



Census 2020

Communication and Outreach is Critical

THE CENSUS IS VERY IMPORTANT.

The next census will be conducted on April 1, 2020 per the constitution, which mandates that every 10 years, a full head count will be conducted nationwide. There are two primary purposes for the census: re-apportionment of the house seats in the Congress and allocation of more than 600 billion federal dollars each year to the states and communities. Since the census provides the most complete and accurate data for the entire population, it is used widely by governments, businesses, and non-profits. Census data is also the foundation for many federal statistics.

PARTICIPATION IS THE KEY.

To ensure every resident in the Commonwealth is counted so that Virginia gets its fair share of the political representation and federal funding, it is imperative that every household complete the census form.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH IS CRITICAL.

Broad and effective communication and outreach of the census is necessary and critical to help increase awareness and knowledge; ease distrust, uncertainty, or even fear; and advocate for timely and full participation.

Answering a census form is simple and easy. The Census Bureau mails each household a form— which takes about 10 minutes to complete—and a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope in which the form can be mailed back to the Bureau. In the 2020 Census, households will also have the option of filling out the census online.

People who do not wish to participate may think that if they don't return the census form, they will not be counted. This is not true. In 2010, 74 percent of U.S. households returned the census form. That does not mean the remaining 26 percent households were not counted. In fact, these households were visited, once or multiple times, by census enumerators. If a household declined to answer a census enumerator or was not available, the information was then obtained through people likely to know the members of the household, such as neighbors or apartment managers. In short, as long as an address exists and is believed to be occupied, the residents of that address are counted, and the basic demographic information such as age, gender, race and ethnicity are reported. It is worth noting that the cost for a postage-paid envelope used to mail back the census form is far less than the cost for a visit from a census enumerator. In 2010, the postage for mailing

back the census form only cost the government 42 cents, while a visit by a census enumerator cost \$57, significantly increasing tax payers' burden.

Previous census studies have shown that when households participate voluntarily and in a timely manner, census data is more accurate and census operating costs are significantly reduced.

In addition, census communication and outreach help to improve census undercount, a persistent problem among certain population subgroups. In spite of the great efforts and costs of counting everybody in the U.S., the following groups are often undercounted in the census:

- Children under age 5
- Renters
- Minorities
- Immigrants
- The poor
- People living in rural areas

Undercount results in less political representation, fewer federal dollars, and less favorable resource allocation for individuals and communities already in disadvantaged or vulnerable positions. Targeted and effective communication is instrumental to help these groups more fully and accurately report their information through the census form.

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