

Information Against Misinformation

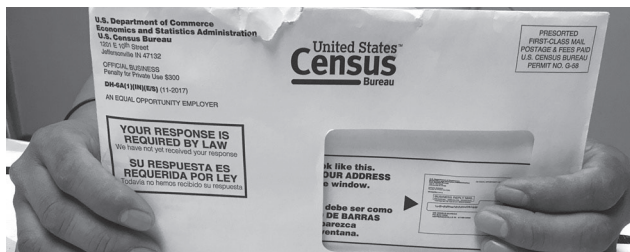
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BEFORE YOU READ: What is misinformation? And what can you do about it?

As an immigrant in the United States, how can I make sure my voice is heard? I am not a citizen, so I cannot vote in the election, but I can participate in the census. However, there is a lot of misinformation about the census. Worse, because of this misinformation, many people in minority and immigrant communities may decide not to participate in the census. This would be a big mistake!

Adult Students Want More Information

Before I started writing this article, I made a little survey about the census at my school. My classmates were divided between those who did not know anything about it and those who were afraid to participate. The result of my survey made me see how big the problem was. How can we expect the minority community to participate in the census if they do not know anything about it? My



classmates had so many questions about the census. Above all, they were surprised about how the census results could influence our community. I could see it on their faces and hear it in their voices: they wanted more information and knowledge about this important matter.

What about Privacy?

One of people's biggest concerns is that they are giving private information to the government. They worry that their privacy will not be protected. It is good to know that Title 13 of the U.S. Code says it is against the law for the Census Bureau to

How Much Money for Your State?

The census helps decide how much federal money your state will get. If your community is undercounted, you will receive less money for these programs. Check the programs that matter to you:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid and Medicare | <input type="checkbox"/> Special education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College grants and loans | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing loans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food stamps | <input type="checkbox"/> Home energy assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highway & Roads | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Lunch Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Child care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Section 8 housing and vouchers | <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption and foster care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary aid for families | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult education funding |

Visit nelrc.org/stand-up-and-be-counted/census2020 and click on Classroom Resources for related lessons and activities.



publish any private information that identifies an individual, including name, address, and phone number. Furthermore, it is against the law for the Census Bureau to share information with immigration officials or any government agency.¹

What about Citizenship?

The biggest rumor about the census occurred after President Trump argued to include a question about citizenship. Even though the U.S. Supreme Court did not approve the citizenship question on the 2020 Census, the rumor has spread, and it may be enough to discourage the participation of both documented and undocumented immigrants.

One reason for the confusion is that the American Community Survey (ACS) *does* ask about citizenship. The main difference between the ACS and the census is that the ACS only chooses random residences in the U.S. to answer the questionnaire. And they conduct this survey every year. In addition, the ACS asks about more details, including the place of birth, citizenship, and year of entry into the United States.²

The census, on the other hand, happens every 10 years, and all people, whether they are citizens or not, are required to fill it out. (And remember: the census *does not* ask about citizenship!)

Stop the Undercount!

In 2012, the Census Bureau reported that 16 million people were not counted in the 2010 Census. Overall, non-Hispanic whites were *overcounted*, and Native Americans, Blacks, and Hispanics were *undercounted*.³

With so much misinformation and lack of information, we are at risk of undercounting the minority population again. We cannot let this happen! We need to work together to inform each other about the census and understand our rights. We need to know that participating in the 2020 Census is our responsibility while we are living in the U.S. It will help us create a better community and support democracy in the country.

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Endnotes: 1. <www.census.gov/history/www/reference/privacy_confidentiality/title_13_us_code.html>; 2. <www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/citizenship>; 3. <www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html>.

Do Your Own Research; Report Rumors

Conduct a survey of your class. Create a survey that includes questions about the census, such as: What are three things you've heard about the 2020 Census? Do you plan on filling out the census? What concerns do you have about the census? Research the answers to the most common questions, and share these answers with your class.

Report rumors! If, in the course of your research, you find misinformation, report it to the Census Bureau, which has opened a website <2020census.gov/en/news-events/rumors.html> for dispelling rumors. You can also report misinformation to <rumors@census.gov>.



For a lesson packet on hoaxes and scams, go to <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/lesson-packets>.

