

Census 2020: Planning Counts

By Megan Tennermann, AICP, Planner

Census Day is coming! The next Decennial Census will be held on April 1, 2020, and while that may seem like a long way off, the full preparations for this Census began early last year around the country.

Why Do We Have the Census?

Article 1, Section 2 of the United State Constitution requires that an enumeration (or count) of the population be made every ten years, in order to ensure fair representation in the House of Representatives. Over time, the Census became housed in the Department of Commerce, which expanded the Census program to include information about the homes people lived in, the jobs they did, and how they got around, among other topics. This information is used at all levels of government to allocate funding, as well as providing citizens, especially companies, with data to use for starting and/or relocating businesses.

Fun Facts

21,160 veterans live in Orange County

Our population is **10.8%** foreign-born

Why Are You Preparing Now?

Counting every single person in the United States is an enormous operation, so preparation for the next Census typically begins at the end of the last Census. "Census Tests" are held in cities around the country in order to test new survey techniques and outreach methods. Residential building permit data is collected on an annual basis to get a rough estimate of the number of households in each level of government (municipal, county, state, even down to the neighborhood level). Housing unit addresses need to be verified, because Census forms go to housing units, not individual people. People living in other situations

need to be accounted for, such as people living in group quarters like nursing homes, college dorms or military barracks; people who are homeless; or people in temporary situations like hospital stays. All these situations and facilities need to be incorporated into the outreach plan and counted on Census Day.

What Can Municipalities Do to Make Sure Our People Are Counted?

Orange County as a whole had a 68% response rate to the Census in 2010. This low response rate (lower than the state and national averages) likely means that the County was undercounted, and therefore did not receive its fair share of transportation, housing, and other federal and state funds. To make sure the count reflects as many people as possible, we ask municipalities to talk to their residents and businesses, starting now, about the importance of filling out the form and mailing it back.

If anyone has any questions about the Census, please feel free to contact Megan Tennermann at mtennermann@orangecountygov.com.

Orange County Trends

Compared to the US and NYS, We are...

Young - our median age of 37.2 is lower than both the national median age of 37.9 and the state median age of 38.4

Less Racially Diverse - more of our population is white, not Hispanic or Latino; the County is becoming more diverse over time.

More Employed - our unemployment rate is 7.3% compared to 8.2% in NYS and 8.3% nationally.

Wealthier - our median household income is 19.5% higher than that of NYS and 31.4% higher than the national median.

