

# Missouri Counts: 2020 Census Message Guide

Prepared by Missouri Foundation for Health

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This message guide is informed by research conducted by Missouri Foundation for Health to gain rural community insights through focus groups and a statewide survey, and analysis of national studies (U.S. Census Bureau, Color of Change, NALEO, and more). Please use this guide to:

- Raise awareness of the 2020 Census in your community and among the populations you serve.
- Talk to your colleagues and community leaders to figure out how you can make sure everyone in your community is counted.
- Engage local media to cover the Census, helping educate their readers and viewers.

## Core Messages

The 2020 Census is our chance to make sure the hard-earned tax dollars we send to Washington, D.C. make their way back to Missouri. For every adult and every child that is not counted in the Census, our state will lose \$1,300 in federal dollars every year. When every Missourian is counted, we get more money for roads and bridges, hospitals, and schools. Respond to the 2020 Census today at [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov). Because Missouri Counts!

### What's at Stake

- The Census happens every 10 years. If we aren't all counted in 2020, Missouri will be shortchanged for the next decade.
- For every adult and every child that is not counted, our state will lose \$1,300 in federal dollars every year. That adds up to \$13,000 per person over the next 10 years. Those are funds that we won't get for our roads and bridges, hospitals, and schools.
- In 2010, Missouri lost a seat in Congress because not everyone was counted. We can't risk losing another voice for Missouri in Washington, D.C.

### Why it Matters

- When we all respond, Missouri gets more money to pave our roads and rebuild bridges.
- When we all respond, our health care programs and community health centers get more funding to take care of our family, friends, and neighbors. When we're not all counted, hospitals could close, forcing people to drive hours to get care.
- When we all respond, our schools get important funding to take care of our kids. This includes after-school programs and lunches for children.

*Think about the roads, highways, hospitals, and public schools in your community. When you can, refer to local landmarks to make these messages more relevant to your audience.*

## Key Points for Key Populations

The following populations are among the hardest to count. Many had low response rates in 2010. Others have barriers to participation, such as access, misinformation, or fractured trust in government. For Missouri to get a complete count in 2020, we must help these populations understand why it is important to respond.

### Rural Communities

- When we all respond, rural communities like ours get the funding we need.
- When we all respond, Missouri gets more money to pave our roads and rebuild bridges. We also get money for other infrastructure projects, like broadband internet.
- When we all respond, our health care programs and community health centers get more funding to take care of our family, friends, and neighbors. When we're not all counted, hospitals could close, forcing people to drive hours to get care.
- When we all respond, our rural businesses can get the support they need to grow, succeed, and keep workers employed. This includes the USDA Rural Development Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program.
- If you don't have internet access, don't worry. The U.S. Census Bureau is planning to mail paper copies of the Census questions to households without internet access. You can also respond by calling toll-free at 844-330-2020. If you want to respond online at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov), you can use a computer, cell phone, or visit your library — they are one of the groups helping Missourians be counted.

### Low-Income Missourians

- When we all respond, Missouri gets more funding for health insurance programs like the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid (MO HealthNet).
- When we all respond, Missouri gets more funding for important programs like SNAP (food stamps) and the school lunch program. This means more children and families can get the food they need to be healthy.
- When Missouri families fall on tough times, safety net programs are there to help. When we all respond, Missouri gets the funding we need to help our neighbors get back on their feet.

### Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

- Believe it or not, a lot of people forget to count the children in their home. Everyone counts, and it is important to count children of all ages, including nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. Don't forget to count your littlest ones. This includes newborns, even if they are still in the hospital.
- The Census happens once every 10 years. If we don't count our young children living at home, our community will have less funding for schools, child care, and other services our children need to grow up strong.
- When we all respond, Missouri gets more funding for health insurance programs for our kids. This includes the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid (MO HealthNet).
- When we all respond, Missouri gets more funding for important programs like SNAP (food stamps) and WIC. This means our kids have access to the food they need to grow up healthy.
- When we all respond, our local schools and child care facilities, such as Head Start, will get the funding they need.
- If your child spends time in two homes, count them where they stayed on April 1, 2020.

## Black Residents

- The Census is our chance to make our voices heard.
- If we don't respond, we risk losing representation in Congress. 2020 and the years that follow will be an important time to make sure our community is represented.

## Immigrants

- Responding to the Census is part of our civic duty.
- The Census will not ask if you are a U.S. citizen. Everyone living in the U.S., regardless of citizenship or immigration status, should be counted in the Census.
- The Census is available in many languages. The Census is available online and by phone in 13 languages, including Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic. The paper version for mailing will be available in English and Spanish.
- The U.S. Census Bureau will keep your information private. They are not allowed to share your information with anyone, including other government agencies.
- If you respond to the Census on time, a Census worker is less likely to visit your home. The easiest way to respond is online at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) or by calling toll-free at 844-330-2020. You can even use your smartphone.

## Renters

- Make sure you count everyone living in your house or apartment. It does not matter if they are not listed on the lease or rental agreement, or if they are not related to you. The U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord.
- When we all respond, programs like the Section 8 housing choice vouchers can help more Missouri seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children get affordable housing.
- Even if you are not staying in your home or in Missouri long-term, you would still be counted where you are living on April 1, 2010.

## Older Adults

- When we all respond, Medicare Part B is fully funded so our seniors can get the care they need.
- When we all respond, Medicaid long-term care services can help more seniors stay in their homes and live with dignity as they age.
- Responding to the Census is our civic duty. It is a way to participate in our democracy and say, "I Count!"
- If you don't have internet access, or aren't comfortable responding online, don't worry. The U.S. Census Bureau is planning to give paper copies of the Census questions to some households where older adults live. You can also respond by calling toll-free at 844-330-2020.
- A Census worker will never ask for your Social Security number, or information about your bank accounts or credit cards. The U.S. Census Bureau will not email you about the 2020 Census, either.

## People with Disabilities

- Everyone deserves to be counted. The 2020 Census is our chance to make sure all Missourians are represented. When we all respond, Missouri gets more money for important programs like Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and special education grants.
- The U.S. Census Bureau has non-English support materials, such as language guides, in American Sign Language (ASL), braille, and large print.

- The U.S. Census Bureau’s Census questionnaire assistance includes a telecommunication device for the Deaf.

### Young Adults (18-24)

- 2020 is your first chance to participate in the Census on your own! It is everyone’s civic duty to respond.
- It is easy to respond to the Census online at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov). You can do it from a computer or on your cell phone.
- If you live away from home on April 1, 2020 you should be counted where you live. Colleges and universities will work directly with the U.S. Census Bureau to count people who live in dorms and residence halls. If you live in off-campus housing, you should respond to the Census. If you are living at home with your parents, you should be counted at your home address.
- Make sure you count everyone living in your house or apartment. It does not matter if they are not listed on the lease or rental agreement. The U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord.

## Engaging Trusted Voices

It’s on all of us to make sure our friends, family, and neighbors are all counted. We encourage you to engage trusted voices in your community to help raise awareness of the 2020 Census. The following messages might help you bring those new voices on board.

### Elected Officials and Community Leaders

- As a leader in our community, our neighbors trust you and count on your leadership. Your voice will be incredibly valuable as we work to help our neighbors understand how important it is to be counted so that communities like ours get the funding we need to tackle important projects for our roads, hospitals, and schools.
- In 2010, Missouri lost a seat in Congress because not everyone was counted. We can’t risk losing another voice for Missouri in Washington, D.C.
- When we count every adult and every child in the 2020 Census, Missouri can have fair representation in Congress.
- The Census will determine redistricting. State officials use the Census to redraw and update the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts to account for population shifts.
- The Census is our chance to be counted and spur development in our community. Businesses use Census data to identify locations for new opportunities, from manufacturing plants to restaurants.

### Business Leaders

- You’re not just a business leader — you are a leader in our community. People trust you. Your voice will be incredibly valuable as we help our neighbors understand the importance of responding to the Census, for businesses like yours and for families like mine.
- Businesses use Census data to make important decisions. Data can be used to identify locations for new opportunities, from manufacturing plants to restaurants. It can also help you better understand your customer base or potential employees. But these data are only useful if the Census is complete.
- When we all respond, Missouri gets its fair share of funding for infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and high-speed internet. We need a stronger infrastructure that helps businesses operate, grow, and succeed.

## Faith Leaders

- People in our community trust you. They turn to you for spiritual guidance, when dealing with personal hardship, and as they look for ways to give back. Your voice can play a powerful role in making sure our community is counted.
- When we all respond, Missouri gets more funding for important programs like SNAP (food stamps) and the school lunch program. This means more children and families can get the food they need to be healthy.
- Our churches and volunteers do so much to lift up our neighbors in times of need. But we can't expect you to meet all of the need. When we all respond to the Census, our state and communities get the funding we need for important programs that help our neighbors, like SNAP and Medicaid.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Use these frequently asked questions and answers to address additional topics that may be relevant to your community or the populations you serve. If you have questions about the Missouri Foundation for Health campaign and resources, contact Alex Rankin ([arankin@mffh.org](mailto:arankin@mffh.org)).

### What is the Census?

- The Census is a questionnaire—think of it like a survey. It only asks nine questions. It counts every adult and child living in the United States. It takes place every 10 years. The next Census is in 2020.
- The Census helps our government figure out how much money each state gets for important programs. The Census also determines each state's representation in Congress.
- The Census is part of the U.S. Constitution. It is everyone's civic duty to respond.

### What does the Census ask?

- The Census asks nine simple questions about the people living in your household. This includes name, age, race, sex, and if you own or rent your home.
- The Census will *not* ask for your income or political party.
- The Census will *not* ask if you are a citizen. You may have heard about this in the news. In the end, this question was not added.

### Why is the Census important?

- The Census helps our government figure out how much money each state gets for important programs. For every person that is not counted, our state will lose \$1,300 in federal dollars every year. That adds up to \$13,000 per person over the next 10 years.
- The Census happens every 10 years. If we aren't all counted in 2020, Missouri will be shortchanged for the next decade.
- Our community has a lot to gain when we all respond. We can get more funding for roads and bridges, hospitals, and schools.

### When is it happening?

- Right now! You can expect to get instructions from the U.S. Census Bureau in the mail or, in some rural communities, hand-delivered to your home, in March 2020. You can respond online at [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov) or by calling toll-free at 844-330-2020.

- Census Day is April 1, 2020. If you're not sure who to count as part of your household, think about who stayed in your home on April 1. For example, if you share custody of a child, you can decide which household should count the child based on where they stayed on April 1. People staying with you on April 1 who have no other usual home should be counted as part of your household.
- If you respond to the Census on time, a Census worker is less likely to visit your home.

### Who needs to respond?

- It is important that every adult and every child in Missouri be counted. This includes children, grandparents or other family members, friends, and roommates living in your home.
- Regardless of your citizenship or immigration status, you should still respond.

### How can I respond?

- You can respond today at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov). You can do it from a computer or on your cell phone.
- You can also call the U.S. Census Bureau toll-free at 844-330-2020 to answer the Census questions.
- Some households will get the Census questions by mail or hand-delivered to their home. This is because they may have limited internet access or older adults living in the home.
- The Census is available in many languages. The Census is available online and by phone in 13 languages, including Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic. The paper version for mailing is available in English and Spanish.
- The U.S. Census Bureau has non-English support materials, such as language guides, in American Sign Language (ASL), braille, and large print. The U.S. Census Bureau's Census questionnaire assistance also includes a telecommunication device for the Deaf.

### Is my information secure?

- Yes, your information is secure. The U.S. Census Bureau will keep your information private.
- It is illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to share your information with other government agencies, courts of law, or private companies.
- A Census worker will never ask for your Social Security number, or information about your bank accounts or credit cards. The U.S. Census Bureau will not email you about the 2020 Census, either.
- If you want to make sure the person at your door is really a Census worker, check their badge. All Census workers have an official U.S. Census Bureau ID badge. The badge should include their name, picture, a Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. They will also be carrying an official bag with the Census Bureau logo and an official letter explaining why they are visiting.

### Does the Census ask about citizenship?

- No, the Census will not ask if you are a U.S. citizen. You may have heard about this in the news. In the end, this question was not added.

### Why is the Census asking for my phone number?

- The Census is only asking for your phone number in case they have questions about your responses to the questionnaire. They will not share your phone number with anyone, including businesses or other government agencies.

### What about...

- **College students?** If you live away from home on April 1, 2020 you should be counted where you live. Colleges and universities will work directly with the U.S. Census Bureau to count people who live in dorms and residence halls. If you live in off-campus housing, you should respond to the Census. If you are living at home with your parents, you should be counted at your home address.
- **Military service members?** The U.S. Census Bureau is working with the Department of Defense to make sure families and service members living in barracks or military campgrounds are counted. Service members who are deployed and stationed in the U.S. should be counted at their home address.
- **Individuals experiencing homelessness?** The U.S. Census Bureau has plans to reach individuals experiencing homelessness. People living in shelters should be counted at the shelter. If someone is staying with you, count them as part of your household.
- **People in prison or correctional facilities?** The U.S. Census Bureau has plans to count individuals living in correctional facilities, detention centers, prisons, and jails. They will be counted in these facilities.

### Is the U.S. Census Bureau hiring?

- If you are interested in a temporary job to support Census outreach, visit [2020census.gov/jobs](https://2020census.gov/jobs).
- You must be at least 18 years old and have a valid Social Security number to be eligible.
- The U.S. Census Bureau will hire noncitizens to serve as translators or Census takers on an as-needed-basis. You must be legally entitled to work in the U.S.