

Engaging communities in the Census (Census Bureau)

Challenge: Create digital tools that enable individuals and communities to see and experience the value of the Census in order to increase participation in the Census.

Census policy priority:

Every decade, in years ending in “0,” the U.S. Census Bureau conducts its Decennial Census, apportioning representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as federal funds for critical infrastructure and services such as housing, highways, schools, hospitals, and scores of programs that are vital to the health and welfare of the U.S. population and economy. In addition to the Decennial Census, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts other critical surveys such as the Economic Census and the American Community Survey, which can help businesses do their planning, and measure the health of our economy and places.

It is critical that all those living in the U.S. participate in the Census. It is therefore vital that people know the impact that Census has on their lives, families, communities, and societies. Yet certain groups have been undercounted at disproportionately high rates, including rural communities, children, and those experiencing homelessness. We are bringing together teams of partners from across industries and sectors to ideate new technology platforms and solutions that will drive participation nationwide.

Why is this problem important? When people and businesses participate in the Census, they further drive its value by ensuring a complete count. Having an accurate count then ensures the fair distribution of federal spending and apportionment of congressional seats. When segments of the population are undercounted, it results in fewer resources allocated, imprecise policy recommendations, and less congressional representation for those communities. The 2020 Census will also be the first to have an online response option, presenting new challenges with those who aren’t digitally connected, but also opening up new opportunities for creative solutions.

Our vision: people living in America know the impact of the Census on their lives, family, community and society, and are therefore driven to participate. Learning how to take the Census will be as easy as going to vote.gov.

What is the problem?

Our goal is to conduct a complete and accurate census, but there are challenges ahead. Historically, certain groups have been undercounted at disproportionately high rates, including:

- Young, mobile people
- Rural communities
- Children
- People experiencing homelessness

With recent budget cuts, increasing mistrust of the US Government, the digital divide, privacy concerns, and a variety of other attitudes, behaviors, and circumstances we expect this problem to grow. Additional resources on this problem:

- [Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Survey](#) (please note pages 48-55)
- [Census Planning Database and Low Response Score](#)

