The 2020 Census: What's at Stake for Oregon

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.

Oregon Count Risk Factors	
Total Population	3,982,267
Population in HTC areas	388,165
Percentage in HTC areas	10%
Percentage households NO internet/ dial-up only	15.1%

2. Census data are used to allocate over $800 billion in federal funding to states and localities.

3. Elected officials, business leaders and other decision-makers use census data to make critical decisions and inform public policy solutions.

To achieve its constitutional mandate, the census must be fair and accurate or risk undermining this indispensible population data for the next 10 years.
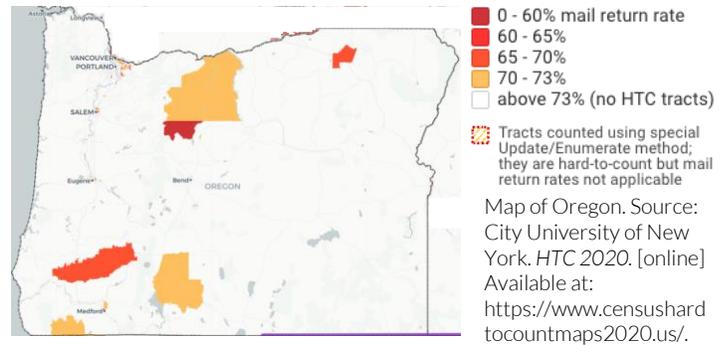
Threats to the Count in Oregon

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 38,311 people in Oregon, losing the state $44,779,594 in funding from census-derived federal financial assistance programs.

1. **Unequal Representation:** In 2020, Oregon will need an accurate count to gain one congressional seat. However, the 2020 Census is at risk of disproportionately undercounting certain hard to count (HTC) communities, risking the state's congressional representation.

2. **Reduced Funding:** In 2015, more than $10 billion of Oregon's budget came from federal programs based on census data. Without accurate data, the federal government will misallocate annual funding for Medicaid, highways and other programs. Additionally, census data are used to allocate million 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), reducing capacity to update address lists, conduct in-person visits to unresponsive households and liaise with complete count committees. **Oregon would lose two ACOs in 2020, dropping to just three ACO offices 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.

Hard to Count Populations in Oregon

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 Oregon. Source: City University of New York. *HTC 2020*. [online] Available at: https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/.

Hard-to-Count Group	Representation in Oregon's Population
Hispanic or Latino	12% or approximately 477,872 people
Black	3% or approximately 119,468 people
Asian	5% or approximately 199,113 people
American Indian or Alaska Native	3% or approximately 120,012 people
Children under age 5	6% or approximately 238,936 people
Foreign-Born Individuals	11% or approximately 434,779 people
Limited English Proficient Households	3% or approximately 41,503 households • 56% speak Spanish • 13% speak Indo-European languages • 27% speak Asian and Pacific Islander languages • 4% speak other languages

Top Counties at Risk of a Census Undercount

Counties at Risk	Total Population	Percent Hard to Count	Percent WITHOUT internet or only dial-up service	Percent Largest Community of Color	Percent Children Under Age 5	Percent Foreign-Born
Clackamas	394,967	4%	10.6%	8% Latino	5%	9%
Douglas	107,375	9%	19.1%	5% Latino	5%	4%
Jackson	210,916	16%	15%	12% Latino	6%	7%
Jefferson	22,305	31%		20% Latino	7%	8%
Josephine	84,063	10%	21.8%	7% Latino	5%	4%
Klamath	65,946	7%	23.8%	12% Latino	6%	6%
Lane	360,273	11%	16.2%	8% Latino	5%	7%
Malheur	30,474	15%		33% Latino	7%	12%
Marion	326,527	15%	16.9%	33% Latino	7%	14%
Multnomah	778,193	20%	12.7%	11% Latino	6%	15%
Polk	78,470	4%	14.8%	13% Latino	6%	9%
Sherman	1,705	100%		6% AI/AN	5%	3%
Umatilla	76,582	4%	20.2%	26% Latino	7%	12%
Wasco	25,657	30%		17% Latino	6%	9%

The 2020 Census is less than two years away and the time to act is now! A polarized political environment increased public distrust of the government and fears about the digital security of personal information puts pressure on state and local governments to take action to ensure a fair and accurate count.