

Inside the 2020 Census

When Will It Happen?

The 2020 Census will count our population using seven different operations, all of which will take place between January and July 2020, before delivering the official count to the President.



January 2020 – April 2020
Update/enumerate: Field staff visit housing units that don't have house numbers/street names to collect census data



February 2020 – June 2020
Group quarters enumeration: Field staff visit group housing (such as prisons and nursing facilities) to prepare for and collect census data



March 2020 – July 2020
Self-response: Individuals can respond to the census via the internet, by phone, or by mail



March 2020 – April 2020
Update/leave: Field staff hand deliver questionnaires to areas without postal service delivery to the door or that have been affected by natural disasters



April 2020 – July 2020
Nonresponse follow-up: Field staff make at least one visit to each non-responding household to collect census data



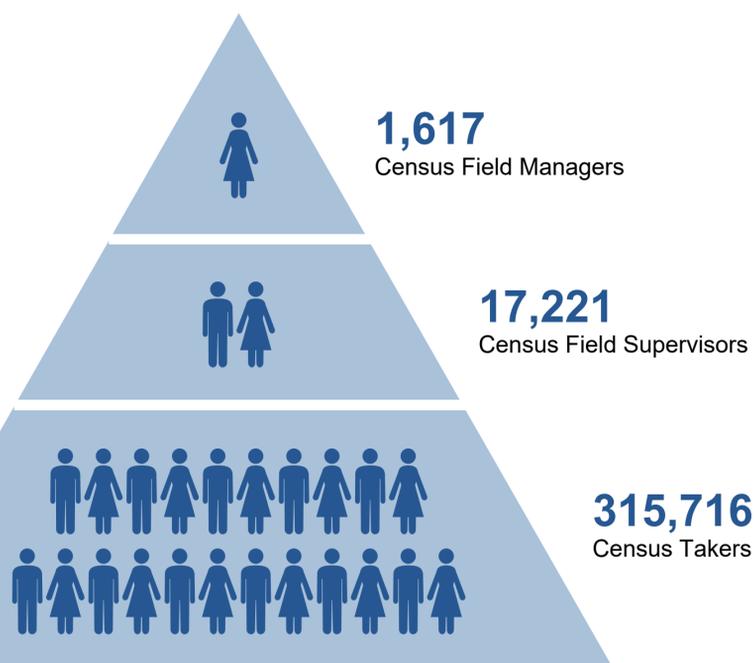
April 2020 – May 2020
Enumeration at transitory locations: Field staff visit transitory locations (such as RV parks and motels) to collect census data



December 31, 2020
 Deliver apportionment counts to the President

What Does It Take?

The Census Bureau hires a large temporary workforce to collect census data.



Note: These are numbers of positions. Some workers will be hired for multiple operations. This is the core number of enumerators the Bureau estimates it needs for its "most-likely" scenario of a response rate of 60.5%.

How Much Does It Cost?

The 2020 Census is likely to be the most expensive census to date.



How Will the Census Bureau Contact Me?

Nearly every household will be invited to respond to the census by mail or in person with a census taker. Those invited by mail will receive either an invitation to respond online or a paper census form if their area is considered less likely to respond online. Regardless of which they receive, individuals have the option to self-respond online, by phone, or using a paper form.

Self-response: 95%



78% of these households will receive a letter with an invitation to respond on the internet

22% of these households, considered less likely to respond online, will receive a questionnaire and a letter with the internet option

Reminder letter

Reminder postcard 

Questionnaire and letter with internet option 

"It's not too late" postcard 

Nonresponse follow-up determines housing unit status for non-responding addresses, and enumerates non-responding housing units.

Almost 5%

of households, often in areas where the majority of households may not receive mail at their home's physical location (such as those that use P.O. boxes) will receive a questionnaire and a letter with the internet option from a census taker that visits their home



Nonresponse follow-up determines housing unit status for non-responding addresses, and enumerates non-responding housing units.

Less than 1%

of households, often in remote areas, will receive a visit from a census taker to fill out their census form



WAYS TO RESPOND



GAO's Work

Over the past decade, GAO has made 112 recommendations specific to the 2020 Census to help address issues such as cost estimation, key innovations, and acquisition and development of IT systems. As of February 2020, 28 recommendations have not been fully implemented.