



## Understanding the Critical Role of Finger Lakes Library System Member Libraries in the 2020 Census

Libraries have always played an important role in promoting and supporting efforts to obtain full participation within a community; the expectation is that there will be greater demands placed upon libraries in the upcoming census due to the transition to a primarily digital survey process – especially in the Finger Lakes Library System service area where many communities face connectivity issues.

The decennial census is mandated by Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution and it is to include people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and noncitizens residing in the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau must submit the census totals to the President of the United States by December 31, 2020. Libraries will need to be engaged in the 2019 planning processes to help launch a successful 2020 survey.

Census data are used in many ways. Some examples include:

- Distribution of more than \$675 billion annually in federal funds back to tribal, state, and local governments for all types of programs including highway planning and construction, grants to local education agencies, special education grants, Head Start, foster care support and child care assistance.
- Determining the number of representatives each state has in Congress.
- Redistricting of state legislative districts.
- Forecasting the future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans.
- Assisting federal, tribal, state, and local governments in planning and implementing programs, services, and emergency response.
- Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly and children.
- Businesses use the data when determining financial investments such as the location of stores in a community.

As trusted sources of information, digital literacy support and community engagement, libraries play a vital role in ensuring that all individuals residing in a community are counted in the 2020 Census. The New York State 2020 Complete Count Commission has been created; and it does include a representative from the library community: Lauren Moore, Executive Director of the Pioneer Library System. The Commission is asking New York State to make a \$60 million investment in its libraries to assure a complete count. This funding would support several key needs:

- Libraries will need to meet an increased demand for internet access.
- Early results from a census test in Providence, Rhode Island, suggest that the online census is difficult for individuals with limited digital literacy skills. Additional library staffing will be needed to meet the demand for one-on-one support.
- Additional levels of security and accountability will be required to ensure online privacy and security of the census survey.

There are still many questions about the overall census survey process. One main concern is the potential inclusion of a question about citizenship or immigration status. It is unclear whether this type of question would jeopardize achieving maximum census participation or perhaps library participation in order to maintain public trust.

Finger Lakes Library System will keep you posted as more information becomes available.

# Road to the 2020 Census

## 2020 Census Operational Timeline



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

# Finger Lakes Library System Service Area: Issues Around Census Self-Response by County

All information taken from: <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>

## **What is the "hard to count" population and why does it matter?**

The goal of the decennial census is to count each person in the United States based on their residence as of April 1. For the 2020 census, each household in the U.S. will either receive mailed instructions on how to fill out the census questionnaire online, or they will receive the actual questionnaire. The Census Bureau asks that as many households as possible submit their responses to this questionnaire via the Internet or by mail — this is the self-response component of the decennial census.

In prior censuses, the self-response rate in many parts of the country has been relatively high. But in other parts of the country and for some population groups more than others, the self-response rate has been relatively low. Households may not have submitted their census questionnaire for various reasons, such as having language difficulties, concerns about trust in government, or otherwise.

These areas and population groups are considered "hard to count", because the Census Bureau sends enumerators into the field to talk with each non-responding household one-by-one. This "non-response follow-up" component of the census can be difficult, time-consuming, & costly (to the Bureau, and to taxpayers). And if these groups and their communities are not counted fairly & accurately, they will be deprived of equal political representation and vital public and private resources.

## **Cayuga County**



Based on the latest census estimates (for the 2013-2017 period), 74,074 people live in 31,428 households in this county, and 4,245 people live in group quarters. (Total population = 78,319.)

Some population characteristics that may affect this county's participation in the 2020 Census include:

### **Census Self-Response**

In 2010, 86.2% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to enumerate the remaining 13.8%.

Based on the latest census estimates, approx. 5% of Cayuga County's current population (or 4,155 people) lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods, shaded in light orange-to-dark red on the map. (These are census tracts where almost a quarter or more households did not mail back their census questionnaires in 2010.) Without higher self-response, more households in these and other neighborhoods in the state are at risk of being missed in the 2020 census.

In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire). During 2013-17, 21.2% of Cayuga County's households had either no internet access or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates.

## Cortland County



Based on the latest census estimates (for the 2013-2017 period), 44,809 people live in 17,925 households in this county, and 3,525 people live in group quarters. (Total population = 48,334.)

Some population characteristics that may affect this county's participation in the 2020 Census include:

### **Census Self-Response**

In 2010, 81.3% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to enumerate the remaining 18.7%.

In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire). During 2013-17, 22.9% of Cortland County's households had either no internet access or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates.

## Seneca County



Based on the latest census estimates (for the 2013-2017 period), 31,664 people live in 13,536 households in this county, and 3,179 people live in group quarters. (Total population = 34,843.)

Some population characteristics that may affect this county's participation in the 2020 Census include:

### **Census Self-Response**

In 2010, 85.3% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to enumerate the remaining 14.7%.

In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire). During 2013-17, 20.8% of Seneca County's households had either no internet access or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates.

## Tioga County



Based on the latest census estimates (for the 2013-2017 period), 48,774 people live in 19,996 households in this county, and 548 people live in group quarters. (Total population = 49,322.)

Some population characteristics that may affect this county's participation in the 2020 Census include:

### **Census Self-Response**

In 2010, 86.0% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to enumerate the remaining 14.0%.

In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire). During 2013-17, 20.1% of Tioga County's households had either no internet access or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates.

## Tompkins County



Based on the latest census estimates (for the 2013-2017 period), 90,661 people live in 38,986 households in this county, and 13,754 people live in group quarters. (Total population = 104,415.)

Some population characteristics that may affect this county's participation in the 2020 Census include:

### **Census Self-Response**

In 2010, 80.0% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to enumerate the remaining 20.0%.

Based on the latest census estimates, approx. 10% of Tompkins County's current population (or 10,149 people) lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods, shaded in light orange-to-dark red on the map. (These are census tracts where almost a quarter or more households did not mail back their census questionnaires in 2010.) Without higher self-response, more households in these and other neighborhoods in the state are at risk of being missed in the 2020 census.

In 2020, for the first time the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit their census responses online via the internet (though you will have a choice to submit your responses either online, by phone, or mailing back a paper questionnaire). During 2013-17, 12.7% of Tompkins County's households had either no internet access or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates.

## **POPULATIONS AT RISK OF BEING UNDERCOUNTED**

Across the board, some populations historically have been, or are at risk of being, missed in the census at disproportionately high rates. These include (based on 2013-17 estimates):

- People of Color
- Children Under 5
- Renters
- Crowded Households
- Single-Parent Households
- Immigrants
- Low-Income Populations
- People with Limited English Proficiency
- People Living in Multi-Family Housing



**All information taken from:**

**<https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>**