



Census 101: The Basics

What is the Census?

Every 10 years, the U.S. conducts a census of the population by sending a form in the mail to every household in the country.

Why do we have a Census?

Census data is used by the government in a variety of important decisions, including allocation \$400 billion in federal funds each year; determination of where roads, bridges, and schools will be built; and apportionment of federal, state, and local government representatives for communities.

Who is counted in the Census?

The Census counts everyone who is living in the U.S.— regardless of citizenship.

How is the Census taken?

Census forms will be mailed to households in March 2010. Census forms must be mailed back on or before April 1, 2010. If assistance is needed filling out forms, Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted Centers will be available. For people living in group quarters such as nursing homes, student dormitories, or prisons, a Census Bureau worker will visit those facilities in April and May 2010 to take a count of those facilities.

What if I don't mail back my Census form?

Households not returning a census form by mail will be called or visited by a Census worker. The best way to avoid having a Census worker come to your door is to mail back your form!

What is on the Census form?

The form is a simple one-page, 10-question form that will take less than 10 minutes to complete. It asks for information about the number of people living in your household, and their age, race, and gender.

Is the Census form only in English?

Forms will generally be mailed in English, with bilingual English/Spanish forms mailed to selected areas. Forms in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian are also available by calling the request line on the back of the English form.

Is information taken by the Census private?

Information given on the census form is 100% confidential. By law, census information is not shared with any other government agency. Census workers take an oath to protect the privacy of respondents and face jail time and/or heavy fines if they violate that oath.

Why should NAACP units care about the Census?

Many communities that are served by NAACP units are at risk of being undercounted in the Census, resulting in less funding and resources being allocated to those communities. Groups with the highest risk of being undercounted are Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, low-income people, and the homeless.