



The Decennial Census

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- The George Washington University Institute of Public Policy [Counting for Dollars Project 2020](#) identified 325 census-guided federal spending programs that distributed \$900 billion across the U.S. in FY2016.
- Population changes measured by the census are used to redraw boundaries for legislative districts. After the 2020 Census, [13 states](#) either lost or gained House seats/electoral votes. Texas gained 2; Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina, and Oregon gained 1; California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia lost 1.
- Federal law [mandates all households participate in the Census](#). Any household member over 18 who does not participate can face [minimum fines of \\$5,000](#), but the last census failure to be prosecuted was in 1790.

Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Look at the [2020 data collected](#) for your state and county. Which data points surprise you? Has the population grown or decreased in your area? What are the impacts?
- **Government:** Redistricting is the most discussed impact of the 2020 Census. How will this impact your state?
- **Business:** How does the 2020 Census impact business in your community? Which changes in the population (size, age, demographics) will benefit or harm local business?

Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** about how the Census affects your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area. Host another conversation with neighbors, students, or co-workers.
2. **Explore the impact of legislation related to the Census in your community.** Search on Ballotpedia or the National Conference of State Legislatures for [redistricting procedures](#) and [criteria](#). Watch the Michigan Leadership Council's discussion on [Redrawing Michigan](#).
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. See what [coordinating and affiliate agencies](#) exist in your state. Search "Census" on your state or municipality's website to see if there are related task forces or organizations. The Census Bureau's Complete Count Committees (CCC) program incorporates tribal, state, and local governments, schools, businesses, faith-based groups, and other community organizations to educate and motivate individuals to participate in the Census. [Find a CCC near you](#).
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on the Census and redistricting laws, and their vision for how to tackle related challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on the Census, funding, or redistricting in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [The Electoral College](#)
 - [The U.S. House of Representatives](#) or [The U.S. Senate](#)
 - [Civic Engagement](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.