



Toward a Fair and Accurate Census 2030

What Is Census 2030 and Why Does It Matter for New Jersey?

The census is a count of all United States residents required by The U.S. Constitution every 10 years to determine Congressional districts. The census is an essential policy tool. The federal government depends on census data to allocate resources; state governments use census data to draw legislative districts and to direct spending, and academics, nonprofits, and businesses rely on census data to inform and direct their work.

Without an accurate count, New Jersey residents will lose resources and representation. New Jersey receives more than **\$65 billion each year** from federal assistance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, transportation infrastructure, and special education and school breakfast funds – all amounts based on census counts.¹ The Garden State retained all 12 of its congressional seats following the 2020 Census, thanks to a well-resourced and widespread outreach campaign. Comparatively, New York lost a congressional seat by a relatively small margin—89 residents—a reminder of the importance of counting everyone. **Too many New Jerseyans go uncounted.** Further, **those (faulty) numbers will determine the next 10 years** of federal funding, federal redistricting, state redistricting, and state funding.

How Does the Census Work?

The census questionnaire is a confidential household survey. The best and most accurate method to complete the survey is for households (people living at a single address) to complete it in full. Unfortunately, in the past too many New Jerseyans have not been counted accurately. Although the 2020 Census permitted a majority of residents to respond online for the first time, participation in New Jersey's largest cities remained low: 51% in Newark, 49% in Trenton, 55% in Paterson, and 50% in Camden.² These communities are among those labeled **Hard-to-Count** (HTC). If residents do not submit complete responses, census workers go door-to-door to try to count people who did not return a questionnaire. Many residents are reluctant to answer a knock from the government. When gathered this way, data are less reliable.

What Are the Census Challenges in the U.S. and in New Jersey?

Just as with 2020, most census forms will be web-based in 2030. Many New Jersey residents do not have reliable internet access and may encounter problems completing the forms. Present heightened distrust of the federal government and concern about federal immigration policy and a proposed “citizenship question” are likely to discourage participation.

Importantly: some groups are more likely to be missed – especially immigrants, people of color, urban residents, children under 5, people living in multifamily housing, non-native English

speakers, individuals living with disabilities, and those who are unhoused. In contrast, wealthier white people are more likely to be overcounted.

How Can We Work Together to Improve the Census Count in New Jersey?

Community leaders in the state must join together to support a complete count in 2030. When all residents in New Jersey are counted, everyone in the state will benefit.

An early opportunity to work toward a more accurate count is through the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation. LUCA is a voluntary process in which state and local governments update and verify the master address list used by the Census Bureau to mail questionnaires to residents. Widespread participation in LUCA, especially municipalities with significant increases in population or residential development, is a critical first step in ensuring a more complete count.

Cities and counties should **form Complete Count Committees (CCCs)** that include government leaders and local representatives from schools, businesses, faith communities, nonprofits, civic groups, and libraries. A coordinated effort is needed to make sure everybody is counted. Local CCCs can teach residents about the importance of the census, encourage local hiring for Census Bureau jobs, provide technology assistance and neighborhood “Get Counted” centers where people can access computers or tablets to complete their census forms, and spread the messages to encourage all residents to participate in a complete count.

Nonprofits and other civic anchors such as schools and medical centers can educate and mobilize their communities, establish or join local Complete Count Committees, host job fairs, equip outreach staff with accurate information about Census 2030, and serve as “Get Counted” centers. Business leaders should emphasize the importance of the census to the community’s well-being and should offer places to “get counted.” All sectors should work together to support a fair and accurate census.

What Difference Can This Make?

A more complete count can generate more federal resources and more influence for New Jersey. Census work supports democracy by increasing civic engagement and public awareness. The time to begin is NOW.

For more information and assistance, contact: Alana Vega, The Fund for New Jersey
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¹ [2025-Census-Matters-Fact-Sheet-New-Jersey.pdf](#)

² “2020 Census: Tracking Self-Response Rates Map.” Census.gov, January 28, 2021.
<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-census-self-response-rates-map.html>.