

Form A Frequently Asked Questions

General Information

What is Form A?

Form A, also known as the Housing Unit and Population Estimate Report, is used by OFM to gather the information that we need to make April 1 city and town population determinations.

Why is population determined as of April 1 each year?

The April 1 date is a statutory requirement specified in RCW 43.62.030. The April 1 date was chosen so that federal decennial census data can be used as the base for estimating city populations.

What are the population numbers used for?

April 1 population estimates are cited in numerous statutes using population as criteria for fund allocations, program eligibility, or program operations, and as criteria for determining county participation under the Growth Management Act.

Form A Reporting

How do I get my Form A?

Form A is accessible through the Population Estimate System (PES) application at <https://pop.ofm.wa.gov> or a PDF document can be sent to you via email. Contact us at pop.estimate@ofm.wa.gov or by calling 360-902-0599 and we will help you choose the format that works best for you.

I am having trouble accessing Form A through PES, what should I do?

Contact us at pop.estimate@ofm.wa.gov or by calling 360-902-0599 and we will help troubleshoot your issue.

The PDF version of Form A opened but cannot be filled out. What should be done?

Form A is not a “fillable” document. It must be printed prior to completing it. Alternatively, you could use the PES application which allows for online data entry and submission.

How should the PDF version of Form A be submitted to OFM?

You may submit the form to OFM by email, fax, or regular mail using the information shown below.

OFM - Forecasting and Research Division
P.O. Box 43124
Olympia, WA 98504-3124

Email: pop.estimate@ofm.wa.gov
Fax: 360-725-5174

Section A: New Frame Housing

What is the difference between Section A1 and A2?

Sections A1 and A2 separate the most current data collection year from prior years in which permits were reported but not completed.

Section A1 is for recording the number of permits issued and the number of units associated with these permits that were completed during the current reporting period from April 2, 2015 through April 1, 2016. These permits and completed units have not previously been reported to OFM.

Section A2 is for reporting the number of units completed for permits that were issued prior to April 1, 2015 but have not yet been reported as completed. The units associated with these permits are referred to as “carryover units”.

In Section A2, why does OFM separate carryover units into two time periods?

OFM is concerned about the over- or under-reporting of completed units over time.

Column 1: This column shows the number of permitted units reported by the city on Form A from April 2, 2010 through April 1, 2015 that have not been completed yet.

Column 2: Report the number of carryover units listed in Column 1 that were completed during the current reporting period from April 2, 2015 through April 1, 2016.

Column 3: Report the number of housing units that were completed during the current reporting period from April 2, 2015 through April 1, 2016 associated with permits issued prior to April 2, 2010.

Do not include units, especially those associated with large apartment buildings that were in place during the April to May 2010 period that had a roof, windows, and doors. The Federal Census defined such structures as “weather tight” and included them in the 2010 census housing counts, even though they were not certified for occupancy. These housing units are already part of the city’s 2010 base count.

You should expect a call from your city analyst regarding the information provided in Column 3. OFM will gladly accept these units as long as supporting documentation can be provided.

What do I do about residential building permits that have expired and are subsequently reissued (renewed)?

OFM recognizes that some residential building permits will expire and have to be reissued. Do not report reissued permits on Form A if they have previously been reported to OFM.

I do not understand the question “Do the data in Section A1 include permits issued in annexed areas by other jurisdictions?” Can you explain?

If your city/town annexed territory with buildable land, owners or builders may have applied for housing permits from the county before the annexation. Your answer will help clarify whether these permits have already been reported to OFM by the county. Cities/towns should work with the county to get a list of all permits issued in annexed areas prior to becoming part of the city/town. Be prepared to provide supporting documentation to your city analyst.

How do I report micro housing units on Form A?

Micro housing units are known by a variety of names including aPodments, congregate-style housing, workforce apartments, etc. These structures are intended to house individuals in private rooms with access to some shared living areas such as a kitchen and laundry room. If your city is issuing permits for micro housing units please contact your city analyst to discuss how these units should be reported to OFM. We want to make sure you are getting an accurate estimate of the population living in these units.

What do you mean by conversions and why are they reported with demolitions in Section A.3?

An existing residential structure may be converted to a non-residential use or a physical alteration can occur that results in the addition/removal of housing units to/from the housing stock. There are two basic types of conversions, each with different reporting requirements:

Residential to non-residential conversion: A housing unit may be converted to a non-residential use. As such, the unit is technically eliminated from the housing stock. Report the number of structures removed from the housing stock in Column 1 and the associated number of units in Column 2.

Conversion from one residential structure type to another residential structure type: A housing unit can be converted from one residential structure type to another. For example, a large single-family house may be converted to a 4-unit apartment. In this case, report the original single-family structure as a conversion in Section A3. The new 4-unit apartment should be reported as a new 4-unit structure (fourplex) in Section A1. Please leave a note in the comment section regarding the conversion.

Do I count the removal of a dilapidated structure as a demolition in Section A.3 even if it hasn't been lived in for many years?

Treat the removal of a structure as a demolition only if it is likely that the Census Bureau counted the structure as housing in the most recent federal census (i.e., the structure had a roof, windows, and doors and could be considered "weather tight").

Why is there no place to report frame housing units from recent annexations?

Population associated with recently annexed housing units from an approved annexation census will be added directly to this year's population estimate by OFM. The annexed housing units will become part of city's base housing stock the following year.

Section B: Manufactured/Mobile Homes

Why does OFM collect data on manufactured/mobile homes separately from frame housing structures?

Based on information from prior censuses, manufactured/mobile homes are associated with different occupancy rates and household sizes compared to single-family frame housing structures. OFM's population estimation model requires that this information be tracked separately.

The list of manufactured/mobile home parks OFM provides is different from what I have. What do you want me to do?

Section B1: This section includes a list of manufactured/mobile home parks reported on prior Form A. In some cases, new entries have been added by OFM based on analysis of administrative records. In the first column, enter the total number of manufactured/mobile homes that are in the park. Do not include travel trailers, recreational vehicles, etc. since these are considered special housing (see the Special Housing section for more information).

In the last column, enter the total number of spaces available in the park (i.e., the maximum capacity of the park).

Please verify with the park manager that all of the information is correct. Update address and contact information as needed.

Enter any manufactured/mobile home parks within your jurisdiction not listed in the empty cells at the bottom of the table. Use the blank space at the bottom of the page to explain each new entry.

Section B2: Enter the requested data concerning manufactured/mobile homes located on individual lots outside of manufactured/mobile home parks.

Why is there no place to report manufactured/mobile homes from recent annexations?

Population associated with recently annexed manufactured/mobile homes from an approved annexation census will be added directly to this year's population estimate by OFM. The annexed manufactured/mobile homes will become part of city's base manufactured/mobile home count the following year.

My city has an RV park and I don't see a place on Form A to add an RV park. Are we losing the population counts?

No, the population in an RV park is considered to be part of the city's base population count due to changes in Census 2010 data collection procedures. Please see the Special Housing section for more information.

Section C: Group Quarters (GQ) Population

Why is the 2015 population for a GQ facility different from what I reported last year?

Section C: OFM keeps track of reported GQ populations on a per facility basis. If the newly reported number differs significantly from that of prior years, the analyst will call the facility. The reason for the difference is sometimes due to the definition of a resident. Some facilities report numbers that include short term stay populations who typically reside elsewhere in the region. At other times, the facilities will report counts that include persons living in a part of the facility that is not considered a group quarter (e.g., assisted living center/retirement apartments). Definitional issues aside, what is most important is that the GQ population that is counted is consistent with what was counted by the city in the base census year (2010).

OFM collects population counts for many of the state's larger GQ facilities on an annual basis. These include state-managed facilities (i.e., DOC, DSHS, etc.), military installations and college/university dormitories. In many cases, OFM will use these numbers rather than those reported by cities and towns on Form A.

Why does the GQ list not include a GQ facility that has been recently annexed?

Population associated with recently annexed GQ facility from an approved annexation census will be added directly to this year's population estimate by OFM. The GQ facility will be automatically listed on Form A the following year.

What about a GQ facility that is not on the GQ list and is not in a recently annexed area?

The empty cells are for reporting GQ facilities that are either new or missing. Enter the requested information concerning facility name, location, contact information, resident population count, etc.

Be sure to include the source of the facility (i.e., newly constructed, always here but not reported, annexed, etc.). If the facility was present before April 1, 2010, the April 1, 2010 resident population count is needed.

Why did OFM stop collecting data for GQ facilities with a capacity of less than 10 people?

A facility with less than ten people usually represents a small number of persons being cared for in a structure that is typically classified as "housing" by the Census Bureau. The number of people living on-site is small and stable. Annual tracking of such facilities has no discernible effect on the city's population estimate, and not tracking these facilities will save both city and OFM staff time. Because these smaller facilities can alternate between housing and GQs over the course of the decade, it is reasonable to treat them as part of the regular household population.

What should I do about a new GQ facility with a capacity of less than 10 persons?

Cities and towns should report newly constructed GQ facilities (after April 1, 2015) with a capacity of less than 10 persons as new construction (i.e., as a new frame housing unit).

If a new facility involves conversion of an existing residence to a GQ (e.g., an adult family home), OFM will not accept it as a new GQ since: 1) it has fewer than ten people, 2) it would have to be deducted from the count of household population and 3) there is a high likelihood it will change back to regular housing at some point in the future.

Section D. Annexation and Municipal Boundary Changes

Why do I need to report annexations on Form A?

Section D is for reporting annexation activity between April 2, 2015 and April 1, 2016. This reporting verifies that our annexation information is consistent with city records. It is not unusual to discover annexations that have never been reported to OFM.

There is at least one annexation that was reported to OFM that is not on the list. Why?

Form A only includes annexations that have been approved by OFM for population purposes at the time the form was printed. If you have any questions about an annexation please call us at 360-902-0599. You may also check on the status of your annexation by visiting our website at <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/annex/cats/default.asp>. Annexations are listed by calendar year in which the paperwork was received by OFM.

My city annexed territory this year. Will we get credit for the population and housing in the newly annexed area in this year's April 1 population estimate?

Not always. Population and housing in annexed areas cannot be included in a city's population estimate until the annexation has been officially approved by OFM. The annexation must have been approved by April 1, 2016 and have an OFM file number. If the OFM approval date is after April 1, 2016, the population will be included in your April 1, 2017 estimate.

All annexations are included in a quarterly annexation filing. Even if an annexation is not included in your April 1 population estimate, your city will start receiving tax money after it is included in a quarterly annexation filing. Revenues start being disbursed in the calendar quarter following the filing. Answers to processes and timing can be found on our website at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/annex/annexinfo.pdf>.

Why is it important to report annexations to OFM?

By law, population and housing units in an annexed area cannot be used for population purposes until its certificate has been approved by OFM.

Special Housing

How will OFM track changes in special population and housing since Form A no longer collects data for special units?

OFM is no longer classifying special housing units as a separate housing type because of changes in data collection at the federal level. The 2010 federal census counted permanent residents living in travel trailers, RVs, boats, sheds, tents, etc. as household population. Although special housing is no longer considered a separate housing type, cities may continue to collect information related to populations living in special housing if they so choose and OFM will continue to estimate population living in special housing.

Cities have three options for dealing with their special populations:

Do nothing: Special population and housing are already included in the city's base 2010 census counts. The costs associated with annual enumeration of special population and housing often outweigh any potential revenue increases.

Use data from a recent city census: Some cities enumerated their special population and housing in 2008, 2009, or 2010. OFM will continue to use the most recent set of numbers for the base counts of special population and housing for the next decade unless otherwise instructed. The city reported counts of special population and housing will be subtracted from the 2010 federal population and housing counts and estimated separately.

Conduct a special census of special housing units: The city might choose to conduct a door-to-door census to count permanent residents living in special housing under the following conditions: 1) there have been significant changes in the number of people living in special housing units since last time the city counted them or 2) an RV park has been built or an existing RV park has been expanded since April 1, 2010. Note that a census of special housing units does not need to be conducted every year.

Important: Contact OFM by March 28, 2016 at 360-902-0599 if you wish to enumerate special housing units and population. Special census forms are required.

Why is there no place to report special housing units from recent annexations?

Population associated with recently annexed special housing units from an approved annexation census will be added directly to this year's population estimate by OFM. The special housing units will become part of city's base housing unit count the following year.

Adjusted Counts

Why does OFM use adjusted counts rather than city-reported counts of mobile homes and group quarters populations? How does OFM calculate these adjusted counts?

OFM has determined that cities/towns and the federal census often report manufactured/mobile homes and group quarters populations inconsistently. Residency rules are not always applied, assisted living facilities are sometimes reported incorrectly as group quarters facilities and mobile homes are sometimes misclassified as single family residences.

In order to mitigate inconsistencies, OFM calculates adjusted counts as follows: we start with the federally reported count from the most recent decennial census, and we then use the city-reported counts to either raise or lower this number based on the change in city-reported counts from the most recent census.

For example, assume a city had a 2010 census GQ population of 100. If the city reported a 2010 GQ population of 110, and a 2015 GQ population of 120, OFM would calculate an adjusted 2015 GQ population as follows: $100 + (120 - 110) = 110$. This GQ population is equal to the census population plus the city-reported change in population since the federal census date.