



Frequently Asked Questions about Census 2020

What is the decennial census?

Every ten years, the federal government does a count of the population of the United States.

What happens to my data? Is it safe to respond?

By Census Law, Title 13 of the U.S. Code, all responses to Census Bureau surveys and censuses are kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only. The Census Bureau publishes "aggregated statistics that do not reveal information about particular individuals, households or businesses." Learn more about [Title 13](#) or [review Title 13 in its entirety](#). Violations are a federal crime.

In order to ensure data sets are useful and protect individual privacy, the Census Bureau will apply safeguards called "disclosure avoidance", which include "differential privacy". Read more about [data protection and privacy](#).

Why is it important to respond to the census?

First, it's the law! Title 13 requires that persons respond to the census.

Second, the data collected by the Census Bureau is used to to distribute federal money, distribute congressional seats, redistricting at the federal and state level. For example, in FY 16, Massachusetts received \$22,849,016,142 through 55 federal spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census. (See [Counting for Dollars 2020 The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds](#)).

After the 2010 Census, [Massachusetts lost one congressional seat](#).

CENSUS 2020 DAY IS APRIL 1, 2020

How do I complete the Census?

Every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone.

Around March 12–20, 2020 households will receive an invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census. Most households will be invited to complete the 2020 Census online or over the phone. However, some households in areas that are less likely to respond online will receive a paper questionnaire along with their invitation. The invitation will also include information about how to respond online or by phone. See the [How the 2020 Census will invite everyone to respond](#) flyer for more info, including a PDF and JPG downloads.

What information will not be requested?

The Census Bureau will never ask for:

- Social Security numbers.
- Bank or credit card account numbers.
- Money or donations.
- Anything on behalf of a political party.

What languages will the Census be in?

Self-response on the phone and online will be available in 13 languages. Mail self-response will be available in Spanish and English.

[The Census Bureau has published 60 language guides to help with self-response.](#)

Does the census ask for sex, and how would a transgender person answer?"

Yes, the census does ask for the sex of everyone enumerated on the form. As librarians, we can provide patrons with the information needed to make their own decisions. The Census Bureau does require all people to answer all questions. We cannot advise people on how to answer, similar to how we wouldn't advise people on how to fill out a tax form or other government forms.

These two resources may help patrons:

The National LGBTQ Task Force's Guide to the 2020 Census: AN INTRODUCTION

<https://www.thetaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Task-Force-Guide-to-the-2020-Census-An-Introduction.pdf>

<https://www.thetaskforce.org/queerthecensus.html>

[MA Census Website](#)