



COMMUNIQUE

THE 2020 CENSUS

Filling It Out Takes Just 10 Minutes & It's the Law

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It comes around only once every 10 years, but there is almost nothing more impactful in shaping the future of localities and states than the census. Results of the 2020 census help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding will flow into communities every year for the next decade. That funding also shapes all different aspects of every community, no matter the size or the location. Responding to the census affects how your community plans for the future and your representation in government — and it's your civic duty.

Local 1180, along with most other New York City unions, has been preparing for the 2020 census for more than a year to make sure members are well informed on the importance of the process. President Gloria Middleton said that in general, most Americans do not understand why the census is conducted or what the data is used for. "We want to be sure our members are educated about the census itself, and about the process of answering the questions," she said. "Understanding is part of being involved, and being involved is what continues to make our union stronger."

Throughout the next decade, lawmakers, business owners, and others will use the 2020 census data to make critical decisions about where communities need new schools, new clinics, new roads, and more services for families, older adults, and children; how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to more than 100 programs, such as Medicaid, Head Start, community mental health services, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and communities across the country for hospitals, fire departments, school lunch programs, and other critical programs and services.

Middleton said that the census is basically a numbers picture of the country. "It tells who we are, where we live, and so much more," she said. "I don't think most of us realize just how important answering the questions really is because we don't understand the direct impact it has on us and our families — everything from busing and subways to special education, school lunch programs, Section 8 housing, and programs to prevent child abuse and housing assistance for older adults — and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Making sure every single person in your household is accounted for means more dollars for New York, and that translates into more services and programs."

Of course, reaching more than 327 million Americans is not an easy task, which is why, for the first time this year, the Census Bureau has

implemented an online site. In January, the first enumeration of the 2020 census took place in Toksook Bay, Alaska, since census takers in that area needed a head start while the ground was still frozen and it allowed them easier access to remote areas with challenging accessibility issues.

In mid-March, the general public was allowed to begin accessing the census online. April 1 marked national Census Day, although Middleton said that day's big push was overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Despite everything that is going on with COVID-19, or actually because of it, it's more important than ever for all of us to fill out the census questions," Middleton said. "Our answers determine how much funding we get for hospitals and the current pandemic clearly illustrates just how desperate we are for more federal funding in New York City."

Another important reason why New York State needs an accurate headcount is so the state is allocated the correct number of legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives. The final count determines the number of seats each state has in the House and is used to draw congressional and state legislative districts based on where populations have increased or decreased.

Middleton reminds members that the Census Bureau will never ask for your Social Security number, bank or credit card account numbers, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party, and most importantly for many living in the United States, whether you are an American citizen.

If you do not answer the census questions on your own, the U.S. Census Bureau will follow up in person to collect your responses. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the self-response phase that was from March 12-July 31 has been extended until Aug. 14. Census Bureau enumerators will start knocking on doors to collect answers in person beginning May 28 instead of May 13 due to the pandemic. Middleton said the best way to avoid enumerators visiting your home is just to take the census online.

"It's 10 questions and they take 10 minutes to answer," she said. "Certainly not to make light of our pandemic situation by any means, but we are all supposed to be self-isolating anyway, so there is no better time than now to allocate 10 minutes to getting the census questions out of the way. None of us can say that we don't have the time."

When filling out the census for your home, be sure to count **everyone** who is living there as of April 1, 2020. This includes everyone — related to you or not — who lives and sleeps at your home most of the time. There

are, however, numerous exceptions, so if you are unsure of how to count someone such as a college student or a boarder, go to <https://2020census.gov/en/who-to-count.html> to find out how to count people who reside in your home who might not fall into what you consider “regular” categories.

At the end of 2020, the Census Bureau is required by law to report the population count to the President and the apportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives to each state. In 2021, the initial census data will be made available to the public.

The census can be accessed online at <https://my2020census.gov/> ■

WHAT IS THE CENSUS?

The 2020 census is a headcount of every person living in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories.

WHY IS THERE A CENSUS?

The data gathered is used to allocate funding for services, products & support for you and your community, like hospitals, fire departments, schools, and roads. Results also determine the number of seats states will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, and are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts.

DO I HAVE TO ANSWER THE CENSUS QUESTIONS?

YES, participating in the census is required by law. If you do not respond, the U.S. Census Bureau will follow up in person to collect your responses.

ARE MY ANSWERS PRIVATE?

The Census Bureau is non-partisan and is required by law to protect your answers. Your responses are used only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau does not disclose any personal information.

HOW DO I RESPOND TO THE CENSUS?

For the first time this year, there are 3 WAYS to answer census questions – online, by phone, or by mail.

WHEN CAN I FILL OUT THE CENSUS QUESTIONS?

Invitations to respond to the 2020 census started arriving in mid March. At this point, you can fill out the census questions anytime until Aug. 14. That date is an extension from the original July 31 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.