

Toward a Fair and Accurate Census 2020

What is Census 2020?

The U.S. Constitution requires that, every 10 years, all people living in the United States must be counted to determine Congressional districts. A confidential survey on census Day (April 1, 2020) asks for information about households and details about the residents. Federal law requires census information to be kept in strict confidence and not shared with any other agencies. Census results are used to distribute federal and state funding and to determine state legislative districts. Businesses and nonprofits use census data to understand population trends and community needs and to plan for everything from where to locate a new restaurant to how many ambulances a community requires. New Jersey receives more than **\$22.7 billion dollars each year** from federal assistance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, money for education and transportation infrastructure – all amounts based on census counts. (For scale, that is well over half the value of the entire State budget.)

Why Does Census 2020 Matter for New Jersey?

The data collected in Census 2020 will determine the political representation and the public resources for New Jersey residents all the way through 2030. That means that for the next 10 years, decisions about federal funding, federal redistricting, state redistricting, and allocation of state resources will depend on the accuracy of this count. **A mistake now has consequences for a decade.** Poor data will lead to poor decisions, underrepresentation, and less money for New Jersey.

An accurate count is important to all the people in New Jersey. Of 435 Congressional districts nationwide, New Jersey has three of the top 50 hardest to count districts – [district 8](#), [district 9](#), and [district 10](#). Twenty-two percent of state residents live in hard-to-count census tracts, which are defined by having low mail-in response rates in the 2010 Census. New Jersey's cities with very low response rates include: Newark (55%), Trenton (59%), Paterson (60%), and Camden (61%). Nonresponses required door-to-door follow-up, which is difficult, expensive, and does not result in a complete and accurate count. Missing a household in Paterson affects Paterson, but it also affects the statewide totals and the federal dollars that are distributed based on those calculations. **An inaccurate count in one city or county affects the resources and representation for the entire state.**

Why Will It Be Difficult to Count New Jersey Residents?

In 2020, unlike in previous years, most census forms will be on-line. Many people in New Jersey do not have reliable internet access and may have problems completing the forms. Present heightened distrust of the federal government and worry about data privacy may discourage participation.

In addition, some groups are historically more likely to be undercounted. Children under the age of five are missed more than any other group; even when their other family members are counted, young children are omitted from completed census forms. These absences will persist for the following ten years. An uncounted three-year-old in 2020 will grow up to be a 13-year-old in 2029 whose school district and community are not receiving the resources needed. Other groups that are too often missed: people of color, urban residents, people living in multifamily housing, non-native English speakers, immigrants, and people who do not have permanent homes. In contrast, wealthier white people are more likely to be double-counted.

An even greater challenge is created by the Federal Administration's proposal to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census. Adding this untested question creates an unnecessary barrier to a complete count and it hits New Jersey hard. Forty percent of state residents are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Many families include people of mixed status such as US citizen children living with permanent resident parents, around the corner from families that include refugees or undocumented people. These communities are located in every county throughout the state. **If residents are afraid to be counted, New Jersey as a whole will suffer.** The state will not receive the federal funds to which it is entitled. Government will not function well and our economy will suffer. Although the legality of the citizenship question is being challenged in seven lawsuits brought by states (including New Jersey) and civic organizations and filed in courts around the country, the issues may not be resolved before the census materials are printed in summer 2019. Even if the citizenship question is ultimately removed from the 2020 Census form, the threat has been raised and communities have been frightened.

Achieving a fair, accurate, and complete count will be more difficult than it has been in previous decades. However, **counting all New Jersey residents once and in the right place is an achievable goal.**

How Can We Promote a Complete Count in New Jersey?

The State of New Jersey has formed a **State Complete Count Commission** that includes elected representatives and civic leaders who are charged with leading efforts count every resident of New Jersey. The **New Jersey Counts Coalition**, led by nonprofit organizations, is working in coordination with the Commission to educate and organize outreach throughout the state. **Local Complete Count Committees** have already been formed in Paterson, Newark, and elsewhere and are preparing to teach residents about the importance of the census, encourage local hiring for Census Bureau jobs, provide technology assistance and neighborhood Get Counted centers, and spread the messages to encourage all residents to participate in a complete count.

Success will depend on good coordination of public, private, and community groups to extend resources and communications throughout the state. **The time to begin is NOW.**

A Plan for Action

Success Depends on Strategic Outreach

When every person in New Jersey is counted in Census 2020, everyone in New Jersey will benefit. This requires a strategic approach. New Jersey does not have the resources to forge a personal connection with every state resident to encourage them to be counted in Census 2020. Success overall will require outreach efforts to be well planned and executed. Targeted Universalism provides a useful framework for outreach. **A universal goal (counting all residents of New Jersey) can be achieved by using targeted approaches to address the specific and varied needs of each group** (for example: residents who do not have computers, immigrants, residents whose first language is not English, residents who are young children, or residents of the state's hardest-to-count cities). To achieve a complete count in New Jersey, we need the participation of people who are already likely to be counted *and* the participation of people who are not likely to be counted. Those groups deserve different strategies.

Universal Strategy

Led by the State Complete Count Commission, the State of New Jersey, partnering with the Census Bureau, should be the loudest voice encouraging every resident of New Jersey to be counted. The Commission can lead all state government activity to promote a complete count and can be the communications hub for all efforts. In addition, the Commission can distribute state funds to support local organizing efforts, a strategy that has proven to be successful in previous censuses in states such as California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.

Targeted Strategy

Led by the New Jersey Counts coalition in partnership with the State Complete Count Commission, successful targeted outreach can work with leaders and organizations around the state to promote a complete count. Nonprofits and community groups are well positioned to lead this work because they know the communities and residents who will need to be engaged and to be counted. Particularly in light of the proposed citizenship question, it will be important for local efforts to include nongovernmental organizations and trusted resident voices.

Targeted outreach requires focus that is both geographically strategic (focused on the places where residents will be more hard to count) and demographically strategic (focused on the diverse communities that are themselves hard to count). These overlapping strategies improve the odds of counting everyone in New Jersey.

Geographic areas of interest. A map of New Jersey demonstrates that the state overall had a response rate above 78%, yet several cities had much lower response rates.

Research and mapping (see www.fundfornj.org/census) demonstrate that there are particular large cities in New Jersey that require special attention because they are at greater risk for missing a complete count. These are places that were considered hard-to-count in Census 2010 because of low response rates and places that have large numbers of hard-to-count residents including people of color, immigrants, renters, and people living in poverty. Often, these cities are surrounded by suburbs and exurbs that are not considered hard-to-count. Each of these places is distinctive and will require its own locally led, targeted strategy to achieve a complete count.

- [Atlantic City](#)
- [East Orange](#)
- [Jersey City](#)
- [Orange](#)
- [Bridgeton](#)
- [Elizabeth](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Paterson](#)
- [Camden](#)
- [Irvington](#)
- [Newark](#)
- [Trenton](#)

Demographic communities of interest. Further, there are specific communities that require targeted attention because their members, historically, have not been fully counted. In New Jersey, significant portions of these groups live in hard-to-count areas, which makes the census challenge even greater. Each of these groups will require its own targeted strategy, led by community leaders and customized to the particular culture, language, and networks of its members. Specifically:

- [Children Under 5](#). **Children under 5 were the most undercounted segment of the population nationally in the 2010 Census.** In New Jersey, there are estimated to be more than 529,000 children under age 5 and approximately 28% live in hard-to-count areas.
- [Latinx](#). In New Jersey, it is estimated that more than 1.75 million residents are Hispanic or Latinx and 40% live in hard-to-count areas.
- [African American](#). More than 1.2 million residents of New Jersey are Black or African American and 51% live in hard-to-count areas.
- [Asian](#). More than 900,000 Asian people live in New Jersey, and 21% live in hard-to-count areas. Further, Asians are estimated to be the fastest-growing group in New Jersey.
- Immigrants and their family members. It is estimated that 40% of state residents are immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. The proposed citizenship question creates new, unprecedented obstacles to counting non-citizens, especially when they live in mixed status families. Note that when the U.S. Supreme Court decides whether the citizenship question may be included in the census, we must be prepared with a strong communications strategy to reach immigrants and their families in New Jersey.

Combining geographic and demographic approaches. If New Jersey combines a broad state-wide effort to promote Census 2020 with a simultaneous strategically targeted effort focused on the cities and communities that are most difficult to count, our statewide odds of success improve. A Targeted Universalism approach makes best use of limited resources.

Advocacy for Action State-Wide

A complete, accurate, and fair count in Census 2020 requires the active participation of government at all levels to be working with nonprofits, businesses, schools and colleges, faith communities, and civic groups.

Step one is to **educate decision makers** about what the Census is, why it matters, and why they and their organizations should be involved. Step two is to secure their **pledge to participate**. Step three is to **raise resources from both public and private sources** to support a complete and accurate count.

Decision makers who must be engaged include:

- State government leaders. Governor Phil Murphy, Senate President Steve Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and members of the state legislature. The Secretary of State and department commissioners must also be connected to census work.
- Members of the State Complete Count Commission, who can help direct state resources to where they can be most effective.
- Local and county government leaders: focused on those who lead the hardest-to-count areas of New Jersey – beginning with the cities listed previously. Local leaders understand how a complete and accurate count can benefit their communities, and they will be effective advocates for Census 2020. They should be encouraged to (1) create local complete count committees, (2) dedicate funding and community resources to support the effort, and (3) serve as conveners and partners for local get-out-the-count (GOTC) campaigns.
- Nonprofit leaders, organizations, and networks, including philanthropy. They should be encouraged to (1) join or create local complete count committees, (2) participate in state-wide efforts as appropriate, (3) dedicate their own resources and build on their own relationships to spread the word about Census 2020, and (4) participate actively in local GOTC campaigns.
- Business leaders and the leadership networks that support them. No-cost Census data are used by business leaders who create jobs and opportunities and they need accurate data about New Jersey and its residents in order to contribute to the state's economic growth. They should be encouraged to (1) step into leadership to encourage a complete count, (2) dedicate resources to support census outreach, and (3) serve as partners in local GOTC campaigns.
- Education institutions, from child care providers through public and private schools, higher education, and professional training programs. Most effectively engaged through the groups'

professional networks, education institutions have a role to play as both (1) advocates for full participation and (2) locations for residents to be counted. Schools can participate, in partnership with the Bureau, in the Statistics in the School program. They can host Get Counted kiosks. They can share important insights with local complete count committees. And they can build enthusiasm and participation in local GOTC campaigns.

- Civic institutions including faith leaders and their organizations, social networks, and neighborhood groups. These organizations know their communities and are often highly trusted anchors. They can be (1) effective messengers to encourage residents to get counted, (2) contributors to local GOTC campaigns, and (3) hosts of Get Counted kiosks.

In 2019, the contacts must be made to build a strong base for organizing GOTC efforts in 2020. Time invested now will make next year's work more effective.

Elements of a Successful Get-Out-the-Count Plan

Getting every resident in New Jersey counted is conceptually simple and logistically complex. The basic elements of a get-out-the-count plan focused on hard-to-count areas or communities include:

1. Identifying the people who are hardest-to-count and who require intentional encouragement
2. Understanding WHY they may be hard to count
3. Communicating reasons for them to participate, using materials developed by the Census Bureau and national partners as much as possible (with slight modifications if required)
4. Creating opportunities for them to be counted, either in their homes or in community locations
5. Staffing follow-up with local trusted representatives, including Census Bureau employees who have been hired from the community and local organizations and leaders who can supplement these efforts
6. Making sure every resident is counted by monitoring response rates

Planning for a Complete Count in New Jersey's Hard-to-Count Cities

A standard strategy is required for each of the hard-to-count cities listed previously. First, make a commitment to a fair and accurate count. Second, develop a network of resources, a communications strategy, and a coordinated plan to get-out-the-count. Third, mobilize for April 1 (Census Day) and beyond to ensure a complete count. Note that it will be very important to coordinate with statewide plans focused on communities that are hard to count. Coordination will help make sure resources can be used effectively.

In more detail:

- Identify and recruit local government, civic, business, and nonprofit leaders

- Start with network of state partners.
- Establish a complete count committee ([use the Census Bureau's guidance](#)) and connect with a Census Bureau partnership specialist
 - Make sure the committee includes representatives from government, education, business, nonprofit, faith, and community-based organizations
 - Make sure the diversity of the city is represented in the diversity of committee members
 - Make sure an individual is identified to coordinate the committee's efforts
- Hold the first meeting of the complete count committee
 - Educate committee members about Census 2020 (Census 101 training)
 - Educate complete count committee members about the particular challenges – and opportunities – in the local area using [maps and analysis](#)
 - Develop a timeline for action, aiming to create a GOTC plan by October 2019
- At subsequent meetings of the complete count committee
 - Call on community experts to learn about the local demographics and barriers to participation
 - Identify particular neighborhoods and communities that deserve special attention
 - Identify partner organizations and leaders that can help with outreach to these areas and groups
- Persuade key local organizations and leaders to join the get-out-the-count effort
- Rely on the expertise of committee members to develop solutions
- Hold Census Solutions workshops ([toolkit available from Census Bureau](#)) to develop innovative approaches
- Promote local hiring for [census jobs](#)
 - Spread the word about Bureau hiring, host a job fair, encourage local residents to apply
 - Ask partner organizations to help with recruiting
- Advocate for resources to support a complete count
 - Support calls for state investment
 - Advocate for local resources, including government money and private contributions
 - Note that a lot of crucial help will be in the form of volunteer time from community leaders who will lend their voices and influence in support of the census
- Tailor Bureau messages and State communications for the local audience
 - Determine language needs and communicate with Bureau
 - Secure translated materials from national partners
 - Identify the most effective trusted messengers and ask for their participation
 - Determine best media outlets for the local population, including social media
 - Recruit local businesses to help spread the word
- Identify local agencies or sites to spread the messages and to serve as Get Counted centers
 - Include places that are open to the public at no charge (such as libraries)
 - Include sites that are hosting large community events (such as fairs or worship)

- Include anchor institutions (such as hospitals, schools, and colleges)
- Include social service agencies
- Complete a local get-out-the-count plan
 - Include advice from the Census Bureau
 - Share that plan with state coordinators and funders
 - Revise and repeat as necessary. The plan will change and that is OK.
- Implement the plan January through April 2020
- After April 1, 2020, use updated data from the Bureau to understand where the count is slow and target additional resources to those areas to encourage residents to participate
- Evaluate what works and share the lessons with the New Jersey Counts coalition and State Complete Count Committee

Developing State-Wide Plans for Hard-to-Count Communities

For each of the communities, a distinct plan will be needed. Development of these plans should be coordinated by stakeholders within the communities.

A similar approach to that used by cities makes sense for these communities. First, make a commitment to a fair and accurate count. Second, develop a network of resources, a communications strategy, and a coordinated plan to get-out-the-count. Third, mobilize for April 1 (Census Day) and beyond to ensure a complete count. Note that it will be very important to coordinate with city-based plans so resources can be used effectively.

In more detail:

- Identify and recruit partners for statewide work: civic, business, nonprofit, and government leaders
- Establish a complete count committee ([use the Census Bureau's guidance](#)) and connect with a Census Bureau partnership specialist
 - Make sure the committee includes representatives from government, education, business, nonprofit, faith, and community-based organizations
 - Make sure the diversity of the community is represented in the diversity of committee members
 - Make sure an individual is identified to coordinate the committee's efforts
- Hold the first meeting of the complete count committee
 - Educate committee members about Census 2020 (Census 101 training)
 - Educate complete count committee members about the particular challenges – and opportunities using [maps and analysis](#)
 - Develop a timeline for action, aiming to create a GOTC plan by June 2019

- At subsequent meetings of the complete count committee
 - Call on community experts to learn about the demographics and barriers to participation
 - Identify particular neighborhoods and communities that deserve special attention
 - Identify partner organizations and leaders that can help with outreach to these areas and groups
 - Persuade local organizations and leaders to join the get-out-the-count effort
- Persuade key trusted organizations and community leaders to join the get-out-the-count effort
- Rely on the expertise of committee members to develop solutions
- Hold Census Solutions workshops ([toolkit available from Census Bureau](#)) to develop innovative approaches
- Promote hiring for [census jobs](#)
 - Spread the word about Bureau hiring, host a job fair, encourage community members to apply
 - Ask partner organizations to help with recruiting
- Advocate for resources to support a complete count
 - Support calls for state investment
 - Advocate for community-specific resources, including government money and private contributions
 - Note that a lot of crucial help will be in the form of volunteer time from community leaders who will lend their voices and influence in support of the census
- Tailor Bureau messages and State communications for the target audience
 - Secure translated materials from national partners
 - Identify the most effective trusted messengers and ask for their participation
 - Determine most effective media strategy, including social media
- Coordinate with other statewide groups and local complete count committees to identify local agencies or sites to serve as Get Counted centers
 - Include places that are open to the public at no charge (such as libraries)
 - Include sites that are hosting large community events (such as fairs or worship)
- Complete a get-out-the-count plan tailored for the specific hard-to-count community
 - Include advice from the Census Bureau
 - Share that plan with state coordinators and funders
 - Revise and repeat as necessary. The plan will change and that is OK.
- Implement the plan January through April 2020
- After April 1, 2020, use updated data from the Bureau to understand where the count is slow and target additional resources to those areas to encourage residents to participate
- Evaluate what works and share the lessons with the New Jersey Counts coalition and State Complete Count Committee

Strategies Required

In order to reach the greatest number of residents most effectively, strategies will prioritize (1) training, (2) messaging, and (3) mini-grants.

Training

Training will enable community leaders and grassroots organizations to understand the importance of Census 2020 and to be able to amplify trusted voices in their community to address questions, concerns, and fears. These efforts can supplement those of the Census Bureau, which does not have enough resources to reach all communities.

Trainings will be aimed at trusted community members and community-based organizations. These include health care workers, teachers, faith leaders, and neighborhood leaders. Trainings will provide tools, messages, and materials to help inform individuals who are not familiar with the Census. The Census Bureau staff can model best practices for training and local complete count committees can take the training to community leaders.

Goals: (1) demonstrate to participants the importance of the census for their communities, (2) demonstrate to participants the importance of being counted themselves and helping their neighbors to be counted, and (3) secure their commitment to participate in the census.

Messaging

Messages will cover two topics: education about the census and safety.

Education: Focus on helping people to understand their own connection to the census and how census participation affects funding for state and local programs that benefit participants and their communities. Materials should provide clear guidance on how to participate and what happens in the case of partial or no response.

Safety: While educating communities and individuals about the importance of participating in the census, it is also important to understand that families will make their own decisions about whether to participate. Ideally, everyone will decide to be counted. However, in the current climate many communities will feel marginalized and targeted. Census data are protected by the government and penalties for disclosing data are severe: fines up to \$250,000 and prison sentences up to 5 years. It will be important to communicate with confidence that census participation is safe.

Mini-Grants

Support for community-based organizations through mini-grants can direct resources to the strategies these partners believe will be most effective. Priority should go to organizations that have a record of success and have long-standing connections with hard-to-count groups and with non-citizen communities.

Mini-grants could support:

- Events, including “count your kids” day or a “census carnival”
- Local coordinators or paid canvassers
- Promotional materials and giveaways
- Publicity and social media
- Technology support, including “get counted” kiosks and free Wi-Fi hotspots
- Question assistance centers

Measuring Impact

The clearest quantitative measure will be the response rate in 2020 and its comparison with 2010. It should be noted that many other factors (threat of a citizenship question, on-line response, reduced budget for Census Bureau outreach) will also play a role.

Nonprofit Partner Organizations

The lead organization in New Jersey is Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). ACNJ serves as the hub for all state NGO census initiatives.

Key partners are already developing strategic get-out-the-count plans:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| • Children Under 5 | Advocates for Children of New Jersey |
| • Latinx | Latino Action Network |
| • African American | New Jersey Institute for Social Justice |
| • Asian | **organization to be determined** |
| • Immigrants and family members | Wind of the Spirit. Make the Road New Jersey |

ACNJ will require funding for statewide coordination, including coordination of communications.

Key partners will require funding for organizing, training, and outreach.

Mini-grants to community-based organizations and local governments will facilitate get-out-the-count efforts.

<u>Non-Governmental Funding Requirements (bare bones minimum)</u>	
Statewide coordination	= \$250,000
Targeted demographic communities: \$120,000 per community	= \$600,000
Communications	= \$750,000
Mini-grants: \$50,000 per geographic community	= \$600,000
Minimum Funding Need	= \$2,200,000
Funding raised to date = \$380,000	

Ambitious AND Achievable

By starting now and being strategic, New Jersey can increase the accuracy and completeness of its Census 2020 count. The interests of 9 million people are at stake. Federal funds of more than \$227 billion dollars over 10 years are at stake.

The time for action is now.

----December 2018