

Reasons People Don't Complete the Census



The Census Bureau conducted a survey to understand why people don't want to or don't complete the census form. In 2018 they sent the survey to 50,000 households all over the United States and they got 17,500 responses. There were 4 main reasons people didn't want to complete the census in 2020. Before reading about those 4 main reasons, brainstorm (or make a list of) all the possible reasons you can think of.

A) Before brainstorming, take a moment and think...

- a) Do you want to complete the census? Why or why not?
- b) Are there people you know who don't want to complete the census? Why don't they?

B) Brainstorm with your classmates: Reasons people don't want to complete the census, write your list in the table below.

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4.
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12.

A Census Bureau study in 2018 found 4 main reasons people don't want to complete the census. The 4 reasons are:

- a. They don't care and or they don't think it will benefit them or their community
- b. They have concerns about data, confidentiality and privacy
- c. They are scared they will get in trouble with law enforcement
- d. They don't trust the government

C) Discuss with your partner: Did you and your classmates think of all 4 of these reasons? Do you agree with any of them?

D) People who know a lot about the census understand that people have their reasons for not wanting to complete the census, but they also know the truth about the census. Look at the table below. In column A you see the misunderstandings people have about the census and reasons they don't want to complete it. In column B you see a list of facts and information that address people's concerns or correct their misconceptions. Match each item in column A to the appropriate item in column B.

Column A: misunderstandings & concerns

Column B: facts & information

1. They think the census is optional.
2. They don't have time.
3. They don't think it will help them or their community.
4. They can't fill it out because they don't speak English.
5. They are not American citizens so they don't need to do it.
6. They don't think their private information will be safe or confidential.
7. They will get in trouble with the law.
8. They speak English but don't understand how to do it.

a. They can call the hotline to get help answering the questions.
b. All people, citizens, non-citizens, undocumented people, people here with visas- everyone must be counted in the census.
c. The census is mandatory for all people living in the U.S.
d. The census takes only 30-60 minutes for most families to complete.
e. The FBI, police, ICE and all other forms of law enforcement will NOT see people's information.
f. Census data is used to apportion government dollars so that communities get money for schools, hospitals and roads.
g. The census is translated into 12 different languages online (Spanish, Chinese-Simplified, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Japanese). There will be glossaries and guides for 59 non-English languages.
h. Census Bureau employees take an oath to protect people's info and will go to prison or get fined if they share information with anyone outside their department.

Answer Key - Teacher's Guide

D) People who know a lot about the census understand that people have their reasons for not wanting to complete the census, but they also know the truth about the census. Look at the table below. In column A you see the misunderstandings people have about the census and reasons they don't want to complete it. In column B you see a list of facts and information that address people's concerns or correct their misconceptions. Match each item in column A to the appropriate item in column B.

Column A: misunderstandings & concerns

1. They think the census is optional. C
2. They don't have time. D
3. They don't think it will help them or their community. F
4. They can't fill it out because they don't speak English. G
5. They are not American citizens so they don't need to do it. B
6. They don't think their private information will be safe or confidential. H
7. They will get in trouble with the law. E
8. They speak English but don't understand how to do it. A

Column B: facts & information

a. They can call the hotline to get help answering the questions.
b. All people, citizens, non-citizens, undocumented people, people here with visas- everyone must be counted in the census.
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