

# The 2020 Census: What's at Stake for Montana

## 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 for three primary reasons:

1. Census data are used to reapportion seats in Congress, and to draw state and local legislative districts, ensuring 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.

Montana Count Risk Factors	
Total Population	1,023,391
Population in HTC areas	44,553
Percentage in HTC areas	4%
Population in Tracts NOT receiving census by mail	58,161
Percentage households NO internet/ dial-up only	21.1%

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 the US.

In 2010, a 1 percent undercount would have missed 9,894 people in Montana, losing the state \$9,311,515 in funding from census-derived federal financial assistance programs.

1. **Unequal Representation:** In 2020, Montana will need an accurate count to gain one congressional seat. However, the 2020 Census is at risk of undercounting [hard to count \(HTC\) communities](#), risking the state's congressional representation.
2. **Reduced Funding:** In 2015, Montana received over [\\$2 billion](#) from federal programs using census data. Without accurate data, the federal government will [misallocate funding](#) for Medicaid, highways and other programs for states, and millions more to counties and cities annually.
3. **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.
4. **Diminished Local Capacity:** In 2020, the Census Bureau plans to cut Area Census Offices (ACOs) from 500 to only 248 nationwide, reducing capacity to update address lists, conduct door-to-door visits to unresponsive households and liaise with complete count committees. Montana would [lose two ACOs](#), dropping from three offices in 2010 to just one in 2020.
5. **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.
6. **"Internet Choice":** The 2020 Census will be the first decennial count using an online system to collect responses. Areas with low internet coverage or connectivity may experience greater difficulty participating in the count.
7. **Update/ Enumerate:** Areas without city-style addresses, in remote locations, or that have been affected by major disasters 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%.

## Hard to Count Populations in Montana

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.



Map of Montana. Source: City University of New York. HTC 2020. [online] Available at: <https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/>.

Hard-to-Count Group	Representation in Montana’s Population
Hispanic or Latino	3% or approximately 30,701 people
American Indian or Alaska Native	8% or approximately 81,871 people
Children under age 5	6% or approximately 61,403 people
Foreign-Born Individuals	3% or approximately 30,701 people

## Top Counties at Risk of a Census Undercount

Counties at Risk	Total Population	Percent Hard to Count	Percent NOT mailed census form	Percent WITHOUT internet or only dial-up service	Percent Communities of Color	Percent Children Under Age 5
Big Horn	13,214	13%	50.3%		73%	9%
Blaine	6,609	21%	43.5%		54%	8%
Cascade	82,049			26.2%	16%	7%
Flathead	94,696	22%		16.3%	8%	6%
Glacier	13,695	33%	39.9%		70%	9%
Hill	16,529	11%	15.7%		31%	9%
Lake	29,311		88.9%			6%
Lewis & Clark	65,989			16.1%	9%	6%
Mineral	4,223	43%			3%	5%
Missoula	113,101			15.4%	10%	5%
Ravalli	41,130	16%			7%	5%
Roosevelt	11,230		84.1%		66%	9%
Rosebud	9,348		34.4%		44%	8%
Sanders	11,375		16.4%		11%	5%
Yellowstone	155,344	3%	17.4%		13%	7%

**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.