

Why the 2030 Census Matters

Accurate census data is one of the least seen but most powerful tools for making government work for everyone—in rural communities, small towns, and urban areas across the country. It helps federal and state governments understand where to direct resources, guides over \$2 trillion in annual federal spending, and provides the foundation for decision-making across every policy area—from healthcare and education to housing and economic development. When we count everyone, we ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and that every community receives its fair share of resources and representation.



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. **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 policymakers, researchers, advocates and funders rely on to make decisions that influence billions of dollars.

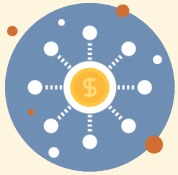
The Challenge of Counting Everybody

The federal government persistently undercounts some populations. For example, in the 2020 Census:

- Young children under the age of five had a 5.4% undercount.
- Hispanic populations were undercounted by nearly 5%.
- Black populations were undercounted by 3.3%.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives living on reservations were undercounted by 5.6%.

This is often the result of underfunding, digital barriers, and inadequate community outreach. This decade, distrust of government, changes in Census Bureau operations, and concerns about data privacy will make participation all the more challenging, particularly in already underserved communities.

Philanthropic investments can dramatically improve the count in hard-to-reach communities in the 2030 Census.



Census data
guides
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\$2.2 trillion
to over **370**
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Nearly all
foundations use
census data
to understand
community
needs, identify
effective
programs, and
measure impact.

Why It Matters

It's hard to overstate the significance of the census in guiding actions and resources on every major issue in the country. The census:

Guides Over \$2 Trillion in Federal Funding

Census data shapes the distribution of more than \$2.2 trillion in federal funding through at least 370 federal programs each year. These funds support hospitals, roads, schools, housing, veterans services, feeding children and families, economic development, and much more. An accurate count ensures every community receives its fair share of resources for the next decade.

Enables Smart Decision-Making Across All Sectors

Census and American Community Survey data provide the foundation for decision-making at all levels of government, plus the private, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors. This data determines where to build schools, hospitals, and emergency services; informs community planning and disaster preparedness; and guides business decisions.

Empowers Smarter Philanthropy

The census is fundamental to everything funders do. Nearly all socioeconomic research that foundations support relies on census data. Accurate census data enables philanthropy and its partners to effectively plan, research, evaluate, and advocate for change. Foundations use census data to understand community needs, identify effective programs, and measure impact.

Strengthens Democracy and Representation

From the time of George Washington, the census has served as a pillar of our democracy. The census determines representation in the House of Representatives and shapes political districts at every level. Accurate counts ensure that every community has a voice in the decisions that affect them.

What Worked in 2020

In 2020, philanthropic investment made a measurable difference. What actually worked?

Texting campaigns reached millions

The largest campaign distributed messages in 17 states to 9.4 million people likely to be undercounted.

State-focused funding proved critical

The CFC State Fund distributed \$13.8 million to 69 organizations in 28 states. Additional philanthropic and public funds were raised across many states, leading to higher census response rates in hard-to-count communities.

National networks strengthened local efforts

31 national organizations connected resources to state-level and grassroots groups, creating a network that 89% of participants rated as very valuable for reaching hard-to-count communities.

Early funding enabled pivoting

Organizations funded early in the cycle were prepared when COVID-19 hit, quickly pivoting from in-person to digital outreach.

We're learning from what didn't work

State infrastructure was lacking in many states—a gap we're addressing for 2030. More direct community organizing resources were also needed. We're applying these lessons for greater efficiency.

"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.



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Join Us!

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, and 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.

Investing in census outreach also strengthens the same local organizations that many funders rely on for other critical work—from COVID response and broadband access to civic engagement and disaster preparedness. Census investment builds lasting infrastructure that strengthens the nonprofit sector.

Here's a list of some of our current funders. Join Us!

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The California Endowment
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Ford Foundation
Freedom Together Foundation
Heartland Fund
The Joyce Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The Census Funder Collaborative is actively welcoming new 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

Want 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.

