

The History of the Census

The census of the United States is described in article I, section 2 of our Constitution. It requests a current count of our residents every ten years, and the information is used to determine how many representatives each state will have in the House of Representatives. The first census was taken in 1790 under the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson. The count, which was conducted by U.S. Marshals on horse-back, resulted in a total 3.9 million residents. Since then, the census is conducted every ten years, generally on April 1st on the years that end in zero. In 1840 the Census Act authorized establishing a centralized Census Office during each enumeration. Then, in 1902, the Census Office became a permanent organization within the Department of Interior. In 1903, the office was renamed the Bureau of the Census and moved to the new Department of Commerce and Labor.

Besides providing the base to determine state representation in Congress, census data are used in many other ways. Since 1975, it has been the Census Bureau's responsibility to present data for smaller, sparsely populated areas. This information is necessary to redesign a state's legislation and districts. Other important applications of the data include the distribution of more than \$400 billion in federal funds for government programs such as Medicaid; planning for the correct placement of schools, roads, and other public services; to help construct more houses, to provide neighborhood information to residents who might require it; and to identify the tendencies that can help to predict the future needs of a community. Much of the geographical census data is available for states, counties, cities, towns, zip codes, zones, census blocks, and much more.

How We Do It

The process of completing a decennial census is a monumental project. For Census 2000, hundreds of thousands of people were hired to assist in counting the population. New homes are being built constantly, and some older homes no longer exist, and it is essential to identify an address for each person so that

everyone will receive a census questionnaire. Some people are not comfortable providing personal information to the government. Sometimes the census forms get lost, or people forget to complete them. Nevertheless, each decennial census has improved in its accuracy. In Census 2000, the Census Bureau hired more than 500,000 people to visit the homes of people who did not return their questionnaire. Census 2000 turned out to be most accurate in the history of the United States, and counted more minorities than any previous census.

Census 2010

In order to complete a successful census in the 2010 more than 1.4 million temporary workers will be hired. The 2010 Census will have one of the shortest questionnaires in the history of the United States. The form will be so simple that it will take only about ten minutes to complete, and all the personal information will be protected by law and kept completely confidential.

For more information please visit the official Census Bureau website:

<http://www.census.gov>

United States Census Bureau Media Department
Los Angeles Regional Census Center
9301 Corbin Avenue, Suite 1000
Northridge, CA 91324
(818) 717-5880
Los.Angeles.RCC.Media@Census.gov

If You're Not Counted in the 2010 Census – You're Invisible

We all need to participate in the Census

The Constitution of the United States mandates that a count of the population of the be conducted every ten years. This count, or census, is conducted at the beginning of every decade, usually on April 1st. Our next Decennial Census is scheduled for April 1st, 2010.

How does the Census Bureau accomplish this?

Census operations are the largest non-war effort put forth by the Federal Government. It will take approximately 1.5 million temporary workers to complete this enormous task. All of the workers have to be hired, trained, given tools with which to complete their work (ie. computers, telephones, offices and supplies), and then after the Census process is complete, Decennial Census operations come to a close and the whole structure has to be dismantled.

It begs the question, why do these workers want to be a part of the process? "Census workers are passionate about our work because we believe what we're doing is important," says Sandra Alvarado, Media Specialist with the Census Bureau. "Not to mention that 1.5 million people get to work and receive a paycheck which helps individual families who are struggling to get through these difficult times, and helps the economy at large."

Participation in the Census is everyone's civic duty and responsibility. Furthermore, it is of vital importance to each individual, their families and their communities. It is an opportunity, once every decade, to do something that will positively impact our lives for the next ten years.

Census Firsts:

For the first time in decennial census history GPS computers were used to help the Census Bureau more accurately and efficiently update their lists of addresses. This is important because in order to mail out the questionnaires, there needs to be a complete list of addresses where people live or could live. This information changes drastically over ten years as structures come down and new ones are built. Additionally, many families have been forced to find alternative housing, as financial difficulties have forced numerous foreclosures.

For the first time everyone will receive the simple short form. The 2010 Census questionnaire will feature only 10 easy questions, such as: name, gender, age, race and ethnicity, etc. Questions **NOT** on the questionnaire: social security number, personal financial information, legal status, etc. This makes it easy for everyone to be counted. Fill it out and send it back. It will take only a few minutes, and you won't even need a stamp!

For the first time in 2010 tens of thousands of homes nationwide will receive a bilingual English/Spanish form in neighborhoods where it is determined there is a large Spanish-speaking population. This will speed up and simplify the process even further. Additionally, there will be forms available in Korean, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese, and in-language assistance in 59 other languages.

Why the Census is Important

The Census count provides the data that serves as the basis for the apportionment of the 435 members of the United States House of Representatives among the states. If we want our presence to count, and our voices to be heard it is important that we all be counted. That is how we and our interests can be properly represented in government.

Every year more than \$400 billion in government funds are distributed based on Census data. If one person fails to be counted they are costing their community a lot of necessary funds. Multiply that by the number of people in a family that doesn't participate. Multiply that by ten years. That equals a huge and significant loss of available money that would be designated for education, transportation, emergency services, and everything else that families and communities will need for the next ten years.

All personal information collected by the Census Bureau is protected by law and completely confidential. The Census Bureau does not share information with any other individual or agency. Violation of this law is punishable by up to \$250,000.00 and 5 years in prison.

The 2010 Census: It's safe, it's easy, it's important. Our future is in our hands.
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Five Reasons To Fill Out Your Census Questionnaire

1. Helps Build Prosperity in Your Community.

Does your neighborhood have traffic jams, elderly folks who live alone or overcrowded schools? Census data can help define strategies to make necessary public improvements in your community.

2. Help in a Time of Need

Many emergency services linked to 911 are structured based on maps developed with the data from the previous census.

Census information helps health providers predict how a disease is spread through communities between members of the population.

When natural tragedies like tornados and earthquakes occur, the census indicates to the rescue teams how many people may need aid.

3. Puts Government to Work for You

It's a great way to let our leaders know who we are and what we need. The numbers are used to help determine the distribution of more than \$400 billion in federal and state funds. The money will help to finance educational and school lunch programs, medical centers, emergency services, transportation and other needs in our community.

4. Reduces Risk for Businesses

Since census numbers help reduce the financial risk and allow the identification of potential markets, businesses can produce the products that you want and need.

5. It Will Help You and Your Family

The individual data stay confidential for 72 years, but you can request a certificate of past censuses to use it as verification of your age, residence, or kinship. This information can help you apply for a pension, establish citizenship or to obtain an inheritance.

In 2082 your great-grandchildren will be able to use census information to learn about the history of your family.

Today your children can use the information to assist them with homework assignments.

Thanks to the fact that we have had a census every 10 years since 1790, we know how far we have come, and how much we have changed as a nation.

Be counted in the 2010 Census.

The future is in our hands!

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