

The 2020 Census: What's at Stake for Alaska

The 2020 Census

The census is a constitutionally required, once-a-decade count of every person living in the United States and has a fundamental role in our democracy. The census is critical to our democracy for three primary reasons:

1. Census data are used to reapportion seats in Congress, and to draw state and local legislative districts. But the 2020 Census is at risk of undercounting [hard to count \(HTC\) communities](#), undermining fair political representation.
2. Census data are used to allocate [over \\$800 billion](#) in federal programs and funding to states and localities.
3. Elected officials, businesses and other decision-makers use census data to make critical economic decisions and to inform public policy solutions.

Alaska Count Risk Factors	
Total Population	736,855
Population in HTC areas	271,329
Percentage in HTC areas	37%
Population in Tracts NOT receiving census by mail	51,420
Percentage households NO internet/ dial-up only	14.3%
Foreign-Born Population	72,222

To achieve its constitutional mandate, the census must be fair and accurate or risk undermining this indispensable population data for the next 10 years.

Threats of an Undercount

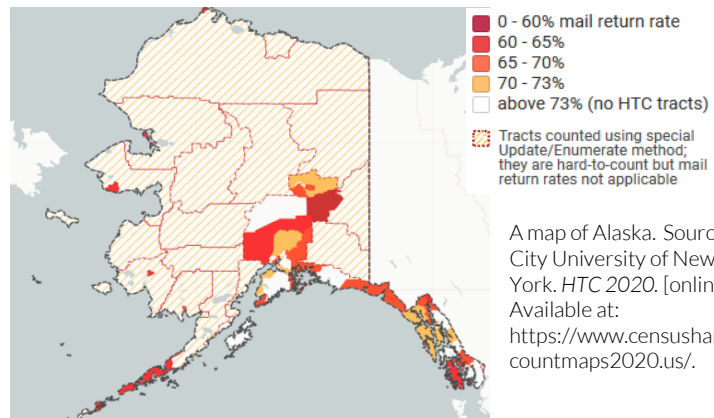
Unfortunately, the 2020 Census is facing [unprecedented challenges](#), including chronic and insufficient funding, decreasing public trust, and delays to implementation of its IT systems. These threats heighten the risk that the census will fail to count every person living in Alaska.

1. **Reduced Funding:** Each year, Alaska receives approximately [\\$3.2 billion](#) from federal assistance programs using decennial census data. Without accurate data, the federal government will [misallocate annual funding](#) for Medicaid, highways and other programs. Census data are also used to allocate millions to counties and cities annually.
2. **Economic Impact:** [Business leaders rely on census](#) demographic and economic data to inform development projections, marketing strategies and investment opportunities. Inaccurate data will derail potential economic growth for 10 years.
3. **Citizenship Question:** The addition of a new and untested [question about citizenship status](#) to the 2020 form is one of the most detrimental decisions to undermine the census. It is likely to [depress participation](#), [increase costs](#) by at least \$91.2 million, increase inaccuracy and inequity and erode public trust in the Census Bureau.
4. **"Internet Choice":** The 2020 Census will be the first decennial count using an online system to collect responses. Significant portions of Alaska include areas with low internet coverage or connectivity that may experience greater difficulty being counted.
5. **Update/ Enumerate:** Rural areas without city-style addresses, including remote locations in Alaska, will not be mailed a census form. Instead, the Census Bureau will use alternative enumeration practices that may result in undercounts of up to 8%.

The 2020 Census is less than two years away and the time to act is now! A polarized political environment, growing public distrust of the government and fears about the digital security of personal information raise the stakes considerably for the upcoming decennial census. The uncertainty of new technologies to effectively replace local capacity, puts pressure on state and local governments to take action to ensure a fair and accurate count.

Hard to Count Populations in Alaska

The goal of the census is to “count everyone once, only once, and in the right place.” But some areas and populations are "hard to count" because of low self-response rates that force the Census Bureau to send personnel to non-responding households, which is difficult, time-consuming and expensive.



A map of Alaska. Source: City University of New York. *HTC 2020*. [online] Available at: <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>.

Hard-to-Count Group	Representation in Alaska's Population
Hispanic or Latino	7% or 56,880 people
Black or African American	5% or 36,843 people
Asian	8% or 58,948 people
American Indian or Alaska Native	19% or 25,662 people
Children under age 5	7% or 51,580 people
Foreign-Born Individuals	10% or 72,222 people
Limited English Proficient Households	2% or 5,389 households <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 21% speak Spanish (1,145 households). ▪ 9% speak Indo-European languages (470 households). ▪ 50% speak Asian/ Pacific Islander languages (2,705 households). ▪ 20% speak other languages (1,069 households).

Nearly All of Alaska Is at Risk of a Census Undercount*

Boroughs & Census Areas At 100% Risk	Total Population	Percent Hard to Count	Percent Largest Community of Color	Percent Children Under Age 5	Percent Foreign-Born
Prince of Wales-Hyder	6,374	100%	51% AI/AN	7%	3%
Wrangell	2,401	100%	28% AI/AN	5%	5%
Hoonah-Angoon	2,107	100%	40% AI/AN	6%	7%
Haines	2,528	100%	10% AI/AN	5%	10%
Skagway	1,014	100%	9% Asian 9% AI/AN	5%	14%
Yakutat	646	100%	45% AI/AN	7%	8%
Aleutians East	3,299	100%	31% Asian 38% AI/AN	3%	44%

* Note: several Alaskan areas are 100% subject to update/enumerate, which can result in an undercount of up to 8%, including: Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, Kusilvak Census Area and Lake & Peninsula Borough. Other areas have high percentages of populations that are hard-to-count, are subject to update/enumerate procedures, or lack adequate internet access but are not listed here.