

# MEMORANDUM

City Manager's Office



**DATE:** September 9, 2020  
**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**THROUGH:** Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*  
**FROM:** Ashwini Kantak, Assistant City Manager *Ashwini Kantak*  
**SUBJECT:** **2020 Census Update**

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This Information Memorandum is in response to a request initiated by Councilmember Dominguez and supported by the full Council at the September 1, 2020 Council meeting. It is intended to provide an update of 2020 Census outreach activities and several factors that impact overall participation including COVID-19 and the recent California Wildfires.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 2020 Census goal is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place. Each decade the Census takes a count of America's population. Census data provides vital information that helps determine political representation in every State and allocation of more than \$675 billion in federal funding that support creating jobs, providing housing, preparing for emergencies and building schools, roads and hospitals. The 2020 Census is considered to be the most accessible survey in census history. For the very first time, an internet self-response option makes it easier for anyone, anywhere to respond at any time.

The 2020 Census has been confronted with a number of setbacks that could lead to a significant undercount, which can translate to Congressional underrepresentation and reapportionment of California dollars. These challenges include increased government distrust with attempts to include a citizenship question, general concerns about data privacy and confidentiality, inadequate language accessibility, Presidential order to exclude undocumented immigrants in the apportionment process, limited federal budget for advertising and outreach, and the impact of COVID-19 and California Wildfires that threaten overall participation.

## **SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REACHING THE HARD-TO-COUNT**

Due to the statewide shelter-in-place order, Census Bureau operations as well as state, county and local government outreach initiatives have been suspended because of restrictions on public gatherings. Most previously developed strategies to reach the hard-to-count were in-person meetings and events including access to public library computers to complete the form. Unfortunately, changes in tactics have greatly impacted effective outreach to historically undercounted and low-response groups such as individuals experiencing homelessness, immigrant populations and in-language dependent households, renters, students and children under the age of five.

## **CENSUS OUTREACH EFFORTS**

City staff has conducted and will continue to implement and support the following activities through the remainder of the Census operation.

- Inclusion of information resources on the City Website;
- Inclusion of messaging around Census takers who will start knocking on doors for the month of September on the City Website and social media platforms;
- Partnership with the County of Santa Clara Complete Count Committee on Non-response Follow-Up outreach;
- Collaboration with United Way of the Bay Area and Homebase to help enumerate people experiencing homelessness (especially first-time homeless due to COVID-19 and California Wildfires);
- Outreach activities during scheduled food distribution City events.

## **UPDATED CENSUS DEADLINE**

During the second quarter of 2020, the Census Bureau shared plans to extend the Census deadline to October 31 from July 31 to address operational delays brought forth by COVID-19. However, the Bureau provided an update regarding the end to all of its counting efforts on September 30, a month sooner than previously announced. This includes critical door-knocking efforts and response collection online, phone and mail. The latest move is part of the Bureau's efforts to accelerate the completion of data collection and apportionment counts by the statutory deadline of December 31, 2020, as required by law.

## **NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW-UP (NRFU)**

Census takers have started visiting homes that have not responded to the Census on August 11. All Census takers are required to wear masks, regardless of state and local guidelines. They will knock on doors and immediately step back six feet to create appropriate space between themselves and the respondents. Census takers will be given additional masks to provide residents should they need one, as well as a hand sanitizer. They will be using an app to collect information, which means they will no longer pass paperwork back and forth with respondents.

**CENSUS TIMELINE**

Noted below are the schedule modifications across the various Census operational phases.

Activity	Original Schedule	Updated Schedule
Self-Response Phase	March 12 – July 31	March 12 – September 30
Mobile Census Questionnaire	March 30 – July 31	Started in July
Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU): In-person enumeration by Census taker.	May 13 – July 31	August 11 – September 30
Service-Based Enumeration & Homeless/Displaced Count	March 30 – April 1	September 22 - 24
Deliver Apportionment Count to the President	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2020*
Deliver Redistricting Count to States	April 1, 2021	April 1, 2021*

\*Pending Census Bureau confirmation

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

The City will continue to share information on its [2020 Census webpage](#), which has been created to provide accurate reports on Census operations. Additionally, regular public updates will be provided through the City’s social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Nextdoor.