Every 10 years, the federal government conducts a roll call of the public to understand the nation’s population. The census count looks at size, sex, age and race of each household, community and state in order to get an accurate snapshot of the United States. As of today, public resources and political representation distributed to these places are based on decade-old data from the last national count in 2010.

Over the next few months, every person in America will dictate how many dollars their state receives for things, such as healthcare, housing, food, education and infrastructure every year through 2030. Essentially, to get proportionate funds — for everything from emergency resources and roads to higher education — each person needs to be counted.

In 2016 alone, Mississippi received more than $10 billion in federal spending across 55 programs. But, according to studies, nearly 800,000 Mississippians — or about 27 percent of the state — live in what’s called “hard-to-count” neighborhoods and risk being left out of the count.

**When Does it Happen?**

**March 12 - 20**

Households will begin receiving official Census Bureau mail with detailed information on how to respond to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail.

During this time, the Census Bureau will count people experiencing homelessness through shelters, soup kitchens, mobile food vans, and on the streets, etc.

**March 30 - April 1**

Nationwide, households will have received their invitation to participate by Census Day and will tell the Census Bureau where they live as of April 1st.

Census takers will visit college students living on campus, senior centers, and other communal living spaces. They will also conduct quality check interviews to ensure the accuracy of the count.

**May - July**

Census takers begin visiting homes that have not responded to make sure everyone is counted.

**How Does it Happen?**

Once a household receives an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census by April 1st, you should respond in one of three ways.

Residents can respond online through the census’ website, over the phone, or via mail.

Census takers will begin visiting the homes that have yet to respond beginning in May through July.
Why Does it Matter?

The 2020 Census data will be used for the next decade to make decisions on how billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to hundreds of different programs. The data reveals where communities need new schools, new clinics, new roads, and more services for families, senior citizens, and children. The results are also used to draw congressional and state legislative districts, as well as the number of seats each state is assigned in the House of Representatives.

What does this mean for Mississippi, specifically?

The results of the Census will determine important and vital aspects of daily life of Mississippians, including hospital and clinic allocations, emergency response manpower, education and teacher funding, affordable housing locations and electoral representation.

Where Does the Data Go?

The Census Bureau gathers all the responses in each state, delivering apportionment counts to the President and Congress in December 2020.

Have no fear, under Title 13 of the U.S. Code the Census Bureau commits to keeping all your personal information confidential.

Any identifiable information cannot be released, even to law enforcement agencies.

Your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

Find a full 2020 Census Guide at mississippitoday.org/2020-census-guide

Find more information and respond to the census at 2020census.gov