

# GROUP QUARTERS OPERATION

## 2020 CENSUS FACT SHEET



The Leadership  
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CENTER ON POVERTY and INEQUALITY  
GEORGETOWN LAW



ECONOMIC SECURITY and  
OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

## COUNTING PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- People in correctional facilities will be counted at their facility address instead of in their home community.
- People living in correctional facilities will be counted in the 2020 Census as part of the Group Quarters enumeration (GQ)—a special operation to count people in group living situations.
- Residents of group quarters will be counted using several methods. Correctional facility administrators and 2020 Census enumerators will decide jointly which method to use for each facility.
- The Census Bureau plans to address concerns regarding prison-based gerrymandering by giving states special access to address processing tools to make it easier for states to reassign incarcerated persons to their pre-incarceration home addresses.

The Census Bureau's [definition of correctional facilities](#) includes: federal and state prisons, local jails, municipal confinement facilities, federal detention centers (Metropolitan Correctional Centers, Metropolitan Detention Centers, Bureau of Indian Affairs Detention Centers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Service Processing Centers, and ICE contract detention facilities), and correctional residential facilities (halfway houses, restitution centers, and prerelease, work release, and study centers).

### COUNTING PEOPLE LIVING IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Beginning February 3, 2020, the Census Bureau will contact (either by phone or in person) correctional facilities' administrators during an operation called [Group Quarters Advance Contact](#) (GQAC) to confirm the location of facilities to be enumerated, explain the enumeration process, request an expected Census Day (April 1, 2020) population count (for each facility), and determine a preferred date, time, and method for enumeration.

[Group Quarters](#) (GQ) will be enumerated during April 2020. Correctional facility administrators can choose from the following [enumeration methods](#):

- **Facility Self-Enumeration:** A facility administrator will be sworn in under Title 13, U.S.C. and trained to distribute modified paper forms called Individual Census Questionnaires (ICQs) to people living in their correctional facility and help with completing the forms, if necessary. The census enumerator assigned to the GQ will pick up the paper forms from the administrator when all are completed.
- **Drop Off/Pick up Questionnaires:** A census enumerator will drop off ICQs with the correctional facility administrator. After all residents complete their questionnaires, the enumerator will return to pick up the forms.
- **Electronic Data Transfer:** Facility administrators will directly transfer census data about the people residing at the facility to the Census Bureau through the

Electronic Response Data Transfer ([eResponse](#)) system. This method can be used only if the facility's data are sufficiently complete and high quality [according to Census Bureau guidelines](#).

- **Paper Response Data Collection:** An administrator will fill out a paper listing (a roster of residents and their demographic data, such as name, age, date of birth, and sex) on behalf of the people residing at the facility and an enumerator will pick it up. The Paper Response Data Files are reviewed by Area Census Office staff and then mailed to the Census Bureau's National Processing Center (NPC).
- **In-Person Interview:** In some cases, a census enumerator will conduct in-person interviews with the people who reside at the facility.

## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO KNOW?

### CENSUS OUTREACH IMPLICATIONS

People in correctional facilities will be counted at their facility address instead of in their home community. Census stakeholder should consider educating households that persons who are in a correctional facility on Census Day (April 1, 2020) should not be included on a household form.

### PRISON GERRYMANDERING

Census population data are used (directly or indirectly) to allocate federal funding, to determine representation in the U.S. House of Representatives (known as reapportionment) and the Electoral College, and for the drawing of legislative district lines at all levels of government—known as redistricting. The use of prison population counts for this last purpose, redistricting, can result in what is sometimes called “prison gerrymandering.” Prison gerrymandering

[distorts](#) political representation at the both the state and local levels.

Census advocates have [argued](#) that the decennial census should include incarcerated people in the population counts for their home communities instead of the communities where they are incarcerated in order to avoid prison gerrymandering. Six states thus far, along with many localities—including over 200 rural counties and other local governments— have enacted [legislation](#) to count incarcerated people at their home addresses instead of where they are incarcerated for redistricting purposes

For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau [will continue](#) counting incarcerated persons at the correctional facility where they live. However, since many states and localities have taken action to eliminate prison-based gerrymandering, the Census Bureau plans to offer a [data product](#) to states after the 2020 Census that can assist them in reallocating their state's prison population counts to their home addresses during the state redistricting or local process if they choose. However, federal funding decisions are still based on people being counted where they are incarcerated.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Support a fair and accurate census by joining or supporting the work of a local Complete Count Committee. More resources about the 2020 Census can be found on the Georgetown Center on Poverty & Inequality website and at [censuscounts.org](#). Anyone can also call Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) (available starting March 1, 2020) at 844-330-2020 for assistance in English. The numbers for assistance in other languages are available at [http://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019\\_18.html](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/memo-series/2020-memo-2019_18.html). You can also visit the Census Bureau's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

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