



Libraries and the 2020 Census

Vital Partners for a Complete Count

The 2020 Census will have far-reaching impacts on political representation and government funding; ensuring a complete and accurate count is crucial. But the Census faces significant challenges. The 2020 Census will take place primarily online, even as many residents lack home internet access. Many people also are not aware of the importance of the Census and how it will affect their lives or may have online privacy or security concerns.

America's libraries are ideal partners to help address these challenges. Libraries are trusted institutions and experienced collaborators—providing information, technology, and training resources to enable Americans to connect with government for many purposes. With a convenient presence in communities across the country, from inner-city neighborhoods to remote tribal lands, libraries can help Census stakeholders reach the full range of audiences. **State and local policymakers, the Census Bureau, Congress, foundations, and other stakeholders should partner with libraries as they work to ensure a successful 2020 Census.**

Libraries are essential, trusted partners in achieving a complete count in the 2020 Census. Libraries:

Deliver information about the Census and host community outreach activities.

Provide internet access and enable respondents to complete the Census form online.

Serve as trusted messengers, including in hard-to-count communities.

Train data users and provide access to Census statistics for businesses and community members.

Partners for Civic Success

Libraries often work with public agencies to achieve community priorities. Library staff connect people with the information they need to access government services and benefits, complete online forms, and engage with civic issues. For instance, library

99% OF HARD-TO-COUNT CENSUS TRACTS HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCATED WITHIN FIVE MILES.

Census tracts identified with the lowest response rates in 2010—and 79% of the time, a library is within a single mile.

Libraries serve people of all ages and backgrounds and are well-positioned to reach some demographic groups that are at heightened risk of being undercounted in the Census. Children younger than 5 years old, for instance, are the most undercounted age group. The Annie E. Casey Foundation recommends libraries as a trusted messenger of information about Census participation to parents and guardians.

American Indians and Alaska Natives also are historically undercounted. Tribal leaders consulted by the Census Bureau recommended libraries as a communication channel to provide information about the Census to tribal citizens.

Through partnerships with Complete Count Committees and other community efforts, libraries can deliver accurate information about the importance of Census participation, options for responding, confidentiality and data security, and other topics critical to enabling a fair and inclusive count.

Using Census Data to Inform Communities

Libraries' involvement with the Census and its data will continue well after 2020. As information experts, library staff provide access to statistical information compiled by the Census Bureau. Libraries work with businesses, government agencies, community organizations, and students in using Census data to better understand their communities. For example:

The Chelsea (MI) District Library offered courses for local businesses on using Census data to research markets and locate workers.



Librarians from **Rutgers University in Newark (NJ)** teach entrepreneurs how to use Census data for business planning through workshops for the Small Business Development Center.

The Hannibal (MO) Free Public Library partnered with the city finance department to utilize Census data in the city's efforts to encourage investment on the South Side of Hannibal.



The University of California, Berkeley Libraries provided a workshop and online guide to enable Contra Costa County's Children & Families Commission to use Census data when updating its strategic plan.



The Palm Beach County (FL) Library System provided Census statistics about grandparents raising grandchildren that a local non-profit organization, Families First of Palm Beach County, used in a successful grant application.

The Drexel University Libraries in Philadelphia (PA) partner with the Dornsife School of Public Health to train graduate students on using Census data in community health assessments.



TAKEAWAYS FOR DECISION MAKERS

America's libraries are well-positioned to support a complete and accurate count in the 2020 Census. Decision makers should:

- Invite local libraries to participate on Complete Count Committees and related activities
- Partner with libraries to assist local residents in applying and training for Census jobs
- Host community meetings and outreach activities in libraries
- Provide resources so libraries can meet technology needs for online Census response
- Promote library services that provide access to Census data and training for data users

