



Key Messages and Supporting Talking Points December 2018

Background

The next decennial census will occur in April 2020. The talking points below can be used to communicate key messages regarding Census 2020 efforts in San Mateo County.

Key Messages and Supporting Talking Points

1. **Every ten years, the federal government is required by the U.S. Constitution to count EVERY person residing in the United States through a national census.**
 - This includes residents of all ages, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.
 - The census is an actual Enumeration, not a sampling of the population.

2. **Ensuring an accurate count in the national Census is essential.**
 - **Political Representation:** The Census data also determines the number of U.S. representatives each state sends to Congress and sets the district boundaries from the state down to local levels.
 - **Federal Funding:** Census data informs how the federal government will allocate **\$675 billion per year** in funding to state and local governments based on the number of people living there. These funds go towards critical programs that support vulnerable populations.
 - **Decision-making:** Census responses provide the official statistics for the County and will be the main source of data for decisions made at the national, state, and local levels. Government, businesses, nonprofits, and foundations use Census data to allocate funding, define where services are delivered, and promote economic development.
 - **Democracy:** It is important for *everyone* to be counted in the Census to ensure all voices are heard and fairly represented. When census information is not accurate, it suppresses the voices of undercounted groups and regions, and undermines the basic political equality that is central to our democracy.

3. **Census 2020 is at high risk for an undercount.**
 - **Budget and Staffing:** Despite declining self-response rates, the Census Bureau will be required to conduct the 2020 Census at a lower cost per household than in 2010. There will be fewer local offices, less field staff, less in-person and telephone follow-ups, and the primary strategy for data collection will be via internet.

 - **Traditional Challenges:** There have historically been challenges counting certain households and population groups. These include recent immigrants, people of color, households with limited English proficiency, households with low income, children under 5 years old, renters and those with unstable housing.
 - **California has historically been the hardest-to-count state in the nation.** Three out of 4 Californians belong to one or more groups that tend to be undercounted.
 - **The County of San Mateo is home to many of these hard to count groups:**
 - 35% of residents are foreign born
 - 47% speak a language other than English at home





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- **New Challenges:** In 2020, there will be additional new challenges.
 - **Internet Response:** For the first time, there is an expectation that most households will complete the Census survey online. This presents barriers for those with limited digital access/literacy or cybersecurity concerns.
 - **Citizenship Question:** One of the most significant changes to Census 2020 survey is the potential reinstatement of a citizenship question. This question is likely to discourage immigrants, who are facing a negative and uncertain climate, and their families from participating.
 - **Distrust & Data Privacy:** There is a widening distrust of government among diverse segments of the population (immigrant and nonimmigrant alike), raising concerns about how census data will be used and whether it will remain confidential.

- 4. **An undercount in Census 2020 will negatively affect all residents in our county.**
 - **Funding:** An incomplete count will hinder our County from getting its fair and sufficient share of federal funds that support critical programs, including:
 - Medical assistance
 - Foster care and child care
 - School nutrition and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
 - Section 8 and other housing assistance
 - Highway planning and construction

For each individual not counted in Census 2020, it is estimated that California will lose \$1,958 of federal funds per year for the following decade.

- **Decision-Making:** An inaccurate count will also impact many other important decisions that affect our county. For example:
 - **City governments** use census data to decide where to provide utilities and build parks, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.
 - **Businesses** use census data to decide where to open facilities and what types of services/products to provide.
 - **Developers** use census data to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.
 - **Transportation planners** use census data to decide on public transit routes.
 - **Citizen organizations** rely on census data to identify community needs, request and fund programs, monitor trends and assess program effectiveness.
 - **Residents** use census data to support community initiatives involving legislation, quality-of-life, and consumer advocacy.

- **Representation:** Census data is used to draw boundaries for every level of government in CA down to the school districts. If segments of our county are not counted in 2020, their voices and needs will not be considered when making important policy, program, and budget decisions.





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5. **The County of San Mateo is taking steps to ensure that ALL residents get counted in Census 2020.**
 - **Census Master Address File Update:** The County, combined with cities, submitted over 30,000 address corrections and additions to the Census Bureau Master Address File, which will be used to send out information about Census 2020 and conduct follow up for households that don't respond.
 - **Coordination with state and regional efforts:** The County is working closely with the state officials and representatives from other local governments to ensure that Census 2020 outreach efforts in CA maximize resources and benefit our County.
 - **Complete Count Committee:** The County, in partnership with THRIVE Alliance of Nonprofits in San Mateo and the San Mateo County Economic Development Association, has formed a committee of private, nonprofit, and community leaders to guide the development and implementation of strategies to reduce undercount.
 - **Community Engagement:** The County will collaborate with trusted community organizations and institutions that can educate residents about Census 2020, motivate them to participate, and support them in completing the survey.
 - **Communication Campaign:** The County will develop and implement a campaign using media and community outreach to increase awareness and encourage participation in Census 2020.

