

**Statement Of  
John C. Yang  
President and Executive Director  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC**

**Hearing On  
“Enumeration or Estimation: Why Inaccurate Census Results Hurt American Citizens”**

**House of Representatives  
Subcommittee On The Constitution And Limited Government  
Committee On The Judiciary**

**November 19, 2025**

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) submits this written testimony to the House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary’s Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government in connection with its November 19, 2025, hearing regarding the decennial census. A census every ten years is mandated by the U.S. Constitution and, when there is an accurate count, serves as a foundation for a functioning government and our democracy.

**ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Advancing Justice | AAJC is a national nonprofit, non-partisan organization founded in 1991. Our mission is to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Advancing Justice | AAJC considers the census, including the American Community Survey (ACS), to be the backbone of its mission. Advancing Justice | AAJC maintains a permanent census program that monitors census policy, educates policy makers, and conducts community outreach and education on the surveys conducted by the Census Bureau. Advancing Justice | AAJC has been working to eliminate the barriers that have historically resulted in the undercounting and underreporting of Asian Americans in federal data collection and analysis efforts, particularly in the census count. Advancing Justice | AAJC has conducted national outreach and educational campaigns focused on Asian American communities for Census 2000, Census 2010, and Census 2020. Advancing Justice | AAJC was the 2020 Census national resource hub for the Asian American and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander communities. Advancing Justice | AAJC has also served as a member of numerous advisory committees to the Census Bureau since 2000, including the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, for which Advancing Justice | AAJC served two second three-year term through August 2019, and its Vice President of Census and Voting

served on the 2030 Census Advisory Committee. Additionally, Advancing Justice | AAJC currently co-chairs the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Census Task Force.

## **THE U.S. CONSTITUTION AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS REQUIRE A COUNT OF ALL PERSONS**

**The U. S. Constitution.** Article I, sec. 2, clause 3 of the Constitution requires a count every 10 years (decennial census) of all persons living in the country for the purpose of apportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. The Constitution explicitly requires an “actual Enumeration” of “all persons,” imposing on the federal government the duty to count the “whole number of persons in each State.”<sup>1</sup> Both Republican and Democratic administrations, through the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), have confirmed unequivocally and consistently throughout our nation’s history that the Constitution requires a count of all persons living in the United States on Census Day, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.<sup>2</sup>

In adopting the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Congress rejected proposals to allocate seats in the House of Representatives based on voter-eligible population alone, rather than total population.<sup>3</sup> Supreme Court rulings affirming the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s guarantee of equal representation require that congressional districts have equal numbers of people.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in *Evenwel v. Abbott*, the Supreme Court unequivocally stated that “the Fourteenth Amendment calls for the apportionment of congressional districts based on total population.”<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the Court quoted from both James Madison and Alexander Hamilton in establishing that congressional representation be “founded on the aggregate number of inhabitants.”<sup>6</sup> This principle was confirmed and restated during debates related to the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. During those debates, some members of Congress fiercely advocated for a “legal voter” basis for congressional apportionment. That view was rejected in the Fourteenth Amendment, which retained the “whole population” basis of apportionment. With the understanding that the Constitution requires total population as the basis for congressional apportionment, it follows that the census must, in fact, count the entire population. Thus, an accurate census must count and account for all persons residing in the United States on Census Day.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 U.S.C. § 2a. *See also*, *Evenwel v. Abbott*, 136 S. Ct. 1120, 1127 (2016).

<sup>2</sup> *See* Letter from Carol T. Crawford, Assistant Att’y Gen., to Jeff Bingaman, Chairman, Subcomm. on Gov’t Info. & Regul’n (Sept. 22, 1989) (on file with U.S. Dep’t of Justice).

<sup>3</sup> *Evenwel*, 136 S. Ct. at 1127-28.

<sup>4</sup> *See Wesberry v. Sanders*, 376 U. S. 1, 7–8 (1964), *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U. S. 533, 568 (1964).

<sup>5</sup> *Evenwel*, 136 S. Ct. at 1129.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 1127.

Following the 1920 Census, in the wake of a new wave of immigration, changing demographics, and a population shift from rural to urban areas, Congress was deadlocked in passing reapportionment legislation, stuck in a debate about the inclusion of “unnaturalized aliens” in the count. This impasse, in fact, led to a failure to reapportion seats in the House for the entire decade of the 1920s, for the first and only time in the nation’s history. Ultimately, Congress passed legislation that cemented the concept of House reapportionment based on the constitutional requirement of total population figures.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the constitutional infirmity of excluding noncitizens (including undocumented immigrants) from the count, there is no way to determine both the citizenship and immigration status of every person living in the U.S. without deeply undermining accuracy. The Census Bureau (or any other federal agency) has never fielded a question on immigration status. It is not a stretch to conclude that asking people if they are residing in the country “unlawfully” would cause many to skip the question, or more likely the census entirely. Since the census is a household-based survey, *no members* of a household would be counted, including citizen children, if one member of that household was a person of undocumented, uncertain, or unclear legal status. That outcome would harm every state and nearly every community, not only for representation purposes, but for the fair allocation of federal and state funding and wise private sector investment. Research already has shown that the addition of a citizenship question suppresses the count of immigrant and mixed-status families,<sup>8,9</sup> and feeds into public distrust of the government by all communities. An immigration status question, especially at a time when fear is pervasive in communities where immigrants live, whether in small or large numbers, undeniably would lead to an irreparably inaccurate census.

### **SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY IS A HALLMARK OF THE CENSUS BUREAU’S WORK**

The Census Bureau is dedicated to upholding scientific integrity and objectivity through all of its statistical activities and in conducting the decennial census. The Bureau has always been committed to providing high quality data; in 2002, OMB formalized the federal government’s guidelines for data quality.<sup>10</sup> In the years since, the Census Bureau has regularly articulated and

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<sup>7</sup> Shanahan, Brendan A. (2025, April 2). A Century-Long Battle Over the Census is Brewing. *Time*. <https://time.com/7265213/battle-over-the-census-brewing/>

<sup>8</sup> J. David Brown, Lawrence Warren, Moises Yi, Misty L. Heggeness, Suzanne M. Dorinski. (2019, June). *Predicting the Effect of Adding a Citizenship Question to the 2020 Census*. Center for Economic Studies, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www2.census.gov/ces/wp/2019/CES-WP-19-18.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Brown, J. D., & Heggeness, M. L. (2026). Citizenship question effects on household survey response. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 45, e70004. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.70004>.

<sup>10</sup> Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies; Republication, 67 Fed. Reg. 8452 (February 22, 2002), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2002/02/22/R2-59/guidelines-for-ensuring-and-maximizing-the-quality-objectivity-utility-and-integrity-of-information>.

revised its Statistical Quality Standards to align with those guidelines.<sup>11</sup> Each and every Census Bureau employee is required to take data quality and stewardship training both when they begin their role at Census and every year thereafter, underscoring the agency's commitment to privacy, quality, and rigor in their work.<sup>12</sup>

The Bureau, along with other principal statistical agencies, is committed to producing and disseminating objective, credible, and useful statistics to support the decision-making of governments, businesses, philanthropy, and social service organizations.<sup>13</sup> Our nation's statistical agencies, including the Census Bureau, embrace four fundamental principles set forth by the National Academy of Sciences. A Federal statistical agency: (1) must be in a position to provide objective information that is relevant to the issues of public policy; (2) must have credibility with those who use its data and information; (3) must have the trust of those whose information it obtains; and (4) must have a strong position of independence within the government.<sup>14</sup> The Bureau understands that any actual or perceived violation of any of the principles undermines the integrity of, and public confidence in, the data the agency produces.<sup>15</sup> The Census Bureau specifically cites *objectivity* as one of its *Information Quality Guidelines*, committing to providing information that is accurate, reliable, and unbiased.<sup>16</sup> Objectivity in the field of statistical information, such as the census count, requires acknowledging that errors in gathering and compiling data are unavoidable. Therefore, the Bureau readily publishes information on the extent of errors in its data, and the likely sources of those errors, to bolster public confidence in the numbers and help policymakers use the data effectively and prudently.

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Quality Standards," Census Bureau, April 2023, <https://www2.census.gov/about/policies/quality/quality-standards.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "DS017 – Data Stewardship Awareness Training," August 2025, [https://www2.census.gov/foia/ds\\_policies/ds017.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/foia/ds_policies/ds017.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Statement of Commitment to Scientific Integrity by Principal Statistical Agencies. [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies\\_and\\_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific\\_Integrity\\_Statement\\_of\\_the\\_Principal\\_Statistical\\_Agencies.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies_and_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific_Integrity_Statement_of_the_Principal_Statistical_Agencies.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Statement of Commitment to Scientific Integrity by Principal Statistical Agencies. [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies\\_and\\_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific\\_Integrity\\_Statement\\_of\\_the\\_Principal\\_Statistical\\_Agencies.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies_and_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific_Integrity_Statement_of_the_Principal_Statistical_Agencies.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Statement of Commitment to Scientific Integrity by Principal Statistical Agencies. [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies\\_and\\_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific\\_Integrity\\_Statement\\_of\\_the\\_Principal\\_Statistical\\_Agencies.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/policies_and_notices/scientificintegrity/Scientific_Integrity_Statement_of_the_Principal_Statistical_Agencies.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Objectivity, December 2021, <https://www.census.gov/about/policies/quality/guidelines/objectivity.html>.

The Census Bureau has also undertaken coverage measurement programs which includes a post-enumeration survey since the 1990 Census in order to evaluate the accuracy of the Census count. These measures are used by the Census Bureau and its partners to identify areas to improve in terms of process and outreach to help ensure a more accurate count of the population. The Census Bureau also adapts their methodology to reflect the changing demographics of the country more effectively, shifting from a single race evaluation to a multirace-based approach for the 2010 Census.

Table 1: Summary of Net Coverage Error by Race and Ethnicity for 2010-2020 Censuses<sup>17</sup>

	2010 Census	2020 Census
Total Population	0.01%	-0.24%
Non-Hispanic White Alone	0.83%	1.64%
Black Alone or in Any Combination	-2.06%	-3.30%
Asian Alone or in Any Combination	0.00%	2.62%
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone or in Any Combination	-0.15%	-0.91%
on Reservation	-4.88%	-5.64%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone or in Any Combination	-1.02%	1.28%
Hispanic or Latino	-1.54%	-4.99%

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Post Enumeration Survey Report, PES20-G-01, March 2022.  
<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/coverage-measurement/pes/national-census-coverage-estimates-by-demographic-characteristics.pdf>

Table 2: Summary of Net Coverage Error by Race and Ethnicity for 1990-2000 Censuses<sup>18</sup>

	1990 Census	2000 Census
Total Population	-1.61%	0.49%
Non-Hispanic White	-0.68%	1.13%
Non-Hispanic Black	-4.57%	-1.84%
Non-Hispanic Asian	-2.36%	0.75%
American Indian on Reservation	-12.22%	0.88%
American Indian off Reservation	*	-0.62%
Native Hawaiian of Pacific Islander	**	-2.12%
Hispanic	-4.99%	-0.71%

\*=Included with non-Hispanic White for coverage estimates in 1990.

\*\*=Included with non-Hispanic Asian for coverage estimates in 1990.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CENSUS AND AN ACCURATE COUNT**

Census data are critical for a functioning society, as they allow for the distribution of federal funds annually to states and Tribal Nations (as well as state allocations to localities), inform effective and efficient policy and planning decisions by businesses, policy makers, and nonprofit organizations, and are used to allocate political representation and to draw legislative districts at all levels. Without an accurate count of all communities, these decisions will not address the needs of the different segments of our country or uphold the constitutional guarantee of equal representation.

**Census-guided Federal Assistance.** Congress allocates significant federal resources to states, localities, and Tribal Nations, families, and nonprofits based on data from the census and the

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Coverage Measurement Estimation Report: Summary of Estimates of Coverage for Persons in the United States, Report G01, May 22, 2021. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2010/technical-documentation/methodology/g-series/g01.pdf>

American Community Survey (ACS), the ongoing part of the census. The reason is obvious: prudent distribution of taxpayer monies relies on accurate data on where people live and work, as well as the quality of life in their communities. Decisions on where to build new schools and hire more teachers, where wider roads and more transit options are needed, where to offer programs focused on senior citizens and job training for veterans (not all of whom are citizens), and where access to health care must be expanded, all depend on accurate data from the census and the ACS, which itself relies on the foundation of an accurate count every 10 years.

A recent analysis of Fiscal Year 2023 federal spending shows that census data “inform the allocation of trillions of dollars in assistance funding from the federal government to states, districts, cities, and other localities. The census guides the geographic distribution of federal funding for health care, infrastructure, education, housing, veteran support, food for children and families, economic development, and much more.”<sup>19</sup> An assessment of the identified 371 federal assistance programs that used census data to geographically allocate their funds showed that more than \$2.24 trillion in federal dollars were allocated to state agencies, local governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, companies, and households.

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<sup>19</sup> Sean Moulton and Janice Luong, Project on Government Oversight, Census Matters: Why an Accurate Count is Essential to Funding Our Communities (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/census-matters-why-an-accurate-count-is-essential-to-funding-our-communities>.

**Federal Assistance Funds Geographically Directed by Census Data<sup>20</sup>**  
Distribution by Select State, Fiscal Year 2023

State	Medicare Total	Medicaid Total	All Other Programs	Totals
California	\$116,603,411,405	\$84,955,802,453	\$74,942,415,408	\$276,501,629,266
Colorado	\$13,225,060,718	\$8,632,878,469	\$8,820,755,106	\$30,678,694,293
Kentucky	\$13,917,964,620	\$13,536,874,309	\$8,246,521,230	\$35,701,360,159
Maryland	\$27,911,802,393	\$11,147,912,393	\$10,054,578,085	\$49,114,292,871
Missouri	\$19,154,556,755	\$12,758,757,801	\$10,576,352,286	\$42,489,666,842
New York	\$71,040,779,897	\$60,145,346,559	\$55,123,596,375	\$186,309,722,831
North Carolina	\$29,578,311,706	\$14,779,202,610	\$16,445,026,413	\$60,802,540,729
Ohio	\$33,376,320,805	\$24,160,463,102	\$19,814,221,943	\$77,351,005,850
Pennsylvania	\$42,943,343,318	\$28,552,616,433	\$22,603,573,091	\$94,099,532,842
Tennessee	\$20,713,368,114	\$9,533,007,555	\$10,323,578,953	\$40,569,954,623
Texas	\$71,098,669,158	\$38,075,142,448	\$43,615,406,742	\$152,789,218,348
Vermont	\$3,064,683,581	\$1,424,837,606	\$1,729,600,666	\$6,219,121,853
Washington	\$20,094,476,518	\$12,847,808,734	\$12,994,489,667	\$45,936,774,919
Wisconsin	\$15,944,832,743	\$8,157,431,823	\$9,011,188,966	\$33,113,453,531
Wyoming	\$2,779,038,571	\$464,314,250	\$1,416,120,585	\$4,659,473,406
<i>United States</i>	<i>\$592,842,090,995</i>	<i>\$1,037,100,000,000</i>	<i>\$17,692,100,290</i>	<i>\$2,240,093,187,193</i>

A fair and accurate census is imperative, as “miscounts in the decennial census can send billions of dollars to the wrong places, depriving communities of the resources they need for an entire decade.”<sup>21</sup> Accurate census data are also critical to ensuring decisions are made, and districts are drawn, that reflect and address the needs of each community.

<sup>20</sup> Sean Moulton and Janice Luong, Project on Government Oversight, Census Matters: Why an Accurate Count is Essential to Funding Our Communities (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/census-matters-why-an-accurate-count-is-essential-to-funding-our-communities>.

<sup>21</sup> Sean Moulton and Janice Luong, Project on Government Oversight, Census Matters: Why an Accurate Count is Essential to Funding Our Communities (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/census-matters-why-an-accurate-count-is-essential-to-funding-our-communities>.



## **THE BUSINESS CASE FOR AN ACCURATE CENSUS**

The private sector relies heavily on census and ACS data because these data are objective, highly accurate, and comparable across geographic regions and time. Businesses use census and ACS data to promote economic development, identify potential customers, understand audiences, and create jobs. Data from the census and the ACS provide corporations, small businesses, and entrepreneurs with the detailed social, economic, housing, and demographic data they need to gauge the sales potential of products and services, better understand the workforce, select new sites for businesses and services, evaluate performance of existing locations, and set strategies for growth.<sup>22</sup> In particular, the granular data that the ACS provides are essential for businesses to track market trends and make decisions about locating their products and services. For example, county-level population figures for women aged 16–34 years could be used to help determine the location for a maternity shop. A children's clothing retailer could use age and income data, combined with retail statistics, to select a location for a new enterprise that will succeed.<sup>23</sup> Real estate agents and industry groups like the National Association of Realtors (NAR) also use census and ACS data to benchmark their home sales data, gain insight about the trends of homeownership at the local level, and track changes in housing markets. Homebuilders analyze census statistics on family size, marriage or cohabitation trends, and birthrates to project the need for new housing of different sizes and types. All of these data help the housing sector meet the needs of communities and the people who live there now or in the future. Census data that are not accurate likely will lead to skewed decisions and investments, and ultimately business failures, especially for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

## **EXISTING AND POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO AN ACCURATE COUNT**

The Census Bureau's mandate to count all people is guided by twin goals of accuracy and confidentiality (which itself is necessary for accuracy). It achieves these aims through objective, scientific and evidence-based methods — methods that must be updated over time as the population grows and changes, and as new technologies emerge. While stakeholders have, appropriately, discussed ways to improve current methods, we should focus collectively and in a bipartisan way on addressing actual barriers to an accurate census count, such as the growing

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<sup>22</sup> The Census Project, "America's Essential Data at Risk: Preserve and Enhance the American Community Survey to Support U.S. Businesses," <https://thecensusproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/acs-business-1-page-8-10-22.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> National Research Council; Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Panel on Census Requirements in the Year 2000 and Beyond; Barry Edmonston and Charles Schultze, Editors, "Appendix F: Business Uses of Census Data" in *Modernizing the U.S. Census*, The National Academies Press, 1995, <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/4805/modernizing-the-us-census>.

distrust in and fear of the federal government and insufficient funding for comprehensive, robust Get Out the Count activities as part of 2030 Census planning.

### *Growing Distrust in and Fear of Government*

Robust participation (i.e., high response rates) is required for an accurate census.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, lower response rates will result in less accurate and timely statistics, which will only be useful summarized for the highest or largest levels of geography. This inaccuracy will also preclude the publication of useful, detailed information for lower geographic and subpopulation levels, with small and minority populations being underrepresented by official statistics, particularly when disaggregated. The Census Bureau has reported that Bureau-administered household survey response rates have been decreasing steadily over the last 10 years, with “primary drivers including anti-government sentiment, privacy concerns, challenges making contact with respondents, and respondent availability when contact is made.”<sup>25</sup> A Pew Research Center report before the 2020 Census found that 60 percent of people who were doubtful about participating in the census felt that way because of mistrust that the government would use the information properly and in accordance with the law.<sup>26</sup>

As we head into the second half of this decade, and move closer to the 2030 Census, mistrust in government is deepening. Recent studies and surveys have shown that trust in government continues to drop; a survey taken in Spring 2025 found that “only 33% of Americans trust the government, while 47% do not and 13% are neutral.”<sup>27</sup> Previous surveys have found that “3 in 4 said public confidence in the federal government was shrinking” (2018) and that “only 22%

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<sup>24</sup> See Mathematica Policy Research, Background Paper: Declining Response Rates in Federal Surveys: Trends and Implications (Jun. 15, 2016), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/255531/Decliningresponserates.pdf>; Teresa A. Sullivan, *Coming to Our Census: How Social Statistics Underpin Our Democracy (and Republic)*, Harvard Data Science Review, Issue 2.1, Winter 2020 (Jan. 31, 2020), <https://hdsr.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/1g1cbvkx/release/8>.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Pickering, U.S. Census Bureau, Nonresponse In Household Surveys Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Economic Statistics Advisory Committee (FESAC) (Dec. 9, 2022), <https://apps.bea.gov/fesac/meetings/2022-12-09/Pickering-FESACNonresponse-in-Census-Surveys-12092022.pdf>. See also, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS) 2023 Modernization Efforts, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/about/modernization.html>.

<sup>26</sup> D’Vera Cohn, Anna Brown and Scott Keeter, Pew Research Center, Most Adults Aware of 2020 Census and Ready to Respond, but Don’t Know Key Details (Feb. 20, 2020), [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/02/PSDT\\_02.20.20\\_census\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/02/PSDT_02.20.20_census_full_report.pdf). See also, Hansi Lo Wang, NPR, How DOGE’s push to amass data could hurt the reliability of future U.S. statistics (Jun. 4, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/04/nx-s1-5397191/us-census-bureau-labor-statistics-doge-data#:~:text=About%20a%20quarter%20of%20the%20people%20the,people%20who%20did%20not%20identify%20as%20Hispanic.>

<sup>27</sup> Partnership for Public Service, The State of Public Trust in Government 2025 (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://ourpublicservice.org/publications/the-state-of-public-trust-in-government-2025/>.

of U.S. adults said they trust the federal government to do the right thing just about always or most of the time” (2024), with mistrust of the federal government being widespread in both parties.<sup>28</sup> Less than a third of U.S. adults (31%) have at least some trust in the federal government to act in society’s best interest, which is substantially lower than those who have some trust in charitable organizations (80%), state and local governments (50%), and businesses (43%).<sup>29</sup> This high level of mistrust in the federal government, in addition to the specific factors of the anti-immigrant climate and data sharing efforts by some federal agencies, will sow distrust in the confidentiality of the census, promote the belief among many residents that the Census Bureau will misuse the information they provide in a way that could harm them or their families, and, therefore, drive down participation rates, which in turn will drive up the costs of an accurate census. Accordingly, the Census Bureau takes its responsibilities to maintain the confidentiality of those who respond to the census very seriously, by ensuring that personally identifiable information is not shared with or divulged to any other agency of government at any level, law enforcement and regulatory agencies, private businesses, or any other entity for any purpose. That is what the law requires and why this pledge is key to convincing the American people to fill out their census forms.

#### *A Robust “Get Out the Count” Program Is Essential for an Accurate Census*

The Census Bureau is developing the 2030 Census operational plan, including efforts to reach out to all residents and households in relevant ways, especially those less likely to participate based on historical patterns. Effective practices from previous census operations include a robust language support program, comprehensive promotion and communications campaign, and an efficient but thorough door-to-door follow-up operation (called Non-Response Follow-Up, or NRFU). For example, a thorough 2020 Census language support program helped reduce barriers to answering the census for millions of people in every state whose primary language is not English, thereby improving the accuracy of the count everywhere. In 2020, the Census Bureau saw a seven percent increase in self-responses in non-English languages over the 2010 Census. That increase included self-responses in Spanish, representing 75.5 percent of Spanish-speaking Limited English Proficient households, and an increase of more than 1,500 percent in non-English, non-Spanish self-responses.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Claudia Deane, Trend Magazine, Americans’ Deepening Mistrust of Institutions (Oct. 17, 2024), <https://www.pew.org/en/trend/archive/fall-2024/americans-deepening-mistrust-of-institutions>.

<sup>29</sup> Gallup, Federal Government Least Trusted to Act in Society’s Interest (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/693446/federal-government-least-trusted-act-society-interest.aspx>.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Language Program Operational Assessment (Sept. 30, 2025), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/evaluate-docs/EAE-2020-language-program.pdf>.

Regarding the significance of door-to-door follow-up to reach unresponsive households, it is important to understand that about a third of all households wouldn't be counted without this vital, if more costly, operation. Along these lines, and even more worrisome, a provision in the House version of the FY 2026 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill (not yet numbered) would limit contact with households to two "inquiries." That means census counting would have stopped in 2020 *when only about a third of all U.S. households had been enumerated* — an unacceptable outcome.

Additionally, Commerce Secretary Lutnick's disappointing decision earlier this year to terminate the Census Bureau's 2030 Census Advisory Committee, Census Scientific Advisory Committee, and National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations has left the Bureau without vital avenues for public input and feedback. Elimination of these long-standing panels also has reduced transparency into the census planning process, as well as the ability to take advantage of knowledgeable stakeholder perspectives on any planned changes. The loss of its advisory committees is a major setback at a pivotal moment for the Bureau, both in its planning for the 2030 Census and its extensive efforts to streamline and modernize other data collection activities to improve cost-efficiency throughout.

To ensure a fair and accurate 2030 Census, it is critical for the Census Bureau to share information with and solicit input from stakeholders, particularly those representing undercounted communities. However, the Bureau's engagement efforts have not always yielded meaningful opportunities for input from stakeholders to the detriment of our shared goals of ensuring that all communities are counted fully in 2030 and measured accurately in the American Community Survey. The loss of the Census Bureau's advisory committees will only further undermine these mutual goals.

We believe there is a real opportunity at this critical juncture in the 2030 planning cycle to strengthen how the Census Bureau obtains input from stakeholders, helping to create a stronger foundation for a complete count in 2030 and improved socio-economic and demographic estimates from the ACS. To that end, we call on the Census Bureau to engage meaningfully and transparently with stakeholders, leverage opportunities for stronger partnerships with national, state, and community-level stakeholders, and seek new ways to solicit expert input on its preparations for the 2030 Census and other data collection programs.

To ensure our mutual goal of an accurate count, Congress should focus on monitoring and conducting oversight of Census 2030 planning and preparation activities, providing sufficient resources for an accurate count everywhere — where all communities are counted accurately — and engaging with interested stakeholders and the Census Bureau on how to achieve its goals and spend taxpayer dollars wisely.

## **CONCLUSION**

While there has never been a census that has met the heavy burden of counting fairly and accurately all communities in the United States, the Census Bureau conducts its operations and activities according to long-standing principles of integrity and guided by objective, scientific expertise. Its work is grounded in the constitutional mandate to count every person living in the country, maintaining strict confidentiality of all personal data as the law requires, and adhering to well-researched, sound scientific methodologies to produce the vital data about our population, communities, and economy that Americans deserve, expect, and need. Deviating from any of these lodestars would destabilize a fundamental cornerstone of our democracy.