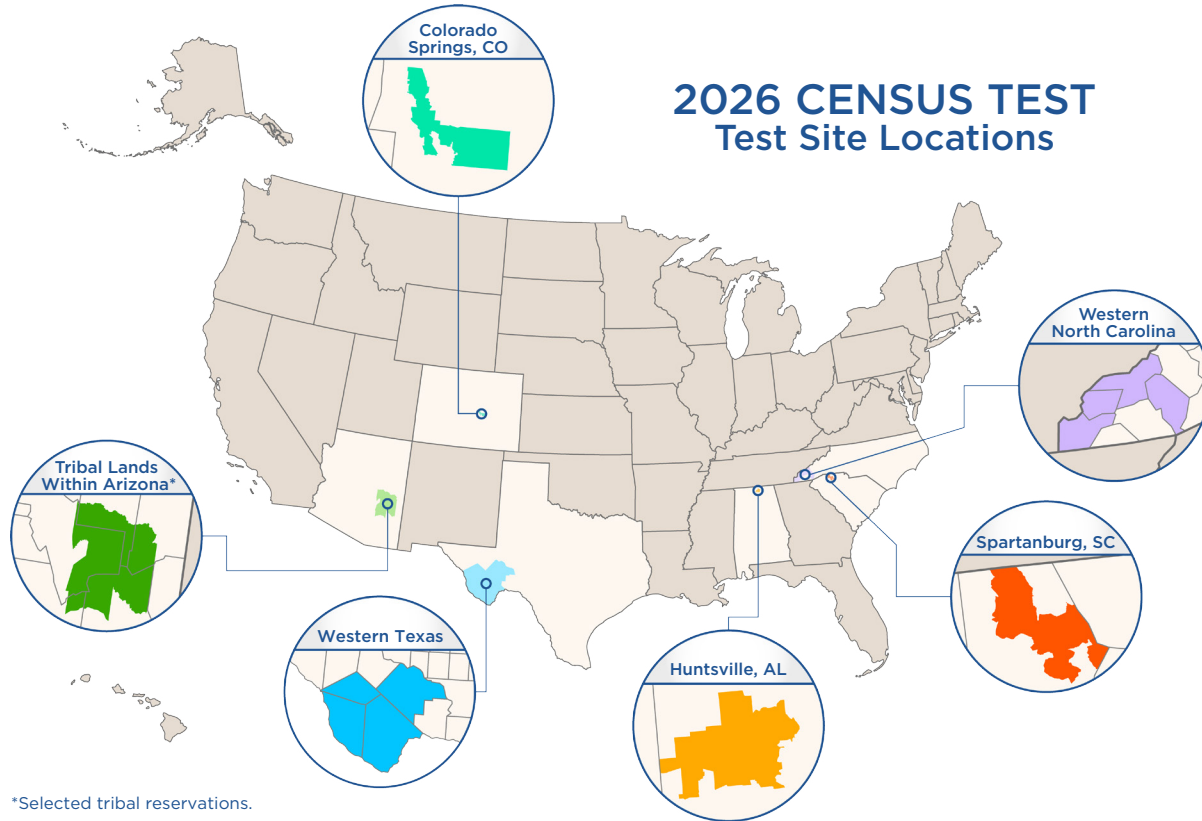


Preparing for the 2030 Census

2026 Census Test—Where We're Testing and Why



The **2026 Census Test** is the first of two major on-the-ground tests planned in preparation for the 2030 Census. The U.S. Census Bureau will test changes and enhancements planned for the 2030 Census in the real world and on a larger scale than research simulations allow. In 2028, a second test will serve as a dress rehearsal of census operations and the handoffs between them.

Focus of the Test

The 2026 Census Test will evaluate improvements being designed to get a complete count of the nation during the 2030 Census, focusing especially on data quality and coverage among historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations.

These improvements are focused on six operational areas:

- Making it easier for people to respond to the census on their own online, by phone, or by mail.
- Improving how census takers collect data in person from households.
- Improving methods for counting people living in group quarters.
- Enhancing outreach efforts that create awareness, build trust, and encourage response.
- Enhancing the infrastructure that supports census operations.
- Processing data concurrently with data collection.

Locations

The Census Bureau used a rigorous, data-driven process to select six sites for the test:

- **Colorado Springs, CO**
- **Huntsville, AL**
- **Tribal Lands Within Arizona**
- **Spartanburg, SC**
- **Western North Carolina**
- **Western Texas**

This combination of sites meets criteria related to geography, living quarters, staffing, technical characteristics, and available budget, systems, and resources.

The test will also mail materials to a nationally representative sample of households, inviting them to respond to the test online, by phone, or by mail. This will help the Census Bureau improve the online questionnaire and invitation materials for the 2030 Census. It will also provide insight on self-response rate trends that will inform 2030 Census planning for field infrastructure, communications, and other operations.

Timeline

- **Summer 2025:** Outreach begins raising awareness in the test sites about the importance of participating.
- **Fall 2025:** Recruiting begins for temporary census jobs in the test sites.
- **Spring 2026:** Public begins responding to the 2026 Census Test.
- **Census Day, April 1, 2026:** Participants are asked to respond based on where they live as of this date.
- **Summer 2026:** 2026 Census Test concludes.

More information is available at census.gov/2026test.