

## Frequently Asked Questions for Census Champions Chester County Census 2020 Complete Count Committee December 2019

The Chester County Census 2020 Complete Count Committee is partnering with organizations that wish to participate in promoting the 2020 Census by becoming a “Census Champion.” A Census Champion is a civic group, business, government entity, social service organization, educational facility, or other organization that agrees to promote the 2020 Census to the individuals with whom they interact. This outreach will have to occur in January, February, and March of 2020, to help spread the word by April, which is when the Census will be taken.

The primary function of a Census Champion will be to initiate direct face-to-face contact with people who belong to hard-to-count communities. The key is to identify TRUSTED AND INFORMED people, who have already established good relationships with hard-to-count residents in Chester County. These could include older people with mobility limitations, renters, recent immigrants, college students, farm workers, Latinos/Hispanics, African Americans, South Asians, and the Amish. The following 25 questions provide guidance for Census Champion outreach staff. If you have any further questions, or you know of another organization that might like to become a Census Champion, please contact Jake Michael at [jmichael@chesco.org](mailto:jmichael@chesco.org) or 610-344-6285.

You can view and download posters and other materials promoting the 2020 Census at Chester County’s Complete Count Committee website: <https://chescoplanning.org/Demographics/CompleteCount.cfm>. More materials will be created and posted on our webpage throughout 2020.

### 1. What is the census?

- The United States Census is a national survey conducted every ten years by the U.S. Census Bureau to count the population. The constitution mandates that all people be counted every 10 years in a national census. It was written into the constitution under Article 1, Section 2.
- Between 1970 and 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau used two questionnaires, a short-form and long- form. The 2020 Census will be a short-form questionnaire only consisting of nine questions.
- Completing the census is required by law.

**2. Why is the census important? How can the results affect me?**

- Census data is used to determine representation in Congress.
- An undercount would affect the following programs:
  - Medical Assistance Program and Medicare Part B.
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and School lunch programs.
  - Special education grants.
  - Funding for highway planning and construction.
  - Section 8 housing.
- The data is also used for research and to analyze and predict trends. This has a direct influence where businesses decide to open, impacting the local economy and job creation.
- Census data is used to distribute more than \$900 billion of federal funding to fund public services.

**3. What is an undercount?**

- An undercount is when fewer than the actual number of people are recorded in the final Census count. An undercount means federal programs and representation are allocated for a smaller number of people than live in our county.

**4. How does the census benefit my community?**

- Your community benefits the most when the census counts everyone. Federal funds, grants, and support to communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, and race, among other factors.
- Residents use the census to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality -of-life, and consumer advocacy. Businesses use Census Bureau data to decide where to open new stores, factories, and offices, creating jobs for the community. Local government officials use the census to ensure public safety and plan new schools and hospitals.

**5. When does the 2020 Census officially start?**

- The U.S. Census Bureau will begin their outreach on March 12 and will finish in July 2020. Census Day is April 1. This is the reference date for responses to the 2020 Census .

**6. How can I respond to the 2020 Census?**

- By April 1, 2020, households will receive an invitation via U.S. Mail to participate in the census.
- In 2020, for the first time in history, people can respond to the census online.
- People can also respond over the phone, using a paper form (via mail) or in-person (with an enumerator.)
- Census Takers (or enumerators) will visit households if they have not completed the census online, by mail, or by phone. Their job is to help you complete the census.

**7. In how many languages will the census be available?**

- If you do not speak English, you can respond to the census online or by phone in 12 different languages: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.
- The paper form will be available in English and bilingual English-Spanish. Spanish-only forms will be available in Puerto Rico.

**8. What will you receive in the mail?**

- From March 12-20, 2020 you will receive via U.S. Mail an invitation postcard to complete the 2020 Census online.
- From March 16 -24, 2020 you will receive a reminder letter.
- From March 26-April 3, 2020 you will receive an additional reminder letter (if you haven't responded yet.)
- From April 8-April 16, you will receive a reminder letter alongside a paper questionnaire. (if you haven't responded yet.)
- From April 20 - April 27, you will receive a reminder letter before an enumerator's visit (if you haven't responded yet.)
- After the final mailer an enumerator will visit your residence to offer assistance.

**9. How many questions will be on the census?**

- The 2020 Census questionnaire has nine questions. Answering the questions will take 10 minutes, depending on the number of people in the household.
- The census will collect information about your household and the people living in it, such as:
  - How many people are living in your house on April 1, 2020.
  - Whether your home is owned or rented.
  - Gender, race, age, ethnic group, and relationship.
- The census questionnaire asks for people's names to ensure that each household member is counted only once. Names, along with other information in the questionnaire, helps census workers to remove extra records if a person appears more than once in the count.

**10. Do I have to answer all the census questions?**

- Everyone is encouraged to fill out the census completely. However, if you do not answer all the questions, your form still is valid but it is possible that an enumerator may come by to your house to collect the missing information.

**11. Will there be a question about citizenship status on the 2020 Census?**

- No, a question related to citizenship status will not be on the 2020 Census.

**12. Will my information be secure?**

- Yes, your data is safe and secure. Responses to the census are confidential. Your information is legally protected by the United States Constitution.
- Under Title 13, the same law that requires participation in the Census survey, it states the data collected by the Census remains anonymous and is used for statistical purposes only. It cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

**13. How does the U.S. Census Bureau use the data collected?**

- The census data is used only for statistical purposes.
- It cannot be used against any person by any government agency or court. NO ONE CAN ACCESS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES, which means that no law enforcement agency (not the DHS, ICE, FBI, or CIA) can access or use the information collected at any time.

**14. Can the U.S. Census Bureau release my information?**

- The U.S. government will not release identifiable information about an individual to any other individual or agency until 72 years after it was collected for the decennial census.
- After 72 years, the records are released to the public by the National Archives and Records Administration. For example, the 1940 records were released on April 2, 2012. 1950 Census records will be released in 2022.

**15. Who has access to census data?**

- All U.S. Census Bureau workers take a lifetime oath of non-disclosure that protects your answers because they are confidential. Punishment for mishandling data is up to a \$250,000 fine and up to five years in federal prison.
- The U.S. Census Bureau will produce a summary report which presents an analysis of the data collected in the 2020 Census. Individual households will not be identified based on their census responses in this report.

**16. How can I recognize an enumerator?**

- The U.S. Census Bureau workers will have badges and briefcases indicating their affiliation with the Census Bureau. Employees will introduce themselves as a Census Bureau employee, show their official government ID badge, and explain the purpose of the visit.
- People may also ask the enumerator for a picture ID from another source to confirm their identity. The U.S. Census Bureau will never ask you to step out of your home.
- Use this link to verify the identity of a U.S. Census Bureau worker: <https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/main/email.cgi>

**17. Beware of SCAMS!**

- The U.S. Census Bureau will never ask for your social security number, money, donations, or bank and credit card numbers.
- The U.S. Census Bureau will never send an invitation to complete the census via email.

**18. Should college students be counted at home or at school? If someone is incarcerated, where and how are they counted?**

- Your student will be counted at their college address.
- The Census Bureau classifies all people not living in housing units (house, apartment, mobile home, rented rooms) as living in group quarters. There are two types of group quarters:
  - Institutional, such as: correctional facilities, nursing homes, and mental hospitals.
  - Non-Institutional, such as: college dormitories, military barracks, group homes, and missions or shelters
- Do not count anyone in a detention facility on April 1, 2020. They will be counted at the facility where they are on Census Day.

**19. Do babies and children under five-years-old count?**

- Include your newborn baby in your census form, even if they are still in the hospital on April 1.
- Babies and children under five-years-old must be counted. You have to count children who live and sleep at your home most of the time, even if the living arrangement is temporary or the parents of the child do not live there.
- If the baby will be born after April 1, 2020 they should not be included as part of your household.

**20. Should I respond to the census in 2020 if I am not an American citizen?**

- Yes, you must respond to the census, regardless of your immigration status. The census counts people: citizens, non-citizens, legal residents, long-term visitors, and undocumented immigrants.

**21. Counting people experiencing homelessness.**

- People experiencing homelessness will be counted at places where they receive services, such as shelters and meal centers through Service-Based Enumeration.
- People who do not have a stable home or are experiencing homelessness, can be counted at transitory locations (hotels, motels, campgrounds) using a paper form, in the Enumeration at Transitory Locations operation.

**22. My neighbor told me that the 2020 Census will be online. Is this the only way to participate?**

- In 2020, for the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau will offer an internet response option as their preferred method of self-response. However, you can complete the census over the phone or via paper form.

**23. If I do not have Internet access, can I use a public computer to respond?**

- You can respond using a public computer from your local library or community center, but you need to wait until receiving the invitation to respond online in the mail.

**24. Can I respond to the census using a smartphone or tablet?**

- Yes, you can submit your answer using your smartphone or tablet. The 2020 Census questionnaire is mobile friendly.

**25. What to do if you have trouble completing the census.**

- You should contact the U.S. Census Bureau. This is the main resource for questions and information related to the census.
- The U.S. Census Bureau will provide language guides in 59 non -English languages, to help respondents complete the 2020 Census.
- Please note that language guides are not census forms.
- Language guides will also be available in American Sign Language (Braille) and large print.