

How the 2010 Census is Different

(April 2009) The 2010 Census will enumerate the resident population of the United States as of April 1, 2010. The census will include everyone living in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. People will be counted at their usual place of residence on April 1, 2010.

In every decennial census since 1940, two questionnaires have been used to collect information: a "short form" with only basic questions such as age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin; and a "long form" with the basic short-form questions plus about 50 additional questions on socioeconomic and housing characteristics. Only a subset of households received the long-form questionnaire—about one in every six in 2000. However, for the first time since 1940, the 2010 Census will be a short-form-only census. This is because the decennial long form has been replaced by the [American Community Survey](#) (ACS). The ACS is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to provide reliable and timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year. The ACS will replace the long form in 2010 and thereafter by collecting long-form-type information throughout the decade rather than only once every 10 years.

In the 2000 Census, the Census Bureau used a paid advertising program for the first time. The 2010 Census will also use such a campaign to increase awareness of the census, and motivate people to participate. However, the 2010 Census will also incorporate two important new operations. For the first time, the Census Bureau will send out replacement questionnaires after an initial period of time, and the bureau will mail out bilingual (English and Spanish) questionnaires to selected areas. Both of these operational changes are expected to increase mail response rates and reduce the nonresponse follow-up workload.

The 2010 Census questionnaire will also add two new "administrative questions" designed to improve the accuracy and completeness of the data. Although these questions are not required by federal law, they will be included to help respondents evaluate how many people are living in the household:

- Were there any additional people staying here April 1, 2010, that you did not include in Question 1?
- Does Person X sometimes live or stay somewhere else?

