

# The National LGBTQ Task Force's Guide to the 2020 Census:

## AN INTRODUCTION



### What is the Census?

Every 10 years, the federal government attempts to count every person living in the U.S. for the Census, also known as the "Decennial Census" or the "short form Census." The next Census will aim to take a snapshot of all people living in the U.S. on April 1, 2020. Results from the Census directly affect issues of democracy - Census data are used to redraw district lines and distribute representative seats - and determine funding of social service programs for each state, including Medicaid, Section 8 housing vouchers, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Census data are also used by advocates to ensure they are meeting the needs of people in our communities, and by litigators to enforce civil rights protections.

Census survey collection will mostly take place from March through April 2020 - online, by mail, and by phone. If you don't fill out the Census during that time, the U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) will send people, known as enumerators, to visit and collect responses from households in person in late-April through early-July 2020. To avoid being visited by enumerators, make sure to fill out the Census online, by mail, or by phone before April 2020!

Moreover, if an enumerator still can't connect with you, the Bureau will fill out the Census survey on your behalf, inputting answers based on what they believe is the make-up of your household based on statistics. Don't let this happen to you! It is another way our identities are erased and we are misrepresented.

### Why should LGBTQ people care about the Census?

Although the goal of the Census is to count everyone living in the U.S., certain populations are inevitably undercounted. Transgender and queer people, LGB people, people of color, immigrants, people who are experiencing homelessness, renters, people living in rural areas, people with low incomes, single-parent households, people with limited English proficiency, and young children are overwhelmingly undercounted in the Census. To ensure fair access to democracy and social services funding, it is important for our community to be accurately counted in the 2020 Census.

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### What happens if I leave some responses on the Census blank?

With the addition of the citizenship question on the Census, there is widespread fear of completing the Census and a desire to leave this question unanswered. It's critical to note that there are privacy protections in place that prevent the Bureau from sharing personal information with anyone else, including other government agencies or individuals, for 72 years. This means that no one outside

of the Bureau can access your personal responses to the Census survey.

The Bureau encourages everyone to fill out the whole survey to get the most accurate data. However, it is unlikely that the Bureau will send an enumerator to a household for leaving a single question unanswered, especially since they likely lack the resources to do so. Nonetheless, it is a possibility that the Bureau will have someone call you or visit you at your house to finish incomplete Census surveys. Last year, the acting director of the Bureau stated that **they process many incomplete surveys**, so incomplete surveys are not uncommon.

### What happens if I don't fill out the Census?

Laws regarding the Census state that that any adult who "refuses or willfully neglects...to answer, to the best of his knowledge, any of the questions on any schedule submitted to him in connection with any census...shall be fined not more than \$100." Basically, the law requires that everyone living in the U.S. fill out the Census or be fined. The law also specifies that it is illegal to tell someone NOT to fill out the Census.

## What questions are on the Census?

There are only **ten questions** on the Census and **eight additional questions** for each person living in that household. Although the questions ask about April 1, 2020, or “Census Day,” the survey tries to count people where they usually live and sleep.

Below, you’ll find the questions proposed for the 2020 Census. These questions have not yet been finalized, because the Supreme Court is currently deliberating about the inclusion of a citizenship question on the form. However, the remainder of the questions below are likely to appear as written below.

# Census 2020 Questions

1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2020?\*
2. Were there any additional people staying here on April, 2020 that you did not include in Question 1?
3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home owned with mortgage or loan, owned without mortgage or loan, rented, or occupied without payment of rent?
4. What is your telephone number?

**Please provide information for each person living here. If there is someone living here who pays the rent or owns this residence, start by listing him or her as Person 1. If the owner or the person who pays the rent does not live here, start by listing any adult living here as Person 1.**

## Person 1

5. What is Person 1’s name?\*
6. What is Person 1’s sex?\*
7. What is Person 1’s age and date of birth?
8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?\*
9. What is Person 1’s race?\*
10. Is Person 1 a citizen of the United States?\*

## Person 2

1. Print name of Person 2
2. Does this person usually live or stay somewhere else?
3. How is this person related to Person 1?\*
4. What is this person’s sex?
5. What is this person’s age and date of birth?
6. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
7. What is this person’s race?
8. Is this person a citizen of the United States?

\*Discussed in more detail below

## How do I navigate filling out the Census as an LGBTQ person?

When looking at some of the questions and response choices on the Census, queer and transgender people may find that their lives aren't exactly represented in the provided responses. We're working to change that. The Task Force has been working to add questions about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) so that our communities have access to better data on our lives and can see ourselves reflected on the form. Additionally, we are working alongside other groups to ensure that data on our racial and ethnic identities are being accurately captured. For now, it is extremely important to be counted on the Census so that our communities have fair and accurate political representation and enough money for the social service programs - like Medicaid and SNAP - that so many LGBTQ people rely on. Below we have provided additional information on specific questions to help you navigate filling out the Census.

Things to keep in mind:

- **Confidential** - The Census Bureau, which is tasked with conducting the Census, is prohibited from sharing data identifying individuals from the Census surveys with ANYONE for 72 years. *This includes other government agencies and anyone outside of the Bureau.* After 72 years, data on individual people can be released publicly.
- **Self-identification** - The Bureau respects how people self-identify on the Census. Since responses are restricted to few options for many of the questions, answer as best as you can with how you self-identify. Since the Bureau doesn't cross-check the information you provide on the survey with any other source, it is okay if you respond differently on the Census than how you would normally answer an official government survey. Additionally, it doesn't cross-check the information you provide on the Census with any other personal identifiable information you may have provided on other documents, including your birth certificate or driver's license.
- **"False" answers** - Census law also indicates that anyone who "willfully gives any answer that is false" on the survey may be fined up to \$500. Essentially, the point of this law is to make sure that each household only submits one survey, which ensures that everyone is fairly and accurately counted. It is not intended to punish people who answer the questions in a way that better reflects who they are with regard to their name and sex.
- **Enumerators** - If you have not filled out the Census online, by mail, or by phone by late-April 2020, the Bureau will send an enumerator to your household to collect a response from you. To avoid this, fill out your Census survey early and encourage others to do the same.

## Questions

### 1. HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE LIVING OR STAYING IN THIS HOUSE, APARTMENT, OR MOBILE HOME ON APRIL 1, 2020?

1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2020?

Number of people =

### Considerations:

*People who don't have a house, apartment, or mobile home:* Forty percent of the 1.7 million young people who are experiencing homelessness in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ. Rates of adult LGBTQ homelessness are not available, but may also be disproportionately high. The Census Bureau is required to count all people living in the U.S., regardless of whether they have a fixed address. If you don't have a regular address, you can still fill out the Census using the address you stay at most often - even if that address isn't a residence. You can use the address of a shelter that you frequent, or a geographic address where you sleep most nights.

*People staying in your home temporarily, or that are new to your home:* In addition to high rates of homelessness, LGBTQ people experience high rates of housing instability. As a result, they may stay with friends or family temporarily, or engage in "couch-surfing". The Census intends to count everyone at the place where they stay most often; if it's difficult to identify a place where you stay most often, you can be counted at a place you stay frequently. If someone is staying with you irregularly, you could consider asking that person if they think they'll be counted at another house - if not, offer to include them on your Census form. Additionally, very young children (especially those under the age of five) are one of the most undercounted groups on the Census. Make sure to count each person in your household, including young children and newborn babies. Any child born before April 1, 2020 should be included - even if they haven't made it home from the hospital yet!

*People who aren't on your lease:* The goal of the Census is to accurately count all people living in the U.S. where they generally live and sleep; it is not tasked with enforcing housing laws. The Bureau does not cross-check survey responses with any other documents. It is important to count all people living in a household, even if there are more people residing in the house, apartment, or mobile home than are on the lease. Accurately responding to the Census won't impact a housing voucher or your ability to stay in your house but will ensure fair and accurate representation and sufficient funding for social services.

## 5. WHAT IS PERSON 1'S NAME?

What is Person 1's name? Print name below.

First Name

MI

Last Name(s)

The Bureau asks for names on this survey just to ensure they are not receiving multiple responses. There is no requirement that you use a name that is on your official documents. Therefore, you can use the name you feel most comfortable with using, even if it does not match other documents, including your birth certificate or driver's license.

## 6. WHAT IS PERSON 1'S SEX?

6. What is Person 1's sex? Mark  ONE box.

Male

Female

Like many surveys we fill out, the Census restricts the responses to this question to "male" and "female" only. Unfortunately, this question fails to acknowledge the myriad of sexes and genders that exist. The Task Force is working to change that for future Census surveys.

Transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks navigate this question - and the gender binary itself - every day of their lives. This survey is no different; you can self-identify here in the way that feels most comfortable for you. As mentioned previously, the Bureau does not cross-reference individuals' answers on the Census with any other documentation. Your answer to this question does not need to match what you have on official documents. For the 2020 Census survey, answer this question in whichever way feels best to you.

## 8. IS PERSON 1 OF HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH ORIGIN? AND 9. WHAT IS PERSON 1'S RACE?

→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.

8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano

Yes, Puerto Rican

Yes, Cuban

Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc. ↴

The Census questions on ethnicity and race are important for the evaluation of federal programs and for the enforcement of civil rights. With data from the Census, we can give more evidence as to racial disparities that exist across the country and use it to better advocate for our communities.

## 9. What is Person 1's race?

Mark  one or more boxes AND print origins.

White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc. ↴

Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc. ↴

American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc. ↴

Chinese

Vietnamese

Native Hawaiian

Filipino

Korean

Samoan

Asian Indian

Japanese

Chamorro

Other Asian –

Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc. ↴

Other Pacific Islander –

Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc. ↴

Some other race – Print race or origin. ↴

However, in the past 40 years, people have advocated to change how these questions are asked to better collect accurate data and to broaden answerable categories. For example, many organizations and individuals have pushed for several decades to get a Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) category added as a response category. If this category was added, then the data from the Census would be much more accurate.

More recently, the Bureau found, through years of testing, that the separate ethnicity and race questions do not collect information in the best way as currently worded – it found that we get much better data on Latinx folks if we combine the ethnicity and race questions. Thus, the Bureau put out a recommendation, with supportive research, to combine the questions. But in the same way this administration halted the addition of sexual orientation and gender identity questions to the 2020 Census, the administration has also stopped progress on the addition of a MENA category and the combination of the ethnicity and race questions. Unfortunately, without approval from the administration, the Bureau couldn't move

forward with these changes. For now, we are stuck with two separate ethnicity and race questions.

However, there is space to write in detailed information about your ethnicity or country of origin, which allows us to better understand differences within racial and ethnic groups. We will continue to work with our colleagues in racial justice and social justice organizations to press the Administration to improve the race and ethnicity questions that are asked on future surveys.

(For a detailed history on the race and ethnicity questions on the Census, please visit: <https://censuscounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Census-Report-2014-WEB.pdf>)

### 10. IS PERSON 1 A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES?

**10. Is Person 1 a citizen of the United States?**

- Yes, born in the United States
- Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas
- Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents
- Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization – *Print year of naturalization.*
- No, not a U.S. citizen

In March 2018, [Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced](#) that he directed the Bureau to add this untested and unnecessary citizenship question to the 2020 Census. (AAJC). The addition of this question would jeopardize the Bureau’s goal of ensuring an accurate count on the Census. In a survey conducted by NALEO Education fund, [78 percent](#) of Latinx people stated that the inclusion of a citizenship question would make people afraid to participate in the 2020 Census. (NALEO Education Fund).

Currently, the Supreme Court of the United States is deciding whether the citizenship question can exist on the 2020 Census, and we expect a decision to be made in the summer of 2019. In case there is a decision to keep the citizenship question on the 2020 Census, it is important to remember that confidentiality laws exist around the Census and that it is against the law for the Bureau or any of its staff to share data on individuals for 72 years. The addition of this question is a blatant attack on the fairness and accuracy of the Census. The way to combat this attack is by ensuring we fill out the Census and encouraging our friends, family, and communities to do the same.

As mentioned previously, it is unlikely that the Bureau will send an enumerator if you do not fill out a response to one question.

### PERSON 2, QUESTION 3. HOW IS THIS PERSON RELATED TO PERSON 1?

**3. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark  ONE box.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother
<input type="checkbox"/> Opposite-sex unmarried partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild
<input type="checkbox"/> Same-sex husband/wife/spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Same-sex unmarried partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relative
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Roommate or housemate
<input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster child
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative

In the 2010 Census, this question on relationship to Person 1 had a response option of “same-sex married couple.” That was the first time the Census explicitly captured data on same-sex married couples. For the 2020 Census, responses to this question will also capture data on same-sex unmarried couples who reside together. Despite these changes, the responses still do not accurately represent or capture data on all people in our community, including bisexual people, transgender people, gender nonconforming and non-binary people, LGBTQ people who are not living with their spouse or unmarried partner, LGBTQ people who are not in relationships, asexual people, or intersex people. In fact, the responses to this question remain unnecessarily gendered, which the Task Force is also working to change.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for LGBTQ people to live in “complex households,” or households with multiple family members, families, friends, and other LGBTQ people. Again, the response options for this question do not accurately capture complex living situations. For example, for chosen family, it’s likely that “other nonrelative” is the category that best fits. However, it may not feel good to reduce such a relationship to that category. While we work with the Bureau to improve this question for future surveys, the most important thing to remember for now is that you should count everyone in your household, even if you do not have a close relationship to them.

We cannot continue to be undercounted in the Census. The data from the Census will have an impact for at least ten years – until the 2030 Census is fielded. Our communities and our lives depend on the programs like Medicaid, food stamps, and housing vouchers that are funded based on Census results. Our access to democracy depends on our full representation in Census data. And our civil rights depend on enforcement of the law using Census data. We can’t wait another ten years to get it right!