

Census2020: Capturing the Face of Multi-ethnic America

By Meera Kymal
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Is the census available in any Indian languages?

No. Paper census forms will only be available in English and Spanish and people can respond to the nine census questions online or over the phone in 12 other languages.

Beyond that, the Census Bureau will also provide guides, glossaries and a language identification card in more than 50 languages that include Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Nepali, Urdu, Telugu, Punjabi, Tamil, Malayalam and Marathi. Go to the Census Bureau homepage, <https://2020census.gov/en.html>, and choose your preferred language from the drop-down button at the upper right of the screen.

Since 1890 the Census has collected data on English-speaking ability and languages spoken at home to help determine bilingual election requirements under the [Voting Rights Act](#).

How do I respond to the Census?

[You can respond](#) online, by mail or by phone.

Between March and April 2020, most households will be mailed an invitation to participate in the census online. Reminders, up to and including a mailed questionnaire, will be sent out in the following weeks to those who have not yet responded to the initial outreach. If still no response is received, a census enumerator will visit the address to attempt to collect the data.

Will my personal information be kept confidential?

Yes. [Strict confidentiality laws](#) prohibit the census from sharing information it collects from respondents. Your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court. Your data is protected by [Title 13](#) of the US Code.

Information is used only to produce statistics about the U.S. economy and population for federal programs. Any personally identifying information is kept strictly confidential for 72 years.

Does that confidentiality extend to ICE and other government agencies?

Yes. Title 13 rules, as indicated in the link above, stipulates that personal data collected by the Census Bureau “cannot be used against respondents by any government agency or court,” including immigration, law enforcement, tax collection agencies or any other organization. Any census data released to federal agencies or organizations are carefully reviewed to avoid disclosing individual information.

The Census Bureau addresses its correspondence, including surveys, to addresses rather than to specific individuals, to protect the confidentiality of participating households.

Will I be asked to identify my race in the census?

Yes. [Census 2020](#) collects data on race and ethnicity to capture the face of multi-ethnic America.

There are 11 separate check-boxes for Asian and Asian Pacific Islander identities, plus space to write in ones not listed. Those 11 options are: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Other Asian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Other Pacific Islander.

The questionnaire offers some suggestions for what people might choose to write into the Other Asian option’s blank spaces, such as: “Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.” and for Other Pacific Islander prompts: “for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.”

Answers to questions of race and heritage are based upon self-identification. So you can choose as many criteria to describe your racial identity as you see fit.

Will I become a target for ethnic discrimination if I disclose my national origin as Asian Indian?

No. Personal data collected on your race is strictly confidential. It’s used to inform federal policy decisions on civil rights, educational opportunities, promoting equal opportunities and assessing environmental risks and [racial disparities](#) in health care access, housing, income and poverty. If anything, the greater risk is in not identifying your ethnicity and thus depriving your community of your share of political representation and tax spending.

I'm on an H1B visa and my spouse is on H4 visa. Will participation in the census affect our status?

No. Although the census is supposed to include [all foreign-born non-immigrants](#) in its population count, it does not collect data on their legal status. Furthermore, by law, personal information is not shared with any agency, including law enforcement. All personal data at the Census Bureau is kept confidential for the next 72 years, under threat of steep fines and incarceration for anyone who violates that law.

Will I have to disclose my citizenship?

No. The Census is a count of everyone living in the United States including citizens, non-citizens, undocumented immigrants, non-citizen legal residents and non-citizen long-term visitors.

The recently proposed addition of citizenship question made people wary about participating in the census for fears it would expose non-citizens to ICE interrogations. But last year the Supreme Court BLOCKED its inclusion in Census 2020 so immigrants (legal and undocumented), refugees, minorities and their families are not deterred from participating in the census and the population count is more accurate.

As Census expert [Terri Ann Lowenthal](#) describes it, the Constitution “does not say citizen, it does not say legal resident, it says the census must count all persons in the 50 states, and the primary constitutional purpose is apportionment.”

What's at stake?

An accurate count ensures that each state gets the right number of congressional seats to represent its population and receives its share of up to [\\$1.5 trillion each year](#) in federal funding to support communities, families infrastructure and much more.



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