

United States Census 2000: C

April 1, 2000, is Census Day in the United States. Questionnaires from the U.S. Census Bureau will begin arriving in the mail later this month. Answers definitely count, for many reasons of great importance to local communities and the nation as a whole.

Conducted every 10 years, as mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is one of the foundations of our democratic process, and participation is an important civic responsibility. "The collection of full and accurate data in the 2000 Census is vital to working families," noted the AFL-CIO Executive Committee in a 1999 statement urging all union members to fully cooperate in the count.

Every year, over \$185 billion in federal funds are awarded to localities based on census numbers. Following are just some of the ways "Your Answers Work For You" as cited by the U.S. Census Bureau:

- The federal government uses census numbers to allocate billions of dollars in federal funds every year for community programs and services, including education programs, housing and community development, health-care services for the elderly, job training and many more.
- State, local and tribal governments use census information for planning and allocating funds for new school construction, public buildings such as libraries, highway safety and public transportation systems, new roads and bridges, location of police and fire departments and many other projects.

- The U.S. Congress uses the census totals for the reapportionment process to determine how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Likewise, states use the numbers to allocate seats in their legislatures. In addition, state and local governments use census tabulations for redistricting, to redraw the boundaries of the congressional, state and local legislative districts.
- Community organizations use census information for developing social service programs and community action projects, such as senior lunch programs and child-care centers.
- Businesses use the numbers to decide where to locate factories, shopping centers, movie theaters, banks and offices—leading to the creation of jobs in your area.

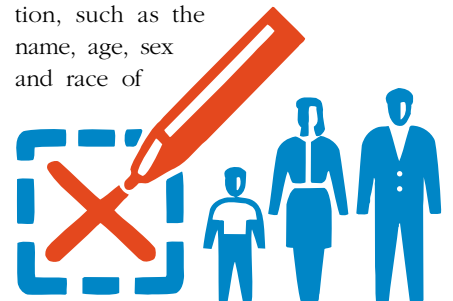
It's Important, Safe and Easy

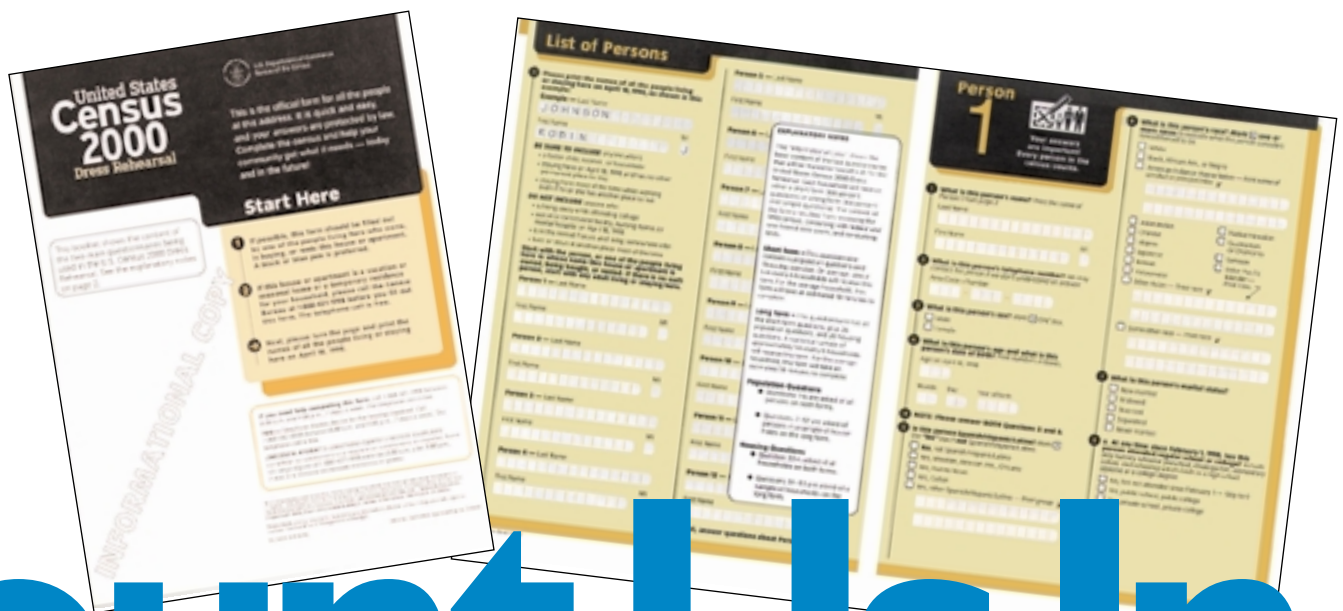
The percentage of people who mailed back their census forms declined from 78 percent in 1970 to 65 percent in 1990. As a result, communities across the country have failed to get their fair share of federal funds every year because people were not counted.

Most of the estimated 120 million U.S. households will receive a questionnaire by mail in late March, and census takers will deliver forms to the remaining households. The Census Bureau launched a campaign earlier in the year to seek an increased and rapid mail-in response, which would reduce the need for expensive follow-up visits by census takers. The questionnaire will be easy to read and simple to fill out. Responses provided are confidential—the privacy of respondents is protected by law.

What's On the Census?

The 2000 Census is designed to be simpler, less costly and more accurate than in past decades. Five out of six households will receive a short-form questionnaire, which takes about 10 minutes to complete and asks basic information, such as the name, age, sex and race of





Count Us In

the persons in the household. For the first time ever, people answering the census will be able to select more than one racial category to indicate mixed racial heritage.

One in six households will receive a long-form questionnaire. The long form seeks more detailed socioeconomic information about the residents' demographic characteristics—the housing they live in, how they go to and from work, the languages they speak at home and other information that helps define the patterns of community life in the nation. Information about income, housing and poverty rates enables federal, state and local government agencies to put tax dollars to the best use. Statistics showing where people work and how they get there help cities and towns develop better transportation plans to ease traffic and conserve natural resources.

More Ways to Respond

Additional census forms will be available in community centers, post offices and other locations. There will be a well-publicized toll-free telephone number for those who prefer to phone in their answers.

Statistical Sampling To Remedy Undercount

The Census Bureau estimates that the 1990 net undercount rate was approximately 1.6 percent of the population (approximately 4 million people), a disproportionate share of whom were among the nation's racial and ethnic minorities. To compensate for missed persons and provide a more accurate count with Census 2000, the Census Bureau intends to produce a separate set of statistically adjusted figures, based on a large sample survey.

There has, however, been political controversy around the question of using census figures arrived at by using a statistical sample for purposes of legislative reapportionment. The Supreme Court has now ruled that sampling-derived numbers may not be used for the purpose of reapportioning seats in the U.S. Congress. The statistically adjusted figures could, however, be used for any purpose other than apportioning seats in the U.S. Congress. Different states are now wrestling with the issue of using statistical sampling numbers to redraw their own legislative districts.

The Census and the Internet

Census 2000 will be the first fully computerized census. The Census Bureau will disseminate demographic data resulting from the census via the Internet. Thus, millions of people with access to personal computers will be able to log on to the same data used by government officials and interest groups to gain a better understanding of larger demographic trends and economic opportunities. The most sought after information will also be available in print and on CD-ROM.

An Aid to Success In the Next Millennium

To provide the United States with a portrait of its people and the conditions in which they live, more than 900,000 census takers and support personnel will be utilized to account for 120 million households and an estimated 275 million people.

The United States has had a census every 10 years since 1790, enabling the nation to know how far it has come. All the things learned through Census 2000 will help America succeed in the next millennium. 