

Avoid Hoaxes, Scams and Rumors during the 2020 Census

Lesson Packet #22 from The Change Agent



Purpose:

This intermediate-level lesson packet gives students a chance to work on reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills in the context of relevant, timely information about protecting against fraud during the 2020 census.

Contents:

It includes two authentic documents from census.gov, one student-written article from the “Stand Up and Be Counted” issue of *The Change Agent*, and a quiz to test students’ understanding.

p. 2: Before You Read activities (including vocabulary and pre-test)

p. 3: Fighting 2020 Census Rumors

<https://2020census.gov/en/news-events/rumors.html> – LEVEL 7

p. 4: Avoiding Scams and Fraud

<https://2020census.gov/en/avoiding-fraud.html> – LEVEL 10

p. 5: Quiz (covering the two census documents)

pp. 6-7: “Information Against Misinformation”
(from *The Change Agent*) – LEVEL 8

College and Career Readiness Standards

Read for details, add knowledge of vocabulary, practice reading more complex documents, practice speaking and listening (by conducting a survey), research and present findings.

Steps for using this Lesson Packet:

1. Do the Before You Read activities.
2. Read the first Census Bureau document (p. 3), circling vocabulary and pausing to answer questions. Read it through a second time.
3. Repeat process with second Census Bureau document (p. 4). Have students take the quiz (p. 5).
4. Read “Information Against Misinformation” (pp. 6-7) and do the activity at the end, which gives students a chance to survey others, perhaps uncover misinformation, respond to that misinformation, and report it to the Census Bureau.
5. Reflect on this lesson. What did students like or not like? What relevance (if any) will it have in their life?

Before You Read:

1. Ask students to share what they know about hoaxes, scams, and rumors. Have they ever been a victim of one? What happened? What do they do to avoid them?
2. Here is a list of some key vocabulary words. It’s optional to teach them in advance.

Rumor	False information, not true
Fraud	When you lie in order to gain something
Scam	When you have a plan to get something in an unfair way; fraud
Hoax	A trick
Phishing	[see definition in “Avoiding Scams and Fraud” – p. 4]
Impact (v)	Have an effect on
Eligibility (n)	When you qualify for something
Bound by	Controlled or limited by
Strictly	Rigid, not flexible
Confidential	Secret
Unsolicited	When you did not ask for it
Malware	Software that is designed to damage your computer or steal your information
Watermark	A mark that is embedded in an official paper

3. Test your knowledge by answering these questions before you read the two census documents. Then, as you read the documents, look for the answers.

Question	Yes	No
a) Are non-citizens counted in the census?		
b) Can my answers be shared with law enforcement or used against me?		
c) Can I only take the census online?		
d) What questions WILL NOT be asked by the Census Bureau?		
e) Will a Census Bureau employee ask for my Social Securing Number or bank account information?		
f) Will a Census Bureau employee have an ID badge with their photo?		

Fighting 2020 Census Rumors

an excerpt from: <https://2020census.gov/en/news-events/rumors.html>

This is your source for facts about the 2020 Census.

If you have a question about something not addressed here or see false information about the 2020 Census or the U.S. Census Bureau, please contact rumors@census.gov.

Learn more about the Census Bureau's [Trust & Safety](#) team and how to support a complete and accurate 2020 Census count.

Setting the Record Straight

Are non-citizens counted in the census?

YES. Everyone counts. The 2020 Census counts everyone living in the country, including non-citizens. [Learn more about who should be counted when you complete the 2020 Census.](#)

Can my answers be shared with law enforcement or used against me?

NO. The law prevents the Census Bureau from sharing your information with law enforcement. Your answers cannot be used to impact your eligibility for government benefits. Your answers are only used to create statistics about our country. The Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the U.S. Code to protect your personal information and keep it strictly confidential. That's every answer, to every question.

Can I only take the census online?

NO. The 2020 Census will be available online, by phone, and by mail. Online and phone responses can be completed in 13 languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese). A paper form will be mailed to every house that hasn't responded already when we send our fourth mail piece out.

What questions WILL NOT be asked by the Census Bureau?

During the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will **never** ask you for:

- Your Social Security number.
- Money or donations.
- Anything on behalf of a political party.
- Your bank or credit card account numbers.

If someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau contacts you via email or phone and asks you for one of these things, it's a scam, and you should not cooperate. For more information, visit [Avoiding Fraud and Scams](#).

Avoiding Fraud and Scams

an excerpt from: <https://2020census.gov/en/avoiding-fraud.html>

The U.S. Census Bureau is committed to making the 2020 Census quick, easy, and safe for all participants. Here are some tips to help you stay safe.



Avoiding Scams Online

Phishing is a criminal act in which someone tries to get your information by pretending to be an entity that you trust. Phishing emails often direct you to a website that looks real but is fake—and may be infected with malware.

It is important to know that the Census Bureau will not send unsolicited emails to request your participation in the 2020 Census. Further, during the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will never ask for:

- Your Social Security number.
- Your bank account or credit card numbers.
- Money or donations.

In addition, the Census Bureau will not contact you on behalf of a political party.

Staying Safe at Home

If someone visits your home to collect a response for the 2020 Census, you can do the following to verify their identity:

- First, check to make sure that they have a valid ID badge, with their photograph, a U.S. Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date.
- If you still have questions about their identity, you can call [800-923-8282](tel:800-923-8282) to speak with a local Census Bureau representative.

Reporting Suspected Fraud

If you suspect fraud, call [800-923-8282](tel:800-923-8282) to speak with a local Census Bureau representative. If it is determined that the visitor who came to your door does not work for the Census Bureau, contact your local police department.

Quiz : Avoid Hoaxes, Scams, and Rumors during the 2020 Census

True or False:

1. Only citizens are counted on the census. _____
2. My baby is just one month, so I should not count her. _____
3. I can participate in the census by phone, online, or by mail. _____
4. The Census will not ask for your Social Security Number. _____
5. You need to make a small payment to fill out the census. _____
6. No census employee will ever ask for your credit card. _____
7. Phishing emails often include links to fake websites. _____

Fill in the blank:

8. If a census worker comes to my house, I should check their badge. It should include three things:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
9. There are three possible ways to take the census. Fill in the below with the method you prefer and explain why.

I prefer to take the census _____ because _____

Information Against Misinformation

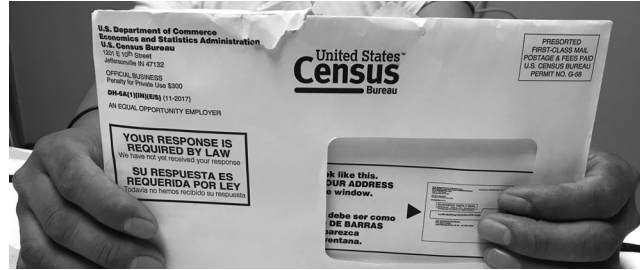
Kelly Akemy Makimoto Murphy

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 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

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.



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 and present. Find the answers to the most common questions, and present the answers to your class in a slideshow or on a poster. Or write an essay about it.

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>.

