



Toward a Fair and Accurate Census 2020

What Is Census 2020 and Why Does It Matter for New Jersey?

The census is a count of all United States residents required by The U.S. Constitution every 10 years to determine Congressional districts. The census is an essential policy tool. The federal government depends on census data to allocate resources, state governments use census data to draw legislative districts and to direct spending, and academics, nonprofits, and businesses rely on census data to inform and direct their work. Almost everything we know about our population and our communities comes from information collected during the decennial census and its related surveys.

When New Jersey residents are not counted, the state loses funding and influence. For New Jersey, allocations from 16 large federal assistance programs (including Medicaid, SNAP, housing vouchers, and education grants) are derived from the census count. In FY2015, the state received \$17.56 billion dollars in federal grants from these 16 programs alone,¹ an amount about half the size of the entire New Jersey state budget. Further, New Jersey lost a Congressional seat in 2013 after losing another in 1993. New Jersey now has 12 congressional districts, the lowest number since 1933, which limits the state's impact on federal decisions.

How Does the Census Work?

The census form is a confidential household mail-in survey. But in the 2010 census, return rates for New Jersey's cities were very low: 55% in Newark, 50% in Irvington, 55% in Orange, 55% in Atlantic City, 56% in New Brunswick, 59% in Trenton, 60% in Paterson, and 61% in Camden.² These communities are among those labeled [Hard-to-Count \(HTC\)](#).

Census workers go door-to-door in HTC areas to try to count people who did not return a survey, but the workers' only guide is the address list the Census Bureau has prepared. Some groups are more likely to be missed – especially immigrants, people of color, urban residents, children under 5, people living in multifamily housing, non-native English speakers, and people who are homeless. In contrast, wealthier white people are more likely to be double-counted.

Too many New Jerseyans go uncounted (more than 31,000 in the 2010 census). Their interests are not represented when policy decisions are made.

What Are the Census Challenges in the U.S. and in New Jersey?

Census 2020 will rely on digital submission of data, a new process that will require more personal follow-up. However, Congress has limited the Bureau to keep spending at or below the previous spending levels. Hard-to-count (HTC) communities will face new challenges exacerbated by limited internet access.³ In addition, many experts worry about data privacy

and the potential for census data to be used to target vulnerable communities. For example, there are proposals to include questions related to citizenship and immigration status, which would threaten the integrity of the census. The result would be a dangerously politicized census *and* an inaccurate count, both of which would skew any subsequent congressional and state redistricting and resource allocation.

Historically, New Jersey has made only minimal efforts to have its residents counted. The state's 2010 effort was largely internal with no specific state budget allocation, and New Jersey's overall mail-in rate for census questionnaires actually fell to 74% in 2010 from 76% in 2000. In contrast, states that invested in census 2010 saw increased response rates, which is a critical component of achieving a fair and full count.

Based on analysis of previous census participation rates, 2020 HTC areas in New Jersey will include Newark, Paterson, Trenton, Camden, Atlantic City, Jersey City, and other urban areas.⁴ Targeted and strategic outreach will be required to achieve an accurate count.

What Leadership Is Required Now From the State of New Jersey?

Governor Murphy could be a champion for the census, leading the call for all residents of New Jersey to be counted in 2020. The administration should prioritize a complete count in 2020 and allocate appropriate state resources. Legislators should join the push for a complete and accurate count that will benefit the residents of their districts and the state as a whole.

Two essential steps are required. The State of New Jersey should **form a Complete Count Commission** that includes stakeholders from government as well as civic leaders who represent business, education, philanthropy, faith, civil rights, and nonprofit organizations. Further, the State should **allocate funding to support a complete count** in 2020. Following the example of California, which recently allocated \$40 million, the State of New Jersey should target a sum based on \$1 per resident – for a total of \$9 million to be used over FY2019 and FY2020. The funds would support outreach and communication (supplementing Census Bureau activities), with particular focus on HTC communities. The return on investment is likely to be high. For example, California estimates that its \$2 million investment in community address canvassing alone will yield at least \$100 million in annual federal contributions.⁵

Further, the state of **New Jersey should support sound federal policy that ensures census data are secure**. For example, if Homeland Security threatens immigration enforcement based on census data, the state should support census protection including rapid legal responses. If immigrants are not counted among our population, New Jersey will lose.

How Can We Work Together to Improve the Census Count in New Jersey?

Civic leaders in the state must join together to support a complete count in 2020. When all residents in New Jersey are counted, the state will benefit. A priority will be **cultivating partnerships across sectors** to include county and local elected officials, business leaders, faith

leaders, non-profit organizations, and community-based groups, to convey that the census is about counting *everybody*.

In 2018, support will be needed for governments that **participate in the Bureau's Local Update of Census Addresses program (LUCA)**.⁶ Technical assistance may be required to ensure that updated address lists can be prepared within the time allotted.

Primary outreach **focus should be on HTC communities**. Local Complete Count Committees should be established in HTC areas. Local leaders need to be supported with:

- data analysis and mapping to understand HTC target areas;
- partners that represent the diversity of the community;
- strategic, community-specific messaging delivered via traditional and social media;
- training and jobs for local people to help complete the count; and
- creation of "Get Counted" assistance centers at neighborhood sites such as public libraries and community centers.

For HTC populations that are difficult to geographically pinpoint (such as children under 5, elderly people, and people who are homeless), alternate outreach strategies must be developed in partnership with social service and advocacy organizations.

Across New Jersey, it will be important to **motivate the public to participate** (via effective marketing including locally appropriate languages and ethnic media). Technology assistance will be needed to help people access the internet.

What Difference Can This Make?

At a minimum, a more complete count can generate more federal resources and more influence for New Jersey. In 2010, states that invested in census outreach in HTC areas increased the number of responses compared with the previous census, which benefitted all state residents. Further, census work supports democracy by increasing civic engagement and public awareness. We believe now is the time to make a meaningful impact in New Jersey by leading the effort for a complete count in census 2020.

To join the effort, contact Kiki Jamieson (kjamieson@fundfornj.org).

¹ "Counting for Dollars," produced by the George Washington Institute of Public Policy. [New Jersey report](#).

² 2010 Census participation rates. [Data downloaded](#) from the Census Bureau.

³ Although broadband access in the state of New Jersey is better than in other states, there are gaps that correspond to hard-to-count communities. In some census tracts, access is estimated to be limited for 20%-40% of households.

⁴ Hard to Count 2020. [Access the maps online](#), data provided by CUNY Center for Urban Research.

⁵ Ed Kissam: "Toward A Fair, Accurate California Census Count in 2020: A Community-based Address Canvassing Initiative in 2017-2018." [wkf Giving Fund white paper](#).

⁶ US Census Bureau, Registered 2020 LUCA Participants, [map](#) updated regularly.



Draft Action Plan to Ensure a Fair and Accurate Census 2020

We believe now is the time to make a meaningful impact in New Jersey by leading the effort for a complete count in census 2020. To join the effort, contact Kiki Jamieson (kjamieson@fundfornj.org).

In 2018: Make a commitment to a fair and accurate count in New Jersey; focus on advocacy, education, and building resources and relationships.

STATE GOVERNMENT. Create a state Complete Count Commission that includes stakeholders from government as well as civic leaders who represent business, education, philanthropy, faith, civil rights, and nonprofit organizations.

- Allocate funding to support a complete count in 2020. Target \$9 million to be used over FY2019 and FY2020 to support outreach and communication (supplementing Census Bureau activities), with particular focus on Hard-to-Count (HTC) communities.

LOCAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS. Prepare to establish Complete Count Committees to focus on HTC communities. Plan to allocate resources in 2019 and 2020.

PHILANTHROPY.

As a group (**Council of New Jersey Grantmakers**), champion the census.

- Federal policy: Encourage adequate federal funding, discourage addition of untested citizenship question, and advocate for firm commitment to data security.
- State policy: Advocate for NJ Governor Murphy to support a complete count in New Jersey by creating a Complete Count Commission and allocating funds in the budget.
- Put census funding in foundation budgets 2018-2020. Consider a pooled fund.
- Convene and educate grantees and partners about the importance of a fair and accurate count and how each can participate.
- Provide funding for technical assistance to municipalities and counties doing LUCA (local updates of census addresses – spring 2018).

THE FUND FOR NEW JERSEY. Champion the census with leaders in public and private sectors.

- Serve as a hub for census information, connecting state partners with national and regional resources. Develop institutional partners.
- Support data analysis and mapping in order to target HTC communities.
- Convene and cultivate statewide ad-hoc coalitions of civic leaders from business, education, philanthropy, faith, civil rights, and nonprofit sectors.
- Develop opportunities to inform local leaders and trusted organizations in HTC areas to encourage generation of Complete Count Committees in HTC areas.

Note: in September 2018, Census Bureau begins recruiting community workers, address canvassing.

In 2019: Develop the infrastructure to get-out-the-count.

STATE GOVERNMENT. State Complete Count Commission takes the lead.

- Coordinate messages about importance of census 2020 and encourages development of local and county Complete Count Committees.
- Distribute allocated funding to support a complete count. Target HTC communities.

LOCAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS.

- Establish Complete Count Committees to focus on HTC communities.
- Allocate resources to support get-out-the-count efforts.

PHILANTHROPY.

- Contribute to a pooled fund to support census work in underfunded HTC areas.
- Provide additional funds to grantees for census-supporting work.

HARD-TO-COUNT COMMUNITIES. Establish Complete Count Committees for HTC communities.

- Develop site-specific strategies in collaboration with local leaders.
- Working with the Census Bureau and state partners, support communications about the importance of being counted (including messages that are language- and culture-specific).
- Assist the Bureau to identify and hire city residents to help conduct the count.
- Identify local agencies and institutions to serve as “Get Counted” assistance centers.

OTHER CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERS.

- Draw on networks to spread communications about the importance of census 2020.
- Recruit local leaders and trusted organizations in HTC areas to support census.

THE FUND FOR NEW JERSEY. Champion census 2020.

- Serve as a hub to channel census information and resources to the places where the most impact can be achieved. Connect networks to develop Complete Count Committees in HTC areas.
- Support statewide ad-hoc coalitions of civic leaders from business, education, philanthropy, faith, civil rights, and nonprofit sectors.

Note: in September, first recruiting begins for census field workers.

In 2020: Mobilize for April 1 Census Day – and beyond – to ensure a complete count.

ALL PARTNERS.

- Support state-wide and targeted communications to raise awareness and excitement about census.
- Follow census response rates in New Jersey to see where more follow-up enumeration is needed.
- Invest strategically (flexible, nimble funds) to meet needs that arise unexpectedly (due to low response rates or technology glitches)
- Prepare with partners and grantees for redistricting work to come.