

# 2020 Census Operational Adjustments Due to COVID-19

The 2020 Census is underway and households across America are responding every day. Online, phone and mailed self-responses will continue through the data collection process. Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, the U.S. Census Bureau adjusted its 2020 Census operations:

- To protect the health and safety of the American public and Census Bureau employees.
- To implement guidance from federal, state and local authorities regarding COVID-19.
- To ensure a complete and accurate count of all communities.

Under the adjusted 2020 Census Operational Plan, field activities would resume after June 1, 2020, as area census offices begin returning to full staff capacity. In-person activities, including enumeration, office work, and processing activities, will incorporate the most current guidance from authorities to ensure the health and safety of their staff and the public.

Activity/Operation	Original Schedule	New Schedule
<b>Field Offices at Peak Operations</b> Managers and staff commence administrative, training, deployment and support activities for peak data collection operations. <b>This includes selecting and hiring field staff.</b>	March 1	June 1
<b>Self-Response Phase [A]</b> Online, phone and mailed self-responses continue throughout the data collection process.	March 12 – July 31	March 12 – October 31
<b>Update Leave [B]</b> Census takers drop off both invitations to respond and paper questionnaires at the front doors of 5 million households.	March 15 – April 17	June 13 – July 9
<b>Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) [C]</b> Census takers visit households that have not responded online, by phone or by mail and conduct in-person interviews.	May 13 – July 31	August 11 – October 31
<b>Group Quarters (e-Response &amp; Paper Enumeration) [D]</b> <i>Many group quarters have already begun responding through our e-response enumeration option.</i>	April 2 – June 5	April 2 – September 3
<b>In-Person Group Quarters Enumeration [D]</b> Group quarters that remain a part of our in-person group quarters enumeration efforts will begin in July.	April 2 – June 5	July 1 – September 3
<b>Mobile Questionnaire Assistance [E,*]</b> Census Bureau staff assists people with responding online at places people gather (grocery stores, events, etc.)	March 30 – July 31	Needs further review and coordination with outside partners and stakeholders.
<b>Service Based Enumeration</b> We work with service providers at soup kitchens, shelters, & regularly scheduled food vans to count the people they serve.	March 30 – April 1	Needs further review and coordination with outside partners and stakeholders.
<b>Count of People Experiencing Homelessness Outdoors</b> Census takers count people under bridges, in parks, in all-night businesses, etc.	April 1	Needs further review and coordination with outside partners and stakeholders.
<b>Enumeration of Transitory Locations</b> Census takers count people staying at campgrounds, RV parks, marinas and hotels if they do not usually live elsewhere.	April 9 – May 4	Tentatively September 3 – September 28 but may need further review and coordination.

## **[A] Self-Response Phase**

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Households can continue to respond online, by phone or by mail until October 31. Originally, the final date to respond was July 31. Self-response will be encouraged even while census takers visit households that haven't responded.

## **[B] Update Leave**

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Census results are used for legislative redistricting. Therefore the Census Bureau must tabulate responses based on the physical location where people live, not where they receive mail. This is why the Census Bureau does not mail census invitations or questionnaires to PO Boxes.

There are communities in our area where the U.S. Postal Service requires households to use a post office box to receive their mail instead of having mail delivered directly to their homes. In these areas, a census taker was scheduled to have either hand-delivered census information ...so the household could respond online, by phone or by mail...or the Census Bureau planned to visit the household to interview the residents in person.

This operation is called Update Leave and was scheduled to begin March 15. COVID-19 caused the Census Bureau to cease all field operations March 18 so many of these communities have not yet received their census information.

People living in communities who haven't received a census invitation or paper questionnaire yet are asked to wait to respond.

The Census Bureau will hand-deliver a census invitation and paper questionnaire as soon as it is safe to do so. By responding with your Census ID or on the paper questionnaire you receive, we'll be able to get the best count of your community. The Update Leave operation is currently scheduled to resume June 13.

## **[C] Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU)**

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The Census Bureau is charged with collecting information from all households in the United States. Some households will not have responded online, by phone or by mail. To obtain the information from those households, the Census Bureau will hire and train census takers to visit each non-responding household. This operation is called Non-Response Follow-Up.

Households that prefer not to be visited by a census taker can still respond online, by phone or by mail even while the Non-Response Follow-Up operation is being conducted. If a census taker comes to your home, please cooperate. Your community needs your response.

Non-Response Follow-Up was originally scheduled to be conducted May 13 through July 31. NRFU is now scheduled to begin August 11 and continue through October 31.

## **[D] Group Quarters Enumeration**

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Group quarters are places where people live or stay in a group living arrangement. These places are owned or managed by an entity that provides housing and services for the residents. These services may include custodial or medical care as well as other types of assistance and residency is commonly restricted to those receiving these services. People living in group quarters are usually not related to each other.

Group quarters include: group homes, nursing facilities, college, university, and seminary student housing, prisons, jails, workers' group living quarters, military quarters and more.

Group quarters operators have options of how residents can be counted. Group Quarters Enumeration was expected to be completed by June 5. The completion date has been extended to September 3.

## **[E] Mobile Questionnaire Assistance**

The goal of Mobile Questionnaire Assistance [MQA] is to raise the self-response rates in census tracts of communities where the self-response rate has been low. The Census Bureau will use the Self-Response Rate data [[2020census.gov/response-rates](https://2020census.gov/response-rates)] to identify and target census tracts where the self-response rates are low. MQA staff will be deployed to these targeted tracts. These staff will be confidentiality-sworn Census Bureau employees who will be able to answer questions and help respondents directly access the Census questionnaire on a secure Census Bureau-issued mobile device.

There are two types of locations to which an MQA staff member might be deployed:

1. An Event-Based MQA location. This would be an event or activity that is being conducted in the low-responding census tract. It can be organized by a census partner in that community or it can be an event or activity that has been planned and is being conducted by another group or organization. If there are no pre-planned events, Partnership Specialists will be reaching-out to community partners located in these low-responding census tracts to encourage them to host an event or activity.
2. A Highly-Mobile MQA location. This would be a location in which there are no pre-planned events or activities. These would be locations in the targeted tracts with high visibility and foot-traffic such as grocery stores, markets, houses of worship [before and after services,] public transit hubs, libraries, community centers, and other locations where people might naturally congregate.

The dates for Mobile Questionnaire Assistance have not yet been re-established.

## **[\*] Partner-led Questionnaire Assistance Centers**

Partners and organizations can choose to provide an opportunity for the people they serve or their community members at-large to use the organization's computers or tablets to respond to the Census. These locations are considered Partner-led Questionnaire Assistance Centers and will not be staffed by confidentiality-sworn Census Bureau employees, nor will they utilize secure Census Bureau equipment. They are organizations, for example, a boys and girls club, who have set-up computers or tablets where their local community members can come and respond to the Census.

These organizations can open and operate Partner-led Questionnaire Assistance Centers whenever it is safe and they feel comfortable doing so. The Partnership Specialist serving your county can provide guidance to Partners who want to establish Partner-led QACs. You are encouraged to download and review this document which provide guidelines for hosting and operating a Partner-led Questionnaire Assistance Center: [Questions and Answers for Stakeholders Supporting the 2020 Census](#). It is important that the public understands that a Partner-led QAC is not staffed by Census Bureau employees and that their devices are not Census Bureau secure.

- All operations and dates will be predicated on ensuring the health and safety of the American public and Census Bureau employees and guidance from federal, state and local authorities regarding COVID-19.