

# Why the U.S. census tries to count everyone

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Word Count **423**

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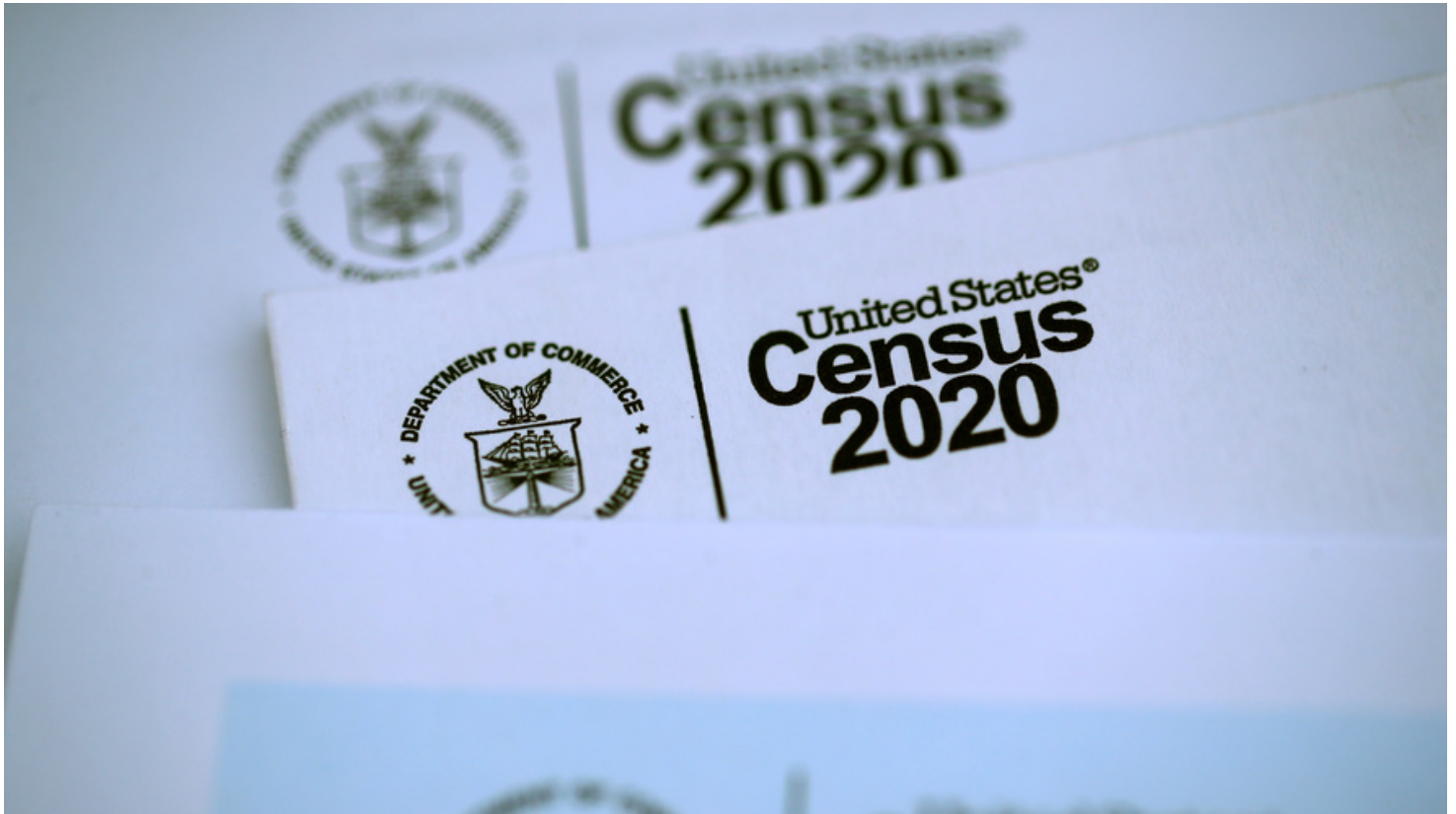


Image 1. The U.S. Census logo on paper gotten in the mail with an invitation to fill out census information online on March 19, 2020, in San Anselmo, California. Photo Illustration: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

The United States is counting everyone who lives here. This is called the census. It is pronounced SEN-suss.

Around March 23, a letter should have come to your home. The letter asks people to complete a form. The census is done every 10 years. It counts everyone living in the U.S. The form asks questions about who lives in a home. It asks how old they are, too.

## The Importance Of The Census

This count is a big job. It is important that everyone be counted. That is because the government uses the count. It decides how many lawmakers each state should have. If a state loses people, it might lose a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. This is one of the lawmaking bodies in the U.S. The other lawmaking body is the Senate. Each state only gets two senators. If a state has more people, it might add a lawmaker. They would get added to the House of Representatives.

The count helps decide how to divide up money. The money comes from the government. This money is shared each year. It helps states and towns build roads, schools and more.

Programs need the census, too. The programs use the census to see where money is needed. They help support low-income families.

The count in 2020 is the 24th census. It must be held every 10 years, the law says. The first one was in 1790. It was when George Washington was president. About 650 men went out to count people. Some walked and some rode horses.

## Census Can Now Be Taken Online

It is not easy to count everyone. The U.S. population keeps growing. There is one more person every 23 seconds. More babies are born. People come from other countries, too.

Leaders have tried to make the count easy. For the first time, people can respond online. They can respond by phone and mail, too. There are guides in 60 languages. Braille is offered for people who are blind.

Each home must send a form. People might have to pay a fine if they do not.

Still, some might not want to respond. Think about this. The people who take the census are like a dog looking for a bone. They do not give up. More letters will come. They want everyone to be counted.



## Quiz

- 1 How did leaders change the census because they wanted it to be easier?
- (A) They said people might have to pay a fine.
  - (B) They said people could answer in person.
  - (C) They said people are able to answer online.
  - (D) They said people from other countries can complete it.
- 2 How was the FIRST census different?
- (A) It helped to decide how to divide up money.
  - (B) People taking it walked or rode horses.
  - (C) It asked who lived in each home.
  - (D) People used it for special programs.
- 3 WHY does the author say it is important for everyone to be counted?
- (A) It helps to decide how many lawmakers each state should have.
  - (B) The first census was when George Washington was president.
  - (C) People can complete the census in 60 different languages.
  - (D) The people who take the census are like a dog with a bone.
- 4 What is a reason the author gives for the opinion that it is not easy to count everyone?
- (A) It must be held every 10 years.
  - (B) Each home must send a form.
  - (C) Many letters will be sent home.
  - (D) The U.S. population keeps growing.