



# 2020 Census Faith Toolkit:

The Moral Imperative for an Accurate Count

## **Acknowledgements**

**Council for a Strong America** is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

### **Shepherding the Next Generation**

Evangelical pastors and ministry leaders calling for biblically-based and effective approaches to strengthen families and communities

**October 2019**

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## Introduction

**April 1, 2020, “Census Day” is just around the corner. Every ten years, the federal government is required to count every single person living in the United States through a census in order to determine how billions of dollars in federal funds, as well as political representation, will be distributed among states and local communities for the next decade.**

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. This toolkit is designed to help faith leaders like you ensure that everyone in your community is counted so that government, the private sector, and the faith community can best appropriate their resources to address the needs of each of the identified person

The 2020 Census will be the first high-tech census, with an online response option. Additionally, the Census Bureau has faced funding constraints throughout the planning process.

As a faith leader, you are an incredibly trusted messenger who can help educate and mobilize your congregation, your colleagues and your entire community to rise to this challenge of ensuring that everyone is counted in the census.

This “Get Out the Count” program is based on this understanding that faith communities have a unique moral voice and are trusted community leaders and resources. As such, faith communities and their leaders are poised to be key messengers in turning out our communities to be counted in the 2020 Census, no matter the obstacles, so that every one of our neighbors is fairly and accurately counted.

A coalition of national religious denominations and organizations, in partnership with Faith in Public Life and Shepherding the Next Generation, have come together to form the 2020 Census Faith Council. They will work together to lead public education efforts regarding the 2020 Census, advocate for a fair and accurate count, and recruit 500 Census Faith Ambassadors across the country and particularly in Hard to Count communities to be community leaders in educating their neighbors about the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census.

It is essential that the census count be accurate, because it will impact:

- **Critical Federal Programs:** Over \$800 billion in federal government funding annually will be determined by the 2020 Census count. 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.
- **Political Representation:** The 2020 Census will determine how many representatives your state will send to Congress and how your congressional district

will be drawn. This is why we must ensure a fair and accurate count as citizens and people of faith.

We are looking forward to your partnership on the 2020 Census and hope you'll join us as a Faith Census Ambassador. Please be in touch with ideas, questions, and concerns at [census2020@faithinpubliclife.org](mailto:census2020@faithinpubliclife.org). We want to hear more about how we can help your community be counted.

Sincerely,

**2020 Census Faith Council,**

Convened by Faith in Public Life and Shepherding the Next Generation

## Why Become a Faith Census Ambassador?

- Are you passionate about ensuring everyone is counted in the 2020 Census?
- Do people look to you as a trusted leader?
- Can you speak publicly and help others understand why the Census is so important?
- Do you want to learn more about the census process so you can help your community be counted?

Faith Census Ambassadors are respected community leaders, both clergy and lay leaders, who commit to helping in Get Out The Count efforts in their communities.

### Here's how your leadership is needed:

1. You can educate & mobilize your community! Educate your colleagues and your congregation. Represent the faith community at state and local census meetings with government officials, business and nonprofits. Speak at events and spread the word far and wide.
2. Become a local expert on the census. You'll have access to Census Faith Council's detailed training series on the 2020 Census—why it's so important, how it works, and how you can help ensure everyone in your community is counted. You'll be fully equipped to be an effective advocate for your community.

Sign Up to Be a Faith Census Ambassador at [www.faithinpubliclife.org/census](http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/census)

## Who is Hard to Count?

Historically, these population groups have been undercounted in the census:

- Children under age five
- People living in poverty or experiencing homelessness
- People of color
- Immigrants
- Religious minorities

It's worth noting that most of these communities are "hard to count" as a result of a long history of an underlying mistrust of government and lack of information. The tragic result is that these communities then receive fewer federal resources and less political representation.



## Get Out the Count in Your Congregation

The census impacts us all. Faith leaders have a unique position and voice to help people

- 1. Post a [flyer](#)** in your congregation to raise awareness.
- 2. Teach about the importance of being counted** in the 2020 Census and what's at stake for your community.
- 3. Sign up to be a Census Faith Ambassador** to help lead local "Get Out The Count" efforts. Educate your colleagues, speak at events, and get training and materials. Go to [www.FaithinPublicLife.org/Census](http://www.FaithinPublicLife.org/Census).
- 4. Recruit others to be Ambassadors** since the harvest is great and the laborers are few. We need ambassadors in every "hard to count" community in the country.
- 5. Join or form a Complete Count Committee** with guidance from the US Census Bureau at [https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/complete\\_count.html](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/complete_count.html)
- 6. Spread the word through all your good works:** food pantries, housing, ESL classes, schools, etc.
- 7. Provide assistance during the count.** Help people access the internet to complete the census survey. Have volunteers direct people to reliable sources of information, such as the Census Bureau's toll-free phone lines. Have a sign-up Sunday!

## Talking Points on the 2020 Census

The census impacts us all. Faith leaders have a unique position and voice to help people understand the importance of responding to the census, both for their families and community. We invite you to use these talking points as a guide while you address your congregation or community in a presentation, speech, or sermon in order to create dialogue and bring awareness to each person's vital role in responding to the 2020 Census.

### 1. Everyone deserves to be counted.

Our shared faiths teach that every person is created with equal dignity by God. That means everyone deserves to be counted by their government.

### 2. The Census is completely confidential.

When you fill out the census survey, your personally identifiable information will not be shared outside the Census Bureau with any other government agencies. Everything is confidential and protected by ironclad laws. Personal census information is only public after 72 years, and historians often use that data for important research.

### 3. The 2020 Census is the first high-tech census with an online response option.

However, you will have the option to respond by telephone or with a paper questionnaire.

### 4. Our community benefits from everyone being counted.

Over \$800 billion in annual federal funding is distributed based on the 2020 Census.

- Federal agencies use census data to allocate billions of dollars at the state and local levels for vital community services such as hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, job training centers, senior centers and police departments.
- Census data also determines how many Representatives each state has in Congress.
- Our Congressional and state legislative districts are redrawn using census data.
- If we get undercounted, we get underfunded and underrepresented.

### 5. People of color have historically been undercounted in the Census.

- In the 2010 Census, it is estimated that 3.7 million African Americans and 3.8 million Hispanics were not counted.
- Ensuring everyone is counted in the 2020 Census is a matter of racial justice long overdue.

### 6. We have a legal and moral responsibility to participate in the census.

- Part of looking out for our community is ensuring that we have the resources we need to thrive. We have a responsibility to participate in the census.
- Our families, children and neighbors are counting on us. We have to work together to ensure that everyone in our community is counted.

### 7. Completing the census is easy and you can get help or support.

The 2020 Census will be the first census conducted online. 80 percent of households will receive a postcard from the Census Bureau in the mail including a link to the official 2020

Census Website and a unique identification code. With the identification code, you can answer the 11 questions online.

If you do not respond online or by phone, a paper questionnaire will be sent to you which you can fill out and mail back to the Census Bureau. If you do not respond to that, individual census workers may come to your door to collect your responses.

The other 20 percent of households, mostly those with older adults and low broadband access and internet usage, will be sent the paper survey to be completed and returned by mail, along with a unique identification code to respond online.

## Important Dates



**JUNE–SEPTEMBER 2019:** Open and staff 248 Area Census Offices (ACOs) (40 early ACOs open January–March) and recruit/hire ≈ 76,000 temporary address listers for targeted Address Canvassing operation.

**AUGUST–SEPTEMBER 2019:** Census Address Canvassing, the process of updating and verifying a list of all residential addresses, including group housing facilities such as college dorms.

**LATE JANUARY 2020:** Enumeration (door-to-door interviewing) begins in remote Alaskan communities.

**MARCH 2020:** Census Bureau mails or drops off census packages at every residential address, starting the self-response period.

**MARCH 16–APRIL 30, 2020:** Self-response phase of census.

**MARCH–APRIL 2020:** Enumeration at Transitory Locations operation running to count people in transitory locations (such as hotels and campgrounds).

**MARCH 30–APRIL 1, 2020:** Service-Based Enumeration operation running, conducting in-person interviews to count people experiencing homelessness.

**MARCH 16, 2020:** Update Leave (UL) & Update Enumerate (UE) operations in rural and remote areas without reliable or direct mail delivery begin.

**MAY 13–JULY 2020:** Primary Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) operations encompassing occupied housing that did not self-respond (Early NRFU operations begin April 9 for areas with significant off-campus college student populations).

**APRIL 1, 2020:** CENSUS DAY

**SUMMER 2020:** Census wraps up.

**BY DECEMBER 31, 2020:** Congressional reapportionment determined; state population totals sent to the president.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the census?**

The U.S. Constitution mandates that every 10 years there is a census that counts every resident in the United States. It's sometimes called the Decennial Census because it occurs every 10 years.

### **Why does the census matter?**

The information the census collects helps determine how more than \$800 billion of federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year.

Census data are also used to draw the political maps for every Congressional district and state legislative district. This means that in the past “hard to count” communities have gotten less representation in Congress and state legislatures.

### **How do I respond to the census?**

The 2020 Census will be the first census to offer an online response option. Everyone has the option of taking the census on paper, over the phone or online, whichever you prefer.

Most households (80 percent) will receive a letter in the mail, inviting them to respond online with a unique identification code. With the identification code, you will be able to fill out the 2020 Census online.

If you do not respond online using the identification code provided in the mail, a paper questionnaire will be sent to you which you can fill out and mail back to the Census Bureau. If you do not respond to the paper questionnaire, individual census takers will try to contact you by knocking on your door.

The other 20 percent of households, mostly seniors and people with no internet access, will be sent a paper questionnaire to be completed and returned by mail. Those mailings will also include the option to complete the survey online.

### **Is it safe to provide my information to the Census Bureau over the Internet?**

Yes. The US Census Bureau will keep your responses to the survey safe, secure and encrypted at all times.

The US Census Bureau is only tabulating the data collected from your survey anonymously and on a broad scale. There are several legal protections which exist to safeguard your privacy and the confidentiality of your responses. The Census Act (also known as Title 13) includes strict confidentiality provisions prohibiting any employees of the Commerce Department or Census Bureau from using information collected via the decennial census for anything other than the production of statistical datasets. Additionally, Title 13 prohibits any federal, state and local agencies from using data collected via the decennial census to the “detriment” of any individual who responded to the survey from which the dataset is built.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, your individually identifiable information is protected under a federal law known as the “72-year rule” which mandates that individual-level records are protected for 72 years after the census is taken. For privacy reasons, access to personally identifiable information contained in decennial census records is restricted to all but the individual named on the record or their legal heir for 72 years.<sup>2</sup>

### **What if I just sit the census out? Why should I share my information with the US Census Bureau?**

A fair and accurate census is one of the most significant civil rights and economic justice issues facing our country today.

In addition to ensuring fair political representation, enforcing civil rights laws and effective policy planning, census data are used to distribute federal, state, and local resources equitably and prudently. In fact, federal agencies use census data to allocate billions of dollars each year for vital community services such as hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, bridges, tunnels and other public works projects and emergency response. Communities of color, urban and rural low-income households, immigrants, and young children are all at a greater risk of being missed by the census. Being undercounted deprives already vulnerable communities of fair representation and vital community resources.

### **What if I am not a US citizen, does the census still count me?**

Yes. The U.S. Constitution requires that the census counts every resident in the United States regardless of their immigration status. All people should be counted to ensure that our community is fully counted.

### **Will there be a question about citizenship on the 2020 Census survey?**

No. After months-long debate, a ruling from the Supreme Court, and further review by the federal Administration, it was determined that a question on citizenship will not appear on the 2020 Census.

### **Is census data confidential?**

All responses to the census are confidential and cannot be shared outside the Census Bureau - even with other government agencies. Personal information collected by the Census Bureau is protected under several federal laws and has the most ironclad confidentiality protections of any federal data.

It is easy for misinformation and fear to spread. It is our job to spread the truth, try to help people manage their fear, and work to ensure everyone is counted regardless of immigration status.



## **Useful Sacred Texts Relevant to the Census**

### **Old Testament Scriptures**

*“On the first day of the second month, in the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, saying: “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head.” (Numbers 1:1-2)*

*“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Among these shall the land be apportioned as shares, according to the listed names’ (Numbers 26:52-53)*

### **New Testament Scriptures**

*“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of all the inhabited earth.” (Luke 2:1)*

*“Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matthew 10:30)*

## Additional Resources

1. More information can be found at [www.FaithInPublicLife.org/Census](http://www.FaithInPublicLife.org/Census) and [www.CensusCounts.org](http://www.CensusCounts.org)
2. The [Hard to Count Map](http://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us) shows which Census tracts had the lowest mail response rates in 2010: [www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us](http://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us)
3. Faith Census Ambassadors: Sign up to be an ambassador [here](#).
4. Count All Kids: Census 2020: <https://countallkids.org/>

## Factsheets

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights 2020 Census Resources  
<https://civilrights.org/census>

- [Why the Census Counts](#)
- [Adding A New Citizenship Question to the 2020 Census](#)
- [Hard to Count: Young Children and Their Communities](#)
- [Latinos in the 2020 Census](#)
- [African Americans in the 2020 Census](#)
- [People living in poverty in the 2020 Census](#)
- Brennan Center: [Digitizing the 2020 Census](#)
- Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality [Counting People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

## Endnotes

1. Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC): Factsheet on the Census, Confidentiality and Japanese American Incarceration; <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/census/Census-Confidentiality-Factsheet-AAJC-LeadershipConference.pdf>
2. The '72-Year Rule' Governs Release of Census Records; <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2012/04/09/the-72-year-rule-governs-release-of-census-records/>





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