



Mainers Need an Accurate Census:

How the census affects funding for critical programs for children and families

The census is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau every ten years. The data collected is then used to allocate federal funding to states and municipalities, as well as to determine congressional representation. For this reason, a complete and accurate census is critical for our country and for our state. It will shape the lives of our youngest children at the most critical points in their development for ten years to come. **However, the 2020 census is on track to produce a significant undercount, especially of children under age 5.**

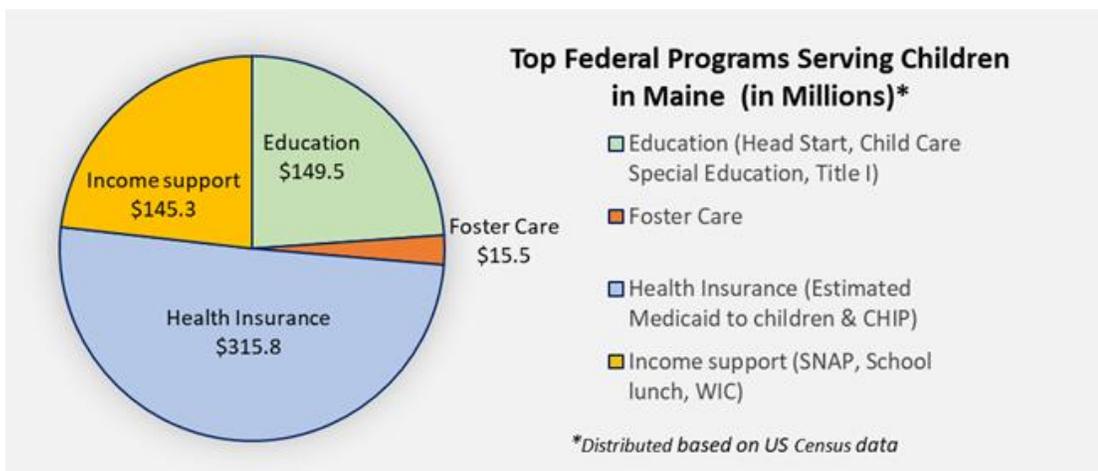
In 2015, \$2.8 billion in federal funds was allocated to Maine based on census data. Much of that went to programs critical for children.

THE UNDERCOUNT OF KIDS

Despite the vital importance of the census, we face another potential undercount of young children in 2020. **Why does this matter?** The 2020 census will determine how much federal funding states and localities receive each year for the next decade. When kids aren't counted, communities don't get their fair share of federal dollars for Head Start, school lunches, public health insurance, housing, child care and various other programs and services that help young children.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FEDERAL FUNDING



About 300 programs rely on data derived from the census, including highways, schools, and publicly funded health care. In 2015 federal spending for these programs totaled roughly \$800 billion nationally, with \$160 billion allotted to programs that serve

children. These include the Children's Health Insurance Program; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Title I education funding; the school lunch program; grants for special education; Head Start and Early Head Start; foster care assistance; and the Child Care and Development Fund. In that same year, **Maine received \$2.8 billion in federal funds based on census data.** Of that, \$626.1 million went to the largest programs serving children and families in Maine, particularly those with low incomes.



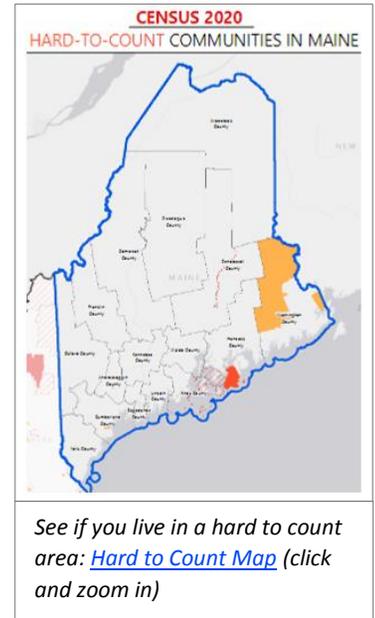
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What an undercount could mean and how we can ensure an accurate count

HARD TO COUNT TRACTS

Why do some kids not get counted? Although some people are invariably missed or counted more than once, the census undercounts children younger than 5 at a much higher rate than any other group. Some families are harder to count than others because their living arrangements are complex, while others are in mobile households, are homeless, or live with a non-English speaking parent. Some kids live in places traditionally harder to count. These include neighborhoods where poverty is high and where multi-unit buildings and rental housing are more common. Nearly 25 percent of kids under age 5 live in hard-to-count tracts. In Maine, the hard to count areas in 2010 included (US Census data):

- 15% of Washington County's current population (or 4,685 people)
- Maine Islands
- American Indian reservations
- High density areas of Portland
- Downtown Lewiston



Additional communities at risk for an undercount in 2020 include: Augusta, Auburn, Biddeford, Greater Bangor, Presque Isle, Sanford, Waterville.

HOW WE CAN MAKE EVERY KID COUNT IN THE 2020 CENSUS

The 2020 Census is at great risk of producing another sizable undercount of young children. Congress has underfunded the Census Bureau for the last six years, which has caused delays and cancellations of testing in key hard-to-count areas. This will also be the first-time participants can fill out the census online. Additionally, a new and untested citizenship question will appear on this census. Between the lack of adequate funding and the unease around the citizenship question, an undercount is likely. As we have seen how critical an adequate count is for funding and representation, we must all do what we can to ensure an accurate count.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- *Fill out the census – it's a legal mandate! Data collected is also protected by law and cannot be shared with other government agencies. This year you can fill out the census [online](#).
- *Reach out to your local officials to see how they plan to support outreach efforts for an accurate count in your community.
- *If you interact with parents and families in your work, encourage them to complete the census, and provide [additional information](#) to them.

Together, we can ensure we have the most accurate count for the 2020 census!