



Business Counts

How Business Can Contribute to an
Accurate 2020 Census

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Constitution mandates a count of every person in America every 10 years, and the next such census will be conducted in 2020. Data from the decennial count produce a basic picture of who is living in the United States, but this foundational set of population information is also used to inform the creation of many data products that the public and private sectors use every day. Companies have come to rely on the census for crucial demographic information about customers, the workforce and the economic landscape. It helps to efficiently allocate \$800 billion annually in federal funding, including transportation, housing, education and workforce development services that contribute to a thriving economy. The census also determines political representation at all levels of government, including how many U.S. Representatives each state receives.

Achieving an accurate population count is imperative and requires assistance from both the public and private sectors. Business can play a key role by encouraging customers, employees and the general public to complete their census questionnaires. This report offers (i) a basic overview of the 2020 Census; (ii) examples of how business can plug into national and local census efforts; and (iii) a range of actions that businesses and business membership organizations can take to support a successful count, including instances of how some companies participated during the 2000 and 2010 Censuses.

Potential actions for 2020 include the following:

- **Utilizing digital media**
- **Supporting state/local efforts**
- **Engaging the media**
- **Directly encouraging employees and customers to respond**
- **Contributing expertise and products**

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To learn more about *Business for the 2020 Census* visit strongnation.org/census.

BASICS OF THE 2020 CENSUS

In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau, for the first time, will be encouraging residents to complete an online questionnaire to reduce the overall cost of the census. Paper questionnaires and the option to respond by phone will be available for all households, especially those living in areas with little access to the internet. The Census Bureau's 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan offer a basic timeline (below) about when to engage partners, employees, customers and the general public to achieve an accurate census.

- **Strategic Early Education Phase (January 2019 - December 2019):** Based on lessons from the 2010 Census, starting early to build a base of understanding and trust about the census is important, especially in areas with higher concentrations of hard-to-count populations (see below). This is a good period to get buy-in and establish collaboratives (Complete Count Committees) with a range of community leaders including companies and business-membership organizations.
- **Awareness Phase (January 2020 – February 2020):** Although Census forms are not yet available, communications to notify and educate the general public about the count will ramp-up. Key messages include explaining the importance of the count, why people should participate, and how they can complete their census forms.
- **Motivation Phase (March 2020 – April 2020):** Starting in mid-March, all households will receive a census package instructing them to complete their census form online. These will be sent by mail or delivered by a census worker in some rural and all remote areas (Note: Some households who rarely use the internet or have limited access will also receive a paper questionnaire at this time.) Messages to employees, customers and the public should encourage them to complete their questionnaire. If they don't self-respond by mid-April, they will receive a paper form, although everyone can continue to complete the form online.
- **Reminder Phase (May 2020 – July 2020):** By this time, residents would have had the opportunity to complete their forms for at least six weeks, so now is the time to encourage those who have not yet participated. If residents have not self-responded by April 30, a census worker will visit their home to help them complete the questionnaire in person.
- **Thank You Phase (August 2020 – December 2020):** Residents and partners can be thanked for participating at any time, but the U.S. Census Bureau will focus on thanking everyone during this period.

- **Data Dissemination Phase (starting in January 2021):** The U.S. Census Bureau will deliver the final state population totals and resulting reapportionment of seats in Congress to the President in December 2020. Between January and March 2021, states will receive more detailed data for redistricting, and after that, the Census Bureau will publicly disseminate additional results and analyses.

HARD-TO-COUNT POPULATIONS AND OTHER CHALLENGES TO AN ACCURATE 2020 CENSUS

The 2020 Census must overcome many hurdles as it works to achieve an accurate count. Congress, for instance, underfunded census planning from Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2017; the Government Accountability Office has reported that the Census Bureau faces many challenges, including hiring an adequate number of workers during a period of low unemployment and implementing appropriate cybersecurity measures. The inclusion of a question about citizenship, according to some experts, may also deter some immigrant households from responding.¹

There are many segments of the population who have been more difficult to enumerate in previous censuses as well. Ensuring these groups are accurately counted can become costly as the Census Bureau may need to send multiple mailings and, eventually, a census worker to their homes. Companies can help reduce costs and improve the accuracy of the count by encouraging their employees and customers (especially those who may fall into one of these categories) to respond early. Hard-to-count groups include:

- **Households with unreliable internet access or low internet use**
- **Those not speaking English fluently**
- **Young children**
- **Low-wage households**
- **Foreign-born residents**
- **People of color**
- **Frequent movers and renters**
- **Young adults who are mobile**

¹ Barabba, V., Riche, M. F., Prewitt, K., Murdock, S. H., Groves, R. M., & Thompson, J. (n.d.). [Letter written January 26, 2018 to Secretary Wilbur L. Ross]. Retrieved January 15, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2018/03/27/Editorial-Opinion/Graphics/DOJ_census_ques_request_Former_Directors_ltr_to_Ross.pdf?tid=a_mcntx

- **Those with low education attainment**
- **Single parent households**
- **Residents who distrust the government**
- **People living in rural or geographically isolated areas or in places difficult for enumerators to access (e.g., buildings with strict doormen, gated communities and basement apartments)**

The US Census Bureau and private organizations have conducted polling and message testing regarding how residents and specific populations may respond to the 2020 Census. Public results of those studies can be found at <https://bit.ly/2Th5niW>.

ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE RESPONSE

The U.S. Census Bureau will be driving residents to the first-ever online questionnaire in 2020 as the preferred method of response. This provides new opportunities for businesses to utilize cost-effective, internet-based tactics to encourage employees, customers and the general public to participate early. These tactics include posting messages, videos and a link to the official 2020 Census website on company websites and social media accounts. Reaching all segments of the population, especially hard-to-count groups such as those without internet access, will require help from multiple stakeholders employing a range of tactics. Below is a list of opportunities and actions (although not exhaustive) that businesses can consider to help achieve a complete count

It is important to note that the Census Bureau is committed to ensuring every resident is counted once and in the right place. Every household in the country will receive a unique identification number, tied to an address, that will be used to complete their questionnaire online or by telephone. Households also will be able to respond to the census on-line or by phone without a unique ID, and the Census Bureau will ensure accuracy by verifying the existence of the housing unit and de-duplicating multiple questionnaires submitted from the same address. Paper questionnaires will include a barcode that is tied to a specific address.

Start Now in 2019

Begin thinking about how your company or organization interacts with its customers, employees and the general public (e.g. social media, website, brick and mortar stores, employee communications, monthly customer statements, relationships with community organizations) and whether your company can use those resources to build awareness around the census and encourage response/questionnaire completion in 2020.

Get Help: Connect with National, State and Local Partners

✓ **Connect with or help create a state or local Complete Count Committee (CCC).**

CCCs are very important to ensuring an accurate count in a given region. They are composed of leaders from tribal, state, and local governments; community-based organizations; faith-based groups; schools; businesses; and the media. They can be created by state and local governments to develop place-specific strategies to educate the public about the census and encourage participation in the count. CCCs may develop locally-focused marketing materials such as talking points, posters, flyers, and infographics. Some CCCs will have subcommittees focused on business engagement.

Business/business membership organizations can play a key role in catalyzing the development of a committee if one does not exist and/or advocating for local and state resources for CCC activities and materials that require funding. 2019 state legislative sessions provide important opportunities to establish and secure public funding for CCCs. For example,

- **Alabama Counts:** In August 2018, Governor Kay Ivey signed an executive order creating the Alabama Counts initiative to ensure a complete 2020 count in the state. Among its many subcommittees, one is focused on business engagement and is led by an Alabama business leader.

✓ **Become a U.S. Census Bureau Partner:** The U.S. Census Bureau provides an array of free support and materials to help companies and business membership organizations encourage their employees, customers and the general public to complete their census questionnaires. Learn more at census.gov/partners. The Census Bureau will offer assistance through six regional and 248 area field offices across the country, although fewer will be established than in previous censuses. During the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau worked with more than 267,000 public and private partners across the country, including *NASCAR, NBC, BestBuy, Target, 3M, and Walgreens*.

✓ **Join the *National Business Network for an Accurate Census*.** The network is a free, virtual, private listserv of business persons from companies, trade associations and business membership organizations. There are no dues and no commitment of time. The Network will 1) ensure the Census Bureau is adequately funded in the federal budget and 2) help businesses identify activities that encourage employees and customers to complete their census forms. There are no obligations to participate in any action (e.g. business sign-on letters, op-eds, outreach to Members of Congress, activities that help get out the count), but if/when members choose to take part, they will be provided with

draft materials to make every opportunity a light lift. Learn more at strongnation.org/census.

Utilize Digital Media

Note - Many of the tactics listed in this document may have a digital component. This section focuses on activities primarily digital in nature.

- ✓ **Post messages, videos and a link to the official 2020 Census web page on company/organization websites** (in multiple languages), encouraging visitors to participate and directing them to the Census Bureau website for more information. During previous counts, some companies created specific web pages about the census for employees and customers, with many targeting messages to hard-to-count populations. For example,
 - **PepsiCo** - Focusing on Latino residents, PepsiCo created a campaign to promote the 2010 Census called *Yo Sumo* (I Count). The effort included a web page allowing residents to upload videos about their experiences being Latino in America, which were then used to develop a documentary directed by Eva Longoria called *Latinos Living the American Dream*. In collaboration with PepsiCo, **Telemundo** aired some of these videos and created their own content that included Latino celebrities discussing their experiences and support for *Yo Sumo*.
 - **Mead Johnson Nutrition**, makers of Enfamil, used their web platform to encourage parents to participate in the 2010 Census and include their young children on their census questionnaire.
- ✓ **Use social media** to encourage customers to respond. Posting messages and videos on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube is cost-effective, and if a link is included, followers can easily access the official 2020 Census web page. Many of the tactics in this document (e.g. kick-off events, news stories, local community events) can include a social media component. For example,
 - **2020 Example: Univision** will be active on social media promoting the census using the hashtag #CuentaConmigo (#CountWithMe) and sharing content from community partners.
 - **Nickelodeon**: During the 2010 Census, the network's character Dora the Explorer was used in videos that encouraged parents to complete census forms and include their young children. They were watched roughly 40,500 times, the second-most viewed videos on the Census Bureau's YouTube page.

Support State/Local Efforts:

- ✓ **Sponsor or speak at local, state and national events** about the importance of the census to build awareness among the business community and the general population (e.g. chambers of commerce meetings, business conferences, community events, schools). For example,
 - To promote the 2000 Census, **Georgia Power Company** worked with community leaders to host an Asian-American Census Summit, which drew 150 attendees, attracted widespread media attention, and led to the development of multiple local census initiatives to engage the Asian-American community.
- ✓ **Participate in a census kick-off event** publicizing the 2020 Census and encouraging residents to complete their census questionnaires. Kick-off events are typically held when census forms are first released to the public (mid-March for the 2020 Census), and the event is used to draw media attention and public awareness of the count. Localities, states and national collaboratives will organize kick-off events. For example,
 - **The 2010 Census Road Tour:** The Census Bureau visited many cities across the country using several census-branded vehicles to encourage participation in the count and hosted promotional events at many locations. Corporate partners attended events and sponsored the tour, including **Google, Music Television (MTV), Country Music Television (CMT), Telemundo, Valero, Sprint, 3M and Best Buy**. *Note: The Census Bureau will not implement a road tour in 2020.*
 - **Walgreens** hosted a census road-tour event in a strategically-located store parking lot in Chicago.
- ✓ **Contribute financially or offer volunteers to local and state-based efforts to promote census participation.** During every decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau relies on assistance from local community leaders and collaboratives to promote response. These local efforts, however, require resources to print materials, publicize the importance of the census, and staff tables at community events. Check if a local Complete Count Committee or other initiative has already been developed in your area. The United Philanthropy Forum and the Funders Census Initiative at the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation can connect you with local philanthropies leading place-based census efforts.
 - **2020 Example: DTE Energy:** With their headquarters located in downtown Detroit, DTE Energy has committed financial resources to the city's get out the count initiative "Be Counted Detroit." When the initiative was launched, the company also included a blog post on the website encouraging residents to participate in the 2020 Census.

Engage the Media:

- ✓ **Host a local television station or news reporter** at your office, store or an Area Census Office to promote the importance of the count. Messages can focus on the importance of census data for the effective allocation of public services such as education programs that strengthen the workforce, or how data are used by a retail store to appropriately stock shelves with products people in that area want and need.
- ✓ **Lend an executive, a celebrity or a character to participate in Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** about the 2020 Census. These can be recorded for television, used for flyers or developed for social media. PSAs can be publicized on local or national television, in high-traffic stores, on gas station pump screens or on Twitter and Facebook. For example,
 - **Nickelodeon:** Young children are an historically undercounted segment of the population. In 2010, Nickelodeon lent the children's television character Dora the Explorer for short, English- and Spanish-language videos, print materials, and social media graphics encouraging parents to include their children on census forms.
 - **Comcast** provided \$3.5 million to start the multicultural campaign called "Make A Difference - Be Counted!" that featured several PSAs and on-demand content about the 2010 Census. **Time Warner Cable, Cox Communications and Charter Communications** also contributed air time for PSAs.
- ✓ **Promote the 2020 Census on popular television shows**, especially those featuring high-profile celebrities. For example,
 - **2020 Example: Univision** will air educational segments about the importance of the 2020 Census during television programs and local news broadcasts. For example, they recorded a short [segment](#) during their reality talent show "Pequeños Gigantes" about the importance of participating in the census. They will also host a web page dedicated to providing census information and resources in Spanish.
 - **Black Entertainment Television (BET)** created a TV program encouraging response to the 2010 Census called *Be Counted: Black America and the 2010 Census*. Nas, an American musician, hosted the show. BET also included messages about the 2010 count during award shows hosted by the network.
- ✓ **Lend your name to earned media** (op-eds, LTEs) in local and national press that:
 - Promotes adequate federal (and possibly state or local) funding for the 2020 Census

- Notes the importance of the census for business and local communities, highlighting its impact on the effective allocation of public resources, including education, public safety, roads, housing, and prudent investment of private sector resources.
- Encourages employees, customers and residents to participate in the 2020 count.

Directly Encourage Employees and Customers to Respond:

- ✓ **Display posters, flyers and information** about the 2020 Census in stores, staff offices, schools, parades, festivals and other community events. The U.S. Census Bureau, some Complete Count Committees, and nonprofit organizations will provide access to draft materials and messages. For example,
 - **2020 example: Univision** community engagement teams will be working with nonprofit partners promoting the 2020 Census at local festivals and other community events. They will also be encouraging their employees to participate by staffing information tables in the lobbies of their stations and office buildings.
 - **Casey's General Stores** partnered with the Census Bureau in 2010 to include "Be Counted" boxes with information about the census in their stores.
 - **Best Buy** included messages encouraging response on television screens displayed in stores after census forms were distributed in 2010.
- ✓ **Include messages promoting the census** on customer receipts and in utility bills, credit card bills and emails to customers. For example,
 - **Georgia Power Company** placed inserts in customer bills explaining the importance of the census in their everyday lives during the 2000 Census.
- ✓ **Encourage employees** to complete their census questionnaires at employee meetings and through inserts in company pay stubs, flyers in break rooms, and general company communications. An employer could also allow employees to complete their questionnaires at work and provide computer equipment such as tablets in a private common area to respond confidentially.
- ✓ **Run promotional messages (possibly in multiple languages) in weekly store circulars** or other customer publications. For example,
 - **Target** dedicated a section of a weekly in-store circular encouraging customers to complete their census questionnaires in 2010.

Professional Sports:

- ✓ **Sporting events** offer tremendous opportunities to engage large segments of the population both nationally and in specific cities. For example,
 - ***Nascar and 3M:*** The Census Bureau, NASCAR and 3M partnered in 2010 to sponsor a car labeled with messages about the census in the Nascar Sprint Cup series.
 - ***Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and the National Football League*** used sporting events such as the Super Bowl to build awareness about the census and encourage attendees to respond. The 2010 Census Road Tour was hosted at several sporting events.

Contribute Your Expertise and Products:

- ✓ **2020 Example: Scholastic Corp:** As a publishing and education company, Scholastic will be leveraging its expertise and relationships with educators for the 2020 Census to develop information for their website and teacher e-newsletter that educate families about the importance of the Census and encouraging households to complete their census questionnaire and include their young children to ensure that schools and communities get the resources they deserve. Scholastic is actively talking with partners to expand the distribution to include printed materials for schools to send home to families.
- ✓ **2020 Example: Microsoft and Cisco** have partnered with the Maricopa Association of Governments and the City of Phoenix to equip six vans with internet access and equipment to help educate residents about the census and provide a venue to complete the questionnaire. The vans will visit some of the hardest to count areas in the region.

ReadyNation: Business. Kids. Workforce.

Business executives building a skilled workforce by promoting solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work, and life.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be citizen-ready.

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