

Adapting Outreach in Response to COVID-19



IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19, the Census Bureau and libraries delayed and adjusted 2020 Census operations and awareness activities. Buildings were closed, events were cancelled or moved online, and the deadline to **respond to the Census** was extended until October 31.

A complete count is vital to ensure communities don't miss out on billions of dollars in needed funding for libraries, schools, healthcare, and other services. Libraries can play a pivotal role by informing their communities that participating in the 2020 Census is easy, safe, and important.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED TO THE 2020 CENSUS SO FAR?

About **61% of households nationwide** have responded to the 2020 Census as of June 14. This is several points lower than the final rate in the 2010 Census, which was 66.5%.



The response rate is substantially lower in some communities, particularly among populations that have been undercounted historically. For instance, the response rate in Wisconsin overall is 68%, but is less than 40% in many neighborhoods of Milwaukee.

KEY POINTS

The 2020 Census has been extended to October 31.

Residents can respond online, by phone, or by mail.

A reminder postcard will be mailed in late July.

Door-to-door follow-up will begin in August in most areas.

Online and contactless outreach can support a complete count.

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FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ABOUT LIBRARIES AND THE 2020 CENSUS, VISIT ala.org/census

Share your library's Census story with the hashtag **#CountOnLibraries**

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE 2020 CENSUS?

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the Census Bureau rescheduled field operations, incorporated health precautions, and extended census-taking into the fall. **Important updates** include:

DEADLINE

The deadline to respond to the Census has been extended to October 31.



MAILINGS

In March and April, the Census Bureau mailed 95% of U.S. households an invitation to respond to the census, followed by up to four reminders.

HAND-DELIVERY

For the other 5% of households, mostly in rural and remote areas without home mail delivery, Census employees visit in person to deliver a questionnaire or interview the residents. These activities began in May and June according to local health guidance.

ADDITIONAL REMINDER MAILING

Between July 22-28, a reminder postcard will be mailed to households that have not yet responded.

DOOR-TO-DOOR FOLLOW-UP

Starting August 11, the Census Bureau will conduct its largest door-to-door operation to follow up with households that have not completed the census. (In a few areas, visits will start in July.) Census-takers will make multiple attempts to visit each remaining household until October 31.



SPECIAL SITUATIONS

The Census Bureau will count people living in campgrounds, RV parks, marinas, and hotels between September 3-28; and people experiencing homelessness at shelters, services, and outdoors on September 22-24. The Census Bureau is coordinating with **college student housing** and other group living facilities to count their residents.

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HOW CAN LIBRARIES ADAPT THEIR CENSUS ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE A COMPLETE COUNT?

Libraries can share information about the 2020 Census, even if access to library buildings is limited. Libraries have undertaken activities such as:

PARTNERSHIPS

Don't go it alone! Libraries can work with community partners to amplify their outreach.

- Contact the **Census Bureau Partnership Specialist** for your area to share your plans and ask about resources, such as flyers or bookmarks.
- Reach out to your local **Complete Count Committee** to find collaboration opportunities.
- Find **outreach materials** and **FAQs** from the Census Bureau and **Census Counts**.
- Tell elected officials and community leaders about the library's activities so they can share with their constituents.



Late July and early August are key times to raise awareness of reminder mailings and the beginning of in-person visits from census-takers.

ONLINE AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Share trusted information for diverse audiences on the library's channels and other local outlets.

- Post messages on the library's website and social media, such as Nextdoor, Facebook, and Twitter.
- Send reminders through the library's email lists and newsletters.
- Reach out to **local media**, including ethnic and non-English media, to share why the Census is important to the library and community.
- Write an op-ed, letter to the editor, or post for a neighborhood blog.



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VIRTUAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Inform and engage users through online programming.

- Host a live program as a videoconference or telephone town-hall. In Michigan, the Wayne State University Library System hosted a [series of online events about the Census](#).
- Consider other ways to engage your community online or at a distance. For instance, the Gail Borden Public Library District in Illinois sponsored a [Census Kids Digital Art Contest](#).



Track your community's current **response rate** and tailor your outreach to **lower-response areas**.

CURBSIDE AND OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

Spread the word outside the library building.

- **Leave the Wi-Fi on** so users outside the library building can complete the census online. If possible, extend Wi-Fi with repeaters or hotspots.
- Distribute Census flyers or bookmarks with library checkouts, including curbside or drive-thru pickup.
- Display a Census message on the library's electronic sign, plant yard signs on the library grounds, or hang a Census banner on the bookmobile.



The Morton Mandan Public Library in North Dakota draped a [Census banner on its bookmobile](#).

SOURCE: MORTON MANDAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

RE-OPENING

As library buildings re-open, incorporate reminders about the Census.

- Display posters and flyers in high-visibility areas of the library.
- Remind patrons about the Census during telephone or in-person interactions.
- If computers are open, encourage residents to fill out the Census at the library.
- Include a handout or message in back-to-school information for students and parents.



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