Be Counted
Newaygo County
BeCountedWestMI.org
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Be Counted West Michigan is an effort by the West Michigan Research Network (WMRN) to help government officials and agencies promote a complete 2020 Census count in their communities.

In 2018, the West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance awarded WMRN a grant to support the work of Be Counted West Michigan in Region 4, which includes Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola and Ottawa Counties.

**OUR GOAL**
The goal of Be Counted West Michigan is to provide a central hub of relevant data and resources for municipalities and government agencies serving the people of Prosperity Region 4.

**OUR MISSION**
The mission of Be Counted West Michigan is to support a complete and accurate 2020 Census count in Prosperity Region 4 by providing accessible and easy to understand data and resources to the region’s municipalities and government agencies.

**OUR VISION**
We believe that participation in the Census is relevant and valuable to the self and broader community. Participation will ensure:

- fair representation at all levels of government,
- appropriate funding distribution for financial assistance programs that benefit West Michigan's communities and
- reliable data to inform research, decision making and planning across the region.
Who We Are

The West Michigan Research Network is a community of researchers in West Michigan who convene to cultivate professional relationships, skills and resources.

Our priorities are:
- professional/talent development
- peer review
- research design
- data advocacy

Why We Exist

The 2020 Census faces multiple challenges to getting an accurate count. Learn more about these in the Challenges for 2020 section.

Be Counted West Michigan is dedicated to helping local leaders promote a complete and accurate census because:
- An accurate census helps ensure fair representation at all levels of government.
- The census directly impacts the funding your community will receive over the next decade.
- The census provides the most reliable data for research, decision making and planning.
What’s New

INTERNET FIRST
The 2020 Census will offer options for internet and phone responses for the first time. The Census Bureau plans to encourage households to respond online.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES
The 2020 Census will use significant technological advancements of which local leaders should be aware.

For example, the Census Bureau has turned to aerial imaging software to update its Master Address File and to ensure they have record of every living quarter in the U.S.

Additionally, the Census Bureau is relying on automation for the enumeration process. Census takers will use smart devices to conduct door-to-door follow-up for non-responders. The devices will transmit data digitally, so the Census Bureau has real-time data on response rates.

FEAR & MISTRUST
While the use of technology can be seen as a positive advancement for the Census Bureau, the heightened level of fear and mistrust in the country will be a formidable challenge.

Local government is the level of government trusted most by the public. Therefore, local leaders are a trusted voice that can champion participation, instill confidence and counter false information.
Challenges

TECHNOLOGY BARRIERS
Citizens living in areas with low-internet access, especially rural America, will be challenged to respond. Additionally, census takers may find using their smart devices difficult in these areas.

About 16% of U.S. adults are not considered digitally literate.2 This will make accessing and responding to an online census difficult for this population.

PRIVACY AND CITIZENSHIP CONCERNS
Many populations are concerned that their information will be used by the government to target them.

In a 2018 survey, 63% of respondents indicated they believe the census is used to help the FBI and police keep track of people who break the law, and 53% of respondents believe it is used to locate people living in the country without documentation.3 Both assumptions are inaccurate.

INCREASED APATHEY, DECREASED TRUST & CONFUSION
In a 2018 survey, 22% of respondents were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” their responses would be used against them.3

CENSUS EMPLOYMENT HIRING
In a time of very low unemployment rates, the census may be challenged to fill over 500,000 temporary positions for the 2020 Census.
Who Is Hard-to-Count

With every census, some groups are missed at disproportionately high rates and are considered hard-to-count (HTC). Local leaders can help reduce undercounts by identifying these groups and focusing their efforts on HTC populations.

MAPPING YOUR HTC COMMUNITIES
Find specific data for your community using Be Counted West Michigan's 2020 Census Low Response Analyzer at BeCountedWestMI.org/dashboard/.

KNOWN HARD-TO-COUNT GROUPS
- Families with young children
- Racial & ethnic minorities
- Limited English proficiency households
- Immigrants
- Renters & residents who move often
- Alternative or overcrowded housing units
- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Young, mobile adults
- Gated communities
- Publicly inaccessible multifamily units
- Single-parent headed households
- Persons displaced by natural disasters

BARRIERS TO BEING COUNTED
- Language barriers
- Mistrust in government
- Privacy/cybersecurity concerns
- Untraditional living arrangements
- Lack of reliable broadband/internet access
RESIDENCE CRITERIA FOR THE 2020 CENSUS

• The census seeks to count all people residing in the U.S. at their usual residence, which is the place where they live and sleep most on or around Census Day, April 1, 2020.
• People who do not have a usual residence or who cannot determine one are counted where they are present most on April 1, 2020.

Homeowners, renters and household members with one residence will be counted at this residence, even if they are temporarily visiting elsewhere on April 1, 2020.

Temporary residents, vacationers, multi-home owners and “snowbirds” will receive census mailers at each housing unit but the “head of household” will respond using their usual residence. Children under shared-custody will be counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. In cases of equally shared custody, they will be counted where they are present on April 1, 2020.

Non-citizens who are living in the U.S. will be counted at their usual residence. Tourists, business travelers or other temporary visitors will not be counted.

Active military personnel and families who are stationed in the U.S., deployed overseas but stationed stateside during the census or aboard a military vessel who’s homeport is in the U.S. will be counted at their usual residence either on or off-base. If they are stationed overseas or aboard a military vessel who’s homeport is overseas, they will be counted as part of the federally-affiliated overseas population by the U.S. Department of Defense.
Residents of group facilities will be counted at the facility in which they are housed or living on April 1, 2020.

College students who live on campus or in off-campus housing will be counted at the school facilities or at their off-campus housing. College students who commute will be counted at their usual residence. Those living and/or studying abroad will not be counted.

Boarding-school students will be counted at their parents’ home.

Persons living abroad or expats who are a part of a federal mission will be counted as part of the federally-affiliated overseas population. Anyone else living abroad will not be counted. Those traveling overseas temporarily will be counted at their usual residence in the U.S.

Persons in shelters and experiencing homelessness will be counted where they live and sleep most of the time if they have a usual residence. If they do not have a usual residence on April 1, 2020 but are staying at a temporary shelter or residence, they will be counted at that shelter or residence. If they live outdoors with no shelter on April 1, 2020, they will be counted at the outdoor location where they are present on Census Day. Outdoor locations will be visited by census enumerators only if they are identified with the help of municipal offices and nonprofit organizations in advance.

Incarcerated persons will be counted at the prison or jail in which they are incarcerated on April 1, 2020.
How to Respond

In March of 2020, about 80% of addresses will receive a letter with instructions on how to respond online or by telephone.

The remaining 20% (selected because they are less likely to have or use the internet) will receive the same letter AND a paper questionnaire with postage-paid return envelope.

ONLINE
The 2020 Census will be online first, meaning all households will have the opportunity to respond online or using a smartphone.

Heads of households will identify themselves online using their household address or a unique ID they received through the census mailing.

PHONE
The 2020 Census will also be the first census to allow for phone responses.

Respondents can ask questions about the census by calling the toll-free Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) line.

PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE
The 20% of households, noted above, will receive a paper questionnaire in the first census mailing as well as a request to respond online or by telephone.
Nonresponse Follow-Up

The Census Bureau will begin Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) in the beginning of May. During NRFU, the Census Bureau will count households or determine whether a housing unit is vacant for addresses that did not self-respond.

After three mailed requests to complete the census online or by phone with no response, households will receive a paper questionnaire with return instructions on the fourth and subsequent mailings.

VACANT HOUSING UNITS
Using administrative data, primarily from the U.S. Postal Service, local governments and third-party commercial vendors, the Census Bureau will identify and remove vacant housing units from the NRFU records.

IN-PERSON ENUMERATION
For the first time in 2020, enumerators will use smart devices, instead of a pen and paper, to collect data.

All non-responding households, that are not considered vacant housing units, will receive a visit from a census enumerator at least once. If no one answers the door or if the head of household is unavailable, a note will be left explaining the attempt and encouraging the occupants to self-respond. Enumerators can visit a non-responsive household up to six times.
Programs that support our state’s most vulnerable populations rely on census data to determine level of funding. These programs include but are not limited to:

- Medicaid
- nutrition assistance
- highway construction
- workforce & economic development
- Head Start/Early Start
- K-12 education

**WHAT THIS MEANS FOR WEST MICHIGAN**

**THE 13 COUNTIES IN WEST MICHIGAN RECEIVED OVER $7 MILLION IN EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE/JOB TRAINING FUNDS IN 2017.**

**WEST MICHIGAN COUNTIES RECEIVED OVER $63 MILLION IN 2017 FOR TARGETED, EXTRA EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO HELP AT-RISK ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS ACHIEVE AND SUCCEED.**

* Allocation of federal funds to these programs is guided by data derived from the Census. Allocation formulas used to calculate funding for census-guided programs use many differing factors. This makes it impossible to accurately predict the per capita or location-specific vulnerabilities of a miscount.
What This Means for You

In Michigan we stand to lose an estimated $1,800 per person, per year for programs that use census data\(^4\). What does that mean for Newaygo County?

**MEDICAID AND HEALTHY MICHIGAN ENROLLMENT**

As of 2017, an estimated 27.7% of Newaygo County residents or over 13,100 individuals received Medicaid or Healthy Michigan benefits. Of these recipients 45.9% were under the age of 19.\(^6\)

**K-12 EDUCATION**

Over $2.3 million in Title I allocations were received by school districts in Newaygo County in 2017.\(^5\) Title I funds give schools financial support to provide specialized programming to improve student achievement, especially for low-income families.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

In 2017, Michigan Works! West Central received over $1.3 million in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act allocations\(^5\). This funding allowed them to assist over 4,500 visitors per year at their Fremont Service Center.\(^7\)

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*Allocation of federal funds to these programs is guided by data derived from the Census. Allocation formulas used to calculate funding for census-guided programs use many differing factors. This makes it impossible to accurately predict the per capita or location-specific vulnerabilities of a miscount.*
The U.S. Census Bureau estimates it will need up to 500,000 temporary employees to reach all nonresponding households.

Collaborate

WITH THE CENSUS BUREAU
Local governments can assist the Census Bureau through get out the count (GOTC) efforts and preparation for the enumeration.

LOCAL CENSUS REPRESENTATIVE
Your local Census Bureau representative is:
Kris Steinberg, Partnership Specialist
Kris.S.Steinberg@2020census.gov

LOCAL UPDATE OF CENSUS ADDRESSES PROGRAM (LUCA)
In an effort to establish where to count, the Census Bureau attempts to update and locate every address in the country that needs to be counted and establishes the Master Address File (MAF) and the Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) mapping database. This information is used to determine which addresses receive mailings on Census Day.

Local governments play an important role in updating this information and ensuring it is accurate by participating in LUCA. Participation in LUCA ended in 2018. However, the New Construction program enables communities to add residential units to the MAF if they were built after LUCA ended but before Census Day 2020.

Federally recognized tribes with a reservation and/or off-reservation trust lands, states, counties, cities (legally incorporated places) and townships (minor civil divisions) that contain blocks where the Census Bureau plans to mail questionnaires to living quarters for the 2020 Census can participate in the New Construction program.
MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO RESPOND

Are you familiar with the populations in your community that are traditionally missed in the census? Local leaders can play a critical role in reducing undercounts in their communities by helping the Census Bureau identify and focus on hard-to-count (HTC) populations.

• Learn how different HTC populations feel about the census and what can motivate them to participate using the 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators (CBAMS) Survey, which you can access here: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/final-analysis/2020-report-cbams-focus-group.html.

• Understand the population in your community and tailor your messaging to specific demographics using the resources provided by Be Counted West Michigan and their interactive dashboard at BeCountedWestMI.org.

PROMOTE CENSUS BUREAU HIRING
The Census Bureau is planning to hire up to 500,000 temporary employees nationally to help ensure a complete and accurate count. You can help by promoting these job opportunities in your community.

• Promote census job openings on your job boards.
• Conduct focused recruitment efforts in neighborhoods with HTC populations.
Collaborate

WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS & MUNICIPALITIES
In a 2018 survey about the U.S. Census, respondents revealed they trusted their local government more than state or federal.

USE YOUR POSITION TO GET OUT THE COUNT
Local, elected officials are typically the most trusted government representatives. As a trusted voice, they can remind constituents why census participation is so important to themselves, their families and communities.

START AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL TEAM
This can help identify resources across departments and ensure outreach efforts are not redundant. Identify a lead coordinator from whom department/agency leaders can get answers and guidance to support the 2020 Census.

PARTICIPATE IN THE NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
Even if you didn’t participate in LUCA, you can still participate in the New Construction program.

WORK WITH YOUR OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND/OR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Find out how you can coordinate communications efforts to support the 2020 Census in conjunction with other campaigns. Leverage your local media presence and social media platforms to connect with members of your community.

UTILITY & OTHER MONTHLY SERVICE MAILINGS
Include alerts on how to respond, important dates and locations of assistance centers in service mailings that are already going out.

In 2018, 47% of responders said they did not trust their local government, compared to 59% who said they did not trust the federal government.³

BeCountedWestMI.org
CONNECT WITH YOUR SCHOOLS
Encourage schools to use the Statistics in Schools program where teachers can find resources about the importance of the census. Students can learn what the census is, how it impacts their community and take the message home. Access Statistics in Schools here: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources.html.

ESTABLISH CENSUS ASSISTANCE CENTERS AT PUBLIC BUILDINGS
Census Assistance Centers provide access to kiosks or computers with internet service so individuals can participate in the census even if they don't have internet access at home. Libraries, community centers and other social service buildings are great locations for community members to get information about the census and respond online.

- Help connect populations with low digital-literacy to digital skills training opportunities.
  Contact local education providers and workforce development agencies to learn about available training.

PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PLAN A CENSUS DAY EVENT
Help generate excitement around Census Day, share the importance of participate and engage HTC neighborhoods. In 2010, “march to the Mailbox“ events were held by hundreds of communities across the country.

ALERT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT, EMERGENCY RESPONSE & DISPATCH SERVICES
Census enumerators will be canvassing door-to-door during in-person NRFU, potentially leading to increased 911 calls.
Participating in the 2020 Census is a civic duty and good for your community.

The very first responsibility of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution is a count of all persons living in the United States to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. But your participation in the census impacts a much broader range of decisions, from how legislative districts at all levels of government are drawn, to where roads and transit are built in the future, to how more than $800 billion in federal funding is distributed annually across the country.

There are multiple ways to be counted in the 2020 Census.

In mid-March 2020 most addresses in the United States will receive a postcard with instructions to participate online, but you will also have the option to respond via phone or mail. Through spring and summer 2020, Census Bureau employees will follow up in-person at addresses that have not yet been counted.

Your personally identifiable information (PII) is protected by law and cannot be shared outside of the Census Bureau.

Census Bureau employees are sworn to uphold the confidentiality of your data for life. Your responses can only be used to produce statistical information, and your personal information cannot be seen or used by other government agencies or the courts. Title 13 of the U.S. Code imposes steep penalties for anyone who shares personally identifiable information (PII).
“Data security is the highest priority for the Census Bureau and extensive protections are in place to protect the integrity of the 2020 Census.”
Online responses are secured by multiple layers of encryption and isolated from online access as soon as you hit submit. And by working with the federal intelligence community and private industry, the Census Bureau can quickly identify and respond to any external threats to its databases.

“English language proficiency is not required to participate in the 2020 Census.”
The complete online census questionnaire will be available in twelve languages other than English. Telephone responses will be accepted in the same additional 12 languages. Paper forms will be printed in English and Spanish. Language guides and glossaries will be available in 59 non-English languages, plus Braille.

“If you don’t have access to the internet in your home, you can still be counted.”
The online questionnaire can be completed on a smartphone and desktop internet kiosks may be available at local post offices, libraries and other community centers. Households identified as having limited internet access and households that do not respond to initial census mailings will also be given the opportunity to complete the census through the traditional paper questionnaire. A telephone response option will also be available for the first time.
Every community faces different census related challenges. Here are some key points of consideration for your city if it falls into any of the categories below.

RAPIDLY GROWING COMMUNITIES
If your community is rapidly building more housing units, your city’s participation in the New Construction Program is critical. Your involvement with the program will ensure housing units built between the conclusion of the LUCA program (Summer 2018) and Census Day (April 1, 2020) are included in the Census Bureau’s Master Address File (MAF).

HIGH IMMIGRANT / NON-NATIVE-ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATIONS
Civic engagement tends to be lower for immigrant and non-native-English speaking communities. City leaders should make engaging with these communities a priority. Be sure to include trusted voices – such as religious leaders, educators, nonprofit service providers and nonEnglish media – in your efforts.

VACATION DESTINATIONS & CITIES WITH “SNOW BIRDS”
Be sure to reference the “How Are Different Populations Counted” section to determine how temporary residents are counted in your community.
COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY CITIES
Be sure to reference the “Where People are Counted?” section to determine how your student population will be counted. It is important to note that while NRFU is scheduled to start in May 2020, the Census Bureau will begin the NRFU process earlier in areas with a concentration of college students living off campus, to account for students leaving after the spring semester. College students are also good job candidates for enumerators.

RENTERS & TRANSITORY OCCUPANTS
People whose “usual home” at the time of the census is transitory or mobile – are also at heightened risk of being undercounted. They tend to live in hard-to-reach locales (e.g., hotels, motels, marinas, racetracks, circuses, carnivals, camp grounds, and RV parks). Since the Census Bureau will not visit every locale, it will conduct a special “transitory enumeration” that relies on assistance from local officials and community advocates to identify temporary transitory locations, such as motels, that now house families displaced by economic distress.

CITIES WITH OR NEAR MILITARY BASES
Be sure to reference the “How Are Different Populations Counted” section to determine how your military and federally-affiliated population will be counted. The Census Bureau has recently changed how deployed military personnel serving overseas during the census are counted, to better ensure an accurate count of military communities.
Important Census Dates

**JANUARY 2020:** Census Questionnaire Assistance will be available to answer general questions about the census from mid-January through early September 2020.

**FEBRUARY 2020:** The Census Bureau will contact administrators of group quarters (military barracks, college dorms, prisons, and skilled nursing homes, among others) in advance of the enumeration of these locations, which will occur in April.

**MARCH 12, 2020:** The Internet self-response period will start as households begin to receive invitations to respond, either through the mail or hand-delivered to households in many rural and remote areas. Households may continue to self-respond through July 31.

**MARCH 30, 2020:** Service-Based Enumeration (SBE) will begin. This three-day/night enumeration occurs at shelters, locations that provide services for people experiencing homelessness, and targeted outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness sleep.

**APRIL 1, 2020:** Census Day! Respondents do not have to wait until April 1 to respond but should include everyone who will be a “usual resident” on April 1. If people aren’t sure, they can wait until April 1 to respond.

**APRIL 2020:** Census takers begin visiting college students who live on campus, people living in senior centers, and others who live among large groups of people. Census takers also begin conducting quality check interviews to help ensure an accurate count.

**MAY 13, 2020:** Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) will begin. During NRFU, the Census Bureau will follow up with households that did not self-respond to the census by sending reminders and/or visiting in person. NRFU will continue through July. (In communities with large numbers of off-campus college students, NRFU will begin on April 9, to reach students before the academic term ends.)

**DECEMBER 2020:** The Census Bureau delivers apportionment counts to the President and Congress as required by law.

**MARCH 31, 2021:** By this date, the Census Bureau will send redistricting counts to states. This information is used to redraw legislative districts based on population changes.
Additional Resources

• BeCountedWestMI.org (for localized data and resources)
• 2020Census.gov
• Local Census Bureau Representative:
  Kris Steinberg – Kris.S.Steinberg@2020census.gov
• BeCountedMI2020.org (for nonprofit organizations)
• Regional Census Hub:
  Freemont Area Community Foundation
  4424 W. 48th St, Freemont, MI 49412
  231-924-5350
  facommunityfoundation.org
Sources


