

Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg urges people to complete the US census online

The social network is directing users to the Census Bureau's website.

Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg urged people to complete the 2020 US census online even during the coronavirus pandemic, noting that tech companies also have a responsibility to encourage participation.

"I know that this might not feel like a big priority at a time when so many people are understandably worried about their health, security and loved ones, but it really matters," Sandberg said in a Facebook post.



Sandberg's remarks come on Census Day, the date the US Census Bureau uses to reference where a person lives for the once-a-decade population count. For the first time, people can complete the census online. Census takers, who go door to door, will be equipped with an Apple iPhone 8. The census is important because it helps determine which states and communities get billions of dollars in federal funding and the number of seats each state gets in Congress.

"It is that funding -- and the services it provides -- that we rely on when crises hit. It's so important that everyone is counted and that no community is underrepresented," she added.

In an op-ed published on conservative news site RealClearPolitics, Sandberg outlined what Facebook has been doing to boost participation in the census and crack down on misinformation. The social media giant directs users on Facebook and Facebook-owned Instagram to a website where they can fill out the census. More than 11 million users clicked through notifications on Facebook and Instagram that led them to the website, she said.

Facebook has also been stepping up efforts to crack down on misinformation about the census, though it's unclear how well they're working. In December, the company said it would ban misleading posts and ads that aim to prevent people from participating in the 2020 US census. Those rules also apply to politicians. Facing criticism from Democrats, Facebook removed ads in March from President Donald Trump's reelection campaign that critics said could've created confusion about the census. The ads directed supporters to take a survey the campaign calls the "Official 2020 Congressional District Census."

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