

Census 2020 and the Citizenship Question

What is the citizenship question?

The Census Bureau has added a question about citizenship to the Census form. The question asks whether a person is a citizen, and if so, how they became a citizen. The question does not ask for respondents' immigration status.

Should I participate in the Census?

Census participation is critically important. Census data are used to distribute money for essential public services, like schools, libraries, transportation, and healthcare. When you participate in the Census, you help your family and community get its fair share of resources and services. Census data are also used to divide up political representation. When you participate in the Census, you help your community have a voice in our government. All people who live in the United States are required by law to participate in the Census.

Do I have to answer every question?

It is actually a federal crime to fail to respond to the Census, in whole or in part. However, millions of people fail to answer at least some questions on every Census and enforcement of this law is virtually nonexistent.

Can I skip the citizenship question on the Census? What happens if I do?

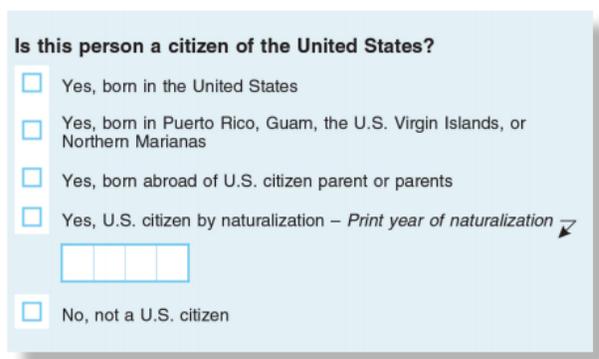
It will be possible to skip the citizenship question when you fill out the Census form on paper, online, over the phone, or in-person. Your form will still be counted. The Census Bureau might follow up if you skip questions on the form to ask for the missing information, either by phone or by sending a Census Bureau employee known as an "enumerator" to your home. The fewer questions that you skip, the less likely it is that the Census Bureau will follow up.

What happens if someone provides a false answer to the citizenship question?

Providing a false answer on the Census is technically a crime, though enforcement is rare. Confidentiality laws prohibit the sharing of individual Census responses with other agencies (more below) and it is highly unlikely that a person would be prosecuted for lying on the Census. Nevertheless, there is a small risk of immigration-related consequences if respondents are found to have falsely stated that they are citizens. It is therefore important not to lie when responding to the Census.

Will the Census Bureau share my information with other agencies?

There are extremely strong confidentiality protections for Census data under federal law. Census data about individual respondents cannot be shared with anyone outside the Census Bureau, including law enforcement or any federal agencies. Additionally, Census data cannot be used for any purpose other than statistical analysis. If a Census Bureau employee wrongfully discloses Census data, he or she could be given five years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine.



The image shows a screenshot of the 2020 Census citizenship question. The question is "Is this person a citizen of the United States?". There are five radio button options: "Yes, born in the United States", "Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas", "Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents", "Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization - Print year of naturalization" (with a dropdown arrow and a four-digit input box), and "No, not a U.S. citizen".



Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus is ready to provide free legal support and guidance to any community organizations working on Census. Please contact us if you have any questions. Contact: Julia Marks, juliam@advancingjustice-alc.org

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