



2020 CENSUS: BASIC INFO AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The United States Constitution requires that there be a full count of the population living in the country every 10 years. Beginning in mid-March 2020, the US Census Bureau will ask people to provide information about their households as of Census Day (April 1, 2020). Everyone needs to be encouraged to respond and be assured that it is quick, easy, and safe!

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT – POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Put simply – Census data drives decisions that will affect economic investments in communities and the weight of a community’s political influence until 2031! The outcome of the population count in 2020 will decide the number of representatives that each state gets in the US House of Representatives and the Electoral College. It will also be used to draw political boundaries for state and local districts. In the last census, Washington gained a seat and now has 10 representatives defending residents’ interests in the nation’s capital.

The Federal Government also uses Census numbers to distribute more than \$800 billion dollars in health, education, and infrastructure funds to states, counties, and cities. Locally, private and public agencies, organizations, businesses, and institutions use Census data to help determine where to build schools, roads, healthcare facilities, child care and senior centers, grocery stores, and new factories.

In 2016, Washington received \$16.7 billion of these funds – or \$2,319 per person! The funds included:

- Almost \$1 billion in transportation planning and construction
- \$8.5 billion for health programs
- \$2.4 billion for education (K-12 and higher ed)
- \$1.2 billion for housing
- \$555 million in rural assistance programs

Based on these numbers, a community could lose up to \$5.8 million for each 100 households missed in the census. This would affect its ability to support children, veterans, senior citizens, and middle- and low-income families adequately. An accurate count of all communities will ensure that they and their families get their fair share of state and federal resources and that their voices matter.

HOW DOES IT WORK – 10 MINUTES FOR 10 QUESTIONS WITH 10-YEAR IMPACT

Beginning in mid-March 2020, the US Census Bureau will send each household a letter, inviting the household to go online (or call) and provide information about the number of people residing at that address. The questionnaire will also ask for the names, sex, age (including date of birth), and race/ethnicity of each person living at the residence. Finally, the form will ask if residents own or rent and will ask for a phone number in case there is a need to follow up for any reason.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE – MID-MARCH THRU JULY 2020

The process runs from mid-March until the end of July 2020. A first mailing from the Census Bureau will arrive at residences between March 12 and 20, and a second letter will arrive four days later. If the Bureau doesn’t receive a response after these mailings, another three reminders will be sent. The fourth mailing will include a printed copy of the questionnaire, but residents will continue to be able to respond online or by phone, as well. Those who have not responded by May 13 will receive repeated visits from a Census Bureau employee to their home to attempt to collect the information needed.

IS IT SAFE – RESPONSES ARE CONFIDENTIAL AS REQUIRED BY LAW

The Census Bureau recognizes how important accurate information is to community decision-making and planning so it doesn’t want to do anything to discourage responses and makes every effort to protect their confidentiality. It uses the highest levels of data security to safeguard the privacy of the information it receives. Also, it is illegal for anyone in the Census Bureau to use responses provided against an individual or to share the information with other agencies. In fact, information from census forms can ONLY be used to produce statistical information. Penalties for violations are severe.

SPECIAL CENSUS PROCEDURES FOR NONTRADITIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

For those experiencing homelessness or who live in ‘nontraditional households,’ the Census Bureau has special procedures, which do not involve a mailed invitation. An explanation of the special processes begins with an understanding of the Bureau’s terminology.

- **Group Quarters (GQ)** is a place where people live or stay in a group living arrangement that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing housing and/or services for residents.
- **Service-Based Enumeration (SBE)** is a subset of GQ, encompassing locations where individuals experiencing homelessness receive services.
- **Transitory Locations (TL)** refer to places where people are unlikely to live year round because of the temporary, impermanent nature of the location. Transitory locations include places such as campgrounds, RV parks, marinas, hotels, motels, racetracks, circuses, or carnivals.

In all cases, Census Bureau staff will contact the administrators of these locations in advance of the enumeration to explain the process and agree on how the population will be counted.

Group Quarters (including SBE) Advanced Contact takes place between **February 3 and March 6**. During GQAC, Census Bureau staff will verify the name, location, and Point of Contact (POC); collect an expected Census Day population count; explain enumeration methods to the POC and confirm the best method with the POC; and schedule an appointment for enumeration.

General GQ will take place between Census Day (April 1) and May 29. However, the enumeration of **SBE centers for** those experiencing homelessness will occur on three days:

- March 30 – enumeration at homeless shelters
- March 31 – enumeration at soup kitchens, food banks, mobile food vans
- April 1 – enumeration at outdoor locations

Transitory Locations Advanced Contact takes place from **February 24 and March 21**. Like GQAC, the TLAC involves Bureau staff contacting the location and verifying the name, location, and Point of Contact (POC); collecting information on number of units; and scheduling an enumeration appointment for some time between April 9 and May 4.

If you are a GQ/SBE/TL administrator, state, county and city officials have worked to provide the Census Bureau repeatedly with information about all known locations. However, if you have not heard from the Census Bureau, feel free to contact their offices at:

Everett

Charles C. Souder, ACO Manager
1615 75th St. SW
Tel: 425-551-1628
charles.c.souder@2020census.gov

Olympia

Lonny D. Jenkerson, ACO Manager
411 Cleveland Ave. SE
Tel: 360-999-4028
lonny.d.jenkerson@2020census.gov
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Seattle

Stephen A. Cook, ACO Manager
4735 E. Marginal Way S
Tel: 206-288-7839
stephen.a.cook@2020census.gov

Spokane

Michael D. Coe, ACO Manager
1636 W 1st Ave.
Tel: 509-505-2000
michael.d.coe@2020census.gov

Tacoma

Steven M. Steinhour, ACO
Manager
950 Broadway
Tel: 253-620-7107
steven.m.steinhour@2020census.gov

For more information on any topic related to the 2020 Census in Washington state, contact Lisa McLean, 2020 Census Coordinator, lisa.mclean@ofm.wa.gov, or 2020census@ofm.wa.gov. Local libraries will also be helpful resources for those experiencing homelessness. Additional information can be found at: www.ofm.wa.gov/2020census.