WITH ALL THE CHANGES AMERICA HAS GONE THROUGH IN THE PAST 2+ CENTURIES -- WARS, SOCIAL UPEHAEAL, POLITICAL SCANDALS -- THERE'S AT LEAST ONE THING THAT'S KEPT GOING: THE DECENNIAL CENSUS.

RESULTS FROM THE CENSUS HELP TO DIRECT FUNDING FOR HUNDREDS OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS -- EVERYTHING FROM HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION TO MEDICAID TO FOOD STAMPS.

AND BUSINESSES USE CENSUS-DERIVED DATA -- SUCH AS INFORMATION ON EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING -- TO MAKE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DECISIONS, LIKE WHERE TO OPEN STORES AND WHICH KINDS OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO OFFER.

THIS IS A GUIDE TO WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR AS THE COUNT* GETS UNDERWAY.

The 2020 Census
A Journalist’s Resource
Comics Explainer
by Josh Neufeld

WILL THE 2020 CENSUS BE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO UNDERCOUNTS? WHO IS MOST AT-RISK OF BEING UNDERCOUNTED?

I'M ORIGINALLY FROM ALGERIA. SO, ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS, WHAT IS MY RACE?

9. What is Person No. 1’s race?
   Mark X one or more boxes
   □ White -- Print, for example, Anglo, French, English, Italian, Irish, Greek, etc.
   □ Black, or African Am. -- Print, for example, Arab, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.
   □ American Indian or Alaska Native -- Print, for example, Apache, Navajo, Blackfeet Tribe, Cherokee, Shoshone, Haida, etc.
   □ Asian -- Print, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, Cambodian, Pakistani, Indian, Filipino, etc.
   □ Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander
   □ Other (Write in):

I'M PART OF THE NUNAKAUYARMIUT TRIBE. I LIVE IN NIGHTMUTE, ON THE BERING SEA.

I DON'T HAVE INTERNET, AND YOU CAN ONLY VISIT MY VILLAGE BEFORE THE SPRING THAW BY DOG SLED, SNOW MOBILE, OR BUSH PLANE...

ONCE THE THAW COMES, EVERYONE LEAVES MY VILLAGE FOR HUNTING SEASON. HOW WILL WE GET COUNTED?

*Includes all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
In June 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the Trump administration’s request to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census.

Despite this, there are fears of a chilling effect. Multiple studies suggest that adding a citizenship question to the Census would have decreased how many people fully complete the questionnaire -- particularly Latinos, for fear of being targeted by immigration authorities.

From a political perspective, results from the Census determine how the House of Representatives’ 435 seats are divided among the 50 states. (Census results are also used to adjust the Electoral College.)

Not everyone knows that Census workers swear a lifetime oath to protect personal info -- not even to reveal it to other government agencies -- under threat of prison time and fines.

Every decennial Census results in some reapportionment -- if the tally is wrong, some states will get more seats than they should and others will get fewer.

Undercounts can lead to smaller House delegations and less federal funding.
STATE POPULATION NUMBERS THAT ARE OFF BY 4% COULD LEAD TO 10–15 HOUSE SEATS GOING TO THE INCORRECT STATES...

Such an error could lead to the misallocation of $60–80 billion in federal grant money over the following ten years.

So... undercounts matter.

Plus—lower completion rates of census forms leads to inaccurate data for the census overall.

What other challenges does the 2020 Census face?

Well, getting people to want to participate in the census, there’s a lot of fear.

Hard-to-count communities—particularly communities that historically have a lot of mistrust of the government—need to hear from trusted voices.

In 2000 and 2010, the Census Bureau used paid advertising and trusted voices sponsorships to urge people to participate.

This time around, underfunding delayed certain operations, including the “trusted voices” program.

John Thompson, former Census Director

Kyla Fullenwider, former Chief Innovation Officer at the Census Bureau
THERE ARE ALSO A LOT OF Shenanigans THAT JUST WEREN'T AROUND IN 2010.

"WE HAVE TO REALLY WATCH OUT FOR MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION -- IT’S AMPLIFIED BY A THOUSAND WHEN YOU’VE GOT TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS THAT CAN SPREAD A RUMOR TO EVERYONE AT ONCE."

CENSUS WORKERS ARE ACTUALLY ICE AGENTS!

DON’T BOTHER FILLING OUT THE CENSUS -- IT’S NOT IMPORTANT.

YOU PAID YOUR TAXES LAST YEAR? THEN YOU’VE ALREADY COMPLETED THE CENSUS!

BAD ACTORS ONLINE CAN ALSO MISLEAD PEOPLE ABOUT HOW TO PARTICIPATE --

-- LIKE POSING AS AN ADVOCACY GROUP TO CONVEY FALSE INFORMATION, OR SPREADING FALSE DATA BY DOCTORING ADS AND NEWS STORIES.

“PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR FROM THEIR PASTORS, FROM THEIR IMAMS, FROM THEIR PEDIATRICIANS, FROM THEIR TEACHERS -- IN REAL LIFE.”

WE ARE ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CENSUS, IT’S IMPORTANT FOR US TO FILL IT OUT SO OUR COMMUNITY GETS ITS FAIR SHARE.

OK, WHAT’S DIFFERENT THIS TIME AROUND?

TECHNOLOGY.

THIS WILL BE THE FIRST CENSUS TO BE WIDELY AVAILABLE ONLINE.

"PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR FROM THEIR PASTORS, FROM THEIR IMAMS, FROM THEIR PEDIATRICIANS, FROM THEIR TEACHERS -- IN REAL LIFE."
WHICH IS REALLY GOING TO HELP WITH MANY OF THE HARDEST-TO-COUNT COMMUNITIES.

WHEN YOU'RE USING A PAPER FORM AND YOU'VE GOT PEOPLE MOVING, IT BECOMES A CAT-AND-MOUSE GAME.

AND THE RESEARCH IS SHOWING THAT MILLENNIALS -- ONE OF THE MOST RELUCTANT-TO-ENGAGE COMMUNITIES -- ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE USING THE ONLINE FORM.

ABOUT 65% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THE CENSUS ONLINE.

BUT THAT'S A TYPICAL RESPONSE RATE.

WHEN PEOPLE FAIL TO RESPOND, CENSUS WORKERS ATTEMPT TO REACH THEM IN PERSON.

NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW-UP IS USUALLY THE BIGGEST, MOST EXPENSIVE PART OF THE CENSUS...

THE PROCESS SHOULD BE MORE EFFICIENT THIS TIME AROUND.

-- AND IS SENDING WORKERS TO PHYSICALLY VERIFY THOSE NEW ADDRESSES.

CENSUS WORKERS ON THE GROUND WILL USE SMARTPHONES TO GET THEIR DAILY ASSIGNMENTS, AND GPS TO NAVIGATE TO INTERVIEWS.

BECAUSE THE CENSUS BUREAU IS USING SATELLITE AND GPS IMAGERY TO IDENTIFY NEW HOUSING AREAS --

CUSTOMIZED SOFTWARE WILL STREAMLINE THE PROCESS AND REDUCE UNNECESSARY FOLLOW-UP VISITS.
NECESSARY FOLLOW-UPS WILL BE ASSISTED BY EXISTING GOVERNMENT AND THIRD-PARTY DATA TO PREDICT THE BEST TIME OF DAY TO VISIT.

YOU WENT TO THE HOUSE AT 10 A.M. TODAY... GO THERE AT 7 P.M. TOMORROW.

AND ONLINE CENSUS FORMS WILL BE OFFERED IN ENGLISH AND 12 OTHER LANGUAGES.

- English
- Español
- العربية
- Français
- Kreyòl Ayisyen
- 日本語
- Polski
- Português
- Tagalog
- 汉语
- 한국어
- Русский
- Tiếng Việt

BUT WITH ALL THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY, THERE ARE NEW CONCERNS.

LIKE ABOUT THE INTEGRITY OF THE DATA TO BE COLLECTED, OR FEAR THAT IT COULD BE ALTERED, DELETED, OR STOLEN.

COMMERCIAL AND GOVERNMENT DATA BREACHES HAVE LEFT MANY PEOPLE LEERY ABOUT REVEALING PERSONAL DATA ONLINE --

-- EVEN THOUGH THE CENSUS BUREAU INSISTS THAT PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL FOR 72 YEARS.

ALSO, SOME HOUSEHOLDS WILL BE GIVEN THE OPTION TO TAKE THE CENSUS OVER THE PHONE (IN ADDITION TO THE ONLINE AND PAPER OPTIONS).

THAT’S A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.  WHAT ARE IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2020 CENSUS?

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2020 CENSUS HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR AT LEAST SEVEN YEARS.

INVITATIONS TO FILL OUT THE CENSUS WILL BE MAILED IN MID-MARCH.

YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY STARTED SEEING ADS FOR IT.

FOLLOW-UPS WILL GO ON THROUGHOUT THE SPRING AND SUMMER.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE STAYING IN THIS HOUSE ON APRIL 1, 2020?

COMMERCIAL SECRETARY WILBUR ROSS SHOULD DELIVER APPORTIONMENT COUNTS TO THE PRESIDENT ON NEW YEAR’S EVE 2020.

AND MARCH 31, 2021, IS THE DEADLINE WHEN CENSUS STATE RESULTS MUST BE DELIVERED...

...FOR REDRAWING DISTRICTS IN A “NON-DISCRIMINATORY FASHION.”

IT’S IMPORTANT FOR JOURNALISTS TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES ABOUT CENSUS PROCEDURES TO INFORM THE PUBLIC — AND HOLD THE CENSUS BUREAU ACCOUNTABLE.