



**It's Time to Fill Out Your 2020 Census Form:
Why a Complete Count is Essential for
Alabama**

Staff Report

**Committee on Oversight and Reform and
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
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SUMMARY

The 2020 Census is officially underway. Every person in Alabama must be counted. The Census is used to distribute over \$1.5 trillion in federal funding. An incomplete count could cost the state its fair share of that funding. Missing just one person in the state could reduce health care funding by \$755 per year, education funding by \$1,216, and job training by \$221.

WHY THE CENSUS MATTERS TO YOUR STATE

The Constitution requires the federal government to count *every single person* living in the United States every ten years.¹

Data collected by the Census is used to determine how much funding your state receives for critical services like education, medical care, foster care, roads, public transit, and job programs. Census data also helps state governments enhance public safety and prepare for emergencies.² In fact, more than \$1.5 trillion in federal funding is distributed based on Census data in 316 different community programs.³ Finally, Census data also helps determine representation in Congress and in state and local governments.

An accurate Census count matters to everyone in your state. To ensure that your state has the resources it needs for the next decade, it is critical that every person in your state is counted in the 2020 Census.

Responding is Quick, Easy, and Online

People can respond to the Census online, by phone, or by filling out a paper form mailed right to your home by the Census Bureau.⁴ The 2020 Census only has 12 questions. The 2020 Census does not ask about citizenship.⁵

Due to the coronavirus crisis, the Census Bureau has urged people to fill out the Census online and has extended the time period for online submissions. Doing so will help everyone maintain essential social distancing. Responding online takes only minutes and saves Census Bureau employees the trip to your home. To respond online, go to <https://my2020census.gov>. If you cannot respond online, simply call 844-330-2020.

Census Data is Private and Confidential

The illegal disclosure of any personal Census data is a federal crime punishable by a \$250,000 fine and up to five years in prison.⁶ The Census Bureau is barred from releasing an individual's information to anyone, including law enforcement, immigration officials, or even your landlord.⁷

Risk of an Undercount in Alabama

In the last Census in 2010, 16 million people were not counted. We know this because after the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau surveyed a sample of households around the United States, compared the information to actual Census responses, and then estimated the amounts of error.⁸

The 2010 Census undercounted African Americans by approximately 2.1%,⁹ Hispanics by 1.5%,¹⁰ American Indians and Native Alaskans living on reservations by 4.9%,¹¹ and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders by 1.3%.¹² Approximately 4.6% of children under the age of 5 were uncouned in 2010.¹³

Experts fear that an undercount in 2020 could be even larger.¹⁴

Based on data from the 2017 American Community Survey, if minorities in the state were undercounted by the same percentage as they were nationally in 2010, the 2020 Census would miss:

- Over 26,200 African Americans;
- Over 2,900 Hispanics;
- Over 2,650 American Indians and Native Alaskans; and
- Over 13,100 young children.

Some communities have particularly low Census response rates. Approximately 15% of people in the state live in communities that were hard to count in the 2010 census.

People without internet access are also more like to be missed. Approximately 17% of households in the state have no access to the internet.

The Cost of an Undercount to Healthcare Programs

An accurate Census count is crucial to ensure that families in your state get the healthcare they need. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) uses Census data to distribute more than \$250 billion in funding each year for programs like Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and foster-care support. These programs are critical to Alabama:

- About 772,000 people receive Medicaid in the state. In 2017, more than \$3.7 billion in federal funding went to help with Medicaid payments.
- More than 174,000 children in the state are enrolled in CHIP. In 2017, nearly \$173 million in federal funding went to help fund CHIP.
- In 2015, nearly \$8.4 million in federal funding was granted to the state as part of the foster care assistance program, which helps provide safe and stable conditions for children in foster care. In 2017, 3,662 children in the state were enrolled in foster care.

Each person who gets counted in the 2020 Census brings in about \$755 per year in funding for Medicaid, CHIP, and foster care assistance programs in the state.

If there just is a 1% undercount in 2020, the state could lose more than \$35 million in federal funding.

The Cost of an Undercount to Education

An accurate Census count is critical to funding Alabama's schools. The Department of Education distributes grants to schools that have a high proportion of low-income students as determined by Census data. This funding is crucial for schools in the state:

- About 205,000 school-aged, low-income children live in the state. In 2017, \$249 million of Title I funds went to schools in this state, which helped to supplement school budgets.

For every low-income student who gets counted, schools in the state will receive \$1,216 in federal funding.

If there is just a 1% undercount in 2020, the state's schools could lose nearly \$2.5 million in federal funding. This is the equivalent of all the textbooks that 9,961 students would need in a school year.

The Cost of an Undercount to Job Programs

The Department of Labor distributes grants to fund assistance programs for job seekers based on Census data. These programs include training for specific skills and jobs, mentoring and apprenticeship, career counseling, and assistance with jobs searches and relocation. This funding is important for workers in Alabama:

- About 888,000 adults and working age youths live under the federal poverty level in the state. In 2017, more than \$46 million in federal funding went to worker assistance programs in the state.

For every low-income worker who gets counted, these programs will receive \$221 in the state.

If there is just a 1% undercount in 2020, the state could lose more than \$1.9 million in federal funding.

SOURCES

This report is based on data from the following sources:

- “2017 American Community Survey” from the U.S. Census Bureau;
- “Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds” from the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy;
- “Federal and State Share of Medicaid Spending” from the Kaiser Family Foundation;
- “State Medicaid and CHIP Applications, Eligibility Determinations and Enrollment Data” from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services;
- “Total CHIP Spending” from the Kaiser Family Foundation;
- “FY2019 Congressional Budget Justification, State Table—Title IV-E Foster Care” from HHS;
- “Census Project” from the Project on Government Oversight;
- “Census 2020 Hard to Count Map,” from the City University of New York Mapping Service; and
- “Updated Data for Persons Defined as Disadvantaged Youth and Adults” from the Department of Labor.

Estimates of the impact of the 2020 Census on federal funding for the state are based on a methodology from Co-Equal.

ENDNOTES

¹ U.S. Const. art. I, § 2.

² Census Bureau, *Why We Conduct the Decennial Census* (online at www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/why.html).

³ George Washington Institute of Public Policy, *Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds* (Nov. 2010) (online at <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Counting%20for%20Dollars%202020%20Brief%207A%20-%20Comprehensive%20Accounting.pdf>).

⁴ Census Bureau, *Ways to Respond* (online at <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html>).

⁵ Census Bureau, *Questions Asked* (online at <https://2020census.gov/en/about-questions.html>).

⁶ Census Bureau, *How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data* (online at <https://2020census.gov/en/data-protection.html>).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census* (May 22, 2012) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html).

⁹ Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census* (May 22, 2012) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html); Census Bureau, *The Black Population: 2010* (Sept. 2011) (online at www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf).

¹⁰ Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census* (May 22, 2012) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html); Census Bureau, *The Hispanic Population: 2010* (May 2011) (online at www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf).

¹¹ Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census* (May 22, 2012) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html); Census Bureau, *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010* (Jan. 2012) (online at www.census.gov/history/pdf/c2010br-10.pdf).

¹² Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census* (May 22, 2012) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html); Census Bureau, *The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population: 2010* (May 2012) (online at www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf).

¹³ Census Bureau, *Investigating the 2010 Undercount of Young Children – Analysis of Census Coverage Measurement Results* (Jan. 2017) (online at www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-2017_04-undercount-children-analysis-coverage.pdf).

¹⁴ *Assessing Miscounts in the 2020 Census*, Urban Institute (June 4, 2019) (online at www.urban.org/research/publication/assessing-miscounts-2020-census).