

MeckCounts²⁰²⁰

Make it count for our community. 

Frequently Asked Questions

1.21.20

About the Census

What is the census?

The census is a count taken every 10 years of every person in the United States. It is required by law and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

What is MeckCounts 2020?

It is a local campaign to ensure that every resident of Mecklenburg County is counted in the 2020 Census. It is led by the Mecklenburg County Complete Count Committee, a diverse group of community members.

What will I be asked?

- How many people are living or staying at your home.
- Whether the home is owned or rented.
- The sex, age, name and race of each person in the home.
- Whether a person in your home is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.
- The relationship of each person in your home.

You will not be asked about your citizenship status.

A sample of the questionnaire is available on our website at MeckCounts2020.com.

Is the citizenship question on the census?

No

When does the census take place?

The census starts in March 2020 and continues into the summer. Here's a [full timeline](#).

How many follow-ups will you get before someone visits you in May?

Before you are visited in person, you will receive (in this order):

- An invitation to respond online.
- A reminder letter.

- A reminder postcard.
- A reminder letter and paper questionnaire.
- A final reminder postcard.

What is address canvassing and why was it necessary?

The census' goal is to conduct a complete and accurate count. The actual count will occur in spring 2020, but before they can do that, they need a list of all the correct addresses. Canvassing was conducted to ensure that everyone is invited to participate in the census and is counted in the correct location.

Can 2 people complete a questionnaire for the same household?

Census computers will be able to connect the information.

How do you count children whose time is split between two households (joint custody)?

If a child's time is divided between more than one home, count them where they stay most often. If their time is evenly divided between homes, or you don't know where they stay most often, count them where they are staying on April 1, 2020.

If someone does not identify as male or female, how should they respond?

Respondents should answer with the sex identified on their birth certificate. Respondents will not be able to select both genders, due to the configuration of the electronic system will only allow one box to be selected.

If I have a friend that's couch surfing, how will they be counted?

Whoever is living in your household on April 1st should be counted.

How will people experiencing homelessness be counted?

People living in shelters will be counted by the shelter. The Census Bureau will manage counting people in non-shelters and outdoor locations such as tent encampments & on the streets.

How will people on college campuses be counted?

- Students who live in off-campus housing that is not owned, leased, or managed by the college or university (such as a private house that is shared with other students or a privately owned apartment) should respond online, by phone, or by mail beginning in mid-March 2020. They should count themselves at the off-campus address, even if they spend time somewhere else during school breaks.
- Students who live in on-campus student housing owned, leased, or managed by the college or university (such as residence halls, off-campus residence halls, or other student housing facilities) will be counted by U.S. Census Bureau employees working with representatives from the university. They may be asked to complete an individual census form.

Can I work for the census?

The U.S. Census Bureau is recruiting for a variety of temporary jobs. To learn more go to [2020census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

Why is it important to have a complete count?

Having a complete and accurate census count will help all of us in Mecklenburg County to receive more resources and have a stronger voice in the future of our community.

- The U.S. Government distributes hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds each year based on census data.
- In FY2016, North Carolina received \$23,750,523,730 through 55 federal spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census.
- Local organizations and businesses use census data to plan for the future of our community.
- Our number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives is based on census data.

Why do they ask whether my residence is owned or rented?

To create statistics about homeownership and renters. Homeownership rates serve as an indicator of the nation's economy and help in administering housing programs and informing planning decisions.

Why am I being asked about race and origin?

We ask about a person's race to create statistics about race and to present other statistics by race groups. The data collected in this question is needed by federal agencies to monitor compliance with antidiscrimination provisions, such as the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

Why Does the Census Ask About Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?

Responses to this question are used for many purposes, such as identifying populations that may not be getting needed medical services under the Public Health Service Act and monitoring equal employment opportunities.

The Census Is Required.

What if I don't complete the census?

The U.S. Census is required by the U.S. Constitution. If a household has not responded by the end of April, a census taker will visit the home to collect responses. These in-person visits will begin in May.

What is the significance of Census Day, April 1?

April 1 is Census Day, a key reference date for the 2020 Census. When completing the census, you will include everyone living in your home on April 1. Census Day will be celebrated with events across the country.

The Census Is Safe.

Is my information safe?

Your responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by federal law. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics. They cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way—not by the FBI, not by the CIA, not by the DHS, and not by ICE.

Why can't they just pull my information from the DMV or my taxes?

It's required that the census counts every person living in the U.S. at the same time and in the right place. That can't be accomplished with DMV or tax records.

How can we tell if it's a census worker knocking on the door?

- First, check to make sure that they have a valid ID badge, with their photograph, a U.S. Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date.
- If you still have questions about their identity, you can call 800-923-8282 to speak with a local Census Bureau representative.
- This [web page](#) provides additional information on what they are doing and why; as well as how to identify them.

How will the US Census manage misinformation on social media?

The census bureau has ongoing conversations with tech companies to flag bots and trolls for misinformation. Tech companies are committed to paying extra attention during census response time.

The Census Is Convenient.

How do I complete the census?

The 2020 Census will be online. If you can't complete it online, you can participate by phone or by mail. Instructions to complete will be part of your census letter.

Do I need my Census ID number to complete the census online?

No. The Census ID is used to populate a verified address. If you don't have an ID, manually enter your address.

Can people request a paper copy of the census?

Short answer: no. Long answer: If you live in an area less likely to respond online, you will receive a paper questionnaire along with your invitation. Otherwise, you will receive an online invitation, followed by a reminder letter, and then a reminder postcard. If you haven't responded by then, you will receive a paper questionnaire. But we do not recommend waiting until then. We recommend completing the census as soon as you receive the invitation, either online or by phone.

How old do you have to be to complete the census?

We encourage adults to complete the census when possible. However, there is no restriction on the age to fill out the questionnaire.

How will someone that is illiterate be counted?

The census can also be completed by phone.

What about people who are vision or hearing impaired?

The U.S. Census Bureau will also have print and video language guides in 59 languages including American Sign Language, braille, and large print guides.

What if people don't speak English?

The online and phone response options will be in English and 12 other languages. They are English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Japanese. **The paper version will be in English and Spanish.**

Here is a list from the [Census Memo](#) of which tools will be available in which languages.

Instrument/Material	Non-English Language
Internet Self-Response Instrument	12 Non-English Languages: Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Japanese.
Census Questionnaire Assistance	12 Non-English Languages above. Includes Telecommunication Device for the Deaf.
Enumerator Instrument, Bilingual Paper Questionnaire, Bilingual Mailing, Field Enumeration Materials	Spanish
Language Glossaries, Language Identification Card	59 Non-English Languages. (See memo .)
Language Guides (Video and Print)	59 Non-English Languages. Includes American Sign Language, braille, and large print.