of the Religious Action Center of Jewish Reform's webinar calling the Jewish community to help capture these Hard to Count populations.

Reflection Questions:

- *Who in your community would be classified as Hard to Count?*
- *How can you reach out to these people to ensure that they are fairly counted?*

“What’s the worry of people of faith about this census? Let’s be clear. Our worry is that this administration purposely intends to undercount. The people at risk of being undercounted are those in poverty, immigrants, and those on the margins. For people of faith these are precisely the people in whom we are called to see the face of God.”

–Stephen Schneck, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network

Paths to a Successful Census

Internet Self-Response

The 2020 Census will be the first census that will allow every person to fill out the questionnaire online. Almost every person will receive a Census postcard in the mail with a special invitation to fill out the online form. Some households in more rural and historically undercounted populations will also receive a paper form that they can fill in instead of the online form.

The Census Internet Self-Response Portal is an avenue to streamline responses to the Census. Every household that completes the survey online frees-up Census Bureau resources to focus on ensuring that Hard to Count communities are accurately and fairly counted.

Therefore, those who are able should fill out the 2020 Census online during the Census’s self-response period, which begins on March 12th. We encourage households to complete the 2020 Census Questionnaire as soon as they receive their first invitation to do so online. Please encourage others to follow suit so that resources are not spent trying to contact those who have not responded.



Find out more about the Internet Self-Response Portal [here](#).²³

“The Torah teaches that in the wilderness of Sinai, God commanded Moses to take a head count of the people (Number (1:2). Even in biblical times, our leaders understood the importance of an accurate census. The 2020 Census will have a profound effect on every state, community, and individual. We must strive for a full and accurate Census wherein all people and communities are counted.”

–Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Phone and Paper Self-Response

If someone is unable to fill out the Census form online, they can call the number listed on their official Census invitation and fill out their Census over the phone. Households will then receive a paper form by mail in early April if there is still no response.

Non-Response Follow Up

If a household does not respond, either online or over the phone or on a paper form, then the Census Bureau will begin knocking on doors of those who have not responded. This consumes more resources and time than the self-response options.



Reflection Questions:

- *How might a timely online response contribute to more effective Census operations in Hard to Count communities?*
- *How can you help encourage people to fill out the Census online and early?*

2020 CENSUS TIMELINE

Census operations occur from March
to July 2020



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2020

Pre-census promotion including national and local ads



MARCH 12, 2020

The census uses the U.S. postal service to send a letter of invitation to respond. The online and phone portal to respond also opens this day

MARCH 30, 31, APRIL 1, 2020

"Service based enumeration" begins to ensure that homeless populations are counted

APRIL 1, 2020

Official Census Day!

Ensuring that households fill out the census based on where they "usually" live on April 1.

**Why is April 1
"Census Day" if
the census is from
March through
July?**

April 1 provides a reference point for where you are and usually reside. So if you move in May and fill out the form in June 2020, fill out the form where you were on April 1

APRIL 8 - 16, 2020

Paper forms will be sent out to households that have not yet responded

APRIL 2020

Group quarters counted. Group quarters are housing units like nursing homes and colleges

APRIL 20 - 27, 2020

Final reminder postcard before the Census Bureau begins door knocking phase

MAY 13, 2020

Door knocking phase (also called non-response follow up or NRFU). Everyone is still able to respond online, by paper and by phone during this phase or complete the form with the census worker at the door



Challenges to the 2020 Census

The Citizenship Question

In 2018, the Trump Administration proposed a new question to be included in the 2020 Census that had not been included since the 1950s: the citizenship question.²⁴ In July of 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to include a citizenship question in the 2020 Census survey.²⁵ Therefore, **there will be no citizenship question in the 2020 Census.**



This attempt to implement a citizenship question was designed to make noncitizens residing in the United States fearful of responding in order to suppress the Census count in immigrant communities, specifically in Latinx populations. This attempt to skew the results of the 2020 Census would undermine the validity of our nation's democratic foundation.

When noncitizen residents are afraid that their information will be used against them by the government, they will not participate in the Census.

An inaccurate Census count that misses hundreds of thousands of people in immigrant communities would have devastating impacts for the next decade, if not longer. A skewed Census contributes to a broken democracy. When immigrant communities and Latinx populations are not fully accounted for in the Census, they are underrepresented by federal dollars and lose congressional representation.

Encouraging immigrant communities to complete the census and assuring them that there is no citizenship question can help alleviate fears to ensure a full and accurate count. Learn more about how to engage immigrant communities in the 2020 Census in [English](#)²⁶ and [Spanish](#).²⁷

***“Do not mix truth with falsehood or hide the truth knowingly.”
(Al-Baqarah 2:42)***

Census Misinformation

Misinformation and online influence campaigns to sow discord is a new challenge for the 2020 Census in the digital age. Adversaries and other bad actors seek to suppress participation in the Census by undermining trust in the Census Bureau among U.S. residents. This is a similar attempt to skew the resulting data for political or ideological reasons.

It is important to dispel falsehoods about the Census so that people in all communities feel free to participate in the Census without fear that their information will be misused. Namely, the most important points to

reiterate when speaking about the Census is that there will NOT be a citizenship question in the Census and that all private information given in the Census remains confidential and is NOT shared with other agencies.

- ✓ Learn what misinformation is being spread at the [Census Bureau's official webpage on the most prolific rumors about the 2020 Census](#).²⁸
- ✓ If you see misleading or suspicious posts about the Census, report it to the Census quickly at rumors@census.gov.
- ✓ National Advocacy Group Color of Change is also tracking misinformation and rumors surrounding the Census. Report rumors here: <https://act.colorofchange.org/survey/hearing-info-census>

“Core beliefs in the Islamic faith tradition include equality, democracy, and social justice. One of the ways to achieve these ideals is accurately counting the various communities that comprise our nation, including America’s 3.3-8 million Muslims. I’m excited and hopeful that our community will fully participate this year.”

–Wardah Khalid, President of the Poligon Education Fund

Questions on the 2020 Census Form		*Note: There will be NO Citizenship question.
QUESTION	WHY IS THIS ASKED?	
ADDRESS	As the census is a national household count, it is imperative to tie the response to a household.	
HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD?	This is our only chance for 10 years to ensure that we have an accurate count of where everyone is on April 1, 2020.	
DO YOU OWN OR RENT YOUR HOME?	This question is the basis for the US and Colorado to assess its housing inventory. Data is also used to fund housing assistance programs and to enforce fair housing laws.	
NAME	Remember your personal information, including name, is secure. Names are asked to ensure that everyone in the household is counted and for the Census Bureau to do internal verification.	
GENDER	Disaggregated data used to ensure that government programs serve the needs of specific genders, enforce laws and regulations including the Civil Rights Act	
DATE OF BIRTH/AGE	Many census guided programs support specific populations such as Head Start supporting youth children, Pell Grants supporting 18+, and Medicare supporting Older Adults.	
HISPANIC ORIGIN	Data gathered used for government programs and policies to ensure fair allocation of services to Hispanic populations.	
RACE	To ensure federal, state, and tribal programs are in compliance with anti-discrimination laws, regulations and policies. Also used to meet legislative redistricting requirements.	

Faith Talking Points on the 2020 Census

- ✓ **As people of faith, we believe in the divinely given dignity of every person.**

When we answer the Census and help our neighbors do so too, we declare that we are part of “we the people” and we refuse to be excluded from the critical resources and political representation that we deserve.

- ✓ **Our community benefits from everyone being counted, and we have one chance in a decade to get it right.**

The 2020 Census’ impact on our communities and our nation is profound. A full, accurate count lays the foundation for a healthy democracy and communities where families thrive and flourish.

- ✓ **Your census information is confidential, and we have a legal and moral responsibility to take part.**

When you fill out the Census, your personally identifiable information will not be shared with any other government agency. Our families, children, and neighbors are counting on us to participate so we all have the critical resources and representation that we need and deserve.

- ✓ **The 2020 Census will not have a citizenship question, and even if you can’t vote you can be counted.**

Every person, regardless of immigration status, has the right to be counted in the 2020 Census and we will work together as people of faith to make sure we are all counted.

- ✓ **Throughout history, the U.S. Census has been used as a tool of exclusion, but we can reclaim it as a tool for equity, democracy, and justice.**

Historically, the Census has been used as a tool of white supremacy, denying political representation, public resources and recognition of dignity to people of color. Ensuring everyone is counted in the 2020 Census is a matter of racial justice that is long overdue.

- ✓ **Completing the Census is easy, and there is support available for you and your community.**

You can choose how you want to respond – online, by paper, or over the phone. Telephone assistance and an online questionnaire will be available in 12 languages.

How Can You Take Action?

- Sign up to be a [Census Faith Ambassador](#)²⁹ with Faith in Public Life:
 - Help ensure a complete count in your community
 - Educate friends, neighbors, and those in your faith community about how to participate in the 2020 Census
 - Receive helpful resources from Faith in Public Life about how to ensure a complete count in your community
 - Receive timely updates about advocacy strategies concerning the 2020 Census
- [Pledge to be counted](#)³⁰ with the Census Counts #CountMeIn Campaign
 - Receive the most up to date information on the 2020 Census, including new mailings and updates on neighborhoods that have higher no response rates in your community
- Get involved in your local community by [Joining a Complete Count Committee](#):³¹
 - Complete Count Committees help community leaders coordinate outreach and bring awareness of the 2020 Census
 - [Find out here](#)³² if your community already has a Complete Count Committee
- Participate in National Faithful Census Weekend from **March 27th-29th**
 - See the [Faithful Census Weekend Guide](#)³³ from Faith in Public Life
 - Lift up the 2020 Census in worship in your faith community—stress how responding to the 2020 Census is an act of faith
 - Host a [Census Sabbath](#)³⁴ in your congregation
- Set up a [Census Taking Station](#)³⁵ in a popular area in your community
 - A Census Taking Station provides a community area where people who do not have access to Internet can fill out their online Census form safely
- [Canvas for the Census](#)³⁶ in your neighborhood
 - Let people know how and where to fill out their 2020 Census form
 - Leave flyers, palm cards, and materials at grocery stores, community centers, clinics and other essential locations
 - Answer any questions people might have about the 2020 Census, especially questions on privacy of personal information
 - Be sure to hand out these flyers on the 2020 Census from [National Education Association](#)³⁷, [Count Us In](#)³⁸, and the [Census Bureau](#)³⁹
 - You can also hand out [this flyer](#)⁴⁰ for Spanish speaking residents
- Organize or join an event in your area for National Census Day on April 1st

Additional Resources

- Partnership for American's Children: www.countallkids.org
- Asian American Advancing Justice: www.countusin2020.org
- Arab American Institute: www.aaiusa.org/census
- National Congress of American Indians: www.indiancountrycounts.org
- National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials: www.hagasecontar.org
- NAACP: www.naACP.org/2020-census
- National LGBTQ Task Force: www.thetaskforce.org/queerthecensus
- League of Women Voters: www.lwv.org/other-issues/census
- Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund: www.dredf.org/2020-census-disability-community-toolkit/

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- 1 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/history.html>
 - 2 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/census-constitution.html>
 - 3 <https://2020census.gov/en/what-is-2020-census.html>
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 - 5 <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/history-privacy-protection102019.pdf>
 - 6 https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/the_72_year_rule_1.html
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 - 8 <https://censuscounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/factsheet-census-undercount-fall2016.pdf>
 - 9 <http://www.publicmapping.org/what-is-redistricting>
 - 10 <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxvox/census-about-nearly-1-trillion-federal-spending-not-just-elections>
 - 11 <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>
 - 12 <https://censuscounts.org/whats-at-stake/will-your-kids-count-young-children-and-their-families-in-the-2020-census/>
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 - 22 https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GDd19-RHQzKAWbfj1acgVA
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 - 24 <https://www.vox.com/2019/7/11/20689015/census-citizenship-question-trump-executive-order>
 - 25 <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/27/717635291/supreme-court-leaves-citizenship-question-blocked-from-2020-census>
 - 26 <https://www.wecountcensus.com/>
 - 27 <https://www.contamos2020.com/>
 - 28 <https://2020census.gov/en/news-events/rumors.html>
 - 29 <https://www.faithinpubliclife.org/census>
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 - 32 <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-complete-count-committees.html>
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