

BE COUNTED

How the
2020
Census
Impacts
Real
Estate

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IT'S 2020:

Year of the once-in-a-decade Census. You might not be thinking much about the federally mandated count of every person living in the United States. Beyond having to fill out a form, will the Census really affect you?

If you're a REALTOR®, it absolutely will. The data collected during the 2020 Census will influence the communities agents live and work in, both today and for many years to come. It will impact neighborhood development, home values and property taxes, and it will reveal valuable information about population shifts and buyer demographics.

As Compass agent Ari Afshar puts it,

"The Census is really just an exceptionally detailed real estate report ... The Census provides the data map in which we live. The more accurate the map, the better we are served to operate within it."

Census data can even influence where businesses decide (or don't decide) to open, expand or offer job opportunities. Olivia Snarski, local democracy program manager for the National League of Cities, says: "On top of determining federal funding and congressional representation, the Census guides research, decision-making and planning for both the public and private sectors for the next 10 years. This will shape the opportunities that real

HARD-TO-COUNT COMMUNITIES

Children under 5
Elderly
Non-English speakers
Immigrants
Renters
Racial and ethnic minorities
Residents in gated communities
Multi-family residents
Recent movers
People displaced by a natural disaster
Homeless
Single-parent households
Highly mobile residents

See [CensusHardtoCount Maps2020.US](#) for more details on hard-to-count communities in your area.

estate agents [will] have to grow their businesses and develop their neighborhoods."

As REALTORS®, your livelihoods are grounded in the unique natures of the communities that make up your spheres. The Census might seem untouchably vast, but it has the power to affect real change right in your neighborhood.

At Risk of an Undercount

This year's Census will determine how \$675 billion in federal funds are distributed throughout the country. Those funds will go to local infrastructure updates, public education, housing and health services, transit and more, all at the local level. The Census will also help determine how communities are represented in government. If an area is undercounted, it could miss out on significant federal funding and appropriate representation in government, potentially limiting its future growth.

"The consequences of an undercount aren't abstract or political," Snarski says. "They impact the lives of all residents: students, parents, teachers, doctors, small

business owners, senior citizens and, yes, real estate agents. In short, [an undercount] impacts everyone."

Unfortunately, California is at high risk of an undercount, according to experts. The state is home to a large share of what the Census deems "hard-to-count" communities — groups of residents who, for many reasons, are difficult either to reach or to get to participate in the Census count. These groups include people like non-English speakers, immigrants, children, renters and the elderly, among many others. And according to the Public Policy Institute of California, if enough of these hard-to-count community members are missed, California could lose valuable federal funding — or even a seat in Congress.

When it comes to hard-to-count communities, California is particularly problematic. In 2017, almost three-quarters of California's population fell into a hard-to-count category. The Central Valley region is especially vulnerable due to its high numbers of Native, Latino and black Americans, according to Joe Hayes, a research associate at PPIC. "We typically have a more inaccurate count than other parts of the country, and our [hard-to-count] population is growing," says Hayes. "This is, in part, because of the housing crisis, but also because of demographics."

Concerns about data privacy, as well as the proposed citizenship question — which was shot down by the Supreme Court in June and will not be included on Census forms — are also adding to the challenge of accurately counting California (and most other states across the country).

Yawar Charlie, a Compass agent and series regular on CNBC's up-and-coming show "Listing Impossible," is a member of the Census Complete Count Committee in West Hollywood. He's seen some of these fears in action.

"Often, there is a fear that somehow participating in the Census will be something bad, or the government will have extra information on them that that person does not want out," Charlie says. "It is my job to help dismiss these rumors and fallacies to ensure people are counted so they get adequate representation in government

for funding, community programs, grants and the availability of loans."

Agents like Charlie have a unique opportunity to help encourage Census participation and ensure their communities are properly counted and funded. As Snarski explains, "Real estate agents may have a direct line of sight into some of these communities and could play an active role in reminding these households that the 2020 Census is safe, secure and a civic duty."

REALTORS®, Do Your Part

An accurate count is critical for the long-term success of agents and the communities they work in. If you're looking to improve Census participation in your area, you can follow in Charlie's shoes and join a Complete Count Committee in your city. These committees work to increase Census awareness, conduct targeted outreach efforts and cooperate with local governments and businesses to encourage partic-

RECOMMENDED TALKING POINTS

"Participating in the 2020 Census is a civic duty and good for your community."

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

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

"Data security is the highest priority for the Census Bureau and extensive protections are in place to protect the integrity of the 2020 Census."

"English language proficiency is not required to participate in the 2020 Census."

"If you don't have access to the internet in your home, you can still be counted."

THE CENSUS PROCESS

Mailed Census invitations will go out in mid-March.

Residents can respond via their mailed form, online or over the phone in 13 different languages.

If a resident doesn't respond via these three options, a Census taker will be sent to the residence to assist.

ipation. There are hundreds of Complete Count Committees across the nation.

Experts also recommend putting posters and brochures in your physical office, asking your brokerage to become an official Census partner ([2020Census.gov/partners](#)) or even becoming a Census taker yourself (someone who visits homes of individuals who have yet to fill out a census questionnaire). According to Josh Green of the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 500,000 Census takers are needed nationwide. The job offers up to \$30 per hour and flexible scheduling.

Because this is the first year the Census will be offered online, agents can also help by allowing residents who may not have the appropriate technology access to their office computers. Hosting informational seminars and events to discuss the importance of the Census, dispel myths and break down the process can also help.

In the end, every effort to improve local participation counts. An accurate count could significantly impact the future success of both your community and your business.

"Communities are least likely to thrive if they are undercounted, and subsequently underfunded and underrepresented in government," Snarski says. "Real estate agents can help to ensure that their communities are most likely to enjoy growth — economically and culturally — which will make them more capable of investing in their homes and their neighborhoods."