

## See 200 Years Of Twists And Turns Of Census Citizenship Questions

[Renee Klahr](#)

NPR, April 23, 2019

If the Trump administration gets its way, federal law will require this question to be asked of each person living in all of the country's households in 2020: "Is this person a citizen of the United States?" It's been close to 70 years since a citizenship question has been included among the census questions for every U.S. household.

In fact, the U.S. census has never before directly asked for the citizenship status of every person living in every household.

The wording of the question the Trump administration wants to ask comes from a survey the Census Bureau began conducting annually in every county after the 2000 census with about 1 in 38 households — the American Community Survey, which has since replaced the census as the government's way of collecting citizenship information.

How the federal government has used the census in the past to ask about citizenship status has varied over the years. For decades, the census asked only about the citizenship status of people born outside the U.S. who were later naturalized, or became U.S. citizens.

From the first time in 1820 to the most recent in 2000, when only a small sample of households were asked, questions about citizenship on the census have had a history of stops and starts, twists and turns over 200 years.