

Why the 2030 Census Matters for Housing

Accurate census data is one of the least seen but most powerful tools for housing stability. It determines how billions of federal housing dollars reach communities, guides local planning for affordable housing development, and ensures families can access the housing support they need. When we count every person, we strengthen housing security for millions of Americans. Housing stability begins with accurate data, and accurate data begins with the census. This factsheet outlines how funders who care about housing can help ensure we have fair and accurate census data.



What's the Census?

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau counts every person living in the United States—a constitutional requirement that shapes our democracy and public spending for the next decade. The census determines political representation, but it also serves as the statistical backbone for funding decisions in every policy arena, including housing. **Each year, census data, together with the American Community Survey, is used to direct over \$2 trillion in federal spending and helps ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.** Alongside the decennial census, the annual American Community Survey provides ongoing demographic data that housing authorities, developers, policymakers, researchers, and funders rely on to make decisions that guide billions of dollars in housing funding.

Why It Matters for Housing

It's hard to overstate the significance of the census in guiding how public funds are spent on housing. An uncounted family in 2030 will spend a decade—until 2040—in a community without adequate housing support. A mistake now has consequences for a decade. The census:

Determines Federal Housing Funding

Census data guides more than \$70.3 billion in annual federal housing funding through Housing and Urban Development programs alone, including \$44.6 billion for Section 8 housing, \$8.8 billion for housing loans, and billions for Community Development Block Grants. Section 8 vouchers help more than 2 million low-income households—seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children—secure affordable rental housing. Among voucher recipients, 83% are women-led households, 45% are African American, and 16% are Latino. The Public Housing Capital Fund distributes \$1.8 billion to maintain and renovate public housing. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit depends on census data to assess local housing needs and allocate tax credits for affordable housing development. These funds support rural communities, small towns, and urban neighborhoods.

Accurate Census Data:



**Helps plan for affordable
housing needs**



**Maintains housing
assistance programs**



**Guides grantmaking
and helps measure impact**

Directs State and Local Housing Planning

States and localities rely heavily on census data to plan for affordable housing needs. Census data determines Fair Market Rents, which establish payment standards for housing vouchers and determine income eligibility for housing programs. Accurate census counts ensure states can direct housing resources to the communities that need them most.

Guides Housing Development and Investment

Housing developers use census data to identify where to build affordable housing and mixed-income developments. Private sector companies like Zillow and the National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts rely on census-derived data to examine housing trends and guide investments. The American Housing Survey, which measures housing supply, demand, conditions, and costs nationwide, uses decennial census data to determine which households will be included.

Addresses Rural Housing Challenges

Small, isolated communities face particular planning challenges. A household undercounted in rural Montana or Alabama in 2030 means a community loses critical funding that could have supported affordable housing development, maintained housing assistance programs, or addressed homelessness in rural areas.

Enables Smarter Housing Philanthropy

The census is fundamental to everything housing funders do. Accurate census data enables them to effectively research community needs, evaluate program impact, and target investments to the families and communities that need support most. Foundations use demographic and other census data to guide their grantmaking and measure their impact. Additionally, investing in the census strengthens the same local organizations that many funders need to lead other efforts like eviction prevention or homelessness outreach.

Strengthens Housing Research

The American Community Survey is the only source of reliable, comparable community-level data for analyzing neighborhood housing needs. Researchers and policymakers use this data to understand housing cost burdens, evaluate programs, and identify where investments can have the greatest impact.

Supports Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws

Federal agencies rely on census data to monitor discrimination and enforce fair housing laws. The Department of Housing and Urban Development uses census data to ensure communities are meeting fair housing obligations and to direct resources where housing discrimination is most prevalent. Without accurate counts, enforcement of housing laws becomes impossible.

Our Path to a Complete 2030 Count

The 2030 Census is being planned right now: how the Census Bureau will reach undercounted populations, what resources will be available, and how data will be collected.

The federal government will not provide the resources for comprehensive community outreach. That's where philanthropy comes in. We have a proven model from 2020, when foundations came together through the Census Funder Collaborative to raise more than \$120 million for the national effort and an additional \$75 million for state-based activities.

Philanthropic investment made a measurable difference: "Civil society saved the 2020 Census." That's the conclusion drawn by one evaluation. The infrastructure built for 2020 continues working today—supporting broadband access, civic engagement, and other community campaigns. Everyone counts, and together we showed we can make sure everyone is counted.



Join Us!

The Census Funder Collaborative is actively welcoming housing funders.

You can:

- ▶ **Provide funding directly** to trusted community organizations doing census outreach
- ▶ **Leverage your convening power** to bring together stakeholders for 2030 planning
- ▶ **Help your colleagues understand** the importance of census data to your work
- ▶ **Contribute to CFC's pooled fund** to support coordinated national and state efforts

When we count every person, we strengthen housing stability for all families.

Ready to Learn More?

Contact the Census Funder Collaborative at info@censusfunders.org to explore how your foundation can support a fair and accurate 2030 Census.

