**Everyone Counts in the 2020 Census**

There’s something new in Census 2020, and it’s of particular importance for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community: The option to identify a relationship as same sex. For the first time, the census will give people the option to identify “same sex husband/wife/spouse or same-sex unmarried partner.”

While this has been updated on the census form, the question about a person’s biological sex remains binary. According to the Census Bureau, respondents are encouraged to indicate the sex that best describes their personal gender identity, even if it differs from their assigned biological sex.

“Responses from the LGBTQ+ community, a historically undercounted community, will provide reliable data to inform advocates, policymakers and researchers working LGBTQ+ issues,” according to the Census Bureau website.

Since its inception in 1790, the census has always asked people to identify their sex. (Check the box of the sex you identify with.) That’s because the data allows the Census Bureau to create statistics about men and women for use in planning and funding government programs. It also can be used to enforce laws, regulations and policies against discrimination.

Now the Census Bureau will be able to begin to do the same for the LGBTQ+ community. Actual data can translate into political power, including civil rights protections, and support and service programs.

Some people hesitate about completing the census because they are concerned about whether their information will be kept safe and confidential. The Census Bureau is bound by law to protect your answers and keep them strictly confidential. Every census worker takes an oath of non-disclosure that protects your answers.

It’s imperative that everyone participate, because federal funds will be allocated to the federal spending programs in Michigan based on the data collected from the census. Programs such as:

* Healthcare: Medicaid, Medicare Part B, children’s health insurance, and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.
* Infrastructure: Highway planning and construction, federal transit and general community development.
* Education: Head Start, Pell Grants, school lunches, rural education, adult education, and grants for preschool special education.
* Employment and training: vocational rehabilitation state grants.

That data also helps determine the number of state representatives Michigan has in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, our state lost two Congressional seats between the 2000 and 2010 Census, and we’re at risk of losing another one in 2020.

Fill out the 2020 Census today. It will take you 10 minutes to answer nine questions that will have a huge impact on your friends, your family and your community for the next 10 years.

Visit [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov/) to fill it out with your computer or handheld device. Call 1-844-330-2020 to learn how to complete the census by phone, including in a language of your choice. Respond to the questionnaire by mail.

When everyone counts, everyone wins!

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