

## 2020 Census: Impact on Money and Power?

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The coronavirus pandemic has rocked our world, completely changing our lives and our routines. It is a significant [threat to Latinos](#)' 2020 census response and outreach efforts. Money and political power are at stake. Texas community outreach strategies are already challenged by President Trump's administration discriminatory and inhumane policies directed at immigrants, and the state's SB4 anti-immigrant bill in 2017 along with its failure to invest funds for an accurate census count. While the official '2020 Census Day' (April 1<sup>st</sup>) has passed, the Census 2020 questionnaire can and must be submitted. It has never been more important than now to ensure that all of us complete the questionnaire and be counted.

A little background on the purpose of the decennial census. The U.S. Constitution mandates that every ten years the U.S. government conducts a census of the nation's population to determine the count of people living in the 50 states for the purpose of the apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives. On December 31, the Census Bureau, as required by law, will deliver to the President and to Congress the final count from the 2020 census for all states and the District of Columbia. These numbers will be used to apportion the 385 congressional seats that remain after each state is allocated a single U.S. House seat. States compete for the 385 seats based on the numbers of people that were counted in the 2020 census. In the process, depending on the growth of the population since the previous decennial census in 2010, there will be winners and losers among the states as they compete for congressional seats. Texas could very well end up with three additional congressional seats, upping its current 36 seats to 39. Yet, Texas A&M University demographer Dudley Poston has estimated that an undercount of 0.7%—or a mere 210,000 people—could result in Texas forfeiting the third potential seat to another state. Simply put, if we do not get counted, we do not have adequate political representation.

The population counts from the 2020 census are also used for a second purpose: the distribution of federal funds that support more than 300 federal programs. Over the following ten years, every year the federal government will allocate over \$1.5 trillion to states based on the number of persons tallied in the 2020 census. Texas stands to be a major recipient of federal dollars that support 316 federal programs, including such programs as Medicaid, Medicare, Head Start, services for veterans, funds for highway construction, educational programs, medical programs, and hundreds of other programs that we, our families, and our neighbors depend on. The more people who are not counted in the 2020 census, the more money Texas will leave on the table and the funds that it receives will be stretched out even more to support the needs not only of people who got counted but also those of people who were not tallied in the 2020 census. Poston estimates that for every 210,000 persons not counted in Texas, the state's federal funds will drop by \$711 million. The 2020 census count has a long shelf life as the number will be used to distribute federal funds over the next ten years. Getting counted in the 2020 census pays off.

It is not surprising that many state governments around the country have invested large sums of money to get as complete a count as possible in the 2020 census. California along with 25 other states have committed nearly one-third of a billion dollars to get everyone in their state counted. Even though an undercount of approximately 210,000 Texans may result in a loss of Texas' 39<sup>th</sup> seat along with a drop of \$711 million in federal funding, Texas did [not invest](#) a single penny in efforts to count everyone in its population. Many critics of the Texas political leadership suggest that Republicans are willing to forego a congressional seat and millions of dollars in federal funding to maintain their political dominance through undercounting people who are the most difficult to count and who tend to be more likely to support the

Democratic Party. The message from the Texas political establishment is that persons who are difficult to reach “do not count.” Immigrants, the poor, and disenfranchised are the [biggest targets](#) of this neglect and efforts at retaining their political power.

It is important also to stress that each person living in the United States, regardless of citizenship status, is required to participate in the 2020 census. In addition, the census questionnaire does not ask people to report their citizenship status.

We certainly want to prove the Texas political establishment wrong. We are important and we do count. Recent data indicates that Texas’s [self-response rate is 31.3 percent](#) compared to 36.2 nationally. We cannot allow a repeat of the 2010 census where Texas tied for the 7<sup>th</sup> lowest response rate in the country at 64.4 percent. The result was a 1.54 (777,359) Latino census undercount according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Latino leaders from the Texas Mexican American Legislative Caucus and National Association of Latino Elected Officials argued the undercount was closer to 3 to 5 percent.

If you have completed the 2020 census, thank you very much for doing your civic duty. If you have not done so, please do so now. If you need assistance in completing the census questionnaire, help in English is available by calling 844-330-2020 and in Spanish at 844-468-2020. Let’s make sure that you, your family, your friends, and your neighbors get counted. Let us stand up and do our civic duty.

As we recover from the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic in the coming months and years, it will be increasingly important that we have a political voice to represent our interests as well as to ensure that we have access to all the resources that will be needed to recuperate from the ravages of the outbreak. It will certainly pay off even more to get counted in the 2020 census.

### **IMPORTANT 2020 CENSUS DATES**

- **April 1:** This is Census Day - not a deadline, can respond after this date. **MUST** respond as soon as you can.
- **April 29 – May 1:** Census Bureau will count people experiencing homelessness - at soup kitchens and mobile food vans, on the streets, and at non-sheltered, outdoor locations such as tent encampments.
- **April 16 – June 19:** Census takers will work with administrators at colleges, senior centers, prisons, and other facilities that house large groups of people to make sure everyone is counted.
- **May 27 – August 14:** Census takers will interview homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census to help make sure everyone is counted.
- **December:** The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President and Congress as required by law.
- **March 31, 2021:** By this date, the Census Bureau will send redistricting counts to the states. This information is used to redraw legislative districts based on population changes.