

Census Outreach Volunteer Guide

2022 Census

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Overview

Greetings, and thank you for your interest in playing a key role in the BRC Census project! This guide is intended for Census volunteers who have signed up to be Lab Hosts and/or Data Disseminators, our two primary outreach roles.

Every year since 2002, BRC Census volunteers have worked to collect and make available data that accurately describe the population of Black Rock City (BRC). The Burning Man Organization uses Census data for event planning, advocating for Burners, and negotiating with local and federal governments during the permitting process. Researchers also use Census data for a variety of research projects and publications. In addition, summaries of the data are available online at the [Census Data Archive](#) and [Census Portal](#) within the Burning Man Journal, and on-playa at Census Lab for anyone who wants to learn more about Burning Man.

One of the most exciting things about working as a Lab Host or Data Disseminator is that, for many people, *you are the face of BRC Census*. When you interact with Burning Man participants you can give them a positive feeling about the Census, intrigue them with the information we provide, and make them eager to participate in our research. And participation is what it's all about!

Have you completed the interactive training(s) relevant to your role yet? You can find all training materials on the Census [homepage](#):

- Both Lab Hosts and Data Disseminators should review the Interactive Introduction (so you can answer general questions about the BRC Census team) and the Interactive Random Sample Training (so you can answer questions about our sampling methods).
- Lab Hosts should also review the Interactive Lab Host Training.

Regardless of your role, it may also be helpful to take a look at the Census Data Archive and the Census portal on the Burning Man Journal (see the links above) so you're prepared to discuss some of our recent data and posts with participants who stop by the lab.

Post-Arrival Updates

This page will have hand-written notes with information about any changes that have been made to Census protocols since arriving on-playa. *Check this section before every shift, as notes may be added at any time during the Burn.*

Role Descriptions

Lab Hosts work throughout the week at Census Lab and Center Camp. A good Lab Host is friendly and social with excellent, clear communication skills. There are Lab Hosts scheduled from 9:00 AM - 7:00 PM every day from the Monday after Gate opens, through the Friday before the Man burns. On-playa Lab Host training is required for all Lab Hosts; you can check Shiftboard for the training schedule.

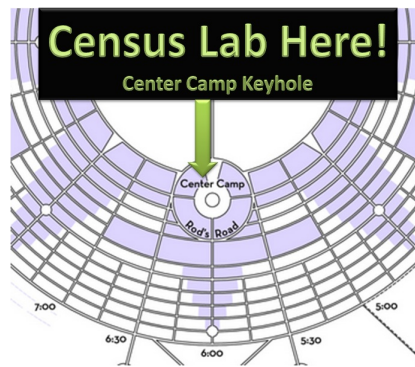
Each Lab Host shift is two hours long, and a Lab Host's time is spent interacting with participants. Sometimes Lab Hosts may assist other Census volunteers in finding information about their schedules or responsibilities. More often, Lab Hosts interact with participants who have limited knowledge about Census as a team. The Lab Host's first and foremost goal is to get these participants excited about the Census project so that they remember to go home and complete their online survey. Lab Hosts generate excitement by offering interesting pieces of Census Data, and through a variety of interactive activities.

Data Disseminators work toward the end of the event, on Friday before the Man burns. Each Data Dissemination shift is 2.5 hours long, and training is provided at the beginning of each shift. A good Data Disseminator is friendly, social, and willing to approach strangers. Clear communication is also important.

Data Disseminators assist with outreach by reminding participants about the online survey and distributing preliminary Census results to participants all over BRC. Data Disseminator shifts always start at Census Lab to pick up preliminary results and do a brief training session. Data Disseminators are sometimes assigned to assist with a particular outreach event (such as a Data Bash), but outside of those cases Data Disseminators can do their job anywhere in Black Rock City that they wish to go.

Preparing for Your Shift

Note: Census Lab, where all shifts start and most shifts end, is located at Center Camp across from Playa Info:



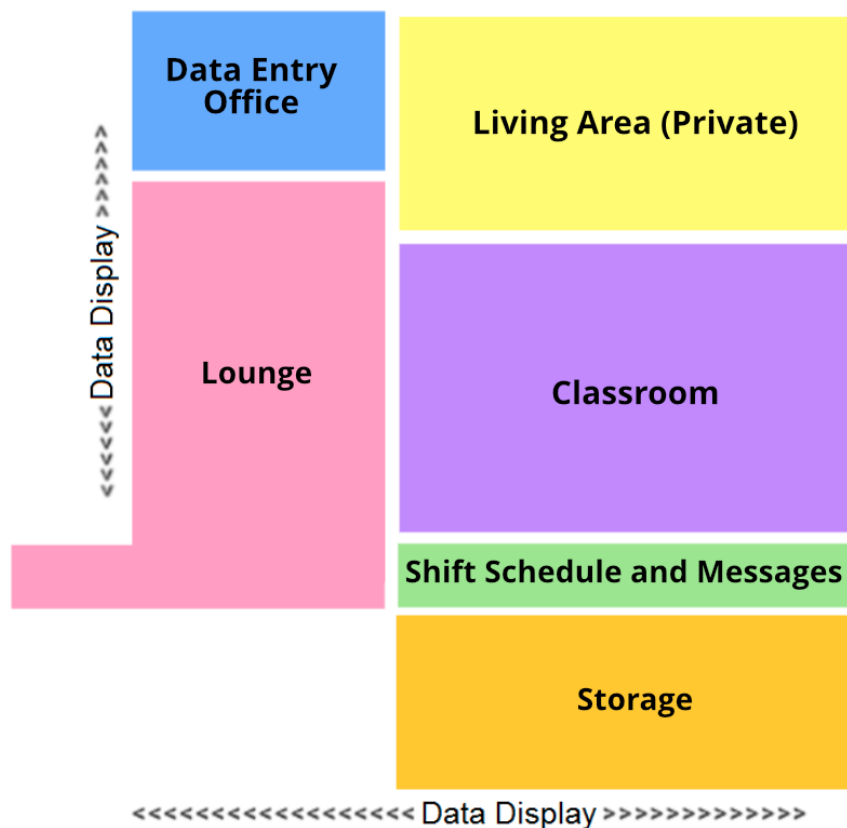
If you ever need to describe the location of Census Lab to another participant, it is often easiest to say that we are at the 11 o'clock radial of the road that runs around Center Camp, across from Playa Info and next to Media Mecca.

Bring the types of things to your shift that you would always carry with you at Burning Man: goggles, dust mask, water bottle, perhaps a snack. You can refill your water bottle at the Lab, and lemonade is also available. The Census uniform is a white lab coat with a Census patch, which helps to identify you as an official part of the Census team. You are encouraged to decorate your own lab coat with Census colors (neon pink and black) and bring it to your shift (we will provide you with a Census patch at training), but this is optional. Loaner lab coats are plentiful and will be available at Census Lab when you arrive for your shift. You will also receive a Census volunteer badge with your name on it, which you should bring to all of your Census shifts.

Arrive at least 10 minutes before the start time for your shift. *Please take your commitment seriously and make every effort to attend the shift(s) you sign up for! This is especially important for Lab Hosts, because you will be taking over for volunteers whose shifts are scheduled to end when you arrive.*

Notes for Lab Hosts

If it is your first shift, take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the Lab:



See the next page for a description of each area labeled on the map above.

- The *Data Entry Office* contains completed sampling forms and computers used for data entry.
- The *Lounge* is a breezy, shaded space with couches. Volunteers and visitors can relax here to review printed Census reports, fill out field notes books, write a question in the Unanswered Questions Book, chat with Lab Hosts, etc. Water is also available here, provided by the Lab Hosts on duty.
- The *Classroom* is where we hold on-site training sessions and outreach events. It is also the storage location for water, Census stickers, spare lab coats, Lab Host umbrellas, and other equipment used by Census volunteers.
- The *Shift Schedule* can be found on a wall facing the classroom area. The Data Bash schedule, Who's Who poster, and other useful reference material are also posted here.
- The *Living Area* is a private space for team members who camp at Census Lab. Avoid entering this area if possible, unless you are looking for a team member to help you with something during your shift.
- Exterior *Data Displays* are found all around Census Lab with highlights of the data collected during past years.

Locate all items required for your shift:

- From the Classroom area:
 - *Census stickers* and *data sheets* to hand out to visitors
 - *Loaner lab coats* are stored here on a rack, available if you don't already have one of your own
- From the Lab Host Locker in the corner of the Lounge nearest the Data Entry Office (you'll be given the locker code when you attend on-playa training):
 - *A tablet* to sign yourself in; you may also want to hold onto this for other uses during your shift - be sure to sign it out in the Tablet Sign-Out Log!
 - *A handful of outreach pins or other gifts* to hand out to participants who take place in interactive activities with you (we'll review specific gifts and activities during on-playa training)
 - *A *insert future gift (if we do one) here** - our gift to you for all of your hard work!
 - *A printed copy of this document* stored in the Census Lab Host Binder, be sure to check the Post-Arrival Updates section before beginning your shift.

Then, check in with the Lab Host you are relieving. *Be sure to sign in for your shift so we can keep track of your volunteer hours!* The Lab Host you are relieving can show you how if this is your first shift. Ask if the current Lab Hosts have any observations or tips to offer. What have visitors been interested in discussing?

Review the data sheet and the outside data displays to arm yourself with interesting facts. You will also want to review the copy of this document set aside for Lab Hosts, to see if the *Post-Arrival Updates* section has any information you need to know.

Notes for Data Disseminators

There will be someone in the Classroom (see the map above) checking volunteers in for your Data Disseminator shift. If you need a loaner lab coat you can select one from the rack. *If you borrow a lab coat, please be sure to return it at the end of your shift!*

Be sure to sign in for your shift so we can keep track of your volunteer hours! The person who checks you in will also provide you with Census stickers and data sheets for you to share during your shift. This will be your opportunity to ask any questions you have about the Census team or sampling methodology, so be sure to take this opportunity if you are uncertain about anything!

Representing BRC Census

The [2022 BRC Census Volunteer Behavioral Standards Agreement](#) provides critical information for all Census volunteers. In addition to reviewing all online materials, you must use the link above to review and acknowledge these standards before you arrive on-playa. To prevent redundancy, this section is written with the assumption that the reader has already reviewed the Behavioral Standards. This section is intended as a supplement to those standards, with information specific to those volunteers acting as Data Entry Shift Leads.

Interacting with Participants

Remember, the primary purpose of any Census Outreach Volunteer (regardless of specific role) is to encourage participation in our online survey that opens Tuesday after Burning Man ends! That means that your best case scenario involves every participant walking away from their interaction with you feeling good about you and your fellow Census volunteers. You are the face of our team when you are in a lab coat, and you have a tremendous amount of influence on whether or not they participate in the survey.

When interacting with Burners, people respond to your energy. Be upbeat, excited, respectful, and polite. Remember, one of the best ways to provide a positive interaction is to refrain from making assumptions about the people with whom you are interacting. Use gender-neutral language and avoid assumptions about prior Burn experience or anything else that might lead to someone feeling misunderstood or singled out. This guide will go into more detail later about the specific things you might say to incoming Burners within the specific roles covered in this guide.

Interacting with Other Departments

We regularly encounter people from other departments, most often other Burning Man staff departments and occasionally law enforcement or external vendors. If someone in a uniform or with a staff ID is expressing an interest in BRC Census and asking the same sorts of questions you would expect from a non-uniformed participant it is perfectly fine for you to interact with them as you would with anyone else. If they have more complex questions and you aren't sure of the answers (or of the reason for their interest), ask them to come with you into Census Lab so that you can locate a member of Census Leadership who can assist.

It is best to err on the side of caution when it comes to asking a member of Census Leadership to assist with questions asked by someone in uniform, or someone from another Burning Man department. We often take note of these interactions, both positive and negative, so that we can pass compliments (or concerns, whichever is applicable) along at the end of the event.

If you aren't sure how to identify or locate a member of Census Leadership, a Shift Lead can help you to do so. You can also ask around at Census Lab, or you can check the "Who's Who" board posted at Census Lab, which includes information for each Volunteer Coordinator and each member of Census Management. Each volunteer's "Who's Who" entry includes a picture, plus some information about when and where you might be able to find them on-playa. Or, as a short-cut, any Census volunteer wearing an event radio can probably point you in the right direction.

Interacting with Census Volunteers

If you are stationed at Census Lab as a Lab Host, you will almost certainly encounter fellow Census volunteers who would like your help. Lab Hosts will receive on-playa training on tasks such as checking shift schedules and reviewing training materials.

What Happens During a Data Dissemination Shift

The Data Disseminator role has a lot of room for personalization. Your goal is to make contact with participants and get them excited about completing the online survey when they get home. You can do this in any way that is safe for you and fun for everyone involved! Some Data Disseminators go out in groups; others go out alone. You could walk, ride a bicycle, or hop onto a Mutant Vehicle.

Be thoughtful about where you go and respectful about what participants are doing. Avoid areas where your presence might be considered an interruption or intrusion, such as the Temple or a performance or class. Outside of those general guidelines, you are free to go anywhere in BRC: walk-in camping, the Esplanade, one of the plazas, or anywhere else you will be welcome!

Be sure to review [How to Engage Participants](#) below for ideas and suggestions. You will have stickers and data sheets to hand out, and you may also be provided with other outreach tools - games to play with participants, information sheets about the Census team, or other similar items. Each Data Dissemination shift is scheduled to last for two and a half hours, but practically speaking when you are out of data sheets, stickers, etc. you can consider yourself done. If you borrowed a lab coat or other equipment, please return it to Census Lab. If you don't have anything to return to the Lab, you do not need to return to the Lab at the end of your shift.

What Happens During a Lab Host Shift

There should be two or three Lab Hosts on duty between 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM, beginning on Monday morning after Gate opens and ending Friday evening. Lab Host shifts are two hours long, and staggered so that some Lab Hosts work from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM and others work from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, and so on throughout the day. This way, with the exception of the shifts beginning at 9:00 AM, Lab Hosts arriving with their shifts will join at least one Lab Host already on-site who has already been briefed on the day's activities and can pass critical information along.

If there are two Lab Hosts, one stands outside the lab to engage people who stop to read the data displays. The other stays inside to welcome people who enter the Lab. It often makes sense to spend your first hour out in the sun, then spend your second hour inside the Lab where you can cool off and get a break from the heat. However, you and your shift partner can make any arrangement so long as it works for both of you. If there are three Lab Hosts, one should go to Center Camp Café (see [Hosting at Center Camp Café](#) below).

Most Lab Hosts will have reviewed this document and attended on-playa training before their first shift. However, up to one Lab Host per shift could be a drop-in volunteer referred by the Volunteer Resource Team. If someone arrives during your shift and says they are a drop-in volunteer, give them a few minutes to review this document before getting started. When possible, drop-in volunteers should work from Census Lab, within hearing range of a Lab Host who attended the on-playa training so they can ask for help as needed.

Hosting at Census Lab

Some visitors to Census Lab may be volunteers who are reporting for a shift, want to see the schedule, or have other questions. Try to help them find who or what they are looking for - you will learn more about the resources available to you for this during your on-playa training.

Other participants stop by Census Lab because they are curious about the Census or because they want to complete the Census survey. Greet every visitor with a smile and make them feel welcome. Offer them water and the shade of the lounge. Remember, a big part of your role is being a welcoming face to generate positive feelings about BRC Census. We want them to leave the Lab feeling eager to participate, with positive memories about their trip to Census Lab.

It's common for people to stop by intending to fill out their Census form - this is because the Census survey used to be a paper form filled out on-playa. Explain that the survey is only available online now, but we would love for them to complete it after the event. Offer them a sticker as a reminder for when they get home. Ask if they would like to answer a question set in a field notes journal (you can learn more [here](#)), and offer them a seat in our lounge area. Show them the

information in the Lab and try to answer their questions.

If someone asks a question you don't know the answer to, don't try to guess - be honest and tell them that you don't know the answer, but that you can help them to discover it. If there is someone else in the Lab who might know the answer, ask that person for help. If not, invite the visitor to leave their question and email address using a tablet, and someone from Census leadership will get back to them after Burning Man. Alternatively, they can email census@burningman.org directly after the Burn.

There may be researchers present at the Lab, collecting data for their own academic projects. If the Lab Host who meets you when you begin your shift mentions researchers (or if researchers arrive at the Lab to collect data during your shift), introduce yourself and ask for some information about their research, and for some recommendations about how to incorporate the research project with the other activities at the Lab. If you have any doubts about whether someone has obtained permission to collect data at Census Lab, find a member of Census Leadership and ask for assistance.

If a research project is restricting access to any part of the Lounge, changes can and should be made to make things easier for everyone. Lemonade can be moved, Field Notes books could be relocated (say, to the table out in front of the shade, though it would need to be moved back later!), etc. If a researcher makes any request of you that makes you uncomfortable or seems excessive (for example, if someone asked you to clear everyone out of the lounge or asks you to stop Lab Host duties in order to assist them), don't hesitate to find a member of Census Leadership so that they can help resolve the issue.

Hosting at Center Camp Café

If there are three Lab Hosts on a shift, we would like to send one Host to Center Camp to maximize our outreach efforts. Coordinate with your fellow lab Hosts to decide which of you will work in each location and (if you want to try multiple locations) when you will switch places.

Before you head to Center Camp, be sure to gather a few items:

- Anything you need for an hour or two of self-care: water, sunglasses, a snack, etc.
- A lab coat with your name badge on it
- A stack of Census stickers
- 1-2 pencils and a pencil sharpener, as backup for the field notes books
- One hard copy each of the following items - be very careful to return these to Census Lab when you are done at Center Camp:
 - Last year's Population Analysis
 - Materials for any interactive activities you want to bring with you (we'll cover these

in more detail during on-playa training)

- If one is available, you may choose to bring a tablet along so you can collect email addresses for survey reminders, collect unanswered questions, and review the digital Population Analysis. If you choose to do this, **do not** let the tablet out of your sight during your shift! You must return it to Census Lab when you are done.

In the Center Camp tent, you will find a Census table with several field notes books. This is a great chance to make sure that the field notes books are still interact-able: check to see if the pencils are still attached and sharpened, and fix any issues you see. After that, you can Lab Host from the Census table, or you can choose to move around Center Camp.

Be attentive to the other activities taking place in Center Camp during your shift. Try not to walk through performances or distract participants who are already engaged in other activities. If there are performances or music, be thoughtful about making sure you do not “upstage” or interrupt them. However, outside of these considerations, the Center Camp Lab Host role is yours to play as you see fit!

How to Engage Participants

The easiest way to engage visitors is to entice them with a piece of data. Everyone loves to hear a juicy Census statistic! There are tons of Census data from which to choose. Find two or three statistics that you think are interesting and keep those handy in your mind. Or, locate them on the display to show visitors. We'll also provide data summaries for your reference.

Examples:

- Do you know what percent of last year's Burners considered themselves to be religious?
- Do you know what percent of last year's Burners traveled from outside the United States?
- Do you know what percent of last year's Burners were attending for the first time?
- Is there anything you wonder about the Burning Man population, last year or in previous years?
- Have you completed the Online Census survey in past years?
- Do you have any questions about the methods we use to collect data?
- Do you have any questions about why we do the Census and how Census data are used?

In addition to discussions about data and methodology, there may be other participatory opportunities. These activities vary every year, and are usually not 100% finalized by the time this document is published. These activities will be discussed in more detail during on-playa training, and described in the [Post-Arrival Updates](#) section of this document.

Frequently Asked Questions

Visitors ask a lot of questions when they visit the Census Lab or encounter a Census volunteer. Some of the most common questions and answers are included below:

Q: “How do I participate in the Census?”

A: After the Burn, we would love to have you complete our online survey. Here is a sticker to remind you! [*Hand the visitor a sticker*] Here on the playa, you can participate in the field notes project. Each journal contains a short set of open-ended questions about a particular topic. There is one here in the Lab you can answer.

Q: “What do you do with the Census information?” This question may be phrased more aggressively, such as “Who do you give all this information to?” or “Are you selling our personal information to the man?”

A: The Census is completely voluntary and confidential and no personal identifying information is collected. The data are used in three main ways:

- Our results are shared with Burners and the wider world through our blog to give everyone an accurate picture of what the BRC population is like each year.
- Our data are used by collaborating academic researchers, who contribute questions for their own research interests. Past inquiries have looked at gender, sexuality, play, transformation, and emotions.
- The Burning Man organization uses our data in their negotiations and advocacy for the event. When it comes down to it, the event might not even happen without the data we collect.

What's Next?

You're almost ready to hit the playa! There are just a few more things you should do:

- Review and digitally acknowledge the [2022 BRC Census Volunteer Behavioral Standards Agreement](#).
- Be sure that you understand the information in this guide and all the other documents and interactive training resources linked in the [Overview](#) of this document.

- If it sounds like fun, find and decorate your own lab coat using Census colors (neon pink and black). Please don't use other colors; we want you to be easily identifiable as a Census volunteer!
- Update your schedule if your availability changes. You can log into Shiftboard to unconfirm (resign from) a shift up to 5 days before the shift takes place. If your availability changes with less than 5 days' notice please email censusvolunteercoordinators@burningman.org if you are not yet on-playa, or stop by Census Lab to notify us.
- Read all emails from Census carefully, as they contain details about your arrival and on-playa training.

Thank you so much for volunteering with BRC Census. We appreciate your efforts to prepare for your shift! Feel free to contact us at censusvolunteercoordinators@burningman.org at any time with questions or comments as you prepare for Burning Man.