

# Get ready

## The importance of the 2020 Census for townships

Soon across townships in Michigan, the 2020 U.S. Census will be on everyone's mind, as multiple mailings are being received at homes, people are logging in to complete the census form online for the first time, and doors are being knocked upon by census enumerators.

Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the federal government must complete a census every 10 years to make sure there is an accurate count of the people who call America home. This has occurred every decade since 1790, and this practice has had major implications across the country and the state of Michigan.

The 2020 Census will be no different, and it is incredibly crucial for townships to make sure every person in their community is counted.

As noted by the U.S. Census Bureau on its website ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), the census has the following general—and critically important—impacts:

- It determines how many representatives each state gets in Congress and is used to redraw district boundaries. Redistricting counts are sent to the states by March 31, 2021.
- Communities rely on census statistics to plan for a variety of services and programs, including emergency services, infrastructure and local schools.

- Businesses use census data to determine where to open places to shop.

The decennial census impacts are far and reaching for townships, and an undercount would mean Michigan communities would lose critical federal funding that supports programs and services, including rural development, veterans services and more. The fast-approaching 2020 Census will impact Michigan townships for the next 10 years in many different and profound ways.

As noted by Dr. Eric Guthrie, Michigan's state demographer, "If there is one thing that a local area can do throughout the decade to make sure their voice is heard, this is it."

### **Census 2020 timeline and process**

The U.S. Census Bureau has a calendar in place on its website breaking down its outreach plan for getting a full and accurate count.



**“If there is one thing that a local area can do throughout the decade to make sure their voice is heard, this [Census] is it.”**

—Dr. Eric Guthrie,  
Michigan state  
demographer

The process begins with a mailed invitation letter to complete the census between March 12 and March 20, 2020. The majority of people will receive information on how to complete the questionnaire online. This marks the first time that the internet will be the primary census response method. Based on demographic characteristics and internet connectivity of a geographic area, roughly 20 to 25 percent of people will initially receive the traditional paper form. A 1-800-number call-in option to complete the questionnaire will also be available for the first time in 2020.

Township officials well know that internet connectivity remains a major issue in many parts of Michigan, and because of this digital divide (as well as concerns about providing information online), individuals can ultimately choose their preferred method—internet, phone, or the classic option, paper. A paper questionnaire will be sent in April to households that have not yet responded, and various reminders will be sent to non-respondent households throughout the process as well.

Starting in May 2020, census enumerators will visit residences in person to collect information from remaining non-respondents.

Townships should consider their own options for encouraging a complete count—now and throughout the next eight months. The window to educate your residents on the need to complete the census closes a little more as each day passes.



# cover story



Clinton Charter Township (Macomb Co.) has challenged to neighboring Sterling Height to a friendly competition to see which community can “out-census” each other on social media. The township fire department are among the community members who have gotten in on the challenge, showing their support for a complete count.

This is more than a needed national response, but something that can impact each community, right down to the very street they live on.

“It’s really important that we get this count right every decade because all of our decisions that have been [made] throughout the decade can be traced back to, in one or another, to data that is derived from this [census],” Guthrie said.

## Township impacts

The census response of a township can help increase or decrease the importance of that region and impact its potential growth over the course of the next decade. There are multiple aspects in a township that could be impacted by a weak census response.

The first is around the funding. As noted previously, the population—and the needs of the population—could impact how much funds are allocated to a specific area. If a township does not respond fully, their area could be seen as stagnant—or worse, shrinking—and less funds may be allocated to them. This could impact roads, schools, hospitals and other local needs. It is estimated that almost \$675 billion in federal funds is distributed based on census data. You will want your community to receive a stronger portion—and the portion that it deserves—of that distribution.

For every resident who is not counted, Michigan could lose as much as \$1,800 per person, per year. This is funding that our communities, and our state, simply cannot afford to lose.

The voice of the community can also be greatly impacted by a strong census count—or undercount. “It’s difficult for people to justify their importance in a system without some sort of data showing that they exist,” Guthrie said. “And these are those data we look to primarily to look at the size, composition and distribution of the population. So, when we are talking about various cities or other types of municipal entities, we’re looking at the population counts that are derived ultimately from the census to show how large and how relatively important in the state.”

Census response, and the resulting statistics and demographics, can help plan how limited funds are spent in a township for community programs and services. A low count could impact if funds are spent in an area—and how much.

As noted previously, businesses look to the census to see if a community will be the right location for their business. Real estate developers also look to the census to decide whether to build in an area.

The overarching fact is a township has to live with this data for a decade. So it is vital that if a township wants to be seen as vibrant and growing they need to support and promote a strong census response ... or they may be feeling the implications of it for the next 10 years.

## Census barriers

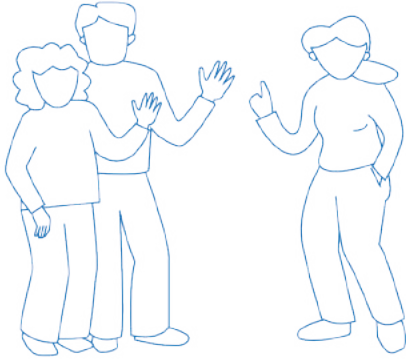
In today’s world, there are multiple reasons that could impact a strong 2020 Census response. With the recent news on immigration, there is a lot of concern around the country about completing the census and how it could impact a household, especially if a family member is an immigrant.

Other populations that have a high-risk of being missed outside the different minority communities include the more mobile populations, renters and children between the ages of 0 and 4 (*discussed further on page 15*). In January 2019, the Census Bureau released the *2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Focus Group Final Report*, looking at the concerns around the citizenship question and how the census is currently viewed by minorities, as well as other communities (rural, young people, etc.).

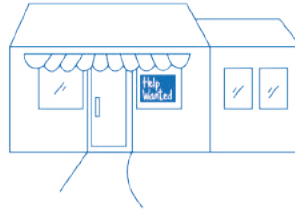
The report was created out of 42 focus groups that took place in 14 different locations around the country. Five responses arose to the front as the biggest concerns around the census:

- Knowledge
- Apathy
- Confidentiality and privacy
- Repercussions
- Distrust of the government

# Census data are being used all around you.

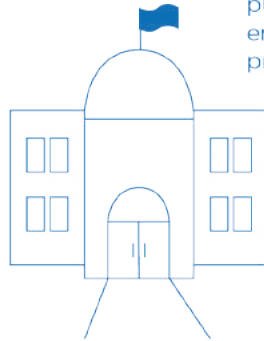


Residents use the census to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life and consumer advocacy.

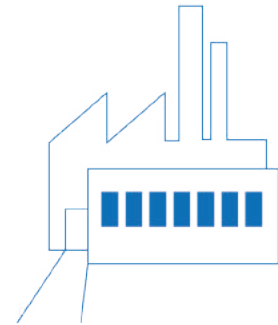


Businesses use census data to decide where to build factories, offices and stores, which create jobs.

Local governments use the census for public safety and emergency preparedness.



Real estate developers use the census to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.



www.census.gov

Each of these concerns emphasizes the importance of a strong educational focus in census outreach, and townships can help alleviate concerns. For example, for residents who cite privacy concerns as a reason to not participate, it is important to note that any information is completely confidential—in fact, it is against the law for any responses or information to be released by the Census Bureau or anyone associated with the census. Data collected is only used for census statistics and findings. However, if there are still potential concerns, there is always the reminder that taking part in the census is mandatory—and one’s civic duty.

Completing the questionnaire is also quick! It has been calculated that it only takes about 10 minutes to complete the census, one minute for each question.

The 2019 census barrier report did discover that participants were encouraged by the idea of community funding and how the census could positively impact their region, noting, “The focus group discussions highlighted a number of obstacles to self-response but also a strong motivator—tying participation in the census to community funding and, by extension, the hope for a better future for younger generations. Though it came to life differently across audiences, this idea was a common thread for all groups.”

## Generational concerns

During the 2010 Census, the age group that was missed the most were young children (under age 5). Federal funding is impacted by these numbers and it is believed that since the last census, Michigan lost \$9.7 million a year that could have gone to multiple programs to benefit Michigan’s children, including special education, SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) the state’s foster care system and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

There are multiple reasons why this might have occurred in the past. Parents might simply have forgotten to include them because they were a newborn or because the child spends his/her time between two households.

To correct this problem from occurring in 2020, new outreach plans will be needed by the community. That could include sharing information with doctor’s offices, daycares and hospitals, and emphasizing the importance of not forgetting their little ones. Another resource is a data tool created by the Michigan League for Public Policy’s Kids Count that can be found online (<https://mlpp.org/2020census/>), which provides estimates of children by county, and by various categories.

Another generational concern involves college students. The census is based on where an individual is living on April 1, 2020. While this may be a bit confusing for students

## Sheridan represents MTA on governor's new Complete Count Committee

MTA Executive Director Neil Sheridan was appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to serve on the new 2020 United States Census Complete Count Committee, which will assist in a complete and accurate census count in Michigan.

"This committee is essential to making sure that Michigan has the resources and representation it needs," Whitmer said. "The 2020 census count will dictate how much federal funding is allotted to Michigan for our schools, infrastructure, and how many representatives we have in the U.S. House of Representatives. I am establishing a census committee so that Michigan will be prepared to organize, educate and count our residents with accuracy."

The committee is charged with providing public leadership, identifying barriers that may prevent a full count, creating and implementing an action plan to overcome recognized barriers, and identifying opportunities to coordinate with other entities working toward a complete count.

"The governor has asked for MTA's and your township's help in driving a complete census count for Michigan," Sheridan said. "It is crucial that townships' residents fully participate so that we protect our seats in Congress, boost our eligibility for a return of the federal tax dollars we pay in, and correctly document the population movement into our townships beyond the 52 percent of Michigan residents estimated previously.

"Make no mistake, having your community correctly tallied in the census is a fight for resources and representation and not a statistical data-gathering exercise. Please start spreading positive, pro-census participation messages in your newsletters and other communications with your residents and other civic leaders. We will pass along any helpful resources received from the state and federal agencies through the *Township Focus* magazine, our website and social media."

The committee will be housed within the state Department of Technology, Management and Budget and administered by the 50 members appointed by the governor, which represent a diverse group of Michiganders from various geographic, economic, racial, cultural, gender and occupational backgrounds.

and their families, if a student is living on a campus on Census Day, they need to complete a census response for that location, not from their home. Some local colleges are embracing the need to educate students about this—like Central Michigan University, where they are planning an outreach to make sure their students who are staying on campus (or near campus) correctly fill out the census for that location.

On the other end of the generational spectrum, there is the concern about the aging population and their response to the census. Townships may wish to consider reaching out to their older residents—perhaps at the township senior center or library, or local churches. Talking with these residents and sharing information can help to alleviate worries or confusion that they may have about the new online method for response or sharing personal information over the internet.

This outreach to older adults to ensure they take part in the census is critical. Planners and policy-makers look to the census data for trends. If they see an aging population growing over the next 10 years, they may turn to options in the community for services or new zoning considerations to accommodate that population.

A 2018 Census Bureau report, *Demographic Turning Points for the United States for 2020 to 2060*, explores more about the national impact of the aging population and can be found [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). The July 2014 *Township Focus* cover story, "Changing times: Planning for an aging population" is also available on the members-only side of MTA's website, [www.michigantownships.org](http://www.michigantownships.org) (search for "Planning for an aging population" after logging in).

### Michigan efforts around the census

Just in the last few decades, the census has had a major impact on Michigan's representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. In the 1970s, Michigan had 19 members; however, today they have only 14. If the 2020 Census does not go as planned, there is a concern that the number might drop again. Michigan was the only state in the nation to lose population following the 2010 Census, dropping to 9,883,640 residents. Former Gov. Rick Snyder had a mission to increase the state's population to 10 million by the 2020 Census. It will be telling if this mission was successful and how it impacts Michigan nationally.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has emphasized her desire to have a full census count in the state of Michigan. To ensure this, she signed Executive Order 2019-15 forming a statewide committee to help participation and inform the public of the importance of the census. The 2020 U.S. Census Complete Count Committee includes 50 members from business groups, lawmakers and local government organizations—including MTA—among others. (See sidebar at left for more on MTA's involvement in the committee.)



One challenge will be getting a response in Michigan's "hard-to-count regions." To help, a map created from 2010 Census responses shows local officials the response rates from their areas, and any areas they should focus on for 2020 efforts (check out the map at [censushardtocomcountmaps2020.us](https://censushardtocomcountmaps2020.us)).

### Resources to help

The U.S. Census Bureau has a plethora of information available on its website—including infographics, toolkits, photos and other resources that townships can use to help promote the 2020 Census. In addition, there will be five area census offices in Michigan for the 2020 Census: in Detroit, Lansing, Midland, Macomb County and Oakland County.

To assist with outreach, one Michigan organization has also been tasked with spearheading efforts to build awareness of the census and secure a strong statewide response. For more than two years, the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) has been working on a "Census 2020 Michigan Nonprofits Count Campaign," which aims to mobilize nonprofits and partner with the state and local governments to encourage participation in the census in communities that are at significant risk of being undercounted.

To help with this mission, MNA issued a series of mini-grants for nonprofits to form "hubs" in their regions to help support census activities. Details on these hubs—located around the state from Marquette to Detroit—can be found on Be Counted Michigan's "Engage" webpage

(<https://becountedmi2020.com/engage/>). Township officials and volunteers can reach out to those local hubs for assistance, if needed.

Guthrie also emphasized the importance of forming a local complete count committee (CCC). CCCs are usually volunteer committees focused primarily on two tasks:

- Building the public's awareness about the census
- Motivating the population to respond to the census

The hubs can assist townships with the creation of CCCs, from beginning the process to resources for outreach (some of which are available on the "Resources" webpage of <https://becountedmi2020.com>).

"We're doing a number of trainings and technical assistance, not just for our hubs, but anybody can call in and hear about what we are doing—best practices, what we are learning from the field, what we are learning from the Census Bureau," said Joan Gustafson, MNA external affairs officer and campaign manager for the MNA efforts. In addition, MNA is working with 28 Michigan Community Action Agencies around the state that work with lower-income individuals and those in poverty, putting up kiosks where people will be able to complete their census response easily.

"We are going to be developing all kinds of local strategies that will encourage people to fill out their form," Gustafson said, noting that township officials can sign up for weekly Be Counted Michigan newsletter (via the "Engage" page).



## Your Partner in RETIREMENT

MERS provides customized benefits to fit your workforce and your budget

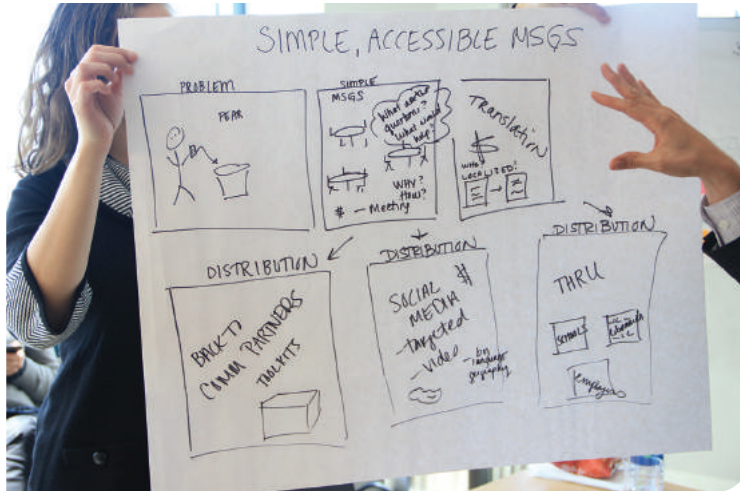
- Retirement plans
- Other post-employment benefits
- Group life and disability insurance



[www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com)  
800.767.MERS (6377)



# cover story



As part of a complete count committee, or on their own, townships can help ensure a strong response. Start planning and brainstorming now on ways to reach your residents and help spread the “I COUNT!” message.

Throughout the upcoming months, MTA will also share with our members information about census efforts, webinars, outreach ideas and resources via *Township Focus* and our publications, website, e-newsletters and social media as they become available. We also have a “Census” webpage on the members-only side of [www.michigantownships.org](http://www.michigantownships.org) (access via the “Index of Topics” under the “Answer Center” tab) with details on and links to census programs and news.

## Township efforts can make the difference

Each and every township in the state benefits from a complete 2020 Census count—and each township can play a role in ensuring their residents are educated about, and are comfortable with, completing the census questionnaire and feel proud to say, “I COUNT!” in their community, state and nation.

**Clinton Charter Township** (Macomb Co.) is Michigan’s 7th largest municipality—and the first township in the state to reach 100,000 population. The township well knows the value of a complete count for 2020, and ascertaining demographic and statistical information about its residents. In fact, the township was the first in Michigan to become a “Welcoming Township,” a statewide initiative to create more welcoming, immigrant-friendly environments that foster an inclusive environment essential to growth.

Deputy Supervisor **Elizabeth Vogel** believes in the possibility of the census to make a positive difference in her

area. She also has been thinking outside the box, creating a CCC with neighboring communities—Mount Clemens, Roseville and Frasier—that share many important resources to work together in efforts to promote the census to their residents. Other townships may wish to take a similar approach, Vogel noted.

“If you’ve got overlapping neighbors, whether it is townships or cities, if you have a good relationship and share stakeholders, don’t reinvent the wheel—work together,” she said.

And for neighboring Sterling Heights, which has its own CCC, they are planning a competition over social media, “Out-censusing each other.” This is being done by using signs supporting the census and having citizens—and even the township’s fire and police personnel—in pictures showing their support.

Vogel also shared other opportunities the joint CCC is considering, like sending information home with students, reminding their parents to count them in the census responses. They are considering using a postcard as part outreach through the Meals on Wheels program, informing senior citizens of the upcoming census and sharing a contact if they need more information. They are also planning to work with area libraries, reaching out to events for both young children and senior citizens.

“The more successful your community is, the more successful the state is,” Vogel said. “If we are all successful, Michigan receives more money.”

**Rose Township** (Oakland Co.) Supervisor **Diane Scheib-Snyder** is not only forming a CCC for her township, but also takes part in one for her county. Noting that efforts are just in the planning stages right now for the outreach around the township, Scheib-Snyder emphasized that there are many opportunities available for townships to help spread the importance of the census.

“The people here might not think their count is important because we’re kind of rural and spread out ... it *does* matter,” Scheib-Snyder said.

Much of her outreach plans are focused on making sure that message is heard. Some ideas she is considering include an outreach to their elementary school, with coloring pages about the importance of the census and making videos with the children to help spread the word through local public access channels and social media.

Scheib-Snyder is also thinking about ways to reach out to the area’s hard-to-count populations, such targeted mailings that give township contact information and let people know that the township is available to help and answer questions.

“If they talked to someone locally, maybe it would take some of that fear away,” she hoped.

Gustafson also praised some of the work being done by the City of Detroit, which has identified “block captains” who will be going block to block to make sure the forms are completed and Detroit has a strong response.

### Some outreach strategies

As part of a CCC, or on their own, townships can help ensure a strong response. Here are just a few ideas:

- Holding CCC or census kick-off meetings. Invite the media to promote coverage.
- Participating in sporting events, festivals or parades where you can reach your community members.
- Hosting Q&A events.
- Including census information—including dispelling any myths or misconceptions—in your township newsletter.
- Creating an informational flier to include when the township mails tax bills.
- Going digital— post information and links on the township website, and consider using social media.
- Helping recruit census workers when jobs become available.

No one knows your township better than you. Get creative on ways to reach your residents, especially those hard-to-reach populations like the elderly or minorities.

### Census Day 2020




Another opportunity for local efforts to promote the census, and its importance to the citizens and communities, is making a celebration out of Census Day 2020.

Census Day 2020—April 1, 2020—will be observed nationwide. It is a great opportunity for townships to create educational events around the holiday. By this point in the federal calendar, citizens should have received mailing and have been given the option to complete the census by mail, phone or online.

If your township begins its work now, by the time Census Day 2020 arrives, it will truly feel like a celebration and a bright day for your community’s future.



**Scott Southard,**  
MTA Staff Writer

 <p><b>Steven Mann</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7509 mann@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Patrick McGow</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7684 mcgow@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Thomas Colis</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7677 colis@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Katrina Piligian Desmond</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7665 desmond@millercanfield.com</p>
 <p><b>Steve Frank</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7503 frank@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Jeffrey Aronoff</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7678 aronoff@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Ronald Liscombe</b></p> <p>+1.313.496.7906 liscombe@millercanfield.com</p>	 <p><b>Ian Koffler</b></p> <p>+1.517.483.4904 koffler@millercanfield.com</p>

## THE LAW FIRM FOR TOWNSHIPS

From municipal bonds to innovative projects, collaborative agreements and tax increment financing, townships and their attorneys throughout Michigan rely on Miller Canfield’s 160+ years of collective wisdom and diverse expertise.

**We are where you are. Local firm. Global resources. ■**

Attorney advertising material – Prior results do not guarantee similar outcomes. This message is for general information only and should not be used as a basis for specific action without obtaining further legal advice.



# MILLER CANFIELD

millercanfield.com/PublicLaw