

WE'RE HERE. WE COUNT.

Stakeholder Toolkit



**CENSUS
2020**

2020census.gov

WE'RE HERE. YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN HELP US MAKE SURE WE ALL COUNT.

Every 10 years in the United States, a national census takes place.

The census is a moment in time to join together—as a neighborhood, a city, a county, a state, and a country—and make sure each and every person is seen. The results of the count inform the distribution of vital resources and representation in our communities for the next decade.

The 2020 Census is more than an obligation; it is our opportunity to show our community's strength. To help each and every one of us say, "I am the present and the future." To show our country: **We're Here. We Count.**

Our community leaders and volunteers will make the difference during this year's census. Your organization's commitment to a more fair and accurate count will ensure our community knows about the census, why it's important to complete, and how to do it safely.

Our goal is to provide your organization with the resources you need to connect with your community and increase self-reporting turnout for the 2020 Census!

COMMUNICATIONS CAN HELP CONNECT OUR COMMUNITY AROUND THE CENSUS

We can help people better understand the census and why it matters to our community when we use the same language.

Used consistently by our whole community, strong messaging will help us:

- Make people aware that the census is happening.
- Increase people's understanding of why it is important to complete the census.
- Help people know how and when they can complete the census.
- Ensure people know their rights and how to complete the census safely (avoiding scams).
- Make sure people know how and where to get help completing the census, if they need it.

Now is our opportunity to stand up and be seen. Because we see you, and we know you count.

In this toolkit, you'll find:

- Messages that can be customized and used in your organization's communications and materials.
- A timeline of 2020 Census milestones.
- Ideas and examples of how your organization can communicate with the community you serve before the 2020 Census and while it is underway.
- Tips for sharing messaging on social channels, in email, on your organization's website, and in earned media.
- FAQ about the census.
- Links to additional community resources.

We invite you to use messaging and guidelines for sharing as they are, or to personalize them for your organization and the communities you serve.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

This work has been informed and shaped by a set of King County and Washington state organizations, community leaders, and contributors. We are grateful for their good counsel and insights.

- APACE
- Big Water Consulting
- CAIR-WA
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- Child Care Resources
- Children's Alliance
- City of Seattle
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- Entre Hermanos
- Hopelink
- King County
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- Philanthropy Northwest
- REACH
- Refugee Women's Alliance
- Seattle Foundation
- Seattle Indian Health Board
- Statewide Poverty Action Network
- United Way of King County
- Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
- Washington Census Alliance
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PART ONE

What your community needs to know about the census—and how your organization can help.



MESSAGING

We can help people better understand the census and why it matters to our community when we use the same language. Strong, effective messages should be:

CLEAR: Messages should be easily and immediately understood. By using clear, descriptive language (no jargon), we help audiences understand what the census is and why it matters.

CONCISE: Messages should use as few words as possible.

CONSISTENT AND UNIVERSAL: Messages should be used across as many organizations and platforms as possible. When a community member sees your trusted organization—and 10 others—explaining why the census is important, they may be more willing to listen and complete the 2020 Census.

HONEST: Messaging should not shy away from directly addressing concerns, and should not promise things out of our control. It is our role to give people clear, accurate information that can help them take action.

FORWARD-LOOKING: At the same time, messaging should help people understand the benefits and impacts of a more fair and accurate census count. It should work to inspire participation.

HUMAN: By speaking to audiences as we would friends and neighbors, we make stronger connections.

ELEVATOR STATEMENT

Every 10 years, the U.S. counts every person living in the country through a national census.

The results inform how funding is distributed for things like our schools, affordable housing, hospitals, and public transportation for the next decade. The count also determines how many representatives we'll have in Congress.

When we all complete the 2020 Census, we show our community's strength.

This is our moment to join together—as a neighborhood, a city, a county, a state, and a country—and make sure each and every one of us counts.

We can help each other. We can make things happen. We are the present and the future.

Together, we can show our nation: **We're Here. We Count.**

WHAT THE CENSUS IS

Key message

Every 10 years, we count everyone in the country. Everyone means everyone, because we are all here and we all count: all residents of every ethnicity, regardless of immigration status, including kids, seniors, military members, and people experiencing homelessness.

Additional messages

- The census is written into the U.S. Constitution under Article 1 Section 2 as the way we determine what funding and representation communities get.
- The census is just nine questions about things like how many people live in your household and their ages.
 - » The census asks nine questions about a primary person in the household and fewer questions for all additional people in the household.
- The 2020 Census does not include a question about citizenship or immigration status.
- It is illegal for census information to be shared with your landlord.
- It is illegal for census information to be shared with law enforcement or other agencies.
- It is illegal for census information to be used to identify people for deportation.

WHY THE CENSUS MATTERS

Key message

Counting people through the census is how funding is distributed where it's needed for the next ten years—for things like our schools, affordable housing, hospitals, and public transportation. The count also determines how many representatives we'll have in Congress.

Additional messages

- Different communities need different resources. The results of the census count show what resources our community needs.
- The results of the census influence federal, state, and philanthropic spending in our communities, as well as how many representatives we have in Congress.
- The census determines the distribution of funding for real things that affect our lives, like:
 - » The number of teachers in our schools.
 - » The number of bus routes in our cities.
 - » The availability of benefits like food stamps and health insurance.
 - » The need for affordable housing.
 - » The number of nurses and beds in our hospitals.
 - » Whether our roads get fixed.
 - » Whether we're prepared for earthquakes, wildfires, and floods.
- The census affects how much say we have in Congress and in Olympia. It determines:
 - » How many representatives we have.
 - » How our state legislative districts are drawn.
 - » How many votes our state gets in the electoral college.

WHY IT'S GOOD TO PARTICIPATE

Key message

By completing the census, you are saying you count. That helps ensure our whole community is accurately reflected in the data that determines the funding and representation we get.

Additional messages

- We all pay taxes. Being counted in the census means that money is more likely to come back to our community.

- Our region is growing. We need to make sure we have the resources to meet our needs.
- In 2016 alone, Washington received \$16.7 billion in federal assistance, based on data collected during the 2010 Census. – *Washington Office of Financial Management*
- The census also determines the number of representatives each state has in Congress and voting districts. For example, Washington’s population grew 14.1 percent in 2010, which earned Washington a tenth congressional seat. – *Washington State Census Alliance*
- It’s your right to participate.
- Your answers are confidential and used only to produce statistics.

HOW THE CENSUS WORKS

Key message

Starting March 12, people will receive letters in the mail with instructions on how to complete the 2020 Census. Until July 31, you can complete the census online, by mail, or over the phone.

Additional messages

- In March, you’ll receive reminders by mail that the Census is happening.
- You can complete the nine-question form online, over the phone, or by mail until the end of July.
- On April 1, we’ll celebrate Census Day—people all over the country will be encouraged to complete the census and there will be community events.
- If you don’t currently have a home, you can be counted at service locations or tent camps. If you are staying with a family member or friend as of April 1, you should be counted in their response.
- Our whole community is working together to make sure everyone is counted. If you’re unable to fill out the form by early May, an official census worker will stop by your home to help you.
- You’ll know a census visitor is official because they’ll be wearing an official census worker badge.
- The 2020 Census is available in 12 non-English languages, and video and print guides will be available in 59 non-English languages, as well as in American Sign Language, braille, and large print.

WHO THE CENSUS COUNTS

Key message

Everyone should be counted once—that means all residents of every ethnicity, regardless of immigration status, including kids, seniors, military members, and people experiencing homelessness.

Additional messages

- Children under 5 should be counted with their families.
- College students, including foreign students, should be counted where they go to school.
- Military members should be counted where stationed; those deployed temporarily overseas should be counted at their home addresses.
- People experiencing homelessness can complete the census at places like shelters, libraries, food pantries, or tent camps.
- You have the right to privacy in taking part in the census—all answers are confidential and used only to produce statistics.

THERE IS NO CITIZENSHIP QUESTION ON THE CENSUS

Key message

The 2020 Census will not ask if you're a U.S. citizen. By law, your census answers cannot be shared with ICE, other law enforcement, public assistance programs, or other agencies, and cannot be used to identify people for deportation.

YOUR RIGHTS

Key message

It is illegal for the Census Bureau to share your information with anyone. All answers are kept confidential and used only to produce statistics.

Additional messages

- Under Title 13 of the [United States Code](#), your census answers are protected and confidential.
- The 2020 Census does not include a question about citizenship or immigration status.
- It is illegal for census information to be shared with your landlord.
- It is illegal for census information to be shared with law enforcement, public assistance programs, or other agencies.
- It is illegal for census information to be used to identify people for deportation.
- Violating Title 13 of the United States Code is punishable by five years in federal prison and up to a \$250,000 fine, or both.

BEWARE OF SCAMS

Key message

The census and its staff will never ask you for your social security number, bank information, or money.

Additional messages

- Official census workers wear census badges to help you identify them.
- The census is free to complete.
- If anyone asks you for money related to the census, they are trying to take advantage of you with a scam.
- The census does not come from a political party—you will not be asked for political or other donations through the census.

HOW THE CENSUS WORKS

The 2020 Census will ask nine questions about things like how many people live in your household and their ages.

This is the first census where people can respond online, over the phone, or by mail.

It will not include a question about citizenship or immigration status.

THE TIMELINE TO RESPOND

Following is the timeline to complete the census.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| March 12–20 | Mailing 1: First notice is sent to homes with instructions on how to complete the census online. |
| March 12 | The census can be completed online, over the phone, or by mail. |
| March 16–24 | Mailing 2: Second reminder is sent to those who have not yet completed the census. |
| March 26–April 3 | Mailing 3: Third reminder is sent to those who have not yet completed the census. |
| March–June | In-person counting begins in group residential locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Service-Based Enumeration (sheltered and non-sheltered people experiencing homelessness) March 30–April 1▪ Group Quarters Enumeration (dorms, jails, nursing homes/skilled nursing) April 2–June 5▪ Enumeration at Transitory Locations (RV parks, campgrounds, hotels, and motels—targeting people without a usual home elsewhere) April 9–May 4 |
| April 1 | Census Day |
| April 8–16 | Mailing 4: Fourth letter and paper questionnaire are sent to those who have not yet completed the census. |

Continued on the next page.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| April 20–27 | Mailing 5: Final self-response notice letter is sent to those who have not yet completed the census. |
| Early May | U.S. Census Bureau will send its representatives, called enumerators, to households who have not yet completed the census. People will still be able to self-respond online, by phone, or by mail. |
| End of July | Census count ends. |
| December 31 | U.S. Census Bureau provides national population totals and congressional apportionment to the President. |
| March 31, 2021 | U.S. Census Bureau releases data to the states for redistricting. |

HOW CENSUS DATA IS SECURED ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Strict federal law protects your census responses. It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census information that identifies an individual or business. Census Bureau employees take a lifelong pledge of confidentiality to handle data responsibly and keep respondents' information private. The penalty for wrongful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

No law enforcement agency (not the DHS, ICE, FBI, or CIA) can access or use your personal information at any time. Data collected can only be used for statistical purposes that help inform important decisions, including how much federal funding your community receives.

The Census Bureau will never ask for your social security number, bank or credit card account numbers, money or donations, or anything on behalf of a political party.

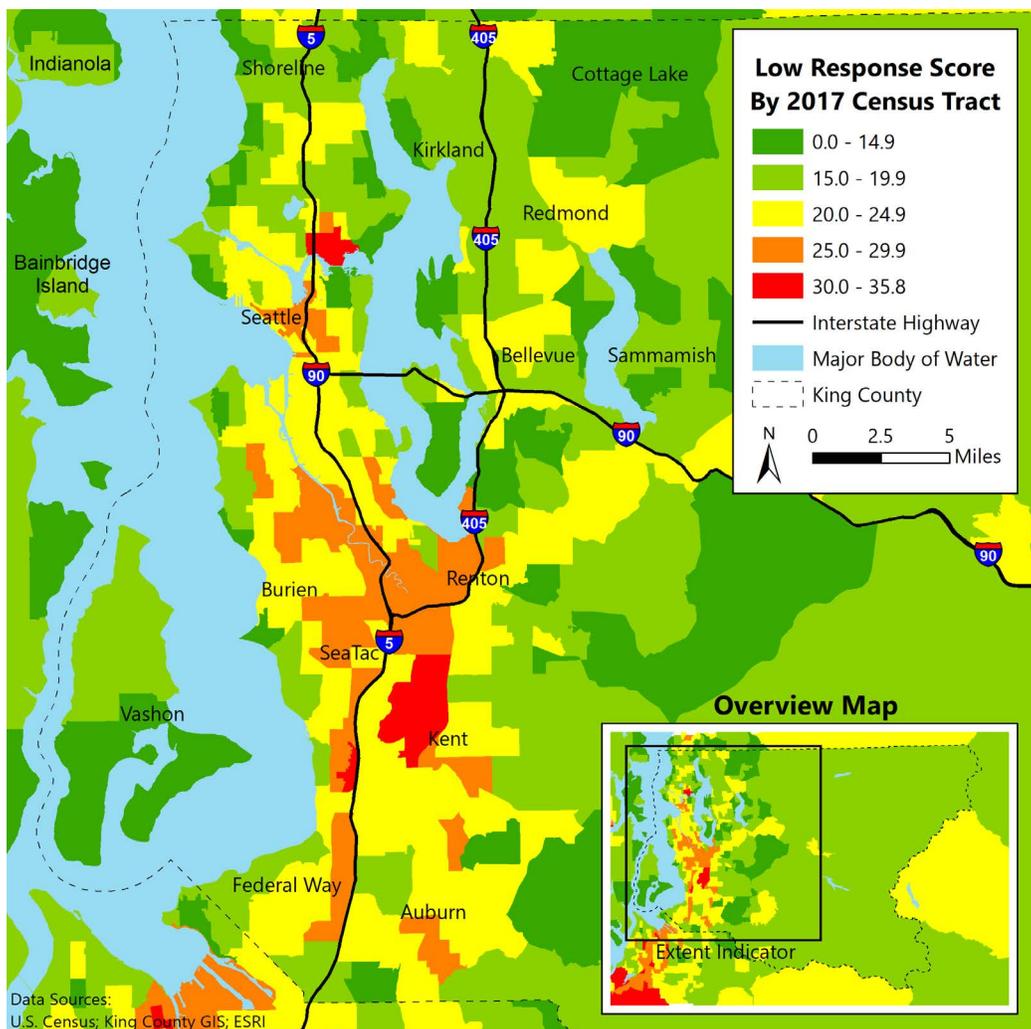
The Census Bureau has a robust cybersecurity program that incorporates industry best practices and federal security standards for encrypting data.

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED COMMUNITIES

Parts of King County have historically had lower census completion rates than others. This is due, in part, to systemic barriers and inequities. The map below shows projected non-self-response rates to the 2020 Census.

The “Low Response Score” is a metric developed by the Census Bureau that combines 25 variables, including homeownership data, age, race, and income. The score is a prediction of the percentage of people who will not self-respond to the 2020 Census (via mail, phone, or online). You can learn more about Low Response Scores and view an interactive version of this map on the U.S. Census website at: [census.gov/roam](https://www.census.gov/roam)

Those who do not self-respond are at risk of being undercounted. Help us ensure a more fair and accurate count by directing your efforts to the areas in King County that may need additional information, support, and education about the census.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE CENSUS?

What is the census?

The U.S. Constitution mandates that every 10 years, the U.S. government counts every person residing in the United States through the census. The data collected is used to inform political representation, the distribution of billions of dollars in federal funds, and helps business and philanthropy make more informed decisions about investments in local communities.

What questions will the 2020 Census ask me?

The 2020 Census will ask nine questions about a primary person in the household and fewer questions for all additional people in the household. By law, your answers are protected and confidential. It is illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to share information with your landlord, law enforcement, or other agencies.

What questions does the 2020 Census NOT ask?

The form will NOT include a question about citizenship or immigration status. The census will not ask for your full social security number, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party, or your bank or credit card information.

When is the census?

The 2020 Census will take place from March—July 2020. April 1, 2020, is National Census Day. Beginning in May, census workers will go door to door to count households that did not self-report. The count will be finalized by July 31, 2020, and national population totals and congressional apportionment are to be submitted to the President by December 31, 2020.

HOW DOES THE CENSUS WORK?

How will I know when to participate?

In March 2020, each household in the United States will receive a letter or postcard from the Census Bureau with online participation instructions.

How do I complete the census?

The 2020 Census will be the first time people will have an option to complete the census online. The Census Bureau will encourage people to respond online, but you can also complete the census by phone or mail.

What information will I need to provide?

The census will ask: name, sex, age and date of birth, race, how the people in the household are related to each other, and whether the home is rented or owned.

Who should be counted?

Every person living in your household as of April 1, 2020 should be counted on the census form, including anyone who does not have a permanent place to live but is staying in your home on April 1. This includes children and babies born as of April 1 up to senior citizens, relatives and non-relatives, regardless of immigration status. If someone in your household spends time in more than one home, they should be counted where they live and sleep most of the time. College students and members of the military living elsewhere, and anyone in a nursing home, jail, or detention facility, will be counted where they are living and should not be counted in your household. For more information about special circumstances, visit 2020census.gov/who-to-count.

What happens if I wait to complete the census?

If your household does not respond, the Census Bureau will mail two reminders and a paper census form in the fourth mailing. If you still haven't completed the census by the end of April, an employee from the Census Bureau will visit your home. They will identify themselves at your door with an official U.S. Census badge. They are trained to help you complete the census.

Will someone be coming to my door?

The Census Bureau will only come to your door if you do not self-respond, either online, by mail, or by phone. The best way to avoid someone coming to your door is to complete the census online, by mail, or by phone after you receive your invitation.

What if I want to respond by mail or phone?

You can complete the form by mail when a form is mailed directly to your household, and you can call 888-839-8632 for more information about responding by telephone.

Do I have to respond to the census?

Yes. The law requires everyone to be counted in the census and that one form per household is filled out. If someone does not fully complete the census or provides false answers, they could be fined up to \$5,000.

What happens if I skip a question?

The answers submitted will be included in the census count. However, if a question is skipped, the Census Bureau may follow up by phone or in person.

I filled out a survey from the Census Bureau last year. Why have I been contacted again?

Between each 10-year census, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 100 additional surveys of households and businesses across the nation each year. One of the surveys that is often confused with the census is the American Community Survey, which reaches about one in every 38 households each year and asks very detailed questions on topics such as employment, income, housing, and place of birth. State and local governments use data from both surveys to plan and fund such things as school construction, transportation systems, public housing, police and fire precincts, and future utility needs. Federal law requires participation in both.

HOW CAN I GET HELP COMPLETING THE CENSUS?

Who can I contact with questions about the census?

For support starting March 1, you can call the Census Bureau’s help line:

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| English | 844-330-2020 | Polish | 844-479-2020 |
| Spanish | 844-468-2020 | French | 844-494-2020 |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | 844-391-2020 | Haitian Creole | 844-477-2020 |
| Chinese (Cantonese) | 844-398-2020 | Portuguese | 844-474-2020 |
| Vietnamese | 844-461-2020 | Japanese | 844-460-2020 |
| Korean | 844-392-2020 | English (Puerto Rico) | 844-418-2020 |
| Russian | 844-417-2020 | Spanish (Puerto Rico) | 844-426-2020 |
| Arabic | 844-416-2020 | Telephone Display Device (TDD) | 844-467-2020 |
| Tagalog | 844-478-2020 | | |

What if I need help in another language?

The printed form will be available in English and Spanish. The online form, as well as phone assistance, will be available in 12 non-English languages: Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Japanese. A Telecommunication Device option will also be available for people with hearing impairments.

The Census Bureau will produce video and print guides in 59 non-English languages, as well as in American Sign Language, braille, and large print. Languages include:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|------------|------------|----------|------------|
| Albanian | Czech | Hmong | Lithuanian | Tamil | Swahili |
| Amharic | Dutch | Hungarian | Malayalam | Telugu | Turkish |
| Arabic | Farsi | Igbo | Marathi | Thai | Twi |
| Armenian | French | Ilocano | Navajo | Tigrinya | Ukrainian |
| Bengali | German | Indonesian | Nepali | Russian | Urdu |
| Bosnian | Gjurati | Italian | Polish | Serbian | Vietnamese |
| Bulgarian | Greek | Japanese | Portuguese | Sinhala | Yiddish |
| Burmese | Haitian Creole | Khmer | Punjabi | Slovak | Yoruba |
| Chinese | Hebrew | Korean | Romanian | Somali | |
| Croatian | Hindi | Lao | Tagalog | Spanish | |

For more information, visit: 2020census.gov/languages

HOW DO I AVOID A SCAM?

How can I avoid a scam?

The U.S. Census Bureau will never ask for:

- your social security number.
- your mother’s maiden name.
- money or donations.
- credit card or bank account information.
- your personal information through email.

How do I identify a census worker?

A U.S. Census representative will always have official census ID if they come to your house. ID badges will have their photograph, the Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. They will be able to provide you with supervisor contact information and/or the regional office phone number for verification, and a letter from the Director of the Census Bureau on Census Bureau letterhead. They may also carry a laptop and/or bag with a Census Bureau logo.

HOW IS MY INFORMATION PROTECTED?

Will my information be kept confidential?

Yes. By law, census data can only be used for statistical purposes. Your responses will be combined with other households to produce statistics, which never identify your household or any person in your household. Your information is confidential and protected by law. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

How is my information kept secure?

The Census Bureau will keep your responses secure and encrypted at all times. Several legal protections exist to safeguard your privacy and confidentiality of responses.

- Under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, census data can only be used for statistical purposes, meaning personal information cannot be used against respondents in court or by a government agency.
- Personal census information cannot be disclosed for 72 years (includes names, addresses, social security numbers, and telephone numbers).
- Census Bureau staff who have access to personal information are sworn for life to protect confidentiality.
- The Census Act includes strict confidentiality provisions prohibiting any employees of the Commerce Department or Census Bureau from using information collected via the decennial census for anything other than the production of statistical datasets.

How is my data stored?

The Census Bureau uses advanced security procedures to protect everyone's personal information. Specifically, it removes personally identifiable information, such as names, telephone numbers, and addresses from its data files.

Who gets my information?

Only the Census Bureau. It's illegal for the Census Bureau to share household information with any other agency, including ICE or other law enforcement. All census employees must follow the law and keep all information confidential. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

WILL THE CENSUS ASK ABOUT CITIZENSHIP?

Will there be a question about citizenship or immigration status on the 2020 Census?

No. As a result of the June 2019 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, the administration has abandoned its plans to add a question about U.S. citizenship or immigration status to the 2020 Census.

Can I still respond to the census if I'm not a U.S. citizen?

Yes. The U.S. Constitution requires that the census counts every resident in the United States, regardless of their immigration status.

WHY DOES THE CENSUS MATTER?

Why do we do the census?

The U.S. Constitution requires the census be conducted every 10 years. More than an obligation, the census is an opportunity to gather more fair and accurate data about our communities so they receive their fair share of funding and political representation.

Why should I fill out the census? How does it impact me?

Census data directly informs how federal funding is allocated yearly to communities for schools, roads, and hospitals, as well as vital social programs, such as Medicaid, Headstart, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). [For example, in 2016, Washington state received \\$16.6 billion for 55 federal spending programs.](#) Census data is used to determine how many seats in the U.S. House of Representatives each state gets and to redraw political districts at all levels of government, ensuring more fair political representation.

How will the 2020 Census results be used?

Data collected from the 2020 Census will be used to:

- Determine Washington state's representation in Congress.
- Allocate more than \$675 billion federal dollars for education, health care, housing support, and business services.
- Inform economic development, housing, public safety, and other community planning efforts.
- Define voting and school district boundaries.

How will the census impact state funding?

Federal, state, and local governments use census data to determine how tax dollars and other resources are allocated. Washington state receives approximately \$16 billion each year in federal funds for a variety of human service, community development, and health programs. Each household that is missed in the census count is equal to losing approximately \$4,800 in federal funds for Washington state. The Washington State Legislature allocates approximately \$200 million in state funds for programs based off of census data.

How will the census impact nonprofit services?

Nonprofit organizations use census data to fund and focus services. The data collected shows areas that are underserved, helping with service delivery and access. Census data is used to inform grant proposals and projects to help improve the quality of life for our communities.

How will the census impact political representation?

Census data is critical to ensuring your voice is heard in our political system. The data helps determine how many seats in the U.S. House of Representatives each state gets and how political districts are drawn at all levels of government, ensuring more fair political representation.

What could Washington state lose if we are undercounted?

Census data directly informs how federal funding is allocated yearly to communities for schools, roads, and hospitals, as well as vital social programs, such as Medicaid, Headstart, Section 8 Housing, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). [For example, in 2016, Washington state received \\$16.6 billion for 55 federal spending programs.](#) The 2020 Census will also be the base for state population estimates that will determine the allocation of about \$200 million to counties and cities from the state general fund annually. If we do not have a fair and accurate count, these dollars will not be invested in our communities that need it most.

Who is at risk of not being counted?

Historically, the communities most undercounted typically face the following barriers:

- Language and cultural barriers
- Mistrust in government
- Privacy/cybersecurity concerns
- Lack of a stable home
- People with low incomes
- Nontraditional living arrangements
- Lack of reliable broadband or internet access

HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN HELP

A more fair and accurate census count in 2020 will help ensure we receive the critical resources our community needs for the next decade.

That said, some people are still unsure about completing the census. That's where your organization can make a difference! By reaching out to the people you serve, you can help our community understand the census and the importance of fulfilling our right to count.

By aligning **We're Here. We Count.** campaign outreach with the U.S. Census Bureau's timeline, we can help our community understand what's happening when it's happening.



PHASE ONE: TRAINING AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

January 2020 – February 2020

Goal

Phase One is all about getting your organization and volunteers trained, and helping raise awareness of the census in the communities you serve.

Get Trained

Get ready to support your community by getting your organization's staff, volunteers, and leadership trained on how to help with community outreach on the census. United Way of King County, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and others will be conducting trainings around North, South, and East King County, and in Seattle.

Visit wecountkingcounty.org to find a training near you.

Get the Word Out

Help make people aware that the census is coming and aware of what they can expect. Use the messaging to help people understand why it's important and how they can help our community count!

Provide multiple ways for people to learn about the census by:

- Placing posters or brochures in your organization's office lobby.
- Hosting a series of "Town Halls" or community gatherings to answer your community's questions and concerns about the census.
- Using social media channels, your organization's website, and email to remind people about why your organization is committed to a more fair and accurate count.
- Taking a series of short videos using a smart phone explaining why you will be completing the census and why it's important for us all to say, "We're Here. We Count."
- Training volunteers and asking them to help support your organization when the census form becomes available.
- Asking people to submit a "pledge" to complete the census so they receive reminders.
- Making a plan to offer "Census Hours" at your office if people need additional support
- And so much more!

Use the opportunity to make the census clear and compelling. Make it personal. Make it true to your organization. Share with your peer organizations and network.

Sign Up for **We're Here. We Count. Census Updates and Stay Up to Date**

Register for our email list at wecountkingcounty.org to receive census communications support, regular updates with the latest materials and resources, information on the census, and real-time information on census completion rates.

PHASE TWO: OUTREACH AND SUPPORT FOR SELF-RESPONSE

March 2020 – April 2020

Goal

Phase Two is focused on helping as many people as possible in historically undercounted communities complete the census online, via mail, or by phone.

Conduct Outreach to Historically Undercounted Communities

On March 12, the U.S. Census Bureau will begin its mailings inviting people to complete the census. Your organization will be critical to engaging people who may have barriers to completing the census, or who may have concerns about completing it. Create opportunities to walk people through the short, nine-question form and count everyone who is currently living in their home or dwelling. If a person is without a home, they should still be counted.

Promote Census Day 2020 on April 1

Every 10 years, we honor April 1 as Census Day. It is an easy, collective time for the community to come together to complete the census, if they haven't yet done so. This day also coincides with the United Way of King County Community Resource Exchange. Celebrate Census Day with your own party, or join United Way of King County for the Community Resource Exchange. Volunteers will be available to help people complete the census.

Encourage Self-Response Across Your Communications

Use your organization's communications channels to remind people that the census is now available to complete. Remind people about their right to complete the census, and about the laws in place to protect their answers and their confidentiality. Don't forget to make people aware of what is NOT asked in the census, like citizenship or immigration status, social security number, political affiliation, and bank or credit card numbers.

PHASE THREE: OUTREACH AND SUPPORT FOR NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW-UP

May 2020 – July 2020

Goal

Phase Three is focused on a final push to make sure as many people as possible are counted. This is also an important time to let our community know that, if they haven't completed the census, a census worker will visit their home. Together, we can increase awareness and decrease discomfort!

Use Real-Time Response Data to Inform Outreach

Enumerators, or people hired by the U.S. Census Bureau to support completion, will conduct door-to-door outreach to people who haven't completed the census. Support direct outreach to the areas that have lower response rates to help people self-respond, so there are fewer enumerators knocking on doors.

Call on Our Community to Ask for their Support

It's vital that all people who haven't yet completed the census do so by July 31, 2020. Encourage people to talk to their neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, local grocers, and more to ask them if they've completed the census. Use it as an opportunity to build stronger community connections and make your organization known as a resource for people who need additional help completing the census.

Continue to Promote the Census and Educate

Much of the attention on the census will likely quiet down after April into May. Continue to remind people that there is still time to self-respond and how to do it safely.

PART TWO

Recommendations for Census Communications and Outreach



TIPS FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF AND THE CAMPAIGN

When talking to people about the census, introduce yourself with your name and what organization you are connected to. Make it clear that you are not affiliated with the U.S. Census Bureau. If people recognize your organization, they may be more willing to have a conversation with you about the census. You can share that you are a part of a community-wide coalition of organizations trying to help everyone in our community be counted, because we're here and we count.

HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS

Be yourself! It is community leaders, volunteers, and trusted messengers like you who will make a difference. If people have questions you don't know the answer to, reference the FAQ included in this toolkit. If you're still not able to provide an answer, take questions and let people know that you don't know and will try to find out, and encourage them to contact your organization.

WHERE TO DIRECT PEOPLE TO COMPLETE THE CENSUS

Information about how and when to complete the census will be available on [2020Census.gov](https://www.2020Census.gov).

Let people know that it is their right—and their opportunity—to complete the census, and that there are laws that protect their privacy and confidentiality. Also, be sure to tell them what information will NOT be asked: like citizenship or immigration status, bank and credit card information, and social security numbers.

SETTING UP AN EVENT

Work with your organization to create opportunities to host community gatherings or open houses to welcome people, make yourselves available to answer questions, and help them complete the census. Post signage in your organization's lobby or public space, post events on your organization's social media and website, and consider asking trusted community members to share your event. If you can't host, consider joining with other organizations to host a community-wide census event.

PRINTED MATERIALS & SIGNAGE

Use and personalize materials from the We're Here. We Count. campaign, such as posters, brochures, and signage to promote your event and provide people with more information. Personalize them with your organization's logo or use them as they are.

Download materials at wecountkingcounty.org.

STAY UP TO DATE

Keep informed about what is happening around the census by signing up for the We're Here. We Count. email list at wecountkingcounty.org. It will feature real-time information, suggested communications, tips, and more!

SOCIAL MEDIA

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

Social media is a valuable tool for people to connect with family, friends, and organizations they like and trust. It is also a critical source for information, news, and resources. When thinking about how to use social media in promoting understanding around Census 2020, think about how you can use different channels to showcase different aspects of the messaging.

- **Twitter prioritizes timely content.** In order to stand out in the rapidly changing Twitter feed, organizations should post short, direct, and clear messages as often as possible (a good practice is about three times a day). These posts can include articles, messaging, and links to relevant sources. Twitter has an audience that is generally more interested in advocacy, activism, politics, and news. Use hashtags to expand the reach of your organization's message.
- **Facebook prioritizes images and conversation.** While Facebook posts can be used for longer messages than Twitter or Instagram, posts with a visual element are more successful, and help to catch your audience's attention. The audience tends to be broad, and generally slightly older (35–55 and aging up). Facebook provides a place for people to connect and share with neighbors in places like Facebook Groups.
- **Instagram is a visual-first community, anchored on images and video.** Instagram can be a powerful visual storytelling tool, but can be challenging for showcasing dense messages. Striking, high-quality photos are a necessity, as there is less focus on the written content you produce. Using hashtags is essential to helping your organization's content get discovered, and it's difficult to include links to learn more. Instagram generally attracts a younger crowd, including teens and millennials.
- **YouTube is a leading video platform.** YouTube tends to work well for content that is more instructional, longer form, focuses on different elements of a singular campaign or series, and is adaptable to both high- and low-quality production styles. Your organization could produce simple how-to's about filling out the census, top ways it helps and impacts our community, and what people need to know to protect their rights, then add them to a 2020 Census playlist.
- **LinkedIn is where you go to connect with professionals and colleagues.** LinkedIn is the leading professional digital network with many resources around job opportunities, professional development and inspiration, and collaboration. Use LinkedIn to engage peers in helping to support the census and educating them about how your organization is supporting it.

HASHTAGS

Hashtags are a mechanism on social media to help bring conversations into a single “feed” of related conversations. Since the We’re Here. We Count. campaign is all about creating a unified voice for our community to encourage people to complete the census, including a hashtag in your conversation will be a critical way to unite efforts and make it easier to see what fellow community organizations are doing in support of the census. We recommend using the following:

- #WeCountKingCounty (Campaign)
- #2020Census (National)

Community-Related Hashtags:

Additionally, there are many local and national efforts around the 2020 Census that may be relevant to your community. Here is a sample of hashtags being used:

- #MakeBlackCount
- #IndianCountryCounts
- #FaithfulCensus
- #AAPI2020
- #QueerTheCensus
- #DemandToBeCounted

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Following is social content for your organization’s use in posting across channels, during the three phases of census communications. Take content right from here and share it across channels.

Download photos, graphics, and other materials to use with these sample posts on social media at wecountkingcounty.org.

Phase One: Training and Community Education January 2020 – February 2020

|  Facebook |  Twitter |  Instagram |  LinkedIn |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>This is a once in a decade opportunity. Now is the time to show how: We’re here. We count.</p> | <p>For ourselves. For our families. For our communities. It’s more than an obligation, it’s an opportunity. #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>This is our moment to join together—as a neighborhood, a city, a county, a state, and a country—and make sure each and every one of us is counted. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>Our community is our strength. Together, we can shape the next 10 years, by showing up and saying, “We’re here. We count.” Will you help us support a fair and accurate count in the 2020 Census?</p> |
| <p>We have a chance to show who we are. Una abuela. A father. A student. We’re the present and the future. We’re here. We count.</p> | <p>You have the right to privacy in the #2020Census—all answers are kept confidential and used only to produce statistics, which will help our community for the next 10 years. #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>When you complete the 2020 Census, you help show our community’s strength—and your information is kept confidential. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>This census, we’re committed to doing all we can to ensure each and every person is counted. Because our present is also our future.</p> |



Nine questions can shape the next 10 years for our community. When we are counted in the 2020 Census, we show our community's strength.

For schools. For fair representation. For transit. For affordable housing. For our community. It is our right to be counted. Will you join us?
#WeCountKingCounty

This year, we have a chance to be seen and counted. Show us who you are in the census. Una abuela. A brother. A student. The present and our future.
#WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census

Impressed by our community's commitment to gathering and supporting our neighbors and ensuring they all have what they need to be counted in this census? Ask me about how you can get involved!

We count. For schools. For transit. For health and social services. We count to say, "We're here." Each and every one of us.

When you complete the #2020Census, you help ensure our community is seen and accurately reflected. That determines the funding and representation we receive.
#WeCountKingCounty

We count. For schools. For transit. For health and social services. We count to say, "We're here." We shape our future. Each and every one of us.
#WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census

We need your help to get ALL of our community counted. The time is now. Reach out to learn more about training and opportunities to help. Let's show our community in all its strength!

Phase Two: Outreach and Support for Self-Response
March 2020 – April 2020



Facebook



Twitter



Instagram



LinkedIn

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Starting March 12, census notices will be arriving in your mailbox. This is our moment to show the nation who we are.</p> | <p>Starting March 12, census notices will start being mailed. Be sure to visit the official census website for information: 2020Census.gov.</p> | <p>Census forms are on their way! Your privacy and data is protected by law. So, complete your Census for our community's future. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>Census notices are on their way! We need our community to come together these next few weeks to make sure our community is counted.</p> |
| <p>Starting March 12, census notices will be mailed. Be sure to visit the official census website for information: 2020Census.gov.</p> | <p>It is your right to complete the census and your privacy and confidentiality is protected by law. Visit the official census website to complete the census now. 2020Census.gov #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>Census Day is April 1, 2020. If you need help completing the census, we're here to help you count! #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>By law, census answers cannot be shared with law enforcement or other agencies, and cannot be used for deportation. Do you know someone who needs help filling out the census? Let us know.</p> |
| <p>By law, your census answers cannot be shared with law enforcement or other agencies, and cannot be used for deportation. Need help filling out the census? We can help!</p> | <p>We're hosting a #2020Census Q&A. What are your questions about the census? #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>The #2020Census is on! Complete your form online, by phone, or by mail. Because our present will shape our future for the next 10 years! #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>What are the common questions you're seeing in the community about the census? Let's help each other for a more fair and accurate count.</p> |
| <p>Census Day is April 1, 2020. We want a strong showing—if you need help completing the census, we're here to help you count!</p> | <p>#CensusDay is April 1! That's the day we celebrate the census and mark our calendars to complete it. Let us know if you need help. We're here to help you count! #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>Because you care, count. Because you may not have felt seen or heard, count. The #2020Census is our opportunity to count everyone who is a part of this vital community. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>Census Day is April 1, 2020. How are you celebrating?</p> |

**Phase Three: Outreach and Support for Non-response Follow-up
May 2020 – July 2020**



| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Soon, census workers will start visiting people who haven't yet completed the census. Look for an official census badge, and remember the census and its staff will never ask you for your social security number, bank information, or money.</p> | <p>#2020Census tip: Always look for an official census badge and remember the census and its staff will never ask you for your social security number, bank information, or money. #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>Know your rights: An official census worker will never ask for your social security number, bank information, or money. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>It's important we protect our community and let them know their rights. Answers on the census are protected and confidential by law.</p> |
| <p>You can still respond to the census anytime through July 2020. Visit the official Census website to complete the census at 2020Census.gov.</p> | <p>No need to wait for a visit by an official census worker—there is still time to complete the census online, by phone, or by mail. Visit: 2020Census.gov. #WeCountKingCounty</p> | <p>It's the law that your answers are protected and confidential. #WeCountKingCounty #2020Census #Census</p> | <p>Census workers are doing direct follow up, but we can still support our community in completing their census online, by phone, or by mail. Visit: 2020Census.gov.</p> |

EMAIL

HOW TO USE EMAIL EFFECTIVELY

Email is a valuable tool for communicating relevant, timely information and driving people to learn more or to take other requested actions. There are a number of ways your organization can include 2020 Census in your ongoing efforts, or create dedicated messages to specific audiences who may benefit from additional reminders and information. Below are some examples of how to more effectively use email.

- **Make it personal.** The subject line determines whether someone will open an email, so it's important to create personal, strong, short subject lines that stand out in a busy inbox.
- **Keep it succinct.** Every story or piece of content in an email should be less than 8 lines long, and the email as a whole should be less than 2 pages long (2 scrolls). The most successful emails have 2 to 4 medium-sized paragraphs, or around 200 words.
- **Organize content consistently.** Newsletters and emails should be organized and consistent and, by using a template, establish consistent expectations with your audience.
- **Prompt action.** Keep the content in each newsletter fresh and new, with a call to action for readers at the beginning and repeated at the end.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

| Week | Type of Content |
|-------------|--|
| February 17 | Census Awareness – The census is coming up! |
| February 24 | FAQs – Share five common questions about the census |
| March 9 | Census Mailing – Census letters will be arriving starting this week! |
| March 16 | Census Rights – Know your rights |
| March 23 | Census Day – Promote Census Day 2020 and offer assistance |
| March 30 | Census Day – April 1, 2020 is Census Day |
| April 13 | Census Reminder – Complete the census and share where to get help |
| April 27 | Census Reminder – Know your rights and how to identify an official census worker |

SAMPLE EMAIL CONTENT

Subject: 2020 Census – Four Things You Need to Know for the Census

Everyone should be counted once during the 2020 Census—all residents of every ethnicity, regardless of immigration status, including kids, seniors, military members, and people experiencing homelessness. And we want to make sure that everyone who is counted knows their rights. Here are four things you need to know:

1. The census will not ask if you're a citizen.
2. It is illegal for the census to share information with law enforcement or other agencies.
3. You have the right to privacy in the census—all answers are confidential and used only to produce statistics.
4. The census and its staff will never ask you for your social security number, bank information, or money. Official census workers wear census badges to help you identify them.

Help protect yourself and your community and be counted!

Because we all count.

Because being counted can make a difference in our schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods.

For fair representation. For a brighter future.

[*Organization Name.*] We're here. We count. And we are here to help YOU count.

WEBSITE

HOW TO PROMOTE THE CENSUS ON YOUR ORGANIZATION'S WEBSITE

Use your organization's website to increase awareness of the census, share how your organization plans to support it, and to share reminders. You could:

- Feature a We're Here. We Count. banner on the home page in a high-visibility area.
- Draft a series of blog posts. Below are some starter ideas:
 - » Use the messaging to share WHY the census is important, WHO gets counted, and HOW to keep it safe.
 - » Create a series of testimonials by staff and community members about WHY they are personally completing the census.
 - » Share how a census-guided program is funding your agency or organization's work.
- Include key dates for the census on an event calendar.
- Create volunteer opportunities around the census.

SAMPLE BLOG POST

Phase One: Training and Community Education January 2020 – February 2020

Headline: Stand with Us to Say "We're Here. We Count." this Census!

Body Copy:

Every 10 years in the U.S., a national census takes place. The census is a moment in time to join together—as a neighborhood, a city, a county, a state, and a country—to make sure each and every person is seen and counted.

The 2020 Census is more than an obligation, it is our opportunity to show our community's strength.

To help each and every one of us say, “I am the present and the future.” To show our country—**We’re Here. We Count.**

The results of the count inform how vital funding is distributed for things like our schools, hospitals, affordable housing, and public transportation for the next ten years. The count also informs how many representatives we have in Congress.

Now is our opportunity to stand up and be counted. Because we see you, and we know you count.

Here’s what you can expect to see over the coming weeks:

- Starting March 12, 2020 – U.S. Census Bureau will send a notice with instructions on how to complete the census online, by mail, or by phone.
- April 1, 2020 – On Census Day, our community comes together to complete the census. We’re hosting an event ... etc.!
- Starting early May 2020 – If you haven’t responded to the census online, by mail, or by phone, you will be visited by an official U.S. census worker. Official census workers wear census badges to help you identify them.
- July 2020 – 2020 Census concludes and the data analysis begins.

You have the right to privacy in the census—all answers are kept confidential and used only to produce statistics. In fact, your answers are protected and confidential by law. That means it is illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to share your information with law enforcement or other agencies.

Our organization (include your name) will be supporting our community—along with organizations all across King County—to make sure we have a more fair and accurate count. If you have questions about the census, need help filling out the census, or want to better understand why it makes a difference, we are trained and ready to answer your questions.

Because we’re here. And we count.

Phase Two: Outreach and Support for Self-Response March 2020 – April 2020

Headline: 2020 Census is Now Live – Be Counted!

Every 10 years, we count everyone in the country. Everyone means everyone: all residents of every ethnicity, regardless of immigration status, including kids, seniors, military members, and people experiencing homelessness.

You should have recently received your first notice by mail with instructions on how to complete the census. On the census, you'll find nine questions asking things like how many people live in your household and their ages. It does not include a question about citizenship or immigration status, and it is illegal for the Census Bureau to share information with your landlord, law enforcement, or other agencies.

Counting people through the census is how we distribute funding where it's needed—for things like buses, hospitals, and schools—and how we determine how many political representatives communities have for the next decade. Real things that can affect and benefit all our lives, like:

- The number of teachers in our schools.
- The number of bus routes in our cities.
- The availability of benefits like food stamps and health insurance.
- The availability of affordable housing.
- The number of nurses and beds in our hospitals.
- Whether our roads get fixed.
- Whether we're prepared for earthquakes, wildfires, and floods.

We're calling on our community—every one of you and your neighbors—to complete the census by or on April 1, 2020! That's Census Day 2020. It's a big goal, but we know our community can do it. For us. For our community's future.

If you need help completing the census, or know someone who does, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're here, and we can help you count! Contact us at: questions@wecountkingcounty.org/

SAMPLE WEB BANNERS

Download digital banners for use on your organization's website at www.wecountkingcounty.org.

Phase One: Training and Community Education January 2020 – February 2020

- 300×250 – Medium rectangle
- 336×280 – Large rectangle
- 728×90 – Leaderboard
- 300×600 – Half page or large skyscraper
- 320×50 – Mobile leaderboard

Phase Two: Outreach and Support for Self-Response

March 2020 – April 2020

We recommend updating the banners when the census is open to direct people to the 2020Census.gov site.

300×250 – Medium rectangle

336×280 – Large rectangle

728×90 – Leaderboard

300×600 – Half page or large skyscraper

320×50 – Mobile leaderboard

MEDIA RELATIONS

King County has a rich media landscape, from ethnic outlets—like Seattle Medium, Northwest Asian Weekly, El Mundo, International Examiner, and La Raza del Noroeste—to radio and community TV stations in many languages, not to mention community outlets like South Seattle Emerald and Seattle Globalist, and town newspapers throughout the county.

In addition, we have four broadcast TV stations (KING 5, KIRO, KOMO, and Q13), along with the Seattle Times, and news sites like Crosscut.com.

These media offer great opportunities to promote census participation in news stories, interviews, op-eds, and letters to the editor.

When thinking about how to use media, it's important to be strategic to have the most impact. **Ask yourself: What media does my audience listen to, read, or watch?** KING 5 is a popular TV station, but if most of your audience is more likely to check out the South Seattle Emerald, consider focusing your time on pitching the Emerald.

Remember that smaller outlets are often hungry for content. Some will welcome your organization submitting a written news story rather than having a reporter cover it. If you're wondering if a publication accepts submissions, look at what they feature on their website, or call or email the news editor.

HOW TO USE OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Take a stand. Editors want their pages to feel like debate forums. They want to publish pieces that identify an issue, and stake out a position on it. The more specific you can be, the more likely your piece will be accepted. For instance, you might want to focus on specific benefits of the census in creating political power. Or why it's important that your community be represented in the data.

Be timely. Connect your piece to something fresh—census deadlines, community help opportunities, and more. You might also tie your piece to the publication's recent coverage of the census.

Be clear. Using plainspoken language shows an editor you understand their readers and want to reach them. Imagine you're writing for your aunt, or the high school student across the street, or the person you see at the coffee shop each day. You are—all of

them. Local media are not academic journals. They're not conference reports. So think about using terms like "census worker" rather than "enumerator." Make sure everyone understands your point by leaving the jargon behind.

Be concise. While your piece will need an introduction that draws readers in, get to the stand you're taking quickly. Readers should not have to wait to learn what you're advocating for; if they do, they'll stop reading. Most op-eds can be well argued in about 600 words; letters to the editor, about 200. Check with the publication you're submitting to to find out the word count they're looking for. Most publications also have guidelines for the kind of pieces they want to see.

SAMPLE OP-ED CONTENT

We all want to be seen. That's true in our families, in our classrooms, at work. And it's also true when it comes to the census.

When each one of us takes part in the census, we help make sure our community counts. And that's important. The census is how the federal government determines how much money to send to communities for a variety of things—like public transportation so we can get to work. Like money for paying for teachers, or for paying nurses at our health clinics.

Too often, communities of color get the message that we don't count. There's one way to be sure we do: by standing up and being counted in the census. Let's make sure we're seen and counted.

HOW TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA

Provide the reporter with relevant materials in advance. The more a reporter understands ahead of time, the better chance you will have to successfully communicate your points. Include supporting work, such as recent newsletters, news stories, social content, or websites for reference.

Know the angle. It is perfectly appropriate to ask a reporter the following questions before an interview: What is the story about? What is its scope? Who else are you talking to? What do you expect from this interview?

Know the reporter. Research other articles the reporter has written. Review their social media. If possible, talk to others who know the reporter. Before the interview begins, try a little small talk with the reporter. You can create a more comfortable interview for both of you when you seem personable and human.

Develop talking points and the bridge message. Prepare one page of talking points using your key messages. Read them, refine them, rewrite them, and rehearse them. For most interviews, three strong, concise messages are usually enough. What is the bridge message that links you back to your key points and message themes?

No one can be prepared for every question—unless you have a bridge message that gets you back to your agenda. The bridge message is what helps people stay on message. A bridge message is simple, such as:

- “We think the issue is really this ...”
- “Let’s look at the facts ...”
- “The key to resolving this problem is this ...”

Signpost your most important message. You must set up the reporter’s ear to receive key points. “Signposting” tells the reporter that you are poised to say something important. We signpost everyday when we say, “You are not going to believe what happened to me today at work,” or “Before we talk about that, I need to tell you one other thing.”

Use signpost phrases such as:

- “If you remember one thing about the census, it’s this ...”
- “There are key reasons to complete the census ...”
- “If we could ask our neighbors to do one thing, it would be this ...”

Signposting is also an effective tool to neutralize negative information.

- “Saying the census doesn’t matter is wrong; here’s why ...”
- “We understand mistrust, but here is why the census is safe ...”
- “Why are they opposed to this issue? I’ll give you two reasons ...”

Signposting is a way to bridge back to your agenda. If a reporter asks questions that divert you from your intended message, these phrases can also help you get back to where you want to be:

- “I hear what you’re saying, but the real issue here is this ...”
- “I understand some people have that opinion, but ...”
- “You bring up a point I’ve heard, but I think what most people care about is this ...”

Tell the truth. If you don’t know something, offer to research it, and phone the reporter back with the answer before the deadline. Don’t be afraid to say that you want to double check the facts and follow up with the correct answer after the interview.

Use clear, jargon-free speech. Speak plainly. Use examples and illustrations that enable the average person to understand you.

Take a breath between thoughts and sentences. By pausing to take a breath between ideas, you add emphasis to an idea and maximize the effect of your presentation. It also allows you to collect your thoughts before moving on to new territory.

Stay “on the record.” Avoid going “off the record” with a reporter, unless you have an established relationship and are certain you can trust them. A good rule of thumb is to never say anything to a reporter that you wouldn’t want to see on the front page of the newspaper.

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

Be accessible. Supply contact information. Don’t crowd your press release with more than one phone number. Always provide an email address, along with a website. If reporters want to find out more about your organization, they will expect to find it there.

Keep the headline to a single line, if possible. Summarize the news using verbs and avoid incomplete sentences.

A good quote always follows a good lead. Quotes are reserved for provocative, exciting language that summarizes the key issue. Every press release lead should be followed by an interesting quote that succinctly tells your story.

Keep it short. There is rarely a need to draft a press release beyond one page. The press release is your chance to sell your issue to the media, nothing more.

Write in plain language without jargon. If you showed your press release to a spouse or a friend, would they understand it? If members of your family do not understand it, rewrite the release in plain language avoiding insider terms or technical jargon. Remember that reporters are writing for a general audience, not special interest groups.

Email press releases as text, not attachments. While a well-formatted press release is appealing, news outlets are equipped with spam filters and rarely accept unsolicited attachments. To avoid going straight to the junk folder, always send your press release in the body of the email.

Have a second party proofread your press release. Nothing can sink a good press release quicker than an embarrassing typo that makes your organization look amateur. All press releases require a second pair of eyes for proofreading and review. Ask a co-worker to read your press release for typos, grammar, and then content.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE CONTENT

For Immediate Release—March 23, 2020

House of Awesome to offer census help sessions

KENT, Wash.—The House of Awesome Methodist Church will provide one-on-one assistance to people needing help completing their 2020 Census form. Volunteers will be available Monday to Saturday through June 30 to answer questions and help residents fill out the online form.

“Our community is stronger when everyone is counted,” said Pastor Fred Smith.

The House of Awesome is particularly eager to help seniors and immigrants, Smith said. 2020 will be the first year the census is conducted primarily online.

“People need to know that it’s safe to take part in the census,” Smith said. “Some folks we serve worry about their data being shared—but census information is kept confidential, it cannot be given to ICE or other law enforcement agencies.”

Some residents don’t have internet access to complete the nine-question census form. Volunteers can explain the questions, answer them on the forms, and ease concerns. Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking volunteers will be on hand.

Data from the census is used by the federal government, in part, to determine funding for things such as transportation, hospitals, schools, and social services. It also informs how many representatives Washington state has in Congress.

“If we’re not counted, it’s as if we don’t count,” says Smith. “We’re not going to let that happen. Our community is standing up for what we deserve.” Smith added.

#

Contact:

Pastor Fred Smith

206-555-1111

fsmith@houseofawesome.org

www.houseofawesome.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL

UNITED STATES CENSUS 2020

<https://2020census.gov/>

UNITED STATES CENSUS – RESPONSE OUTREACH AREA MAPPER

<https://www.census.gov/roam>

WASHINGTON STATE

WASHINGTON STATE CENSUS ALLIANCE

<https://wacensusalliance.org/>

WASHINGTON NON-PROFITS

<https://washingtonnonprofits.org/public-policy/2020census/>

KING COUNTY

UNITED WAY OF KING COUNTY

<https://www.uwkc.org/>

KING COUNTY CENSUS 2020

www.kingcounty.gov/census

URBAN LEAGUE

<https://urbanleague.org/>