

HOW CENSUS DATA IS USED EVERYDAY BY PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME

Constitutionally, the purpose of the decennial census is to ensure an accurate apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives based on state populations. Since the early 1800s, however, policy makers have recognized that an accurate census can provide valuable information to improve the policy process. Today, policy makers at all levels of government, as well as private businesses, households, researchers, and nonprofit organizations, rely on an accurate census in myriad ways that range far beyond the single fact of how many people live in each state. Here are some examples of these uses.

Federal, State, & Local Government Uses

- **Monitoring compliance with Federal law.** Questions on ancestry, gender, race, Hispanic Origin, language spoken at home, place of birth, citizenship & year of entry provide critical information for monitoring compliance with the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, and other anti-discrimination & affirmative action plan requirements.
- **Assisting families, low-income populations, the elderly, the disabled, and veterans.** Accurate census data are used to identify areas eligible for housing assistance & rehabilitation loans; housing subsidies; job training & employment services; energy cost assistance; community economic development & social services.
- **Infrastructure, public health and environmental protection, & program planning.** State & local government planning responsibilities depend on accurate census data, including determining the need for schools, highways, public transportation, hospitals, libraries, and police & fire protection.
- **Disaster relief.** Accurate census information helps local governments predict transportation needs in disaster recovery & contingency planning initiatives



Business Uses



- **Product development and marketing.** Accurate census data on where people of different ages live helps businesses of all kinds to develop & market their products. Producers of consumer durables such as television sets, washing machines, & home furnishings benefit from accurate information on households & their characteristics. Census information on language spoken at home helps television & radio stations define foreign language service areas.
- **Forecasting demand.** Businesses forecasting demand for their products require accurate census data to develop these forecasts. Utilities depend on accurate census data to develop long-range plans for new facilities & networks.
- **Location decisions.** A variety of business location decisions are improved by accurate census data. For example, businesses seeking to pinpoint areas to gauge potential markets for locating new stores, and businesses interested in finding sites having a labor force with certain education characteristics.

Community Group & Individual Uses

- **Delivering health, social, and educational services.** Community groups benefit from census data to set up & administer programs for children, teens, and older persons; to teach English, and conduct voter registration drives; to provide job training for displaced homemakers, and to provide veteran support services
- **Location decisions.** Individuals can make better choices about home-buying, job relocation, or starting their own business if they can take advantage of accurate census information.



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Helping You Make Informed Decisions