

# 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

*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?

### Let's discuss

*Pick 2 or 3 questions that resonate with the group and discuss, or choose your own.*

- In your opinion, what is the priority in regards to the Census?
- Were there some points with which you strongly agreed or disagreed? Was there a perspective that was missing?
- What do you consider the top concerns surrounding the Census? Undercounting, misinformation, data protection, or something else?
- Should there be a citizenship question included in the Census?
- In terms of media attention, funding, and campaigns to ensure responses, is there too much or not enough emphasis given to the Census? What efforts have you seen, and do you think they are effective?

- The Census Bureau's other population surveys - including the [American Community Survey](#) and the [Economic Census](#) - also provide important population statistics and community data. Should these surveys be given attention similar to that of the Census?

## Let's act

### Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share

- [Information gathered from the Census](#) is used to allocate over hundreds of billions of dollars in government spending, as well as redistribute seats in the House of Representatives.
- [A Census Bureau report](#) found Census data in 2015 helped allocate \$675 billion in federal funding for 132 programs from Medicare and Medicaid to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Head Start.
- Even our [roads and highways are impacted](#) - most states rely on population counts from the census to allocate gasoline sales tax revenue, which is a primary source of funding for local roads.
- Population changes measured by the census are used to redraw boundaries for legislative districts. [Estimates](#) from December 2019 project 17 states will either lose or gain electoral votes after the 2020 Census.
- 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.
- In 2018, the Census Bureau discovered, despite its privacy protection techniques, anyone with the proper data tools could use [2010 Census statistics to identify one in six Americans](#).

### Engage Locally

- *Learn more:*
  - **Research your elected representatives' positions** and their visions for how to tackle the challenges facing Americans at large and your community specifically.
    - Your legislators, state comptroller, attorney general and other local elected officials want to know their constituents. Write to them about your interest in the Census in 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.
  - **Explore the impact of the Census in your community.**
    - The [Census Bureau's QuickFacts](#) provides statistics for states and counties.
      - The [NCSL](#) also provides additional information on redistricting.
    - The Census Bureau's Complete Count Committees (CCC) program incorporates tribal, state, and local governments, schools, businesses, faith-based groups, and other community-based organizations to educate and motivate individuals to participate in the 2020 Census. [You can find a CCC near you](#).

- Interested in helping your community with the Census? [Consider applying to be a census taker](#).
  - Consider contacting your elected officials to hear from them about Census-based federal funding distribution in your area.
- *Reach out:*
  - Explore what organizations, legislators, and journalists you could contact to ask questions, learn more and get engaged.
  - If you have trouble finding the information you are looking for on your municipality's or state's website, consider contacting agency or department heads. You can find the contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#).
  - The Policy Circle offers a number of resources for engaging on the local level. Learn how to write a letter to the editor on [The Policy Circle website](#).
  - 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](#).

#### Post A Recap / Dive Deeper:

- Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present. Designate who will post a meeting recap.
- Decide your next meeting topic. Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting?
  - [The U.S. House of Representatives](#) or [The U.S. Senate](#)
  - [Government Regulation](#)
  - [Civic Engagement](#)
  - [The Electoral College](#)
  - Election Series: [Assessing Candidates](#), [Election Integrity](#), and [Campaign Finance](#)
- Dive Deeper into this area. 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.