

# A user's guide to the 2020 census: What to expect and what it means for Maryland and Baltimore

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Last week, the U.S. Census Bureau released the first numbers from the once-every-ten-years count of Americans. The data helps determine representation in Congress and big shares of federal funding.

But data from the 2020 census is not all released at once. Here's a user's guide for what to expect from the 2020 census with what's out, what we're still waiting for, and what it means.

## **Give me numbers! What's been released from the 2020 census so far?**

On April 26, the U.S. Census Bureau **released** population totals for every state, showing that Maryland's population **grew 7%** over the past decade, to 6,177,224 people.

These "apportionment" figures were part of the once-in-a-decade process of redistributing the 435 seats in the House of Representatives among states. As expected, Maryland retained its eight seats.

## **That's it? When will there be more data?**

By Aug. 16, the bureau is expected to release much more detailed local data that will include the population of cities and counties, plus demographic characteristics such as race and age.

That data will initially be released in "legacy format," which means it will be in raw form and not easily readable. More user-friendly data is scheduled to be delivered by Sept. 30.

## **Wait, I've already heard about population estimates for 2020. What are those?**

Each year, the Census Bureau gives population estimates for states, counties, cities, and towns. These are technically based on the 2010 census and **different from the population counts** that are released every decade after a comprehensive count.

The estimates use data on births, deaths, and migration to calculate population change since the most recent decennial census.

Population estimates released in 2020 suggested that **Baltimore's population in 2019 dipped** below 600,000 for the first time in more than a century. The **next batch of estimates are expected today**, including state, county and municipal population and demographic changes.

## **What does the data show so far? What will be learned from future releases?**

Maryland's 7% population growth was in line with the country's growth rate of 7.4%. Both were historically slow.

The U.S. population growth was the slowest since the 1930s.

Maryland's growth rate by decade was the slowest it's been since the 1830s.

Still, Maryland is now the nation's 18th most populous state, up from 19th in the 2010 census.

Future releases will give a clearer picture of the demographics of the state and smaller geographic locations, such as cities and counties.

## **That all sounds fascinating. But will this affect my day-to-day life?**

The data helps guide the location of everything from schools to clinics.

The government also uses it to **allocate billions in federal spending**, for programs such as Medicaid, Pell Grants, highway planning and construction, and the school breakfast and lunch programs.

Local governments, businesses and nonprofits all look to the information to make decisions, too.

The local data released in August will also guide the redistricting process, when the state redraws boundaries of its congressional districts.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-prem-md-census-explainer-20210504-onr1fbr5ebfqhpbak67esbaxq-story.html>