

# 2020 Census

## Frequently Asked Questions

The next decennial census will occur in April 2020. Pinellas County is working closely with cities, civic organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and community leaders to ensure that ALL residents are counted. Below are answers to frequently asked questions about the 2020 Census that can be shared with county residents.

### **What is the Census?**

Every 10 years, the federal government is required by the U.S. Constitution to count all residents in the United States through a national census. This information is used to make sure everyone is equally represented in our political system and that government resources are allocated fairly.

### **What information will be collected for the 2020 Census?**

The government needs to know how many people live in an area and basic statistics about them. The 2020 Census will collect information about each household (number of people living there, home ownership, phone number) and the people living in that household, including:

- Name
- Sex
- Age
- Race/ethnicity.

The census will not include a question about citizenship. The census collects less personal information than many other basic government services, such as your driver's license, school enrollment or tax returns. The census will never ask for your social security number.

### **Who should be counted in the 2020 Census?**

Everyone who is living in the U.S. on April 1, 2020 should be counted in the upcoming census. Unlike voting, this count includes everyone regardless of age, citizenship status or criminal history. Don't forget to count children, extended family, and nonfamily living in your residence.

### **What does the government do with the information they collect?**

Census data is used for statistical purposes only – i.e. to describe the population, including how many people of different age groups live in Pinellas County. The census never identifies you or members of your household. It combines your responses with information from other households to produce data for a neighborhood level tract (20 city blocks).

### **Why is the Census important?**

The census is central to our democracy – it makes sure everyone is equally represented at the local, state, and national levels of government. Census data not only determines the number of U.S. Representatives each state sends to Congress, but also sets the district boundaries for congressional, state, county and city council elections.

Census data also informs how the federal government allocates over \$675 billion per year in funding to state and local governments based on the number of people living there. These funds go towards critical programs that support education, housing, health, and transportation services in our community.

Lastly, census data is used to make other important decisions in our community:

- City governments use census data to decide where to provide utilities and build parks, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.
- Businesses use census data to decide where to open facilities and what types of services/products to provide.
  - Developers use census data to decide where to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.
  - Transportation planners use census data to decide on public transit routes.
  - Citizen organizations rely on census data to identify community needs, request and fund programs, monitor trends and assess program effectiveness.
  - Residents use census data to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life and consumer advocacy

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### **How do I take the census?**

You will be able to respond to 2020 online, by mail, by phone, or through an in-person interview.

Starting in March 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau will begin to contact households through a series of mailings. Most people will receive a postcard with instructions on how to complete the questionnaire online or over the phone. Some might receive a paper form to mail back if they live in an area without broadband internet access.

In early May 2020, the Bureau will begin sending field staff out to visit households who have not yet responded to gather the information in person.

The census paper questionnaire will be available in English and Spanish.

The online questionnaire and phone questionnaire assistance (including Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) will be available in:

**English, Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalo, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Japanese**

Language guides and glossaries will be available in 59 non-English languages plus American Sign Language, braille, and large print.

There are special efforts planned to count the homeless and those in transitory (campground, tent cities, hotels) or group (dorms, nursing homes, shelters) housing.

If you are away during the census timeframe, you can ask someone who lives with you to make sure you are included when they complete the questionnaire OR you can complete the questionnaire online or over the phone by providing your address.

### **How do I know my personal information will remain confidential?**

The Census Bureau collects information only to produce statistics. By law, they cannot share your data with other government agencies, including immigration authorities, law enforcement or courts of law. Federal law also prohibits any government agency from using your personal census information against you for any reason whatsoever. Both the U.S. Supreme Court and the Department of Justice have upheld the protected status of census answers.

All Census Bureau employees take an oath of privacy and are sworn for life to protect all information that could be used to identify individuals. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to 5 years, or both.

### **How do I know my online response is secure from cyberthreats?**

The Census Bureau follows federal requirements and industry best practices to ensure data security from the beginning of the data collection process through the final storage of information. This includes data encryption and two forms of authentication to secure system access. Once submitted, census responses are no longer stored online by the Census Bureau.

### **What happens if I don't participate in Census 2020?**

Everyone is legally required to respond to the census. Every person who does not participate or omits a question, decreases the count of who lives in our county, which could affect political districting, representation, and funding. This will directly impact the programs and services you, your family, and your community rely on.

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### How can I verify the mail I received is from the Census Bureau?

If you receive a survey or a letter in the mail from the Census Bureau, the envelope contains certain information that will help you verify its legitimacy. For example:

- **U.S. Department of Commerce** in the return address. This is the Census Bureau's parent agency.
- **Jeffersonville, Indiana** in the return address. Most census- and survey-related materials are mailed from, and returned to, our **National Processing Center** at 1201 East 10<sup>th</sup> St. in Jeffersonville, IN.

You may also receive a reminder letter from one of our **regional offices** or Census Bureau headquarters in the Washington, D.C. area.

### What can I do to help make sure my community is counted in Census 2020?

1. Apply for census jobs – or share job opportunities:  
<https://2020census.gov/en/jobs/how-toapply.htm>
2. Contact the Pinellas County Complete Count Committee to request a speaker, share information or volunteer to help Make Pinellas Count! Learn more:  
[www.pinellascounty.org/census2020](http://www.pinellascounty.org/census2020)
3. Talk to friends, family, and colleagues about the importance of participating in the 2020 Census.

### Where can I find more information about the Census?

There are many sites providing information about the Census in general, as well as the 2020 Census specifically. Below are just a few:

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

[www.pinellascounty.org/census2020](http://www.pinellascounty.org/census2020)



# 2020 Census

## Key Messages

### **Every 10 years, the federal government is required to count ALL people residing in the United States through a national census.**

- Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution establishes the basis for a complete population count (actual enumeration) every 10 years to determine the number of Congressional representatives that each state gets.
- Residents of all ages must be counted, both citizens and noncitizens

### **Ensuring an accurate count in the national census is essential for many reasons.**

- **Federal Funding:** Census data informs how the federal government allocates \$675 billion per year in funding to state and local governments based on the number of people living there. These funds go towards critical programs that support education, housing, health and transportation services.
- **Political Representation:** Census data determines the number of U.S. representatives each state sends to Congress and is used to determine district boundaries for congressional, state senator, assembly member, county commission and city council elections. That's why it's important to for every person to be counted in the census: to ensure everyone is fairly represented in government.
- **Decision-making:** Census responses provide the official statistics for the county and represents the main source of data for decisions made at the national, state, and local levels. Government, businesses, nonprofits, and foundations use census data to allocate funding, define where services are delivered and promote economic development.

### **The 2020 Census is at high risk for an undercount.**

- **Budget and Staffing:** Despite declining self-response rates, the Census Bureau will be required to conduct the 2020 Census at a lower cost per household than in 2010. Therefore, there will be fewer local offices, less field staff, less in-person and telephone follow-ups, and the primary strategy for data collection will be via internet.
- **Historically Undercounted Communities:** There have historically been challenges counting certain households and population groups. These include recent immigrants, people of color, households with limited English proficiency, households with low income, children under 5 years old, renters and those with unstable housing.
- **New Challenges:** In 2020, there will be additional new challenges, including:
  - **Technology Barriers:** For the first time, there is an expectation that most households will complete the census survey online. This presents barriers for those with limited digital access, lack of digital literacy or cybersecurity concerns.
  - **Political Debate:** The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census and it will not appear on the survey, however, the highly-politicized debate around this issue may depress participation.
  - **Data Privacy & Confidentiality Concerns:** Some residents, particularly in undercounted communities, may have concerns about how census data is used by the government.

# 2020 Census Key Messages

## **An undercount in 2020 Census will negatively affect all residents in our County.**

**Funding:** An incomplete count means our county won't get its fair share of federal funds that support critical programs, including:

- \*Foster care and child care
- \*Special education
- \*School nutrition and Supplemental Nutrition
- \*State Children's Health Insurance Program
- \*Section 8 and other housing assistance
- \*Highway planning and construction

**Decision-Making:** An inaccurate count will also impact many other important decisions that affect our County. For example:

- City governments use census data to decide where to provide utilities and build parks, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.
- Businesses use census data to decide where to open facilities and what types of services/products to provide.
- Developers use census data to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.
- Transportation planners use census data to decide on public transit routes.
- Citizen organizations rely on census data to identify community needs, request and fund programs, monitor trends and assess program effectiveness.
- Residents use census data to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life, and consumer advocacy.

**Representation:** Census data is used to draw boundaries for every level of government in Florida down to the school districts. If segments of our county are not counted in 2020, their voices and needs will not be considered when making important policy, program, and budget decisions.

## **Pinellas County is taking steps to ensure that ALL residents get counted in Census 2020.**

- 1. Census Master Address File Update:** The county, combined with cities, submitted over 5,000 addresses to be added to the Census Bureau Master Address File, which will be used to send out information about Census 2020 and conduct follow up for households that don't respond.
- 2. Coordination with local and regional efforts:** The county is working closely with elected officials and representatives from other local governments to ensure that Census 2020 outreach efforts in Florida maximize resources and benefit our county.
- 3. Complete Count Committee:** The county is leading a group of trusted voices in a committee made up of civic, nonprofit, business, faith, and community leaders encourage everyone to take the census, especially in undercounted communities.
- 4. Community Engagement:** The county will collaborate with trusted community organizations and institutions that can educate residents about Census 2020, motivate them to participate, and support them in completing the survey.
- 5. Communication Campaign:** The county will develop and implement a multilingual campaign using media and community outreach to increase awareness and encourage participation in Census 2020.

## **Where can I find more information about the Census?**

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