

Doubts about the Census:

How will the first online census work and who guarantees confidentiality?

Today we continue with our occasional series meant to answer the most frequently asked questions regarding the Census. If you have a question or doubt about the Census, please write to pilarmarrero700@gmail.com and we will consult the experts to get the answers. These questions were gathered thru social media.

Question: Do you mean that this Census will be digital and we will have to put our information online? How will this work? What will happen to people who do not have access to a phone or computer?

1. **The census will be online, but not exclusively.** As we do with almost any other transaction today, the 2020 Census will be conducted primarily online. This will be the first time this happens in the survey's 117 years of existence.
2. **The way things used to be:** Historically, the Census has been conducted through printed forms that are sent to homes. If the form was not returned, a Census enumerator would then be sent to conduct the survey in person.
3. **You can also request a printed form or...** The 2020 Census will be conducted on a variety of platforms. This time, it will be different, explained Patricia Ramos, a Census Bureau spokeswoman. "Responding to the 2020 Census will be easy for everyone. For the first time, you can choose to respond online and you can also choose to respond by phone, mail, or to a Census worker who arrives at your home.
4. **You will get an invitation to go online:** Esperanza Guevara, director of Census programs for the Human Immigrant Rights Coalition (CHIRLA) explained that beginning March 12, the Census Bureau will send cards or a letter to each household inviting them to fill out about ten questions online using a special identifier number.
5. **Not everyone has the Internet.** But the first online census does not forget that there are sectors of the population that simply do not have easy access to a computer or an Internet connection. According to a report by the Public Policy Institute of California, 90% of households in California use the Internet and 73% have a cell phone. However, there are populations that are less connected: in low-income communities, rural areas and Latinos or African Americans, only 54% to 67% are connected to the Internet.
6. **You will have more than one opportunity to participate.** "The invitation will also include information about the option of doing it on paper or by phone," said Guevara. "Then

they will send three more reminders until the end of April. And if they don't get a response from that household, an enumerator will come to your door.

Five percent of households will receive a written questionnaire from the beginning, either because they have limited connectivity or because they are regions with a population of older or less technologically connected people. In remote places where mail does not arrive, a Census taker may leave an invitation in person.

7. **There will be computers in the community:** Guevara indicated that his organization, CHIRLA, is one of the "trusted" messengers who is working to answer community questions and to inform them of the importance of filling out the Census. CHIRLA will provide computers in its offices and knock on doors to remind the community that it is important to participate. It is anticipated that Public Libraries with computers will also become a favorite place for those who do not have easy access to the Internet.

8. **It takes little time to respond and it means a lot:** "We want to remind you that the Census takes little time to complete, but it means a lot to our communities," said the activist. "Their results help bring resources to their homes and ensure that our values are represented in government."

Question: How can I be sure that my information will be kept confidential or that it will not be used against me by the government?

According to a survey by the Public Policy Institute of California, 63% of Californians are concerned about the confidentiality of the data they give to the government in the Census. This sentiment is accentuated in communities such as Latinos (74%) and African Americans (74%).

There are two levels of mistrust.

The first is mistrust of the platform or whether delivering data "online" to the government is safe at a time when hacking into private financial companies is often in the news.

The second is mistrust of the government and how it will make use of citizen data.

As for the first question, the Census Bureau says it has worked at various levels to protect the information it will collect online or through its door-to-door enumerators who will also carry phones with a special application that will transmit data directly to headquarters.

The data will be "encrypted" to protect its transmission. Staff must use double authentication to verify users and the government will use the Einstein 3A system to monitor networks and identify malicious activity around databases.

Second, the confidentiality of the personal information is guaranteed by law, according to Census spokespeople.

"The law is clear: no personal information can be shared," explained in an email Patricia Ramos, regional Census spokeswoman.

"Under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, the Census Bureau cannot disclose any identifiable information about individuals, households or businesses, even to law enforcement agencies. All Census Bureau employees take an oath to protect your information. We have sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of your data. We could go to jail or be fined up to \$250,000 if we violate that oath," she added.

Guevara, of CHIRLA added that the law is on the side of confidentiality. And for those who do not trust this government, the activist asked to trust the vigilance of the legal community and community groups.

"We are committed to serving as guardians of what happens, we are not afraid to take on the fight necessary to ensure that this government complies with the law," she said.