

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Kim Walesh

SUBJECT: 2020 CENSUS UPDATE

DATE: August 5, 2020

Approved



Date

8/5/2020

INFORMATION

This information memorandum provides an update of key activities, the impact of COVID-19 on outreach efforts, and recent federal government decisions and actions impacting the 2020 Census.

BACKGROUND

The Census is the decennial count of every person living in the United States. Census data helps determine political representation and the annual allocation of more than \$675 billion in federal funds for critical programs that support education, housing, transportation, emergency, and disaster relief services of which California receives over \$76 billion annually. A 2020 Census undercount could put billions of federal dollars and congressional representation at risk for California.

As detailed in earlier information memorandums, the 2020 Census has faced challenges that collectively have represented an unprecedented threat to overall participation. These challenges have included inadequate federal budget to support Census Bureau outreach, fear of government heightened by failed attempts to include a citizenship question, limited language accessibility and significant concerns surrounding the confidentiality and data security of the on-line census survey.

Notwithstanding these challenges and the impacts from COVID-19, the City's overall self-response rate stands currently at 71.1%, higher than the national (63%), State (64.3%) and County (72.3%) self-response rates. The City's self-response rate is also significantly higher than San Francisco (61.1%) and Los Angeles (52.9%). Though City partners have been key in this success, there are certain parts of the City like Alviso, Downtown and East San Jose where the self-response rates are less than 60%.

Impact of COVID-19 on Census Outreach Operations

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the City's outreach plans. City staff has had to shift to education and outreach strategies that do not rely on face-to-face interaction and are not as effective in reaching individuals who historically have been undercounted. In addition, the City has faced challenges reconnecting with local partners that are essential to the City's efforts to reach hard-to-count communities as some of them have had to shift their agency's focus to COVID-19 related efforts and also due to health order restrictions significantly constraining their ability to conduct previously planned efforts.

In addition, critical census operations designed to reach historically undercounted and low self-response population groups, including those experiencing homelessness, renters, low income households, immigrant population and children were suspended due to shelter-in-place restrictions.

Revised Census Outreach Efforts

In addition to continuing to work with partners, City staff is conducting and supporting the following activities through the remainder of the census operation.

- Social media campaign, including public service announcements by community influencers;
- Virtual townhall meetings and presentations;
- Inclusion of census messaging in City mailers;
- Phone banking in partnership with community-based organizations;
- Mobile census kiosks in partnership with the County of Santa Clara;
- Outreach activities at community and Council events, testing and food distribution sites; and
- Distribution of census-branded giveaways.

New Census Deadline

In May 2020, the Census Bureau extended the Census deadline to October 31 from July 31 to mitigate operational delays resulting from COVID-19. However, on August 3, 2020, the Census Bureau announced that it was ending the census operation as of September 30, 2020. The Bureau's decision to accelerate the closure of the census in the middle of a pandemic has raised great concerns about the Bureau's ability to accurately and completely count every person living in the United States as it increases the risk of omitting historically undercounted groups in our community. This decision to close the census one month earlier, raises the significant risk of negatively skewing Congressional representation, redistricting and critical funding for our community.

Under the pre-pandemic 2020 Census plan, the Census Bureau had five months from the end of household data collection (July 31) to produce the apportionment counts. The new deadline allows the Bureau only three months to conduct data quality checks, data processing, etc. A shorter period also means that the Bureau will be relying more on administrative records, proxy

interviews with neighbors and statistical imputation instead of multiple in-person visits which yield more accurate data.

To meet the new deadline, the Bureau also announced that it will hire more enumerators. However, due to the pandemic and other factors, questions have arisen about the Bureau's ability to recruit and retain a sufficient number of enumerators for a City of the size and diversity of that of San Jose. For example, during the past month's soft launch of the door-to-door operation in certain areas of the country, the drop off rate for new hires was as high as 40%.

Lastly, the accelerated deadline also has the potential to significantly impact the Group Quarter and Serviced-Based Enumeration operations that have consistently faced difficulties due to the pandemic. According to the Census Bureau website, these operations are scheduled to take place on July 1 - September 3 and September 22 - 24, respectively. The City has requested that the Census Bureau use administrative data such as HMIS/RHYMIS, equivalent state/local administrative records, and/or Point-In-Time counts to supplement responses secured from the rescheduled Serviced-Based Enumeration operation.

The City has and will continue to participate in local, regional and national advocacy efforts to fight against the accelerated closure of the census.

Presidential Executive Order

On July 21, 2020, President Trump issued an Executive Order to exclude undocumented immigrants from the apportionment process which has reignited fears among the immigrant communities. The President's memorandum seeks to shift political representation away from places with large immigrant communities by defying the constitutional mandate that each state is represented in proportion to their population. On July 27, 2020, the City filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration over the mentioned-above memorandum. The lawsuit argues that President Donald Trump's new policy "violates the Constitution and the Census Act, and it discriminates against people based on race, ethnicity, and national origin in the violation of the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses."

Non-Responsive Follow-Up (NRFU) Operation

Starting August 11, Census Bureau workers will visit homes that have not responded to the census. Census workers will stay outside the visited homes, only ask the nine questions that are on the census form and follow public health orders. Census workers will not ask for personal information (e.g., social security number, bank information, or immigration status). The City will continue to work with partners to encourage residents to complete the census on their own in order to avoid a visit from a census worker.

Census Timeline

An overview of the census timeline is presented below:

Activity	Original Schedule	NEW Schedule
Self-Response Phase	March 12-July 31	March 12-September 30
Mobile Census Questionnaire	March 30-July 31	Started in July
Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU): Census takers will interview households in person.	May 13-July 31	August 11-September 30
Service-Based Enumeration & Count of People Experiencing Homelessness Outdoor	March 30-April 1	September 22-24
Deliver Apportionment Count to the President	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2020*
Deliver Redistricting Count to States	April 1, 2021	April 1, 2021*
*Pending Census Bureau confirmation		

CONCLUSION

City staff will continue to provide regular updates as the census outreach efforts continue and evolve, or sooner when other circumstances critical to the success of the Census occur.

/s/
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Deputy City Manager

For questions, please contact Jeff Ruster, Assistant Director of Economic Development, at (408) 535-8183.