



YOU COUNT!

THE 2020 CENSUS: A CALL TO ACTION

FOR EVERYONE LIVING IN THE U.S.

What is the Census and Why is it Important?

What is the Census? Who is Included?

The U.S. Census takes place every 10 years to take a snapshot of America. The Census is mandated by our Constitution (Article 1, Section 2), and administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, a nonpartisan government agency. The goal of the decennial census, is to count *every person* who lives in the United States. This means that the Census counts people of **all ages, races, birth origin, and immigration status living in the United States**, including people living in the **five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands)**.

In a unanimous decision in 2016 (*Evenwel v. Abbott*), the U.S. Supreme Court found that **everyone, no matter their ability to vote**, should be counted for purposes of apportioning Congressional seats. Hence, **everyone living in the United States regardless of their citizenship status, should be counted in the Census.**

Because the Census Bureau is required under the Constitution to count every resident, there are special programs to count residents in group quarters, including nursing homes, shelters and correctional facilities. Other programs focus on individuals who are homeless and overseas military.

The 2020 Census will mark the 24th time that the country has counted its population since 1790. The Census was ratified as part of the U.S. Constitution in 1788.

What is the census used for?

This count is the foundation of our participatory democracy. It serves as a basis for equitable representation, resource distribution, civil rights protections, housing, education funding and more.

Our future prosperity and well-being depend upon accurate and complete information collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

What is at Stake? Why should I Care?

The number of representatives each state can send to the Congress is determined based on how many people live in the state, according to the Census. In addition, the amount of money each State receives from the Federal government for certain programs (such as SNAP or Medicaid) is determined based upon the Census tallies. An undercount of the residents in a state means its residents will be underserved. The population is deprived of its fair share of representatives and the resources to meet their needs.

The Census means Money

In 2016, more than **\$800 Billion in federal funding** was distributed to state and local communities using formulas based on Census data, nearly **\$74 Billion for New York State**. That translates into **funding for schools, Pell grants, transit, health care, child care, public safety, SNAP benefits, low-cost energy, and more.**

When communities are undercounted, they do not get their fair share of federal funding and programs for 10 years! **According to researchers, in the 2010 Census, the loss of one person in the count translated into the loss of more than \$1,000 per person per year for 10 years.**

The Rockefeller Institute reported that New York State residents pay more than \$35.6 billion to the federal government than we receive in federal funding, representing the greatest total dollar negative balance of payment of any state. If there is an undercount, this negative balance might grow.

For more information about federal funding to New York State, check out https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/IPP-1819-3%20CountingforDollars_NY.pdf

The Census means Representation and Political Power

Our representative form of government depends on Census data.

Apportionment and redistricting at all levels of government are tied to the count.

The Census count is used to determine how many of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives in the U.S. Congress goes to each state.

Subsequently, the state draws the Congressional district boundaries using the Census track data. **New York is at risk of losing two Congressional seats while other states will gain.**

The State Legislature also draws the State Senate and Assembly legislative lines using the data. And our cities and towns use the survey data to draw their electoral districts.

Does the Census Influence other Important Decisions?

Yes. Accurate Census data is valuable and essential for economic development, transportation, healthcare, education and business planning and decision making.

Government agencies use Census data to inform their planning, enforcement and policy decisions. It helps the federal government monitor the enforcement of civil rights laws, voting rights, equal employment opportunities and protections. Local governments, for example, use Census data to decide where to build or improve schools, libraries, roads, public transportation routes and playgrounds.

Nonprofit organizations, health care providers, businesses, researchers and others use Census data to guide their planning and the delivery of services to communities. For example, the National Urban League and its affiliates rely on this data to inform their advocacy, research on the quality of life for Black Americans and policy activities. Businesses look to Census data to help them determine where the workforce or consumer base exists to support their operations.

As a Student How Does the Census Impact Me?

Census information impacts funds for such programs as:

- Federal Pell Grants
- Student wellness programs
- Medical Assistance programs
- Community Mental Health Services

- Science Education Funding
- After-School Programs
- Adult Education Grants
- School Safety Funding

What does it mean for a Community to be Considered Hard-To-Count? What populations are at risk of being undercounted?

Although there is no formal definition of a “hard-to-count” community, the City University of New York’s Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research of the Graduate Center defines it as an area with a self-response rate of 73% or less. See:

https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/img/Census2020HTCmapoverview_Aug2018.pdf

In New York State, 1,900 of the State’s nearly 4900 Census tracts are considered hard-to-count, which include communities of color, renters, foreign-born and low-income.

In the 2010 Census, New York City’s self-response rate (completing and returning their questionnaire) was less than 62%, compared to the national average of 76%.

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| ➤ Brooklyn | 55.5% |
| ➤ Queens | 61.7% |
| ➤ Staten Island | 62.2% |
| ➤ The Bronx | 62.6% |
| ➤ Manhattan | 68.6% |

In some city neighborhoods, self-response rates were as low as 35%.

In New York State, 24% of households did not self-respond to the Census in 2010, requiring in-person follow-up by a Census Bureau enumerator, according to the New York State Complete Count Commission.

Populations that have been historically undercounted are at risk of being undercounted in the 2020 Census: immigrants, renters, Black and Latinx young children, African American men, people with limited English proficiency, LGBTQI people, people who are experiencing homelessness, and Justice-involved individuals, among others.

Of note, there is a significant undercount for children under 5. Estimates of the net undercount for young children grew from 1.4 percent in 1980 to

more than 4.5% in 2010, according to the Census Bureau. The undercount of young children is especially an issue for New York. New York State ranked third nationally in the percentage of children living in Census tracts that experienced low mail response rates in 2010. Further, New York City has more children under 5 in low-responding Census areas than any other city in the Country. And the Census Bureau research found that children missed by the Census count were more likely to be Black and Hispanic than the overall 2010 population of children under 5 years of age.

According to the New York State Complete Count Commission, there could be as many as 4.8 million hard-to-count individuals in New York State, many of whom are racial and ethnic minorities. The Rockefeller Institute of Government identified approximately 4,900 Census tracts in New York State as hardest-to-reach and at risk of an undercount in 2020.

Undercounts of marginalized communities reinforce systemic disparities and misrepresent the rich diversity of our society.

- For information about communities deemed “hard to-count,” check out this interactive map searchable by congressional and state legislative districts or by geographic area developed by the Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center of CUNY <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>
- For information about At-Risk Communities, see: <https://rockinst.org/nycounts/at-risk-community-index/>

Why Should the Latinx Community Be Concerned about the Census?

The Latinx community is now the Nation’s second largest population group and it continues to grow. There are more than 56.5 million Hispanics living in the United States, according to the 2015 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau. It is important for the 2020 Census to accurately capture the rate of population growth. Full and accurate data about the population is important for the community’s empowerment, economic and social wellbeing, educational advancement, and civic engagement.

In the 2010 Census, approximately, 400,000 young Latinx children ages 0-4 were uncounted. The net undercount rate for young Latino children was 7.1%, compared to 4.4% for non-Latinos. **Five states, including New York, accounted for 72% of the national net undercount of young Latinx children. In New York State, 93% of the net undercount of young Latinx children was accounted for by four large counties: Kings (Brooklyn), Queens, Manhattan, Suffolk.** The

undercount of Latinx children disadvantages families and communities, potentially impacting funding for such initiatives as Head Start programs, SNAP, the school lunch program, child health programs and Medicaid.

Latinos are also more likely than non-Latinos to live in hard-to-count places, including multiple dwellings with multigenerational family members. Further, language barriers and immigration status tend to contribute to enumeration difficulties.

Because the federal government relies on Census data to monitor and enforce civil rights laws, it is important to note that under the Voting Rights Act, Latinos are identified as a “language minority group.” Section 203 of the Act requires language assistance in the designated group’s first language at the election polls if they account for “more than 10,000 or over 5 percent of total voting-age citizens in a single political subdivision” to ensure their full participation. An undercount in any jurisdiction may jeopardize this language assistance and disenfranchise voters.

For Census data to accurately portray the composition and demographic strength of the Latino population and to increase the response rates, NALEO Education Fund, The Hispanic Federation, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, The Leadership Conference Education Fund and others are conducting robust outreach and education prior to and during Census 2020 to ensure Latinos understand the importance of Census participation and how to respond to the race and ethnicity questions.

For more information about the potential consequences of an undercount for the Latino Community, see:

<http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/census/2020/Fact-Sheet-Latino-HTC.pdf>

Check out NALEO educational Fund at www.naleo.org

Review additional resources by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights: <https://civilrights.org/census/>