

Latinos Count in the 2020 Census

Why the Decennial Census is Important

The U.S. Constitution requires an accurate count of the nation's population every 10 years, and the decennial census seeks to count every person in every household. An integral part of our nation's democracy, census data affects the ability of our government to ensure equal representation and equal access to important federal and private sector resources for all Americans. Census data is used to allocate seats and draw district lines for the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures, and local governing boards; to target at least \$800 billion annually in federal assistance to states, localities, and families; and to guide community decision-making affecting schools, housing, health care services, business investments, and much more.

"Hard-to-count" population groups are at higher risk of not being fully counted in the decennial census. While some groups have been underrepresented for decades; some may experience new or increased vulnerability due to major changes in census methodology: Using the Internet as the primary point of contact for the 2020 Census, or a reluctance to respond given concerns about data confidentiality. An undercount of the hard-to-count populations can lead to unequal political representation as well as unequal access to vital public and private resources for the people in greatest need.

Latino households are at risk of being undercounted

Latinos have been undercounted for decades, disadvantaging their families, communities, and neighborhoods. In particular, Latino children are among the most undercounted populations in the U.S. Roughly one in three Hispanics live in hard-to-count census tracts.

Hard-to-count characteristics of the Latino community

- **Language Barriers:** About a third of Hispanics speak English less than "very well." Typically, populations with low English proficiency are hard to count.
- **Poverty:** Hispanics have an official poverty rate of 21 percent; higher than the official U.S. poverty rate of 13 percent. Households in poverty are typically difficult to enumerate.
- **Education:** More than 60 percent of Hispanic adults have only a high school diploma or did not complete high school, compared to 40 percent of the total U.S. population. Populations with lower levels of educational attainment are hard to count.
- **Immigrant Status:** More than a third of Latinos are foreign-born, and people immigrating from Latin America to the U.S. comprised more than half of the U.S. undocumented population in 2016. The increase in negative political rhetoric, federal detention and deportation operations may make immigrant households, including Latinos, reluctant to respond to the census given concerns about data confidentiality, which risks a severe undercount.

- **Latino Children:** Latino children comprise more than 24 percent of U.S. children under age five, with 55 percent living in households with complex living arrangements, sometimes moving between various relatives' or caregivers' residences. In addition, 25 percent of Latino children live in households where adults have difficulty speaking English. Both conditions correlate with being hard-to-count.

Latinos are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States

It is especially important to make sure the 2020 Census fairly and accurately counts the growing Latino community. Latinos are already the nation's largest ethnic minority group, at 18 percent of the U.S. population, and this population continues to grow.

Consequences of undercounting the Latino community

An undercount of the Latino community will result in their being denied a full voice in policy decision-making because political boundaries and congressional reapportionments most likely will not be based on real numbers. As a result, this hard-to-count community stands to lose important representation guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Undercounting the Latino community in the 2020 Census could also impact how federal funding is allocated to states and localities. Many programs that provide financial security for low-income families and economic development for their communities are funded based, primarily, on census-driven data, including:

- **Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies – \$13.9 billion**
- **Special Education Grants – \$11.2 billion**
- **Head Start Program – \$8.3 billion**
- **Child Care and Development Fund – \$2.9 billion**
- **Federal Foster Care Program – \$4.6 billion**
- **SNAP – \$69.5 billion**
- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) – \$11.6 billion**
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) – \$6.3 billion**
- **Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers Program – \$19.1 billion**
- **Medicaid – \$312 billion**
- **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) – \$11.1 billion**

You can help – right now

Stakeholders (advocates, funders, and civic leaders) can improve the count of the Latino community in the 2020 Census by joining or supporting work on policy development, community organizing, and the "Get Out the Count" campaign for the 2020 Census:

- **Show members of Congress why they need to support adequate resources for the Census Bureau to conduct the 2020 Census and accurately count all in the Latino community.** Several

years prior to a decennial census, the Census Bureau needs a major annual funding ramp up to perform critical tests and build out a massive program infrastructure. Due to financial constraints, important activities crucial to ensure a fair and accurate census have been postponed or canceled, putting the Latino community at risk of a severe undercount.

- **Stay informed about key census policy and operational developments.** [The Census Project](#) provides regular updates on census-related activities in Congress and the administration. [NALEO's Make 2020 Census Count Campaign](#) provides customized information for Latino communities. [The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#) also publishes many helpful resources.
- **Educate state and local leaders about the challenges the Latino community faces in the census.** Advocates can join Complete Count Committees to help ensure a complete census and include voices from the Latino community.
- **Become a Census Bureau partner to help ensure the Census Bureau's partnership program gets the resources it needs.** This important program is at risk due to budget shortfalls. Partners (organizations, associations, institution, etc.) get timely updates and promotional material from the Census Bureau.

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