



## What Is The U.S. Census?

*Untangling and simplifying market topics and terms*

### Definition:

*The 2020 U.S. Census is designed to count every person living in the United States – approximately 330 million people across 140 million housing units - and is mandated by the Constitution to take place every ten years. The data collected by the census impacts political representation and government funding. Responding to the census is mandatory and could be done by mail, online, phone, or an in-person visit at home.*

### How the U.S. Census shapes the nation:

*The U.S. decennial (every ten years) census tells us who we are and where we're going as a nation. State population counts from the census determine how the 435 U.S. House of Representatives seats are split across the 50 states based on each state's share of the national total. This also influences the number of state votes in the U.S. Electoral College for the 2024 Presidential Election. Additionally, state and local officials use results for redistricting as they redraw congressional, state and local district boundaries to contain roughly equal numbers of people, ensuring each person's voting power is closely equivalent.*

*Census data is also used to distribute over \$1.5 Trillion in federal spending to states and localities each year across health, education, housing, infrastructure programs and more.<sup>1</sup> Accurate census counts ensure that funding is equitably allocated to more than 100 programs such as Medicaid, highway planning and construction, block grant programs for community mental health services, special education grants to states, the National School Lunch Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Head Start and more.*

### What is the Economic Census?:

*The U.S. Economic Census is conducted every five years, most recently in 2017, and gives deeper insights into nearly four million businesses across most industries and all geographic regions. The economic census data helps government agencies to benchmark GDP estimates, estimate producer price indexes, index industrial production and forecast economic conditions in states and localities. Marketers use the data for economic planning, market analysis and investment, production decisions and more.*

## The importance of the U.S. Census to marketers:

### Demographic & Geographic Insights

*On a topline level, census data helps marketers understand the population composition on a country, state and local level. These important demographic and geographic insights help businesses maximize individual market opportunities, learn about the complexion of the changing consumer, identify evolving consumer needs around products and services, devise expansion strategies and more.*

### Audience Targeting

*The census not only provides basic demographic information, but it also includes detailed data on economic conditions, wealth, commuting patterns, internet access, health care coverage, living arrangements, social interactions and much more. This data can give marketers a thorough understanding of who their best prospects are and aids in the development of audience profiles and target archetypes.*

*This, in turn, allows marketers to build effective advertising campaigns particularly when they incorporate an audience-based TV buying approach that focuses more on granular traits and behaviors than broad age & gender demos.*

### Media Measurement Panels

*Since it is not feasible to measure the on-going media consumption behaviors of everyone in a specific geographic area like a country or DMA, a panel reflects a group of people that are chosen to represent a larger universe of people. Panel data is used to understand consumer behavior and provide an accurate picture of how consumers are engaging with media, such as watching TV or streaming video.*

*The census is a primary data source that audience measurement companies rely on to accurately calibrate their panels so that they are representative of the overall population in terms of demographics such as age, race, gender, socioeconomic class and other characteristics.*

*This allows these companies to produce audience estimates and, for instance, project viewership figures of a particular piece of video content. Publishers, distributors, marketers and agencies use panel-based media measurement to get an accurate, and independent, view of campaign delivery and to understand reach and impact. Inaccurate data could have a significant impact on businesses who rely on the data for their media decision-making.*

### Custom Research

*The census is also crucial for marketers that are looking to gain additional insights into their consumers, or potential customers, through custom research studies. Before a custom study is fielded, the study's target audience can be checked against census data to gauge stability and see if it is feasible to develop an objective view of the population. Similar to a panel, custom study*

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respondents are often modeled on census data, within a few percentage points, to create a representative view of the overall population so that accurate and actionable insights can be developed within their target market(s).

## Three initial insights from the 2020 U.S. Census:

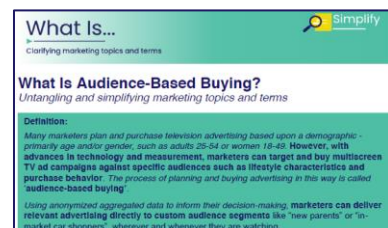
- **The U.S. is more diverse and multiracial than ever** as the White population declined 8.6%, the Hispanic/Latino population grew by 23% and the Multiracial population grew by 276% since 2010.<sup>2</sup>
- **Overall population growth is slowing and the U.S. is aging.** The population grew by 7.4% over the past decade, the slowest pace recorded since the 1930s. However, there is a disparity between adult and under 18 population trends between 2010-2020.<sup>1,2,3</sup>
  - A18+ population: +10.1% over the last decade to 258.3 MM
  - Under 18 population: -1.4% over the last decade to 73.1 MM
- **Populations in metropolitan areas are growing while many smaller counties are shrinking.** Less than half of the 3,143 counties grew their population over the past decade while 81% of metropolitan areas grew.<sup>4</sup>

## Key Resources:

- [U.S. Census Bureau – 2020 Census](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau – 2017 Economic Census](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau – American Consumer Survey](#)
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics – Consumer Expenditure Survey](#)

Want to learn more?

Click on the images below for the content.



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## About VAB

VAB is an insights-driven organization that inspires marketers to reimagine their media strategies resulting in fully informed decisions.

Drawing on our marketing expertise, we **simplify** the complexities in our industry and **discover** new insights that **transform** the way marketers look at their media strategy.

We are committed to your business growth and proud to offer VAB members, brand marketers and agencies **complimentary access** to our continuously-growing Insights library. **Get immediate access at theVAB.com.**

## Sources

1. Council on Foreign Relations, '[Why Does the Census Matter?](#)', 5/11/2021.
2. U.S. Census Bureau, '[2020 Census Statistics Highlight Local Population Changes and Nation's Racial and Ethnic Diversity](#)', 8/12/2021.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, '[U.S. Adult Population Grew Faster Than Nation's Total Population From 2010 to 2020](#)', 8/12/2021.
4. USA Today, '[Takeaways from the US census: A slower growing but more multiracial society, as cities outpace rural areas](#)', 8/12/2021.