



# A Reporter's Guide to Covering the 2020 Census

This is a go-to guide for journalists, providing everything they need to know to cover the 2020 Census.

## Overview of the 2020 Census

**What:** The 2020 Census is a once-a-decade count of every person living in the U.S.

**Who:** The 2020 Census is supported by thousands of permanent staff at the Census Bureau and up to 500,000 temporary workers recruited to help ensure a complete and accurate count.

**When:** The 2020 Census officially began counting people in January 2020 in remote Toksook Bay, Alaska. In mid-March, most households will start receiving invitations to respond online, by phone, or by mail. Beginning in mid-April, households that have not yet responded will receive a paper questionnaire in the mail.

**Where:** The 2020 Census will be conducted in communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). To support the operation, six regional census centers and 248 area census offices are located across the country.

**Why:** The U.S. Constitution mandates that a census of the population be conducted every 10 years. Census statistics are used to determine congressional representation in the states, and how billions of dollars in federal funds are distributed to states and local communities every year for 10 years for critical public services including health clinics, schools, roads, and emergency services.

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## Operational milestones

The 2020 Census operation will be conducted between January and July 2020. Results will be delivered to the president in December 2020 and to the states in March 2021. Below are milestones of note:

### Operational and Implementation Phase



## Helpful resources

Visit the Census Bureau [Newsroom](#) and the 2020 Census [website](#) to:

- > [Subscribe](#) to receive Census Bureau press releases and information via email or text.
- > Read [press kits](#) on 2020 Census topics.
- > Access a content [library](#) that includes b-roll, photos, articles, infographics, videos, and more.

The 2020 Census website includes information for [partners](#), [educators](#), and [job seekers](#).

## Guidelines for media coverage

The Census Bureau is committed to protecting the privacy of respondents, employees, and the security of the data it collects. By law, the following cannot be publicly documented in photos or video by the media:

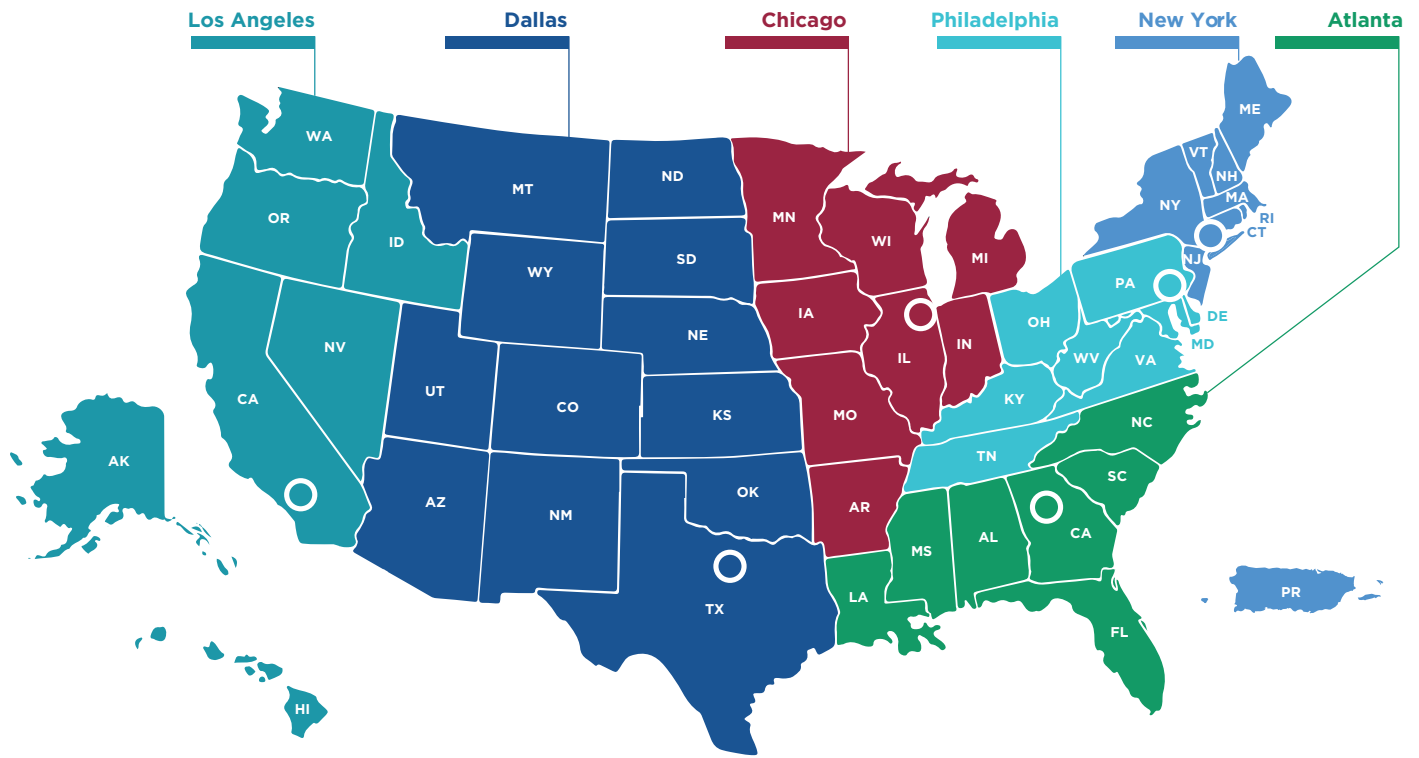
- > Following census takers as they conduct official Census Bureau business such as documenting a respondent's Personally Identifiable Information (PII) on a census questionnaire. The Census Bureau has provided simulated operational photos and b-roll. This is in the 2020 Census [press kit](#).
- > Employee badges.

## How to find information

If you're looking for statistics, information on the 2020 Census, or would like to request an interview with a Census Bureau spokesperson, please send an email to [pio@census.gov](mailto:pio@census.gov) or call the Public Information Office at 301-763-3030.

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If you are looking for local or regional information, insights, and spokespeople, contact a regional Census Bureau center.

- Atlanta:** [Atlanta.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:Atlanta.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)
- Chicago:** [Chicago.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:Chicago.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)
- Dallas:** [Dallas.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:Dallas.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)
- Los Angeles:** [Los.Angeles.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:Los.Angeles.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)
- New York:** [New.York.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:New.York.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)
- Philadelphia:** [Philadelphia.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov](mailto:Philadelphia.rcc.partnership@2020census.gov)

## Story ideas and 2020 Census themes

### February & March 2020:

Soon it will be time to respond to the 2020 Census. What is it and why is it important?

**March 2020:** The Census Bureau is inviting everyone to respond to the 2020 Census. Why does my response matter?

### March & April 2020:

It's time to respond to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail.

How partners and community leaders are helping to encourage everyone to complete the 2020 Census.

### May & June 2020:

Census takers are following up with households that haven't responded.

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Other key 2020 Census topics of interest to your audience may include:

**Community benefits:** Census responses inform how billions of dollars in federal funds are distributed to states and local communities for critical public services and infrastructure every year for the next 10 years.

**Counting everyone:** The Census Bureau has embarked upon an unprecedented integrated communications campaign to reach everyone, including hard-to-count areas and populations. Hundreds of thousands of partners are engaged nationwide to help spread the word that the 2020 Census is important and your response matters.

## Fast facts about the census

- [The first census was conducted in 1790](#) and directed by Thomas Jefferson. U.S. marshals acted as census takers, and it took more than a year to complete the count.
- Census takers will be using [new technologies](#) in 2020. Census takers carry smartphones that include the self-response instrument, maps, and even tools for the employee's payroll.
- Since the 1800s, each census [has begun in remote Alaska](#). The state's size, weather, and fishing and hunting seasons mean that the Census Bureau needs to count people before the spring thaw. In January 2020, Toksook Bay, Alaska, hosted the first count.
- The 2020 Census will include self-response tools for 13 languages, and there are language guides for [59 languages](#).
- Wilbur Ross, the Secretary of Commerce (the executive department that oversees the census), [was a census taker in 1960](#).
- The [modern computer](#) can trace its history to the 1890 Census. A Census Bureau employee invented a tabulating machine that revolutionized the count. The creator, Herman Hollerith, would go on to start a company that would one day become IBM.
- The results of the first census in 1790 were so unexpected that [Congress Hall in Philadelphia](#) had to be expanded to accommodate dozens of new representatives who were elected as a result.
- The census is the U.S. government's largest peacetime mobilization. While the 1790 Census relied on 650 census takers, the 2020 Census will need up to 500,000. This is a decrease from the [2010 Census'](#) 635,000 because of the use of technology and the opportunity for people to respond online.
- The Census Bureau was a [pioneer in female employment](#). Starting in 1880, it employed women as enumerators, clerks, and keypunch operators. By 1903, women made up 50% of the Census Bureau's permanent staff.

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