

BEWARE OF CENSUS SCAMS

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

April 1, 2020 is Census Day — the due date for Americans to take part in the decennial national headcount. Until then, and possibly beyond, you'll hear a lot about — and a lot from — the U.S. Census Bureau. But census activity isn't limited to years ending in 0, and neither is census fraud.

Census scammers contact you by phone, email, regular mail or home visit, or direct you to phony websites, seeking personal and financial information. They adopt the mantle of the U.S. Census Bureau to win your trust — with the added advantage of spoofing an agency that is tasked with asking questions.

Along with its once-a-decade population count, the actual U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 130 surveys each year. The biggest, the American Community Survey (ACS), is sent yearly to more than 3.5 million homes to collect data that helps determine how billions of dollars in state and federal money is distributed. With its detailed questions about things like income, assets, job status, household amenities, even your commute, the ACS does set off scam suspicions — it's a frequent subject of calls to AARP's Fraud Watch Network Helpline — but it is legitimate, and relatively easy to verify (see tips on reverse).

(Continued on reverse)



CENSUS SCAM WARNING SIGNS

- You get an email claiming to be from the Census Bureau. For household surveys and the decennial Census, the agency almost always makes contact by mail.
- A supposed census agent asks you for money or financial data, such as your bank account number and balance. Census will never ask for this information.
- A supposed census taker threatens you with arrest. Taking part in the Census is required by law, and you can be fined for not doing so, but you can't be imprisoned.

No genuine census survey or agent will ask for your Social Security, credit card or bank account numbers. They won't ask when you leave for or return from work. They won't ask for money. They won't threaten jail time if you don't answer their questions. Any of these is a sure sign that a supposed census taker is looking for ways to steal your identity, money or possessions.

Census fraud can hit at home or at work (the Census Bureau conducts business-related surveys, too). Be especially watchful for impostors in early and mid-spring of 2020, when the actual Census Bureau will be sending out reminders to fill out your form and following up in person at households that don't respond.

TIPS TO SPOT CENSUS SCAMS

- 1) Verify that a census taker is legitimate. All should have a Census Bureau photo ID badge (with a Department of Commerce watermark and an expiration date) and a copy of the letter the Bureau sent you. You can also search for an agent's name in the Census Bureau's online staff directory.
- 2) Confirm that a questionnaire you've received is on the Census Bureau's official list of household or business surveys.
- 3) Contact the Bureau's National Processing Center or the regional office to verify the validity of an American Community Survey or other census communication.
- 4) Check that a census mailing has a return address of Jeffersonville, IN, the site of the National Processing Center. If it's from somewhere else, it's a scam.
- 5) Check the web address of any supposed Census website. Make sure it has census.gov in the address and look for https:// or a lock symbol in the browser window.
- 6) Don't give your Social Security number, mother's maiden name, or bank or credit card numbers to someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau. Genuine Census representatives will not ask for this information.
- 7) Don't reply, click links or open attachments in a suspicious census email.
- 8) Don't trust caller ID — scammers can use "spoofing" tools to make it appear they are calling from a real Census Bureau number. Call the National Processing Center at 800-523-3205, 800-642-0469 or 800-877-8339 (TDD/TTY) to verify that a phone survey is legitimate.

To report a scam call, or for help if you've fallen victim, call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at 1-877-908-3360.

UNDERCOUNT: The High Costs of Inaction

New Mexico Must Prepare For The 2020 Census

REALITY - NM is the State Most Vulnerable to Undercount:

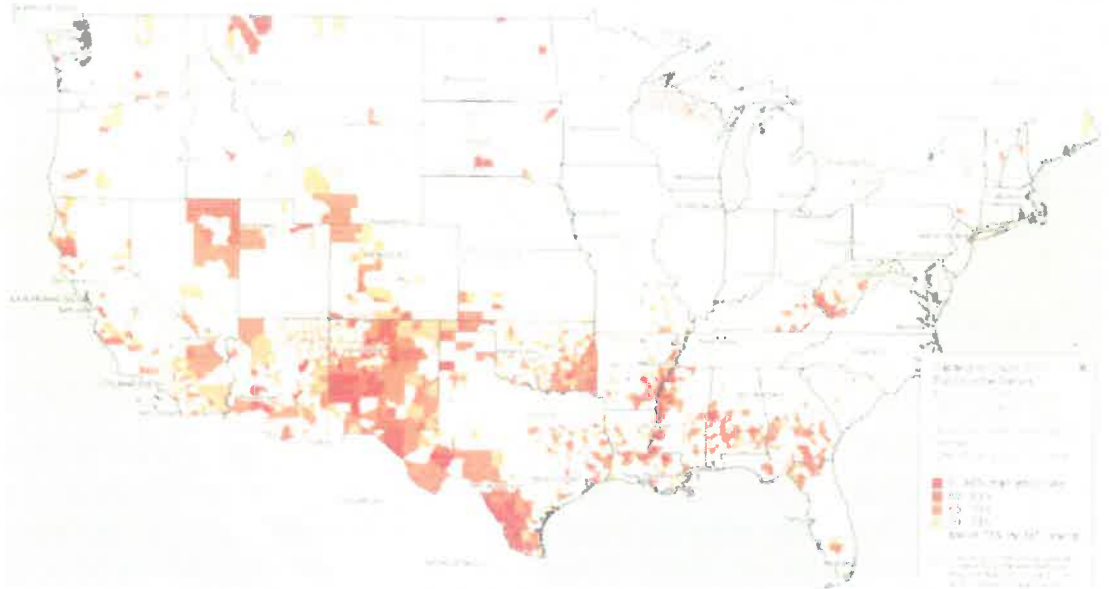
Hard-to-Count Populations (HTC)

Certain population groups – referred to as “hard-to-count” – are at a higher risk of not being fully counted in the census

Some of these groups have been historically underrepresented in the census for decades; some may experience new or increased vulnerability due to major changes in methodology, such as relying on the internet as the primary way for households to respond to the 2020 Census; and some may be reluctant to respond due to concerns about data confidentiality

Being hard-to-count can lead to unequal political representation and unequal access to vital public and private resources for these groups and their communities

(SOURCE) “Will You Count? Latinos in the 2020 Census,” April, 2018, Leadership Conference Education Fund, Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality



NEW MEXICO HTC: Based on the latest census estimates, approximately 43% of NM's current population (or 888,604 people) lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods.¹

AT STAKE - Billions of Federal Dollars Based on Census:

State Funding



Currently, New Mexico receives **\$7.8 BILLION** in annual federal assistance on per capita basis. **\$4 BILLION PER YEAR** are used for Medicaid alone.

Essential Programs



If people are missed on the Census there will be cuts to: **Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, Section 8, School Lunch, Early Ed, Transportation, etc.**²

Cost of Uncounting

1 person = -\$3,000 ↓
X 10 years
-\$30,000 ↓

NM loses \$3,000 per uncounted person. A **1% undercount of New Mexicans** could result in **\$600 million loss of funds** over a 10-year period.

OTTOM LINE: In order to receive the appropriate federal funding for essential programs over the next 10 years, **New Mexico must have an accurate Census count.**

HISTORY - Risk of a New Mexico Undercount is Real



Net NM Undercount
1.94 %³



Response rate in U.S.
49th Place⁴



Internet Access:
Only 73%⁵

The U.S. Census Bureau move to an online survey, introducing cost-cutting measures, new technology and a reliance on the internet to count every resident in the country is problematic for NM.



Citizenship Question

The Trump administration's plan to add a citizenship question has raised **major concerns as to how this could negatively impact the response rate**, particularly with Hispanic and immigrant populations.

A poll conducted by Latino Decisions polling firm found that **more than two-thirds – 68 percent – of Latinos** said they think the Trump administration will share personal information collected by the census, including citizenship status.⁶

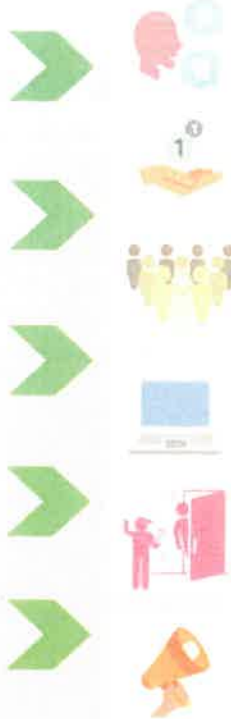
***INTERESTING FACT:** In 2010 the undercount in NM was reduced to under 0.3% due a collaborative effort between the Department of Finance and Administration, Geospatial and Population Studies, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the Earth Data Analysis Center, and local governments that identified 130,000 housing units missing from the Census Bureau Master Address File.

RECOMMENDATION - The State of New Mexico Must Fill the Gap



GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

An initial investment of \$10 million to support the efforts **ensure against an undercount in 2020** costing the state \$600 million in lost funding.



Support a robust outreach effort to New Mexico community members through direct, in-person outreach in multiple languages.

Provide funds for grants to tribal governments, city and county governments, and non-profit groups to support their own outreach efforts in their communities.

Support efforts of the state demographer to identify hard to count communities in New Mexico and develop a system to prioritize efforts to ensure all New Mexicans are counted.

Additional funds for computers and navigators to assist community members in filling out the census, improving access to places with public access to computers.

Additional outreach to: those who are homeless, living in poverty, living in rural areas, w/o internet access, not fluent in English, immigrant families, or people of color.

Develop a strategic communications and engagement campaign to raise awareness about and promote participation in census including: public forums, PSAs, etc.

1 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2018, Tables B03002, B02009-B02012
 2 George Washington University Institute of Public Policy, Counting for Dollars 2020 New Mexico
 3 Price Waterhouse Coopers, Effect of Census 2000 Undercount on Federal Funding in States and Selected Counties, 2002-2012 (http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cmb/cmbp/reports/final_report/fin_sec5_effect.pdf)
 4 US Census Bureau, 2010 Census Coverage Measurement Results (<http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/pdf/ACETechAssess.pdf>)
 5 US Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey, Five-year Estimates (<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/acs/ACS-39.pdf>)
 6 NALEO/Latino Decisions Tracking Poll, Sept 19-Oct 1, 2018 (<http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2018/10/05/the-2020-census-risks-under-counting-the-latino-population/>)

The Importance of the 2020 Census

Cybersecurity and privacy concerns of older Americans addressed

by Joe Eaton, [AARP](#), September 5, 2019 |



Older Americans have been more likely than other age groups to return their U.S. census forms and make sure they were counted.

But as the country gears up for the 2020 census next March — the first that will be completed largely online — experts say there will be challenges in getting older people to participate.

A recent U.S. Census Bureau survey found that 56 percent of those 65 and older aren't comfortable with an online response and prefer to fill out a paper census form. "The concerns over privacy and cybersecurity will have to be overcome, and those concerns are highest for those over 50," says Steve Jost, a former Census Bureau official.

The stakes are high. In 2016, for example, more than 300 federally funded programs relied on census data to distribute more than \$675 billion to states and localities. That includes funds for schools, roads and hospitals and also programs that aid older Americans, like Medicare Part B.

"Participating in the census means getting counted to determine how much federal funding comes into your community and how congressional representation is determined," says AARP National Volunteer President Catherine Alicia Georges. "AARP members need to make sure they are not left out of this very important process."

Georges says it is important for older Americans who don't want to take the census digitally to know they won't be forced to. "No one has to take the census online," she says.

News reports about the digital transformation have raised some questions about the census. Here are answers.

How will the new census process work?

Between March 12 and 20, the majority of households will receive a postcard invitation to respond online to the 2020 census. Those who don't answer will then receive the traditional

paper form in the mail. If a household still does not respond, the bureau will send a census taker to knock on that door to collect the household's data.

People who live in areas that the bureau has determined are most likely to lack broadband internet service will receive a traditional paper form in the first mailing. "The Census Bureau is confident that the 2020 census will be easy for everyone to participate in," says Daniel Velez, a spokesman for the Census Bureau.

Why make the change?

The Census Bureau has digitized the 2020 census to save money. The 2010 census, which cost \$10.2 billion, was the most expensive in history. Taking the census online — at least partially — is projected to save an estimated \$5.2 billion.

The Census Bureau is recruiting over 400,000 temporary workers to help in the massive job of counting their fellow Americans. The bureau is hiring census takers to go door-to-door to help people fill out census forms as well as for office and supervisory positions. The jobs will last several weeks.

A census job can be excellent for [older Americans who are looking for flexible work](#), says Bob Murphy, AARP's state director in Colorado and former mayor of Lakewood.

In Colorado alone, the Census Bureau is hiring hundreds of temporary full- and part-time workers at between \$14 and \$22 an hour, he says.

"We want to get the word out that there are great jobs available," Murphy says. "If you want to work from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., you can do that. It's pretty flexible."

Most positions require a driver's license and access to a vehicle, unless public transportation is available. Some positions require evening or weekend work.

Be careful, though. The [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#) has seen scam artists send out phony offers of census employment, hoping to steal Social Security numbers or other information to aid in identity theft.

An application can be completed online at the Census Bureau website in about 30 minutes. The website also includes wages, which vary based on location. To get started, go to 2020census.gov/en/jobs.

How do I know someone claiming to be from the census isn't a scam artist?

A very small percentage of people who knock on doors claiming to be from the Census Bureau are [crooks looking to gather personal information](#) so they can steal from you.

Real census employees won't ask for your full Social Security number, for money or donations, or for bank or credit card numbers.

Check to make sure that the person has a valid identification badge with his or her photograph, a Department of Commerce watermark and an expiration date. If you still suspect fraud, call the Census Bureau at 800-923-8282 to speak to a representative.

I've been hearing about the "citizenship question." Will that be part of the census?

The Trump administration called for adding a citizenship question to the census, saying initially that it would help enforce the Voting Rights Act. But in late June, the U.S. Supreme Court found the administration hadn't justified making the change. So the citizenship question won't be included.

Groups that opposed the question said it would have caused many noncitizens, even those in the U.S. legally, to dodge the census for fear of repercussions. Noncitizens make up roughly 7 percent of the U.S. population, according to a 2017 analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Have older Americans been at risk for undercounting in past censuses?

The opposite is actually true: Older Americans are the least likely age group to go uncounted. Experts say that's because of their historically high levels of civic engagement and participation in things like voting. In fact, some experts say older Americans are more likely to be double counted than people in other groups. Older Americans who own vacation homes need to be sure to fill out the form only once, from their primary residence.

What happens if I'm missed?

Simple. You won't be represented in the census for the next decade. While a few unrepresented residents shouldn't affect a community's federal funding, if many in your area go uncounted, then federal money — or representation — that would rightly go to your region would go to other communities or states. (Your personal benefits like Social Security and Medicare won't be affected.)

What if I live in a rural community with a low population? Does it matter if I participate?

Yes. In 2016 alone, more than \$30 billion was distributed to rural communities from 55 federal programs. These funds went toward things like home loans, business loans and waste disposal. But such funding comes only if you and your neighbors are counted. This is especially true in areas with low populations.

"AARP members need to make sure they are not left out of this very important process."

— AARP National Volunteer President Catherine Alicia Georges

Is it just about money?

No. The number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, and the electoral college votes that each state gets, are determined by census numbers. So, the political balance of power in America changes after each census.

As boomers age, does the government expect a dramatic rise in the number of older Americans counted?

Yes. In 2010, there were more than 40 million people 65 and older in the United States — 13 percent of the population. That number is projected to grow to 55 million — 16 percent of the population — in 2020. By 2050, those 65-plus will make up 20 percent of the population, the Census Bureau projects.

As the number of older Americans increases, how will the census improve their lives?

An AARP survey shows that most older adults want to stay in their homes and communities as they age. Filling out the census could increase the likelihood of that happening. Census data will be used over the coming decade to decide where to place parks, roads and hospitals. It will determine funding for community projects that benefit people of all ages, including mass transit, which helps many people remain in their homes longer.

<https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-2019/census-impact-older-americans.html>