

# OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Census is Coming...

March 3, 2020

... and so are the scam artists

2020 will be a busy year for the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition to the 2020 Census, it will be administering the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey. Knowing the difference, and how to spot scam artists using the confusion such activity can bring, is crucial to smart consumerism.

## WHAT IS THE CENSUS?

The [2020 Census](#) counts every person living in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana



United States<sup>®</sup>  
Census  
2020

Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). The count is for residents not just citizens. The count is mandated by the Constitution and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Each home will receive an invitation to respond to a short questionnaire—online, by phone, or by mail.

## WHY THE RESPONSES MATTER

When you respond to the Census, you are doing your part to ensure decisions about your community can be made using the best data available. The 2020 Census results will help in directing billions of dollars in federal funds to



*Ensuring Integrity in our  
Marketplace*

...

If you have any questions or concerns about any consumer transaction, or would like to mediate a dispute for free, please contact the Office of Consumer Protection.

100 Maryland Avenue  
Suite 3600  
Rockville, MD 20850  
Main: 240.777.3636  
Tip Line: 240.777.3681  
Fax: 240.777.3768  
MC311

You can also file a complaint online by clicking [HERE](#)



communities for schools, roads, and other public services. Results from the 2020 Census will also help to determine the number of seats that each state has in Congress.

For more information on why the Census matters to Montgomery County residents, see the [Montgomery County Census 2020](#) page and see how you can get involved as a 2020 Census Ambassador, 2020 Census Partner, or host a 2020 Census Party. You can also contact the County's Census Manager at [2020Census@Montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:2020Census@Montgomerycountymd.gov).



### **+** PARTICIPATION IS MANDATORY

The U.S. Constitution mandates that a census be taken every 10 years to count all people—both citizens and noncitizens—living in the United States. While you are required by law to participate, the Census Bureau is also required by law to [protect your answers](#). Your responses are used only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau does not disclose any personal information. Participating in the Census does not excuse you from participating in the ACS.



Census takers will visit homes in April to conduct quality check interviews, and then in mid-May to help collect responses. The Census takers will be in neighborhoods over the Spring

and Summer dropping off Census materials, conducting quality checks, and collecting responses. And this is where the common scam artists enter the process.

### **+** COMMON SCAMS

The Census are ripe for two common scams: job scams and identity theft. Any website connected with the Census will end in .gov. Anything else is not official government communication or website.



**Job Scams:** in the lead up to the Census, the U.S. Census Bureau [increases its hiring](#) of temporary census takers, field supervisors, recruiting assistants, and clerks. This [presents an opportunity](#) for criminals to post a job opportunity on a website or social media, asking for applicants to become temporary census workers. You click and fill out a form with your personal information. They may charge a fee to apply, or a charge to get more information. In a typical job scam, you often get a quick response from a “hiring manager” who may want to interview you via phone or Google Hangout.

After you are “hired,” the company may charge you upfront for “training.” You may need to provide your personal and banking information to run a credit check or set up direct deposit. You may be “accidentally” overpaid with a fake check and asked to deposit the check and wire back the difference. Or, you may need to buy expensive equipment and supplies to work at home.

The Census Bureau does not have an application fee and you can only apply online. The [Census Jobs FAQ](#) can answer more of your questions.

***Identity Theft and Phishing:*** The Census (as well as the American Community Survey and Current Population Survey discussed below) asks a lot of detailed questions about things like income, assets, job status, household amenities, even your commute. These questions may set off your scam suspicions. While legitimate, the types of questions also make the Census an attractive mechanism for identity thieves to gain access to your information. However, the Census does **not** seek your SSN, bank account or credit card numbers, personal information like your mother's maiden name, or seek money or donations. Census fraud can hit at home or at work (the Census Bureau conducts business-related surveys, too).

When you get the Census in the mail, check that the return address is Jeffersonville, IN. If you are not sure you have a legitimate mailing, or if you are not sure the person calling you is a legitimate Census employee, contact the Census Bureau's [National Processing Center](#).



The Census Bureau will not send unsolicited emails. The agency [almost always](#) makes initial contact by mail. If you get one which you suspect is bogus, forward it to [ois.fraud.reporting@census.gov](mailto:ois.fraud.reporting@census.gov) Do not click on any links or open attachments.

If someone comes to your door, ask for a valid ID badge with their photograph. The ID should have the U.S. Department of Commerce watermark and an expiration date. When in doubt about a Census, call 800-923-8282 or contact the [Regional Office](#) in your state.

### **✚ RUMORS DEBUNKED**

Rumors, false information and social media posts discouraging participation can be the source of confusion. Scammers prey on this confusion. The Census Bureau has a page for [FAQs](#) and [Rumors](#).

1. The Census counts citizens and non-citizens. It can be completed (online or by phone) in 13 languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese).
2. Non-citizens can be hired in certain circumstances.
3. Answers cannot be shared with law enforcement.
4. Census can be taken online or by telephone; BUT be wary of emails purporting to link you to an online survey platform or folks calling you for the answers.
5. There is no "Department of Home Affairs" and no one will be going door-to-door to check IDs.

Any new rumors should be reported to [rumors@census.gov](mailto:rumors@census.gov). Please see The Census Trust & Safety Team [flyer](#) for more details on how you can debunk rumors.

### **✚ AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY**

In 2020, the Census is not the only survey out in our communities. You may also be asked to take part in the [American Community Survey](#) (ACS). The ACS differs from the Census in two ways. One, the ACS runs *every year* while the Census is only conducted once every ten (10) years. Two, the Census Bureau contacts only

approximately 3.5 million randomly selected households across the country to participate in the ACS. The Census, however, counts *everyone*.



The yearly ACS helps your community plan hospitals and schools, support school lunch programs, improve emergency services, build bridges, inform businesses looking to add jobs and expand to new markets, and more

The ACS is [mandatory](#) under Title 18 U.S.C. §§3571, 3559. If you have any questions about the Census representative at your door, or concerns about an ACS call or mailed item, call 800-923-8282 or contact the [Regional Office](#) in your state

### CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

A third official survey currently out in the County is the [Current Population Survey](#) (CPS). The CPS is jointly sponsored by the Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The CPS is [the source](#) of the nation's unemployment rate and the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics in the U.S. population.



The CPS has a different [methodology](#) than the Census or the ACS. It goes out to only 60,000 randomly selected occupied households from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. If chosen, your household is in the CPS for 4 consecutive months, then out for 8, and then returned to the survey for another 4 months before leaving the sample. Expect field agents during the week that includes the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month, e.g., weeks of March 15, 2020, April 19, 2020, etc. Unlike the Census and the ACS, your participation in the CPS is [entirely voluntary](#).



County residents are urged to cooperate with the CPS as its results help allocate resources and determine economic policies for individual states and provides other useful information.

If you have any questions as to the legitimacy of the documents, calls or person at your door, and the purpose of the contact is identified as the CPS, there is a separate [contact](#) for you to use. You can either call (301) 763-3806 or email [CPSInfo@ask.census.gov](mailto:CPSInfo@ask.census.gov).

