



We Count:

2020 Census Message Guide—English

Prepared by First 5 Association of California

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About the First 5 Association of California 2020 Census Campaign

The U.S. Census gathers population and demographic data from every person living in every community in the country. This information determines the amount of federal funding that will return to the community and elected representation in government. Most young children (80-85%) who were missed in the 2010 Census count lived in households that completed a Census questionnaire.¹ Of all U.S. states, in 2010, California had the highest undercount of children 5 and under.

An undercount in 2020 could cost California up to \$115 billion per year across federal programs,² including programs that support children: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation. Recent research found that people who are least likely to complete the Census or count their children are most reliant on these programs, including younger, low-income, immigrant, and rural families, along with people in complex household situations.

First 5 Association of California is a nonprofit membership organization that advocates for and works with the California's 58 First 5 county commissions to build strong, effective, and sustainable systems serving California's youngest children. The Association is leading a campaign to inform and motivate Californians to count all young children in the 2020 Census, so families have the support they need for the next decade.

About This Message Guide

This message guide is based on Count All Kids! commissioned message research and a Census survey that the Association conducted with county commissions. **The document is a reference for commissions and partners to adapt and share messages about the 2020 Census with families that have young children.** Printable and digital resources accompany this document along with a style guide detailing how to create additional materials. The guide and materials are also available in Spanish.

In this document you will find the following sections. Each has an introduction in an orange block to explain how to use the content:

- [Core messages](#) to educate and motivate parents/caregivers of children ages 0-5 to include all children in the 2020 Census
- [Messages aimed at sub-populations](#) to address these families' specific barriers
- [Messages you can use to motivate trusted messengers](#) to share Census messages with the families they serve
- [Frequently asked questions](#) to help answer questions you may receive from families or when conducting an interview with a reporter

If you have questions about the First 5 Association materials, please contact Jess Berthold at jess@first5association.org.

If you need additional guidance on reaching Californians beyond those who have young children, visit the state resources at the CA Census 2020 website: <https://census.ca.gov/>.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau.

² George Washington Institute of Public Policy. [Counting for Dollars 2020: California](#).

Core Messages

Children ages 0-5 often are not included in the Census, including in California. In 2020, it's crucial to ensure a complete count of children ages 0-5 to secure adequate federal funding to support children and families in California.

Message research identified the top reasons Californians might not include young children in their Census responses. These include:

- A lack of understanding about the Census and whom to include in the household
- Personal fears related to immigration status and overcrowded housing situations
- Unfamiliarity with how the Census can help their children and households

Below is a three-phase approach to address these factors. Please use these messages as the base for any outreach you conduct with families—whether in individual conversations, presentations, written materials/announcements, and social media messages. You can customize these messages to best meet the needs of the community you serve, including answering questions in-language and highlighting the federal programs on which families most rely.

Each section includes suggested timeframes to begin using these messages. We recognize you may need to adjust the timing based on your individual community's needs.

General Awareness Messages: What is the Census and why do you need to count young children?

(Suggested Time to Use: November 2019 – January 2020)

- The Census happens every 10 years. It is the only official population count in the U.S.
- Your answers on the Census affect how much money your community will receive for the next 10 years. It also decides your elected representation in California and Washington, D.C.
- The Census counts people at each address—even if those people are not related, if they are not U.S. citizens, or if they have only lived at that address during part of the year.
- The Census does not just count adults, it also counts children. This is very important. Even if you've reported your children on your taxes or other government documents, you must include them in the Census form. This means all children under the age of 5 at your address—even if they are not related to the person who fills out the form.
- Remember, when it comes to the Census, everyone counts. Count ALL children living at your address. Don't forget to include babies (born on or before April 1, 2020), nieces, nephews, grandchildren, foster children, and people not related to you (like a friend and his/her child) if they are living with you on April 1, 2020.
- Respond to the Census. Visit 2020Census.gov.

Messages to Address Pain Points: Is it safe to fill out the Census honestly?

(Suggested Time to Use: January – March 2020)

- The Census doesn't just count people who are U.S. citizens. It counts every single person in the U.S. You should include everyone at your address. Completing the Census in 2020 is a confidential way of making sure you and your family count!
 - **In fact, the 2020 Census will NOT ask if you are a U.S. citizen.** You do not need to worry about your own immigration status, or that of anyone living at your address, when you fill out the 2020 Census. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep all of your information private. The Census is not allowed to share your information with anyone—including other government agencies.
 - **Make sure you count everyone living at your home address.** It does not matter if they are not listed on the lease or rental agreement. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord.
- While you should try to respond to the Census on time (by April 30, 2020), Census workers will visit addresses that have not responded to the Census by that date. Census workers are usually members of your community hired by the U.S. Census Bureau.
 - All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.
- Filling out the Census form for your address is easy. You can respond to the Census online or by phone in English, Spanish, or 11 other languages. You can even do it on your smartphone!
 - Video and printed guides are also available in 59 non-English languages.
 - There will also be a printed guide in braille and one with large print.³

Value Messages: Why does the Census matter to my children and to me?

(Suggested Time to Use: March – June 2020)

- Count everyone at your address on the Census. Then, your community can plan for the future and get money to support you and your loved ones. This includes programs that support your children: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation.
- The 2020 Census helps decide how much money your community will get for important programs, including:
 - SCHIP (health insurance)
 - Medi-Cal (health insurance)
 - CalFresh (Food Stamps/SNAP)
 - WIC
 - School Breakfast and Lunch Programs

³ <https://californiacensus.org/about-the-2020-census/>.

- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Child Care (CCDBG)
- Special Education
- Cash Assistance (TANF)
- Section 8 Housing
- Of all states, California had the most children ages 0-5 not counted in 2010.
- The Census happens every 10 years. So, if all the children living at your address aren't counted in 2020, they will have fewer services for the next decade. Don't let this happen. Include all children on your 2020 Census form.

Messages for Key Populations

Children ages 0-5 are among the “hardest to count” in the Census and often fall into multiple hard-to-count groups, such as renters, low-income families, and immigrants.

Many of the caregivers in hard-to-count groups face barriers to respond to or include their young children in the Census. These barriers range from lack of internet access, misinformation, and fear or broken trust in the government. To ensure that all of California’s children are counted, we must help these Californians understand that it is safe to respond.

Select from the following messages based on your community make-up. Please use these messages as the base for any outreach you conduct with these families—from individual conversations and presentations to written materials/announcements and social media messages. You can adapt these based on the needs of the community you serve.

Messages for All Families with Young Children Regardless of Income

- Filling out the Census form for your address is easy. You can respond to the Census online or by phone in English, Spanish, or 11 other languages. You can even do it on your smartphone!
 - Video and printed guides will also be available in 59 non-English languages.
 - There will also be a printed guide in braille and one with large print.
- The Census happens every 10 years. It is the only official population count in the U.S. Your answers on the Census help decide how much money your community will receive for the next 10 years. It also decides your elected representation in California and Washington, D.C.
- Remember, when it comes to the Census, everyone counts. Count ALL children living at your address. Don’t forget to include babies (born on or before April 1, 2020), nieces, nephews, grandchildren, foster children, and people not related to you (like a friend and his/her child) if they are living with you on April 1, 2020.
- Respond to the Census. Visit 2020Census.gov.

Complex Households

- A lot of people fill out the Census, but many forget to count all of the children living at their address.
- It’s very important that you **count everyone living in your house or apartment**. It does not matter if they are not listed on the lease or rental agreement. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord.
- All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.

- Remember that everyone counts. **If the children are staying at your address with you on April 1, 2020, and have no other permanent address, include them in your Census form**, including:
 - Your own children.
 - Children who are related to you—nieces, nephews, and grandchildren.
 - Children who are not related to you—like a friend’s child.
 - A child who spends time in two homes but is with you on April 1, 2020.
 - A child staying with you temporarily who does not have another permanent address.
 - Newborns born on or before April 1, 2020, even if they are still in the hospital.

Non-English Speaking

- Filling out the Census form for your address is easy.
 - You can respond to the Census online or by phone in English, Spanish, or 11 other languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese).
 - You can even do it on your smartphone!
 - Video and printed guides will be available in 59 non-English languages. There will also be a printed guide in braille and one with large print.
- By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share your information with your landlord or anyone else. All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.

Low-Income

- Count everyone at your address on the Census. Then, your community can plan for the future and get money to support you and your loved ones. This includes programs that support your children: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation.
- The 2020 Census helps decide how much money your community will get for many important programs, including:
 - SCHIP (health insurance)
 - Medi-Cal (health insurance)
 - CalFresh (Food Stamps/SNAP)
 - WIC
 - School Breakfast and Lunch Programs
 - Head Start and Early Head Start
 - Child Care (CCDBG)
 - Special Education

- Cash Assistance (TANF)
- Section 8 Housing

Immigrants

- The Census doesn't just count people who are U.S. citizens. It counts every single person in the U.S. You should include everyone at your address in the Census count.
 - In fact, **the 2020 Census will NOT ask if you are a U.S. citizen.**
 - You do not need to worry about your own immigration status, or that of anyone living at your address, when you fill out the 2020 Census. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep all of your information private. They are not allowed to share your information with anyone—including other government agencies.
- Filling out the Census form for your address is easy.
 - You can respond to the Census online or by phone in English, Spanish, or 11 other languages.
 - You can even do it on your smartphone!
 - Video and printed guides will be available in 59 non-English languages. There will also be a printed guide in braille and one with large print.
- While you should try to respond to the Census on time (by April 30, 2020), Census workers will visit addresses that have not responded to the Census by that date. They are usually members of your community hired by the U.S. Census Bureau.
 - All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.

Low-Literacy

- If you don't understand the Census form, don't worry! You can complete the 2020 Census by phone. Just call the Census office.
- Census staff can answer questions in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.
- Remember to include all children living at your address when you respond to the Census.

Rural Communities

- Whether you live in a large city or in a small rural community, when you count your children in the Census, your community gets more money for important programs that support local families. These include: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, breakfast and lunch programs, and housing.
- If you don't have internet access, don't worry! The U.S. Census Bureau will mail paper copies of the Census questions to households living in communities without broadband.

- You can also take the Census by phone. Just call the Census office. Remember to include all children living at your address.
 - When you call, the Census staff on the phone can answer questions in English, Spanish, and 11 other languages.
- You can also fill out the Census on a smartphone or visit your library to use the internet and fill out the form online.

Limited or No Access to Broadband

- If you don't have internet access, don't worry! The U.S. Census Bureau will mail paper copies of the Census questions to households living in communities without broadband.
- You can also fill out the Census on a smartphone or visit your library to use the internet and fill out the form online.
- But you don't need access to the internet. You can take part in the 2020 Census by phone. Just call the Census Office. Remember to include all children living at your address.
 - When you call, the Census staff on the phone can answer questions and provide clarifications in English, Spanish, and 11 other languages.

Engaging Partners and Trusted Voices

Each of us has an important role to play in ensuring that our families, friends, and neighbors are counted.

We encourage you to engage trusted voices and partners in your community to help raise awareness of the 2020 Census and how essential it is to include all children ages 0-5 in the count.

The following points will help you recruit trusted voices in this important effort. We hope these messages are useful as you prompt these trusted and local partners to share Census messages with other Californians. As with other messages in this guide, please adapt them as necessary.

Incorporating First 5 Association Census Messages into Other Partners' Census Messages

If you come across organizations that are sharing Census messages in your community, encourage them to incorporate the following messages about including children ages 0-5 on Census forms. These messages are written to speak directly to parents/caregivers.

- Count all children who live at your address on your Census form, even if you are not their parent.
- Then, your community can plan for the future and get money to support you and your loved ones. This includes programs that support your children: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation.

Child Care Providers

These messages are written to speak directly to child care providers.

- Every day, parents and guardians trust you with their children. They know you have their best interest in mind, and they rely on your expertise.
- We need your help so families understand the importance of including their young children in the 2020 Census.
- By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep all information private. Census workers are not allowed to share responses with anyone, including other government agencies, landlords, or anyone else. All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.
- When we all respond to the Census—and count all children who live at an address (even if the adult taking the Census is not their parent)—child care centers get more funding for the next 10 years to help the families you serve.
- Our community also gets more funding for programs like CalFresh and WIC so the families you serve get the food they need.

- The number of Census responses also decides our elected representation in California and Washington, D.C.
- Respond to the Census. Visit 2020Census.gov.

Health Care Providers

These messages are written to speak directly to health care providers.

- Parents and guardians trust you with their children. They know you have their best interest in mind, and they rely on your expertise.
- We need your help so families understand the importance of including their young children in the 2020 Census.
- By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep all information private. Census workers are not allowed to share responses with anyone, including other government agencies, landlords, or anyone else. All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.
- When we all respond to the Census—and count all children who live at an address (even if the adult taking the Census is not their parent)—health centers get more funding for the next 10 years to help the families you serve.
- California and our community also get more funding for programs like Medi-Cal, SCHIP, CalFresh, and WIC for the next 10 years. It means more families you serve can get the medical care and food assistance they need to be healthy.
- The number of Census responses also decides our elected representation in California and Washington, D.C.
- Respond to the Census. Visit 2020Census.gov.

Elected Officials and Community Leaders

These messages are written to speak directly to local elected officials and community leaders.

- As a leader in our community, our neighbors trust you.
- You can help them understand that—when we count every adult and every child in the 2020 Census, our community gets our fair share of federal funding for the programs that will support families for the next 10 years.
- The number of Census responses also decides our elected representation in California and Washington, D.C.
- The Census is our chance to be counted. It is an easy and guaranteed investment in the future of our children, families, and community.
- Respond to the Census. Visit 2020Census.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are designed to help you address additional topics that may be relevant to people in your local community.

You can use them to answer questions from families or when holding interviews with reporters. As with the other information in this guide, feel free to adapt responses based on your community's needs.

What is the Census?

- The Census is a questionnaire. Think of it like a survey. It only asks nine questions.
- It counts every living adult and child in the United States at a specific point in time—on April 1, 2020.
- The Census takes place every 10 years. The next Census after this one will be in 2030.
- The Census counts all people who live at an address. It does not matter if these people are related. If someone—of any age—lives at your address on April 1, 2020, you should include them in the 2020 Census form.
- The Census count helps determine how much money California will get for important programs that support children, including: schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation.

What does the Census ask?

- The Census asks nine questions about the people living at each address. The questions include name, age, country of origin/race, sex, and if the person filling out the 2020 Census form owns or rents the dwelling at that address.
- The Census will *not* ask for your income or political party.
- The Census is a count of all people in the U.S., no matter your immigration status. The 2020 Census will ***not*** ask if you or others at your address are citizens.
 - You may have come across information about this in the news. In the end, a question about citizenship was not added to the 2020 Census.
- By law, information provided to the Census cannot be shared by the Census with other government agencies or a landlord. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.

Why do I need to count my child(ren)?

- The Census helps our government figure out how much money each state should get for important programs for the next 10 years.

- Counting each and every person in our state in the 2020 Census is crucial. That includes all children. An undercount in 2020 could cost California up to \$115 billion per year across federal programs. That's money we need for schools, child care, medical care, food assistance, housing, and public transportation.
- The Census only happens every 10 years. That means if we don't count all our children in 2020, they will be shortchanged for the next decade.

When does the Census happen?

- In March, you'll receive an invitation and a letter in the mail with directions for how to complete the Census online or over the phone. You will also get a reminder postcard in the mail at the beginning of April.
- Beginning on April 1, 2020, you will be able to fill out the Census form online—on a computer, tablet, or smartphone—or respond by phone.
- You can also request a printed copy of the Census in English or Spanish.
- If you haven't completed the Census by mid-April, you will get a second reminder and a printed copy of the Census in the mail.
- At the end of April, Census workers—usually members of your local community hired by the U.S. Census Bureau—will visit addresses that have not responded to the Census to help fill out the form in-person.
 - All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.
- If you're not sure who to count on your Census form, think about who stays/stayed at your address on April 1, 2020. For example, if you share custody of a child and this child "lives" in two homes, you can decide to include the child on your form based on where he/she stayed on April 1, 2020.

Who do I count?

- A single Census form needs to be filled out for each address. The form should include every person living at the address, no matter their age or citizenship.
- Count every adult and every child born on or before April 1, 2020. This includes newborns who may still be in the hospital, but will live at your address.
- If you are not sure who to count on your Census form, think about who stayed with you on April 1, 2020.
 - If you share custody of a child, you can decide where to count him/her based on the address where he/she stayed on April 1, 2020.
 - If family or friends live with you on April 1, 2020, and they do not have another home, count them on your Census form, even if they are not on the lease.
 - If you have a family member who does not live with you because he/she attends college, is in jail, or lives in a senior living community, do not include him/her on your Census form. They will be counted separately.

- People experiencing homelessness will be counted separately at shelters, soup kitchens, and mobile food vans in spring 2020.
- Remember: by law, all Census information cannot be shared with a landlord or any government agency. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.

How can I respond?

- Starting in March 2020, you can respond at 2020Census.gov. You can do it on a computer or on your smartphone.
- You will also be able to call the U.S. Census Bureau to answer the Census questions.
- Households at some addresses will get the Census questions by mail. This is because they may have limited internet access or have older adults living at the home address.
- The Census will be available in English, Spanish, and 11 other languages. The 11 additional languages include French, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic.
- In addition, video and printed guides will be available in 59 non-English languages, and there will be a printed guide in braille and one with large print.

Is my information secure?

- Yes, your information is secure. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must keep your information private.
- It is illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to share your information with other government agencies, companies, or your landlord. Breaking this law has severe penalties, including a fine up to \$250,000, five years in prison, or both.
- A Census worker will never ask for your Social Security number or information about your bank accounts or credit cards. Never share this information with anyone you do not know or trust.
- 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 will 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 to the survey. Everyone should respond to the Census, including non-citizens.

Why is the Census asking for my phone number?

- The Census Bureau asks 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.

Is the U.S. Census Bureau hiring?

- If you are interested in a temporary job to support Census outreach, visit 2020Census.gov/jobs.
- To be eligible, you must be at least 18 years old, have a valid Social Security number, and be a United States citizen.