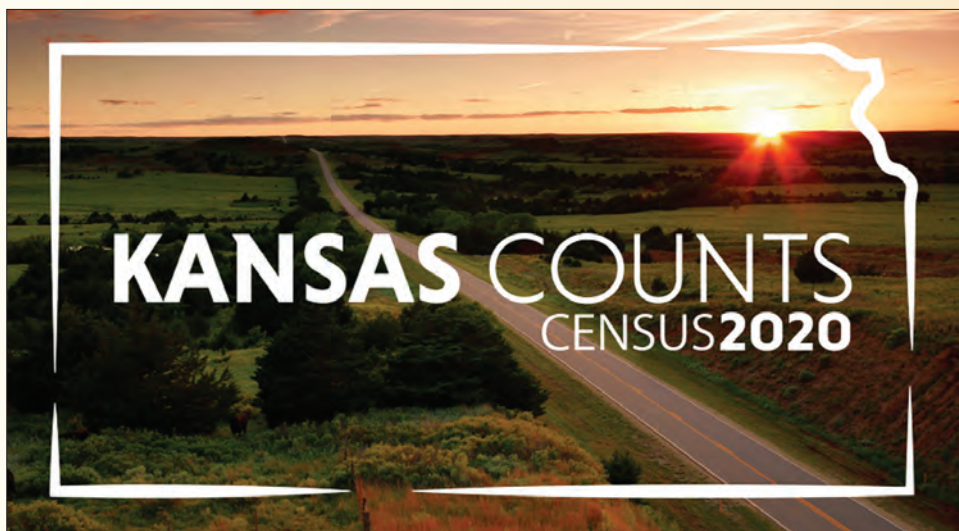


Census Bureau Adapts to the New Normal

Four Month Delay Requires Act of Congress



The Kansas Department of Commerce's "Kansas Counts" website contains information and resources for Kansans completing their census forms. Learn more about the census and its impact on Kansas, your city, and your community by visiting [KansasCounts.org](https://www.kansascounts.org).

The Kansas Rural Water Association's Board of Directors, in October 2019, signed a formal 2020 Census Partnership Proclamation. As a partner, KRWA pledges to keep our members apprised of ongoing 2020 Census activities in an effort to ensure that Kansas benefits from a complete and accurate decennial count. By mid-May 2020, more than half (58.7 percent) of the households across America had already responded. That's nearly 87 million responses, with more responding every day. At time of print, Kansas was in eleventh place nationally in self-response rate, with Minnesota in the top spot, with a self-response rate of 69 percent. In May, Kansas' self-response rate was 62.7 percent, with an internet response rate of 50.2 percent. Johnson County currently has the highest self-response rate in Kansas, at 73 percent. The lowest response rate so far is from Stanton County, in southwest Kansas, at 22.4 percent. While Kansas is doing fairly well in the state rankings, there is obviously room for improvement. According to the Bureau, Kansas' final self-response rate during the 2010 census was only 70 percent.

As with most other activities in our daily lives, the COVID-19 Pandemic

has significantly impacted the Census Bureau's operations. While early indications were that the first phase of self-responding was going fairly well, physical distancing requirements and limitations on personal contact are expected to significantly hamper subsequent phases of the process. In March, due to health and safety concerns related to the pandemic, the Census Bureau temporarily suspended all field collection activities. By April, the U.S. Commerce Department began asking the U.S. Congress for statutory relief from the deadlines for the decennial census an extension to deliver final apportionment counts by at least 120 calendar days. The Bureau has said that the goal of the delay is to ensure a complete and accurate count. Under the Bureau's proposal, field data collection and self-response will be extended from the original July 31 deadline, until October 31. Apportionment counts would then be delivered to the President on April 30, 2021, and the redistricting data to be delivered to the states by July 31, 2021. Since the original deadlines are established by federal law, however, an extension would require congressional approval. Congress has generally responded favorably with bipartisan support for the Bureau's request, but

the legislation had not yet been finalized by mid-May. Legislation for the delay is expected to be promulgated soon and likely to be included within additional coronavirus relief bills, but the plan is not entirely without critics. But without the delay, the 2020 Census data would be of poor quality. The Bureau's plan would impact virtually all field operations for the 2020 Census in Kansas and the rest of the country. There's a lot to absorb and many details are still being worked out where this truly historic census is concerned. The Census Bureau is hoping a majority of people respond online, by telephone or through the mail. Households can respond online at any time through the Bureau's website [2020census.gov](https://www.2020census.gov).

Census field offices began re-opening through a phased-in approach, beginning in mid-May, wherever it was safe to do in order to conduct training and hiring. By May 13, both the Wichita and Overland Park Area Census Offices had re-opened with those key operations slated to begin as soon as possible. In person interviews and non-response follow-up, however, are not expected to begin until late summer or fall. Until then, individuals who fail to self-respond will at first receive gentle reminders in the mail encouraging them to do so. If that

doesn't work, the Bureau will deploy census enumerators, also referred to as census takers, who will conduct non-response follow-ups in an effort to ensure an accurate count. It is important to note that no interaction between household members and Census Bureau employees is required and Census workers will be trained to follow the most current federal health and safety guidelines. Households that do not respond via online, phone, or mail before the end of summer can expect a knock at their residential door by a census enumerator for an in-person interview. In person interviews can be conducted safely outside the household, such as on your front porch, while observing physical distancing requirements. A response to the census is required by federal law, punishable by a \$100 fine for failure to do so, however, the Bureau indicates no fines have been levied since the 1970s.

Fortunately, it has never been easier (or safer) to complete the census. Census 2020 was designed to be the first to be conducted largely over the internet, and a modern, technology-enabled process that was designed to offer multiple ways to respond. The Census Bureau is also able to make necessary adaptations at the local level for special operations as needed.

Online, phone and mailed self-responses continue throughout the data collection process and are the preferred method to respond. The invitation you should have received by mail earlier this year contains a toll-free phone number so you may respond to the census from the convenience of your phone. During April, the Bureau reinstated a callback option, which had temporarily been suspended due to staffing reductions, and the Bureau has made more employees available to respond to requests by telephone. The callback option enables callers to leave a message and receive a timely call

Your information stays 100% private.

The **Census Bureau** is required by law to protect all personal information you submit.



Visit my2020census.gov

KANSAS COUNTS

CENSUS2020

Your responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by federal law. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics — they cannot be used against you in any way. By law, all responses to U.S. Census Bureau household and business surveys are kept completely confidential.

back from a census taker to process their 2020 Census response should all call center agents be busy assisting others. The Census Bureau has live customer service representatives supporting direct phone lines in 14 languages.

If you choose to respond using the paper form, simply fill out your

questionnaire and drop it off at your mailbox or post office. Since the Bureau maintains an address list compiled from various sources including the U.S. Postal Service, you may have received more than one mailing. In that case, check carefully to see if there are any differences in the spelling of the address. Also look for

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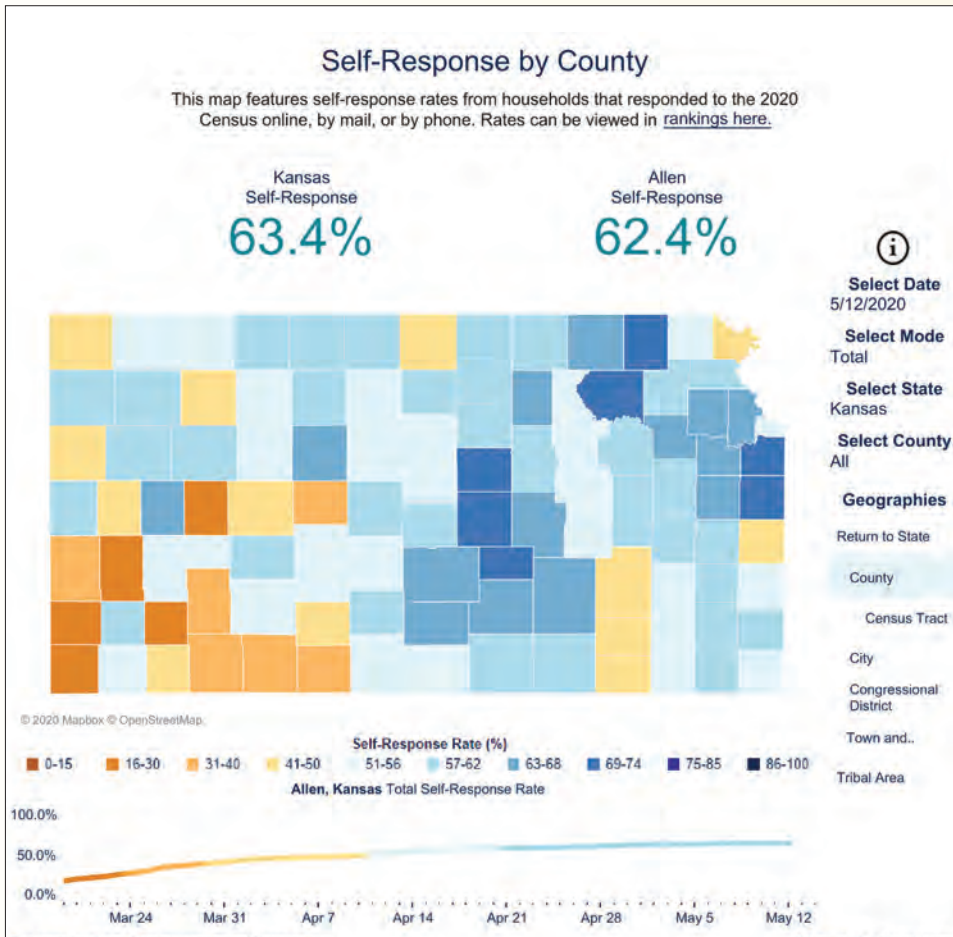
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Map of Census Response Rates: The upper-Midwest has garnered the some of the highest response rates, as of mid-May.

differences such as formatting or unit numbers. If you did not receive a letter or paper questionnaire, you can still respond to the 2020 Census by visiting my2020census.gov, and selecting the link that says, "If you do not have a Census ID, click here." It is located below the Census ID login field.

While the inevitable delay in the 2020 Census is truly extraordinary, it is not unprecedented. Census historian

Margo Anderson told the Associated Press in April that while the statutory deadlines are more than four decades old, the bureau has been flexible in dealing with past unexpected hurdles. In one case, during the 1850 census when returns from California were lost at sea. Another state count was conducted in 1852, she said. This Census' delay, however, is expected to cause significant disruption for states

who are expecting to redraw congressional district maps during 2021, based on the 2020 data. An estimated 17 states are set to either lose or gain congressional seats as a result of this year's data.

Census data directly impacts the funding our cities, counties and the state of Kansas will receive back from the federal government over the next decade. Accurate population data is crucial to many aspects of the public water supply industry, from justifying water rights to determining eligibility for water and wastewater related grants, loans and other state and federal programs. Every census response is important. According to the Kansas Department of Commerce, should 1 percent of the Kansas population go uncounted in the 2020 Census, the state of Kansas could miss receiving approximately \$603,990,400 in federal funding over a 10-year period. Ensure you count, ensure your community counts, and ensure Kansas Counts by participating in the 2020 Census.

Ken Kopp, P.G., Water Rights/Source Water Specialist, joined KRWA as Water Rights/Source Water Specialist in early 2016. He previous worked for twenty-three years at the Kansas Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources and most recently was New Application Unit Supervisor.



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