



ALABAMA
COUNTS!

2020 CENSUS

Messaging Guide

ADECA Alabama Counts! Messaging Guide

In 2020, we as Alabamians have a tremendous opportunity to positively affect our state's future for the next 10 years and beyond. How? By taking less than 10 minutes to complete a 2020 Census form.

Not only that. Saying "I Count" by completing your census form also helps secure a brighter future for yourself, your family and your community.

Your opportunity to say "I Count" is coming in the spring of 2020. The mission of Alabama Counts! is to ensure you understand what is at stake for Alabama in 2020 and to ensure you are prepared to complete and return your census form.

Census Basics

This section will cover the basics of the 2020 Census in Alabama in a clear, concise manner so that anyone will be able to use it to communicate the importance of the census to Alabama and our state's residents. Much of this content will be used on the Alabama Counts! website at Census.alabama.gov.

What is the Census?

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census of the United States every 10 years, going all the way back to 1790. The data collected during the census is used in a variety of ways that affect decisions regarding community services provided to residents and the distribution of more than \$675 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year. This funding supports local programs for schools, health care, community assistance, infrastructure and other important needs. The census also determines the number of representatives each state will have in Congress.

The census counts every person – both adults and children – living in the United States. This information helps monitor changes in communities and is used to identify and address public service needs such as health care, education, public safety, housing, food, and rural access to broadband.

On or around April 1, 2020, each Alabama household will receive a postcard from the U.S. Census Bureau with instructions for how to complete the census. You may respond in three ways: online, telephone or traditional paper form.

Online Response

For the first time, you will be able to complete your census form online using the information included on the postcard. You will be able to fill out your electronic form by using a computer, smart phone or tablet. Alabama Counts is working with agencies and organizations to secure public locations across the state where you may fill out your online census form.

You will also be able to call a toll-free number to complete the census over the phone or request a traditional paper form. This information will be on the postcard mailed by the Census Bureau.

If you do not respond before May 2020, U.S. Census Bureau employees will visit your place of residence to conduct a count.

Safe and Secure

The census is safe and secure. All the information you provide to the U.S. Census Bureau is confidential and cannot be used against you by any government agency or court. Anyone who violates this law faces severe penalties. The law is found in Title 13 of the U.S. Code. More: https://www.census.gov/about/policies/privacy/data_stewardship.html

Census Bureau Jobs in Alabama

The U.S. Census Bureau is in process of hiring many temporary workers to help complete the census in Alabama. These workers will staff census offices that are expected to open in the state later in 2019 and serve as census takers. The Census Bureau expects to hire for these positions throughout 2019 and into 2020. To apply, go to www.2020census.gov/jobs.

Why Does the Census Matter?

Data from the census affects everyone. We all have something to gain from a full census count for Alabama in 2020.

Funding for Programs that Impact You, Your Family and Our Communities

Funding to Alabama for many important programs that affect health care, education, housing assistance, infrastructure development and more is tied in some form to census data. An accurate count will ensure that the state receives its fair share of funding for these important programs. [A recent study by George Washington University](#) indicates that the U.S. government returned almost \$1,600 to the state in 2015 for every Alabamian counted in the census.

[George Washington University also indicated](#) that a total of more than \$13 billion was allocated to Alabama in 2016 from 55 programs that are guided in some part by data derived from the census. All of us either depend on the assistance provided through these programs or know someone who does.

Just a few of the programs and their 2016 obligations in Alabama are:

Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid)	\$3.9 billion
Medicare Part B (Supplemental Medical Insurance)- Physician Fee Schedule Services	\$1.1 billion
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	\$1.2 billion
Head Start	\$138 million
Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies	\$230 million
Pell Grants and Student Loans	\$471 million
Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments and Housing Choice Vouchers	\$194 million
Highway Planning and Construction	\$797 million
Community Development Block Grants	\$21 million

We must do everything we can to ensure that the state receives its fair sharing of funding for these programs so they remain available for those who greatly benefit from them and those who may need them in the future. If we do not, the need for this assistance will remain and state and local governments will be forced to replace the lost funds through alternative means. This alternative will affect everyone.

Congressional Representation

The population count taken in the 2020 Census will determine the allocation of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. States with the most population gains are projected to gain additional seats while states with population losses or slow growth are at risk of losing seats.

A projected slowed population growth in Alabama has put the state in danger of losing one of our seven congressional seats after the 2020 Census. These are the voices that represent us and stand up for our needs on the federal level. The loss of a Congressional representative would mean one less critical voice advocating for Alabama on the national stage. The only way to potentially avoid this outcome is for all Alabamians to participate in the 2020 Census.

Economic Development

Data collected by the Census Bureau is considered by business and industry as valuable, unbiased data collected by a neutral third party. An improvement in a community's Census data could mean additional retail and restaurant growth as well as more consideration from companies wishing to expand or relocate, creating job opportunities.

In 2010, Alabama had a 72 percent response rate to the census with lower rates particularly in west Alabama and in some urban areas. This participation rate won't be enough for 2020. Together, we can make sure that Alabama's voices are heard. You count. Alabama counts.

What is Alabama Counts?

The Alabama Counts! 2020 Census Committee is an advisory group composed of public and private statewide organizations committed to working together to ensure each Alabamian is counted in the 2020 Census. Alabama Counts! builds trust in communities and promotes the 2020 Census. Through these efforts, we are striving for maximum participation in every community across the state.

Governor Kay Ivey signed an executive order on Aug. 20, 2018, establishing the committee, and the director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), Kenneth Boswell, serves as the chair. ADECA serves as liaison between the State of Alabama and the Census Bureau.

Alabama Counts! is divided into eight subcommittees designed to reach all areas of Alabama. The chairs of these subcommittees serve as the executive committee.

The subcommittees are:

Government

Education

Faith-based Groups

Community-based Groups

Economic Development/Industry

Health Care

Rural

Outreach

ADECA and Alabama Counts are collaborating closely with the U.S. Census Bureau's Atlanta regional office and its Alabama partnership specialists who are helping communities form their own local 2020 Census Complete Count Committees.

Key Messages

We All Have Something to Lose

Many Alabamians directly benefit from the federal programs whose funding allocations are determined in part by census data. For these people, completing a census form will be a way to have a say in ensuring that Alabama receives its fair share of funding for these programs.

The assistance programs tied to census data are critical to all Alabamians. If this funding is reallocated to other states due to a poor census count, then the funding for the missing services will have to be made up in some way at the local or state level. This affects everyone.

Congressional representation also affects us all. Losing one of our seven Congressional representatives means one less voice for our state and our people at the federal level.

We Can be a Force for Change

Your voice matters. We all have a say in the outcome of the 2020 Census, and it can end with Alabama's fair share of funding secured and with fair Congressional representation. All you have to do is complete and return your 2020 census form. It is a simple civic duty.

We Must Take Action

The end goal is maximum participation. Don't sit on the sidelines. Show them that you count, that we all count, by completing your census form.

If you are a local government leader, you must begin educating your community about the stakes at a local level. Begin organizing a local complete count committee. The U.S. Census Bureau's state partnership specialists are ready and available to help you.

If you are an educational leader, educate students and parents about the importance of federal funding to our schools. The U.S. Census Bureau is developing a "Statistics in Schools" program to provide curriculum to help with this.

If you are a business owner/manager, talk with your employees and customers about the importance of the census. Make time for your employees to complete their census forms. Let them use their work computers to submit it online.

If you are a community group leader, begin educating your people about the stakes of the 2020 Census and talking about how important it is to fill out the form for the services and assistance provided to your group. The information collected is confidential and cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

If you are a faith-based leader, encourage your congregations to complete their civic duty and fill out their census forms. Use church computers or resources to help your members and the community complete their census forms online.

If you are a rural leader, begin educating residents about how an accurate count can led to better educational, economic development and infrastructure opportunities for your community.

If you are a health-care leader, stress the importance of Medicaid and Medicare funding to the overall picture of health-care choice in Alabama. Though people may have private insurance, a reduction in Medicare and Medicaid is detrimental to overall health care choice due to reduced payments to doctors and potential closings of hospitals/health care facilities.

“I Count” slogan/tagline/theme

“I count” is suggested as the tagline or slogan for the state’s 2020 Census outreach campaign because it puts the message on how the 2020 Census affects people on the individual, personal level. By taking less than 10 minutes to fill out a census form, the individual can have a tremendously positive impact on Alabama’s future. While the potential loss of a Congressional seat is a huge motivator – and will play an important role in the outreach campaign – feedback from Alabama Counts subcommittee meetings and U.S. Census Bureau research shows that people respond the most to messages tying in the Census with impacts in important funding for local programs, schools, infrastructure, health care and economic development. In other words, they respond to how the census could directly impact their lives and the lives of the people they know.

Messaging ideas

Below are some general messaging ideas based on the “I Count” theme.

General - These apply and affect everyone, so they may be useful for a statewide effort.

Alabama Counts because I count and my family counts

I count because my voice matters, and the census is a way for that voice to be heard

I count because the census is a way for my household to secure a brighter future for Alabama

I count because the census is my way of securing a better future for my children

I count because the stakes are too important for me to sit on the sidelines

I count because how else can less than 10 minutes of my time – about the time it takes to order coffee from the coffee shop or fill up your car with gas – positively affect my future for the next 10 years

I count because I know Alabama can’t fall further behind

I count because I believe in Alabama’s future

Education – With so many education dollars at stake, teachers, parents, students and school employees will be an important audience.

I count because I care about Alabama’s schools

I count because I want Alabama’s teachers and students to have all they need to succeed

I count because I want the best possible future for Alabama’s children

I count because our children are the future of this state and this nation

I count because all children deserve nutritious meals at school

I count because I don’t want hunger to affect a child’s educational success

I count because I need my Pell Grant to ensure a path to a brighter future

Economic Development/Industry – Better Census participation enhances a community’s standing with economic development and retail growth.

I count because I want better job opportunities that come from economic development

I count because I want new stores and restaurants to come to my community

I count because I want a brighter future through more opportunities

Health Care

I count because I want access to the best health care possible

I count because I want a healthy Alabama

I count because I want quality health care for my children/grandchildren/parents

I count because I want choices in my health care

I count because I don’t want to drive miles and miles to the nearest hospital

Community-based Groups – Many of these groups serve populations generally considered as hard-to-count groups including ethnic minorities, people on some type of federal assistance, people on housing assistance and people with potential legal issues.

I count because I want to protect my family

I count because I want to continue on a path to a better future through self-sufficiency

I count because energy assistance programs help keep me warm at night/cool in the summer

I count because I want my child to have a nutritious lunch at school

I count because I depend on Medicaid to ensure I have adequate medical care

Faith-based Groups – Pastors and other faith leaders are seen as strong pillars of the community and are trusted voices to their congregations.

I count because it is my duty to fill out the census

I count because I want to help the most vulnerable

I count because I want to be a force for good in my community

I count because I want to take care of the widows and orphans

Rural

I count because I want my community to succeed in the 21st century

I count because I want good roads and infrastructure

I count because Rural Alabama matters

I count because the Black Belt matters

I count because rural Alabamians deserve the same services as everyone else

Government

I count because grants and other assistance help build a better future in my community

I count because I want my community to be the best it possibly can be

I count because a poor census count negatively affects us all

I count because it is my civic duty – like voting

I count because I want adequate representation in Congress

I count because I don't want to lose an Alabama voice fighting for our rights and values on the national level

I count because I want to show the U.S. government who we really are

Millennials - An important group to the success of the 2020 Census in Alabama, many young adults will be considered a "head of household" and need to fill out a census form for the first time.

I count because I want to secure the brightest possible future for myself and others

I count because I want to do my part to make Alabama a great place to have a career

I count because I care for Alabama's most vulnerable residents and want to help them

I count because I want great educational and career opportunities right here in Alabama

I count because my voice and the voice of my generation matters

Website and Social Media Accounts

Website – www.census.alabama.gov (full site under development)

Twitter - @AlabamaCounts

Facebook – www.facebook.com/AlabamaCounts

Instagram -- alabamacounts

Hashtag for Social Media

#AlabamaCounts

Boilerplate Language

As Alabamians, 2020 is our chance to say “I Count” by participating in the 2020 Census. Alabama Counts! is a statewide outreach and awareness effort striving for maximum participation in every community across the state. The Alabama Counts 2020 Census Committee is an advisory group of agencies and organizations committed to working together to ensure that each Alabamian is counted. For more about the 2020 Census and how it affects Alabama and your household, go to www.census.alabama.gov.