

# Western New York Census Toolkit

A local guide for census  
outreach and advocacy



**PARTNERSHIP  
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PUBLIC GOOD**

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## What is the Census?

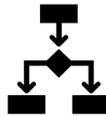
The Census is a tool used to count the United States population once every ten years. It is required by the United States Constitution.

## Why is the Census important?

**Understanding Demographical Change:** The Census helps us understand our population and how it's changing from towns to cities and the country as a whole. It helps us make good decisions on education, housing, the economy, and other community-wide issues. Data collected in the 2020 Census will *be used for the next 10 years* and will inform:



Public Policy



Public Decisions



Research

**Distribution of Funds:** The Census count determines the distribution of

**\$880 billion**  
in federal funding



**75%**  
of federal grant money

**Legislative Representation:** The Census is used to redraw legislative districts and decides the number of seats each state gets in the House of Representatives and state legislatures.



Read more about why the Census matters for Western New York in our policy brief, "[Census 2020: Making Western New York Count](#)," (Anna Blatto, Partnership for the Public Good, 2019).

## What programs are affected by the Census?



### Healthcare

*including* Medicare and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).



### Housing

*including* Section 8 vouchers, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and Fair Market Rents.



### Education

*including* Title I, National School Lunch Program, and Head Start.



### Local Government

*including* Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grants and Community Development Block Grants.



### Transit

*including* transportation planning, funding for roads and public transit, and funding to comply with the American Disabilities Act (ADA).



### Business

*including* determining labor needs which influence where factories and new locations are built and the Small business Development Center Program.

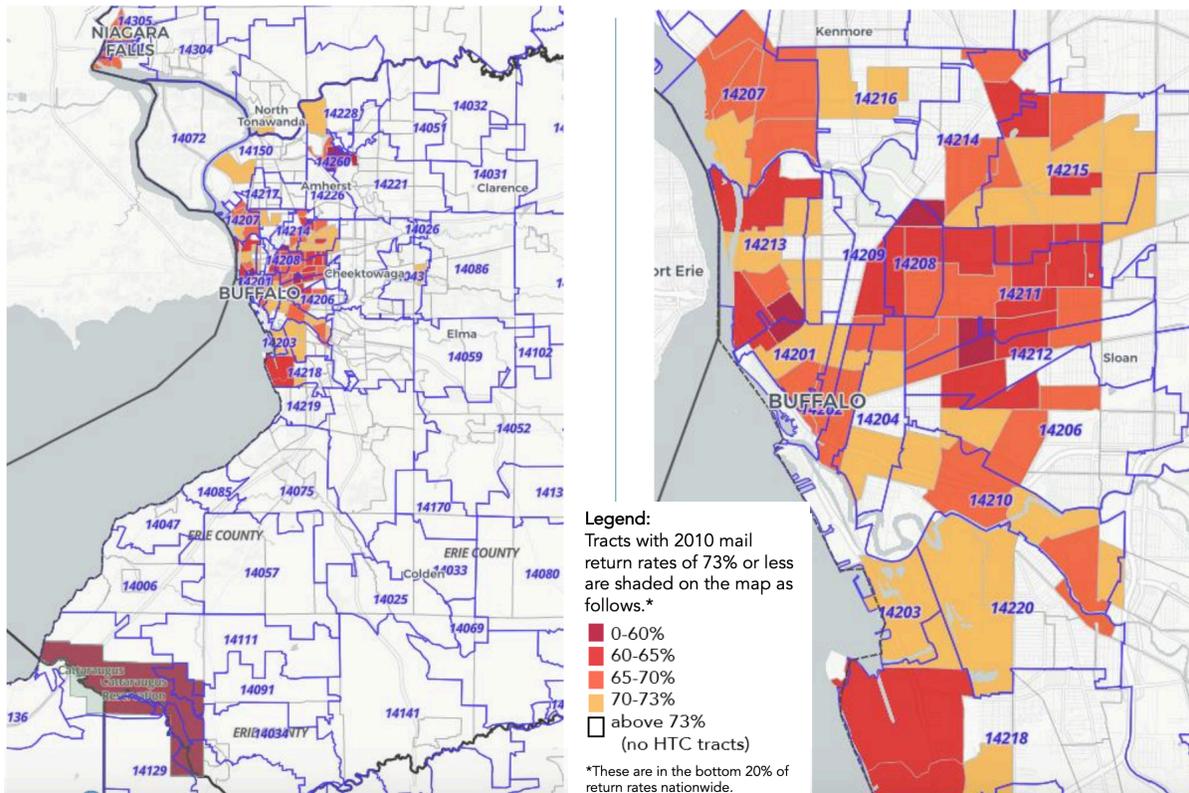
## II. Census and Buffalo-Niagara

### What does "hard to count" mean? What groups have been historically undercounted?

Some groups have been historically undercounted in the Census. In the past, these groups include people of color, low-income families in urban and rural areas, immigrants and New Americans, those with limited English proficiency, Native Americans, single-family parent families, and children under the age of five.

Undercounting results in inadequate and unequal federal support for groups that are already traditionally marginalized.

In Buffalo-Niagara, most hard-to-count areas are in low-income communities and communities of color. Within the city of Buffalo, many have been on Buffalo's east and west sides.



Access interactive hard-to-count maps at <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>.

## II. Census and Buffalo-Niagara

### What are barriers to completing the Census?

Traditionally undercounted communities may not complete the Census for a variety of reasons. One is lack of education – many may not know when, where, or how to fill out a Census form. Since the Census happens only once every 10 years, it is something that is easily forgotten.

The 2020 Census is the first to offer online response, raising possible challenges for residents without internet access at home and those less comfortable with web-based forms.

“ I have no knowledge of how it’s done and when or where.

“ I’m not sure how you fill it out.

Other residents express doubts about what the purpose of the census is and the use of collected data. Some individuals hesitate to provide their personal information, particularly if the benefits of the Census – from increased funding to representation – is not known or seen in their neighborhood.

“ Maybe there are alternative motives instead of just counting people. The promise of getting better services, schools, police, etc. – we don’t see that happening. Nothing changes. Government uses the Census to track people.

“ They already know you’re here.

“ I used to think the Census was important, now not really. In 1960-2000, it was important because neighborhoods were being restructured. Now people don’t care anymore.

*The quotes above are from PPG interviews with Buffalo residents in August and September 2019.*

### III. Ways to Prepare for Census 2020

#### Offer Education

Despite local concerns and barriers to completing the Census, many residents understand the importance of being counted.

It is important to be counted.

It could be used for important government statistical information.

I know my information is useful for the government.

[Filling out the Census is important] if all information submitted is really considered to benefit with the shift in communities.

It is important to count the Fillmore community.

Community groups and individuals can encourage people to fill out the Census and provide education on its importance and impact. Community centers, libraries, and other groups can provide an accessible, safe, and trusted environment to take the Census—especially in previously undercounted areas.

It is important both to demonstrate the value of contributing personal data to the Census and to offer accessible spaces to do so.

*The quotes above are from PPG interviews with Buffalo residents in August and September 2019.*

### Provide Support

#### Drop-In Centers during Census Taking

Community organizations with **space and capacity** can:



**Provide technology** such as computers and tablets for people to securely fill out the Census.



**Have staff available** to help answer questions about what to fill out.



Drop-in centers can provide **specified hours with language support** for common languages in Buffalo that may not have internet or phone Census support, such as Karen, Somali, Burmese and Nepali.

These hours should be advertised to New American communities via word of mouth as well as physical advertisements in the languages of communities trying to be reached.

#### Census Jobs

The US Census Bureau is hiring thousands of people to help with Census taking across New York. The Census Bureau is looking for **diverse staffers who represent all communities**. The Bureau is especially looking for **bilingual staff** who can help with enumeration and other outreach needs.

Advertise Census jobs and provide information on how to apply ([census.gov/jobs](https://www.census.gov/jobs)). Offer technology and capacity, if possible, to help people apply for Census jobs. Make applicants aware that jobs **start at \$20 an hour** in Western New York and that wages earned are **exempt and won't affect SNAP or other public benefits**.

### Get Out the Count

**Talk about the Census at your ongoing events.** You don't need to have a Census-specific event to talk about the Census. Include information or feature a partner from the U.S. Census Bureau at your ongoing events in the months ahead of Census 2020. You can also encourage local residents to apply for Census jobs.

**Take a group to one of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries or Request one of their "Training Labs."** The local library system is helping to get out the count and will provide space and resources for groups to complete the Census. To arrange a group visit to any Buffalo & Erie County Library branch or to schedule an event with their portable training lab of twelve laptops, contact 716-858-7384 or [techknowlab@buffalolib.org](mailto:techknowlab@buffalolib.org).

**Host a Census Party.** Make filling out the Census fun with a Census party! Have pizza, drinks, and have staff or volunteers available to help attendees fill out the Census. Offer raffles or door prizes to encourage attendance too. You can also rent a Census 2020 banner from the [Western New York Library Resource Council](#).

**Reach out to a Census Partnership Specialist.** Census Partnership Specialists can provide valuable and free information for you to distribute to the communities you serve. Form a close relationship with one or two partnership specialists. Additionally, if your community members begin to see them at your events with trusted members of your organization, it is more likely they will take their messaging seriously, too. Locally, you can contact Amy Brombos, supervisory partnership specialist, at (716) 335-6416 or [amy.a.brombos@2020census.gov](mailto:amy.a.brombos@2020census.gov).

**Campaign on Social Media.** Share some localized social media facts included in this kit. And join New York Counts 2020, a statewide coalition working to ensure New Yorkers across the state – particularly those in hard to count districts – can fully maximize their Census participation. The organization frequently provides suggested content to share on social media to promote a fair count in the 2020 Census.

**Canvassing.** Door-to-door canvassing by trusted groups can help raise awareness, educate residents, and counter misinformation in the months ahead of the initial Census mailing dates and while Census mailers are being received.



What are some commonly asked questions about the Census?

### Frequently Asked Questions

## THE CONSENSUS ON THE CENSUS

#### When will the Census take place?

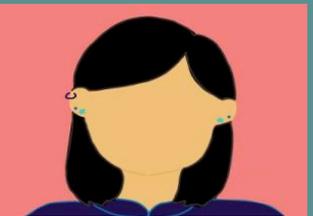
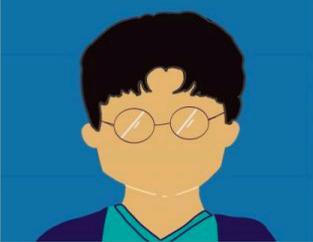
The Census will take place from March to July in 2020. People will be made aware of the Census by a series of mailers, followed by enumerator visits for non-respondents.

From March to July 2020, respondents can self-respond via internet, mail-in form, or phone. From May to July, enumerators will visit addresses that did not yet complete a Census questionnaire.

#### How can I fill out the Census?

There are multiple ways to fill out the Census:

- 1) Online – The 2020 Census is the first to offer online response, on computers or mobile devices. The online survey will be available in 12 Non-English languages - Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.
- 2) By phone – Census questionnaire assistance will be available over the phone in English and 12 Non-English languages – Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese. Phone support also includes a telecommunication device for people who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- 3) Paper – The Census form is available to complete in paper in English and Spanish. Field enumeration materials and enumerator instruments will also be available for Spanish.



### What if my preferred language isn't English?

The Census Bureau is providing support for a variety of languages. For online and over-the-phone response, the Census is available in 12 non-English languages: Spanish, Chinese (Simplified online, both Cantonese and Mandarin over the phone), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese.

There is also full support on paper and enumeration materials for Spanish.

In addition to the languages for which there are directly translated materials, there will be language glossaries, language identification cards, and language guides (video and print) for 59 non-English languages.

### Why is the Census important for me and my community?

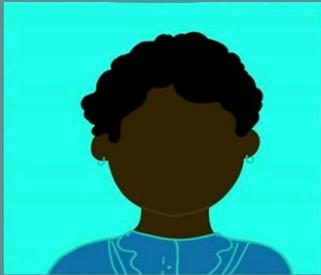
Census data dictates funding for dozens of programs. It can provide insight into the need for additional schools, roads, hospitals, and other public sector investments.

Census data can also influence decisions made by businesses; for example, businesses might use Census data to determine where to open new stores, which products and services may be most beneficial, or where operations need to be expanded.

In the event of an emergency, Census data is used to identify where and how much help is needed from a disease outbreak to a natural disaster to treatment and recovery programs.

Finally, Census data is instrumental in the redistricting process and determines the number of representatives for each state in the House of Representatives.

*Graphics source: "A Colorful & Inclusive Community,"  
Judy Nguyen, University of Colorado – Boulder.*



### Where is my data going? What is the government doing with my information?

Individual responses to the Census are anonymous and remain confidential. They are only used to generate statistics. Individual Census responses are protected under Title 13 of the U.S. Code. The U.S. Census Bureau and its employees are bound by law to protect respondents' personal information. The Census Bureau describes their online technology as “designed to defend against and contain cyberthreats.”

### How will I know when to fill out the Census?

The first Census mailing will take place in mid-March 2020. Depending on the resident's location, it will contain a letter with instructions about how to take the survey online or it will include a paper survey. The second mailing (mid-March) will be a reminder letter. The third mailing (late-March/early-April) will be a postcard to households that have not responded. The fourth mailing (April) will be a letter and a questionnaire to non-respondents; finally, the fifth mailing (April) will be a “it's not too late” postcard to non-respondents.

### How can I avoid scams?

Learn more about the Census. During the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will never ask for your social security number, your bank account or credit card numbers, or money or donations. The Census Bureau will also never call or email you. The only way they will contact you is via mail or during the enumeration period if you haven't responded.

If someone visits your home to collect a response for the 2020 Census, first check to make sure they have a valid ID badge, with their photograph, a U.S. Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. If you still are not sure whether they are a Census Bureau employee, call 800-923-8282 to speak with a local representative of the Census Bureau.

## V. Stay Involved

### Join New York Counts 2020

The New York Counts 2020 Coalition coalition provides a wide range of support, including continued learning through resources and webinars, information to share with community members (including materials in languages other than English), as well as grant opportunities. You can join the New York Counts 2020 Mailing List for updates on Census work throughout New York State.

Visit New York Counts 2020's website at [newyorkcounts2020.org](http://newyorkcounts2020.org).

### Join a Complete Count Committee

In Western New York, both city and county governments have recognized the importance of having complete count committees. [Buffalo Count Us In 2020](#) is working to educate the public on how to participate in the Census, ensure a fair and accurate count, and help fill Census jobs.

The joint Buffalo and Erie County Complete Count Committee has created subcommittees to support their work including:

- Faith-Based
- Early Childhood
- Labor/Business
- Community-Based Organizations
- K-12 Education
- Higher Education
- Immigrants

If you are interested in joining a subcommittee, email [census@erie.gov](mailto:census@erie.gov).

You can check for additional Complete Count Committees in your community on the Census Bureau's interactive map, [here](#).

### Apply for Grants

Funding from both foundations and New York state to support Census 2020 efforts may be available or re-granted to local community groups.

Visit [ppgbuffalo.org](http://ppgbuffalo.org) for updated information on Census grant opportunities and other support.

### How to Fill Out the Mail-In Census Form

Adapted from "[Your Guide to the 2020 Census](#)" (U.S. Census Bureau).

#### 1) Who to Count

Count all people living in your house, mobile home, or apartment.

- Count all people, including babies, who live and sleep at your residence most of the time.
- If no one lives or sleeps at this residence, respond state that on your response.

The census must also include people without a permanent place to live.

- If someone who does not have a permanent place to live is staying at your residence on April 1, 2020, count that person.

The Census Bureau counts people in institutions and other places separately.

- If someone previously lived at your residence but is now living in college, a nursing home, the military, jail, prison, a detention facility, etc. on April 1, 2020 DO NOT count these people.
- Leave these people off your questionnaire, even if they will return to live here after they leave college, the nursing home, the military, jail, etc.
- If you do include them, they will be counted twice.

#### 2) What to Expect

When completing the Census form, expect to provide:

- The number of people living in your household;
- If there is anyone else staying at the address not included in your first answer;
- Whether the house, apartment, or mobile home is rented or owned;
- Your telephone number, only used if needed for official U.S. Census Bureau business;
- Information about each person living in the residence:
  - Name
  - Sex
  - Date of birth
  - Whether they are of Latino, Hispanic, or Spanish origin
  - Their race, including origin

Following the adult listed as "Person 1" on your Census form (if there is someone living at the residence who owns the home or pays the rent, they are "Person 1; if not, list any adult at the residence), the form will ask whether each additional person usually lives or stays somewhere else and how they are related to "Person 1".

*See a sample Census form on the following page to review all information requested.*



## Social Media Samples

#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

Did you know...

Census data is used to provide funding and resources for Buffalo's Head Start programs.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

Did you know...

Census data is used to calculate how much rent is fair to pay and can determine how much a housing voucher is worth.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

Did you know...

Census data determines how much government funding your local library receives.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

Did you know...

Census data can influence funding and support to aspiring small business owners.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

### Did you know...

Data collected from the Census is used to provide funding to the National School Lunch Program, including the one that provides free lunches to many Buffalo Public Schools students.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

### Did you know...

In 2020, you can respond to the Census online, by phone, via mail, or in-person with an enumerator at your residence.



#Census2020 #BuffaloCounts

### Did you know...

The United States Census Bureau will never call or e-mail you. They will mail forms to your address and may send an enumerator to your address to follow-up if no response is received.



*Check [ppgbuffalo.org](http://ppgbuffalo.org) for shareable versions of these samples and more local social media posts.*

### Helpful Links

Below are links to additional resources helpful for learning more about Census 2020 and developing an outreach plan. The list is abridged from a resource available on the New York Counts 2020 website.

[2020 Census Social Media Graphics](#)

--Resource with social media graphics from the U.S. Census Bureau

[2020 Census Social Media Content](#)

--Resource with social media content from the U.S. Census Bureau

[A Guide to Organizing for The Census 2020](#)

--Resource from New York Counts 2020

[Census 2020 Disability Community Toolkit](#)

--Resource from Disability Rights California

[Census Counts Resources](#)

--A link to the full library of resources from Census Counts

[Community Outreach Toolkit](#)

--Resource from the U.S. Census Bureau

[County Census Fact Sheets: NYS 2019 Kids Count!](#)

--Interactive maps with fact sheets to show Census impact on children

[Disinformation Reporting Portal](#)

--From Color of Change to report false or misleading information

[Hágaste Contar Campaign](#) and NALEO Hotline (1-877 EL-CENSO)

--Support from the National Assn. of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

[How Can My Library Increase Awareness of 2020 Census Hiring?](#)

--Resource from the American Library Association on applying for Census jobs

[Indian Country Counts 2020 Census Toolkit](#)

--Toolkit from National Congress of American Indians

[Preparing for the First Digital Census](#)

--Resource from The New School's Digital Equity Laboratory

[U.S. Census Bureau YouTube Channel](#)

--Official YouTube channel with informational videos and PSAs

[Yalla, Count Me In!](#)

--Resources from a grassroots coalition get out the count for Arab Americans





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[www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org)

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