



# WHY THE CENSUS MATTERS FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE

## Introduction

Every 10 years, the federal government attempts to count every person living in the country for the U.S. Census. However, certain populations are inevitably undercounted. Transgender and queer people, LGB people, people of color, immigrants, people who are experiencing homelessness, people living in rural areas, people with low incomes, renters, single-parent households, people with limited English proficiency, and young children are overwhelmingly undercounted in the Census. Meanwhile, white people and homeowners tend to be overcounted.

So what's the big deal?

The Census results directly affect issues of democracy – such as redrawing district lines and distributing representative seats – and determine

funding of social services for each state, including Medicaid, Section 8 housing vouchers, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

## What does it mean to be “undercounted”?

Since the Census was created, it has served the interests of white and wealthy populations and has funneled more resources into those communities and away from the communities that need it the most. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 16 million people were not counted or possibly incorrectly counted in the 2010 Census – generally people who experience multiple forms of oppressions. An estimated 2.1% of the black population, 1.5% of the Latinx population, and 4.9% of Native Americans and Alaska Natives were undercounted.

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***Being counted means being heard - it means having our needs met.***

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For more information on specific undercounted populations, please visit the Leadership Conference Education Fund's [2020 Census resources](#).

## But I thought the Census doesn't even count us?

Though the Census does not explicitly ask about gender identity or sexual orientation, LGBTQ people exist within all the different populations that are undercounted and underserved. It is important for us to be counted in the 2020 Census to ensure that our communities have fair access to democracy and social services funding. We are part of this country and we need to be represented.

## Social Services

Results from the Census are used to determine what share of [\\$88.3 billion in federal funding](#) goes to different social service programs.

### National SNAP funds: \$66.3 billion

Percentage of LGBTQ families receiving SNAP nationally	<b>22.7%</b>
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Percentage of non-LGBTQ families receiving SNAP nationally	<b>9.7%</b>
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### National Medicaid funds: \$361.2 billion

Percentage of LGBTQ families participating in Medicaid nationally	<b>20.9%</b>
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Percentage of non-LGBTQ families receiving Medicaid nationally	<b>12.9%</b>
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Data from: Caitlin Rooney, Charlie Whittington, and Laura E. Durso, "Protecting Basic Living Standards for LGBTQ people" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available on [CAP's website](#).

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher funds: **\$19.3 billion**

CHIP funds: **\$13.7 billion**

WIC funds: **\$6.3 billion**

Health Center Programs funds: **\$4.3 billion**

Numbers reflect funding for FY 2016. For more information on funding, visit the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy's [Counting for Dollars](#) Project.

## Democracy

Results from the Census are used to determine many aspects of our democracy

Estimated number of people living in hard-to-count tracts: **58,952,034**

Estimated percentage of people living in hard-to-count tracts: **18.3%**

Projected number of House Representative seats shifted based on 2020 Census numbers: **9 or 10**

# How does the Census impact our democracy?

## U.S. House Representatives

There are 435 representative seats - each representing one congressional district - which are allocated throughout the country based on population sizes surveyed in the Census. The 2010 Census results caused 12 seats to shift among several states, which translates directly into the shifting of power. Populations that are overcounted - generally white, wealthy, and homeowner populations - are apportioned more political power than are undercounted populations, and their interests are better represented.

## Electoral College

One example of this shift in power can be seen through the Electoral College, which is a state's number of U.S. senators and U.S. House Representatives combined. In all but two states (Nebraska and Maine), every electoral vote during a Presidential Election will go to the party with a majority or plurality of the popular vote in that state. So, if a majority of the popular vote in Alabama was for a particular party, that party would receive all 7 of Alabama's electoral votes.

## Redistricting

States also use Census data to determine how congressional districts are formed, based on the notion that there should be roughly the same population in each congressional district. Redistricting is often used as a political strategy to sway elections. In the US, most states' legislatures approve newly-drawn district lines through the regular legislative process. This means that if one party controls the majority of seats in a state, that party controls how congressional districts are drawn.

## Gerrymandering

Sometimes, members of the majority political party engage in practices that manipulate electoral districts to either dilute or concentrate voting power. This practice, called gerrymandering, is illegal. However, the majority party plans and approves district lines in most states, and because it is very difficult to prove in court, gerrymandering frequently occurs. It is a tactic used by political parties to maintain power and suppress the voting power of certain populations - usually communities of color.

## So what can we do about it?

There are many actions we can take to prepare for the 2020 Census. Below are a few suggestions. Learn more at [www.queerthecensus.org](http://www.queerthecensus.org).

### 2018 - 2019

- **Form a group** of dedicated people to call state representatives to secure a fully funded Census
- **Join your state's count committee** to ensure representation from under-counted districts

### 2019 - 2020

- **Learn to navigate** the Block Boundary Suggestion Program to ensure a fair redistricting process
- **Continue to drive calls** to state representatives to obtain funding for an accurate and fair count

### 2020 - 2021

- **Host Census parties** providing people with access and resources to complete the form online
- **Contact** your Census Bureau regional office and State Data Center Program for questions

Let's fight to make our voices heard in the 2020 Census.