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Democracy in a Pandemic: Voting and the Census During COVID-19 Explained by Experts

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With the COVID-19 pandemic's impact being felt in every area of American life, it is more important than ever to provide rigorous research to inform reporting on this crisis. To meet this growing need, Scholars Strategy Network has compiled a list of scholars who are available to be contacted for comments and analysis. Below are the scholars who can comment on how coronavirus is impacting our democracy.

You can connect with all researchers available to comment on the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#).

Learn more about SSN's efforts to support voting [here](#).

Jacob M. Grumbach

[Email](#) [Twitter](#)

University of Washington

"The COVID-19 crisis makes clear the underinvestment in American public institutions and infrastructure, from health care to the social safety net to election administration. The U.S. must demand that the wealthy and large businesses contribute more to these institutions, because a society that is robust to crisis is better for all of us."

Amel Ahmed

[Email](#)

University of Massachusetts Amherst

"In light of the worsening COVID-19 pandemic, we must look ahead to the November 2020 elections to ensure that they can be conducted safely and at the highest standards. For that we will need to explore the various methods of voting, and especially alternatives to in-person voting. Implementation of such changes will come with both political and technical challenges that we must overcome."

Elizabeth C. Matto

[Email](#) [Twitter](#)

Rutgers University

"With the U.S. Census, the presidential primary campaign, and the upcoming national elections, 2020 already was a critical year for American democracy. A public health crisis only highlights the importance of leadership in a representative democracy and challenges states to balance public health and safety with a citizen's right to vote."

Van Gosse

[Email](#) [Twitter](#)

Franklin and Marshall College

"University administrators should begin planning proactively to guarantee their students' right to vote this fall, including expediting online registration, and pressing legislatures to expand early voting and mail-in voting. The best way for Congress to help students vote and keep them safe is by requiring 50-state vote-by-mail in

2020."

Nancy López

[Email](#)

University of New Mexico

"Now more than ever, we need everyone to help ensure a complete count for the 2020 Census. Think of at least 5-10 people you can mobilize and remind to fill out the 2020 Census at my2020census.gov. You can also call or request a paper copy."

Philip Rocco

[Email](#) [Twitter](#)

Marquette University

"COVID-19 creates an unprecedented situation for the decennial census. The Census Bureau itself has placed many questionnaire assistance activities on hold. Perhaps more importantly, local and state governments as well as community-based organizations have cancelled or drastically scaled back their in-person outreach to historically undercounted communities. The challenge now is how to leverage a more limited set of communication channels to generate trusted and accurate messages about the Census. The success of state and local responses will largely depend on the extent of their planning efforts prior to 2020."

Michael Peshkin

[Email](#)

Northwestern University

"Students vote very reliably by absentee ballot, in greater numbers than they would in person. Partly it's because many out of state students don't feel right about voting in their campus community. Partly it's more convenient, same as for all voters. Now, with COVID-19 keeping us indoors, there's more interest than ever in vote by mail. For students, and for everyone."

Jennifer L. McCoy

[Email](#) [Twitter](#)

Georgia State University

“Normally, an external threat like war or a pandemic health crisis brings a country together. However, our bitter partisan polarization is dividing us even on how much of a threat we perceive COVID-19 to pose. The message we believe depends on which messenger we trust – the president, scientists, a governor, a particular news channel. It is vital for political leaders to develop a common message and strategy for controlling the virus, addressing the economic impact, and protecting the election process.”