How the Census Works

1. Most households receive a mailed invitation from the U.S. Census Bureau asking residents to complete the census questionnaire online. It is also possible to respond by telephone. Some people receive paper questionnaires, which can be mailed back postage-free.

2. Someone from each household should complete the census form. For household questionnaires and responses, everyone who usually lives and sleeps in the home—including babies and small children—should be included. Respondents can call a toll-free number for assistance. Libraries and other organizations offer help filling out the forms.

3. If no one responds from a household, a census taker (enumerator) knocks on the door to count the people living in the household.

The Census Bureau predicted the following response rate in the 2020 Census.

1) There are about 100 million households in the United States. About many households are predicted to respond through the Internet?
   A. 47,000
   B. 470,000
   C. 4,700,000
   D. 47,000,000

2) About many doors will census takers have to knock on?

3) Do you think census information will be shared with the police or immigration?
   A. Yes
   B. No
**Can the police or immigration enforcement see Census records?**

No. Census replies are confidential. By law, no one—neither the census takers nor any other Census Bureau employee—is permitted to reveal identifiable information about any person in a census response. Individual census records are sealed for 72 years, which means no one outside the Census Bureau can see these records.

**Can I use Census records to find out about my ancestors?**

Yes! After 72 years, Census records become public records. That means you can look up census records for your grandparents and great-grandparents if they lived in the United States and participated in the census. It also means that if you participate in the census now, your descendents can look at census records to learn more about you and their other ancestors.

![1920 census record for the Emil family](image)

The census information above is for my grandfather Nathan's family. He was 9 years old in 1920. From looking at census records, I learned that his parents emigrated from Poland and both became naturalized citizens in 1902. Another section of the record shows the address where they lived in Brooklyn in 1920.

**What if someone doesn’t speak English?**

You can fill out census forms in many different languages. For the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau plans to provide the census forms and materials in 13 languages. There will also be videos and other support in 60 languages. Go to [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov) for more information.

**Can I work for the Census?**

Yes! The Census Bureau looks for temporary workers every 10 years when the census is done. For information about working for the census, go to [2020census.gov/jobs](http://2020census.gov/jobs).