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QUESTIONS?

CENSUS Q&A

Do you have a questions about the 2010 Census. [Ask us here.](#)

By **Paul Overberg, USA TODAY**

A look at common questions regarding the U.S. Census:

Q: How can I apply for a Census job?

A: Look at <http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs/> or call (toll-free) 1-866-861-2010.

Q: I got forms at my house and my vacation house. What should I do?

A: The Census Bureau asks you to fill out the form mailed to the home where you live most of the time. If no one lives at your vacation home most of the time, enter a zero on question 1 for the number of people. Leave the rest blank and mail it back. That way, the Census Bureau knows it was received and won't have to send someone to check in person.

If you split your time between homes evenly or move on an irregular schedule, fill out the form mailed to the place where you're staying April 1.

Try to make sure you and others in your household don't complete more than one form. The Census Bureau tries to catch duplicates, but it's not easy.

Q: Why can't I fill out the Census form online?

A: The design of Census 2010 had to be set by 2006. Testing in 2000, 2003 and 2005 suggested an online option would not cut costs or improve response in hard-to-count groups, two major criteria set by the Census Bureau. Since then, smaller countries have shown online response is feasible. Typically, respondents log in using a bar code printed on a letter mailed to their home. In 2006, [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#) and [Canada](#) each included an online option in a census. Online response varied from 7% to 19%. Canada hopes up to collect up to 40% of its responses online in its 2011 census.

This year's U.S. Census includes testing for an online response.

Q: My brother-in-law says I only have to report how many people live in our house. Is that right?

A: No. It's true that the Census was required in the Constitution (Article I, Section 2) to redistribute seats in the [House of Representatives](#) every 10 years. Census resisters say that's why they only need to supply the number of people in their home to comply.


But Congress over the years has passed many laws that require the Census Bureau to collect data to help administer that law. As recently as 1999, federal courts have upheld Congress' power to do this. Congress also passed various laws requiring complete and truthful responses to the Census. These are part of Title 13 of the U.S. Code. (http://uscode.house.gov/download/title_13.shtml)

Here's what will happen if your brother-in-law does this: A Census worker will call or visit his home several times to ask for the information. If he still refuses, the Census worker will get information from neighbors. If the Census worker can't reliably determine some information — such as race — it will be added later through a statistical calculation based on similar households nearby. The Census Bureau calls this "imputation."


Q: How do I know this guy at my door is a real Census taker?

A: Beginning in May, Census takers will visit every home that doesn't return a form. Census workers carry a government ID with an expiration date but not a photo. They may also carry a shoulder bag with the Census 2010 logo. They will not ask to enter your home. They will never ask for credit card, bank account or Social Security numbers. You can call the Census office for your region


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to verify the worker's identity.

Q: Why do we count illegal immigrants?

A: The legal reason: The Constitution required the Census to count the "whole number of persons." It did not limit the count to "citizens," as it did eligibility to serve in Congress. It also did not restrict the count to men or landowners, as some states did in setting voting rights. Slaves only counted as three-fifths of a person, but that ended with ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868, which specifies "persons." During congressional debate on the amendment, the narrower terms "citizens" and "voters" were rejected to ensure broader support for the amendment when it was sent to the states for ratification.

The practical reason to count illegal immigrants: Governments and businesses can plan better if Census data include everyone.

Q: I thought the Census was one page. Why is mine 20 pages long?

A: You may have the American Community Survey, which the Census Bureau also collects. It's mailed to 2 million households each year. It asks dozens of questions about topics such as education, commuting, ancestry, citizenship, disability, military service and housing costs and conditions. None of these topics is included in the 2010 Census.

The Census Bureau asks that you fill out the 2010 Census form and the 2010 ACS form if you get both.

The 2010 Census asks just seven questions about each person. The standard form — mailed to 90% of households — comes on a folded sheet of paper equivalent to six standard pages. For households of up to three people, your answers will fit on just two pages.

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