CENSUS 2020

Why Do the Census?

Fair Representation
Seats in the US House of Representatives are based on population. States with more people have more representatives. After each census, the 435 seats in the House are split up based on each state’s population, so that each set represents the same number of people.

Federal Funding
Each state gets federal funding to operate essential programs for projects like social programs, education, and highways. The amount states get depends on their population, and on how many people are in certain categories (such as age, gender, and race). States get nearly $2,000 per person every year in federal funding for all programs. For each person not counted, the state loses out on $20,000 over 10 years. Programs including Medicaid, Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, the children’s health insurance program, school lunches, special education, and foster care all rely on federal funding determined by the census.

Community Planning
Communities and states use census data to plan ahead. Comparing census data over the years tells a story about ways the community is changing in size, age, employment, home ownership, and other measurements. The data helps organizations like school districts, housing agencies, Head Start/Early Start agencies, transportation departments, and businesses make better plans. Researchers also use census data.

Census Undercounts
When not everyone is counted, essential programs lose out. Undercounted groups tend to be marginalized. When a population isn’t fully represented in a community or state, the programs that rely on federal funding can struggle to meet the needs of certain groups. More than 1 in 10

What is the Census?
The U.S. census has been around since 1790. The goal of the census is to count and gather information from everyone living in the country. The census happens every 10 years and is coming up in 2020. Surveys are sent in the mail to all residences and institutions (such as college dorms, nursing homes, and jails). Census workers go door-to-door in hard-to-reach and low-count areas. The census survey asks about everyone living in the household, including name, age, sex, ethnicity, and race. All responses are confidential. No one can identify you or your household from the survey, and all census workers follow a strict code of privacy.

The federal dollars lost in Montana over 10 years due to the 14,360 people undercounted in the 2000 Census.

$21,000,000
Montanans are at risk of being undercounted. In 2000, Montana undercounted over 14,000 people, which ranked us 44th among all states for accuracy. The undercount in 2000 meant $21 million lost for important program funding over 10 years, until the 2010 Census. In 2010, Montana’s slight overcount ranked us 11th of all states for accuracy.

Young Children
Across the country, the number of undercounted young children has increased each census since 1980. No one understands why. Studies show that poverty, geographic isolation, complex family living arrangements, and minority families make it more likely that a child won’t get counted.

American Indians
In Montana, American Indians are especially vulnerable to census undercounts due to the remote location of reservation communities. Half of all Native Americans in Montana live in hard-to-count geographic areas with limited internet access, which means the use of paper forms is critical.

The US Census Needs You
Your community and state are counting on you to return your census survey. You can encourage your friends, family, and neighbors to return theirs as well. There are other ways to get involved in the census effort:

Complete Count Committees
Volunteer for groups who raise awareness and improve resident response rates to support Business & Economic Development, Community Services, Education and Libraries, Government and Tribal interests.

Census Partners
Census Partner organizations share accurate information about the census and communicate about how census data can benefit communities, businesses, and service organizations.

Census Jobs
A complete census count requires a big workforce. There are many temporary census jobs with flexible hours. Apply to be a census taker, recruiting assistant, office staff, or supervisor.

References
Montana Census & Information Center
The 2020 Census: What’s at Stake for Montana
Census 2020 Talking Points – Counting American Indian Populations

2020 Census: Federal Funding — and Support for Kids — Tied to Census Count
50 Ways Census Data Are Used
Montana Census 2020
2020 Census Survey