

Why the census matters

Official count used in a range of funding decisions, research

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The primary purpose of the decennial U.S. Census is to determine how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, but this official population count is also the base for a range of important decisions. It's used for states' redistricting, research and policy-making, and the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars across the country each year.

Alaska needs complete and accurate counts across the state in 2020 to ensure reliable data for representation, research, and funding through the 2020s.

Required for statewide legislative redistricting

While Alaska has just one seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, and that's unlikely to change, the Alaska Constitution requires the state to redraw legislative district boundaries every 10 years based on new census data.

To do this fairly, the state relies on census counts of residents in thousands of geographic units, including incorporated as well as unincorporated areas across Alaska.

Research and planning starts with the census

Because the census is the only direct and comprehensive count of people across the country, it's a key element for nearly all other reports on population.

Population estimates and projections for areas big and small in the United States typically start with the

last census count, and they become survey weights and denominators for countless statistics and reports throughout the decade including workforce and employment data, health statistics, education statistics, crime data, transportation plans, housing data, and comprehensive plans.

Policy and funding allocations use census data

The census data, population estimates, and many statistics and reports derived from them determine how federal and state funds are distributed each year.

Looking just at federal dollars, a study by the George Washington Institute of Public Policy found that in fiscal year 2015, Alaska received almost \$3,000 per capita through the 16 largest programs that distribute money based on decennial census-derived statistics. These programs included Medicaid (\$1 billion to Alaska), Highway Planning and Construction (\$500 million), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (\$168 million), and the National School Lunch Program (\$35 million).

Dozens of Alaska statutes involve census or population estimates data. Several examples are community assistance and matching funds, business licensing, health facility allocations, Power Cost Equalization, rural designations, and transportation plans. Alaska's

*Visit our 2020 Census page:
[http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/
cen/Alaska2020Census.cfm](http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/Alaska2020Census.cfm)*

Community Assistance Program provides millions of dollars in state funding each year to communities across the state, based in part on population estimates built on the decennial count.

Genealogy and historical research

After 72 years, the Census Bureau releases individual responses to the public. People conducting family and other historical research often use these records. Starting in 2092, future generations will be able to look back at individual responses to the 2020 Census to inform their own research.

Work has started for 2020 and will ramp up in coming months

Preparations for the 2020 Census are under way, and much work remains. In the coming months, through partnership programs with the Census Bureau, cities and boroughs across the state will be updating maps of housing units, reviewing geographic boundaries, analyzing and commenting on operational plans, and convening complete count committees.

To receive email updates about the 2020 Census from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, please visit [http://laborstats.alaska.gov/
email/emailnotify.htm](http://laborstats.alaska.gov/email/emailnotify.htm).

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