

Census Bureau Statement on Modifying 2020 Census Operations to Make Sure College Students are Counted

Census Bureau also announces updates to special operations, assistance program and early nonresponse followup.

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MARCH 15, 2020 — The U.S. Census Bureau continues to carefully monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and follow the guidance of federal, state and local health authorities. We are adjusting some operations as outlined below with two key principles in mind: protecting the health and safety of our staff and the public and fulfilling our statutory requirement to deliver the 2020 Census counts to the President on schedule.

As of today, over 5 million have responded online to the 2020 Census. Currently, the planned completion date for data collection for the 2020 Census is **July 31, 2020**, however, that date can and will be adjusted if necessary as the situation evolves in order to achieve a complete and accurate count.

It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail—all without having to meet a census taker.

We are adjusting operations to make sure college students are counted.

- College students living in on-campus housing are counted through their university as part of our Group Quarters Operation, which counts all students living in university owned housing. In addition to college dormitories, the Group Quarters Operation also includes places like nursing homes, group homes, halfway houses and prisons.
- During our recent 2020 Census Group Quarters Advance Contact operation we contacted college/university student housing administrators to get their input on the enumeration methods that will allow students to participate in the 2020 Census.

- Nearly half, about 47 percent, have chosen the eResponse methodology and about 7 percent chose paper listings, both of which provide the Census Bureau directory information (electronically or via paper records) about each student. About 35 percent, however, chose drop-off/pick-up which allows students to self-respond using an Individual Census Questionnaire (or ICQ). We are contacting those schools to ask whether they would like to change that preference in light of the emerging situation.
- In general, students in colleges and universities temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 virus will still be counted as part of this process. Even if they are home on census day, **April 1**, they should be counted according to the residence criteria which states they should be counted where they live and sleep most of the time. We are asking schools to contact their students and remind them to respond.
- Per the Census Bureau’s residence criteria, in most cases students living away from home at school should be counted at school, even if they are temporarily elsewhere due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We’re working with group quarters administrators to ensure we count their residents.

- The 2020 Census is designed to offer multiple ways to respond. We’re encouraging administrators of group housing to choose a way to count their residents that requires less in-person contact.
- For the “group quarters” operation, which counts people in nursing homes, college dorms, prisons and other institutional living facilities, we offer a myriad of ways to respond, such as via eResponse, paper listing or self-enumeration by the facility.
- We’re contacting all group quarters administrators that have requested an in-person visit and asking them to consider an eResponse or offering to drop off and later pick up paper forms to minimize in person contact with our census staff.

We’re working with service providers to determine the best way forward.

- We are working with service providers at emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens and regularly schedule mobile food vans to adapt plans to count the populations they serve.
- The plan has been to interview each person served a meal or staying at the facility at a date and time the service providers choose **between March 30 and April 1**.

- We are now contacting the service providers to determine whether they will be open **between March 30 and April 1** and whether they would be able to provide a paper listing of census response data for each person served or staying at the facility instead.

We're delaying the start of our Mobile Questionnaire Assistance program.

- We plan to offer assistance with responding to the 2020 Census at events and locations where people naturally gather as part of our Mobile Questionnaire Assistance program.
- We now plan to offer this assistance fully across the country **on April 13**, delaying from the previously planned start of **March 30**.

We're delaying our Early Nonresponse Followup operation.

- In this operation, census takers begin following up with households that haven't responded yet around some colleges and universities. By starting early, we can count households in areas with off-campus housing before the end of the spring semester when students may leave for another residence. We're delaying the start of this effort **from April 9 to April 23**.

The Census Bureau is also making changes to its paid media campaign, earned media efforts, and partnership outreach efforts to adapt to changing conditions while continuing to promote self-response. The key message right now for anyone with questions about how COVID-19 will affect the 2020 Census: **It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail—all without having to meet a census taker.**

We will continue to monitor the situation, take appropriate steps in consultation with public health authorities and provide ongoing updates.



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Related Information

COVID-19

The U.S. Census Bureau is monitoring coronavirus (COVID-19) carefully. Please check this page for regular updates.