



## How Municipalities Can Improve Census 2020 Accuracy and Address Immigrant Undercounts

Historically, immigrants have been underrepresented in the decennial census count. **Localities that have experienced recent demographic change will be those most impacted by an undercount, with significant federal dollars on the table.**

It's critical that all residents—including immigrants—be counted as valued residents to ensure that all residents benefit from the federal resources that communities can access when everyone is counted. The more accurate the state's census count, the more fair and equitable is its share of federal funds.

An accurate census count is critical for states and localities, not only to assure proportional political representation but also an equitable receipt of federal funds. The decennial census count guides how the federal government distributes [more than \\$400 billion in funds](#) annually for infrastructure, programs, and services. In Fiscal Year 2015, the 50 states plus the District of Columbia [received \\$589.7 billion from 16 large Census-guided programs](#), such as Medicaid, Highway Planning and Construction, the National School Lunch Program, and Head Start.

Several factors have contributed to the immigrant undercount problem, including housing and living arrangements, language, education, immigration status, and work hours.

### Efforts to improve the Census Bureau's address list makes a big difference for local communities.

For example, federal programs serving Californians receive almost \$1,958 annually in federal census-guided funding per person. There are about three persons per housing unit in California. ***For every unaccounted household, California risks about \$6,000 per year in federal funding.*** Census 2020 data will be used to guide funding for the entire decade, from 2021-2030.

**In order to have a fair and accurate Census in 2020, it's necessary for the Census Bureau to count everyone in the right place—where they usually live.**

The Census Improvement Act of 1994 gave local governments an opportunity to review and correct the Census Bureau's master address list three years before each decennial census takes place—a process known as [LUCA](#) (Local Update of Census Addresses). The Census Bureau relies on a complete and accurate address list to reach every household and associated population for inclusion in the census. For Census 2020, this process takes place in March-June 2018.

**The LUCA process is the only opportunity offered to tribal, state, and local governments to review and comment on the U.S. Census Bureau's residential address list for their jurisdiction prior to the 2020 Census.**

The Census Bureau's address list is based primarily on information from the U.S. Postal Service. Unfortunately, despite its best efforts, the Census Bureau's Master Address File (MAF) fails to include some kinds of marginal housing: "low visibility, "unusual," or concealed places where people live, often minority and immigrant families in low-income neighborhoods. **In these neighborhoods, as many**

**as two percent of the places people live may not be on the address list, and almost everyone who lives in these households will eventually be left out of the census count.**

## LUCA Timeline

In July 2017, invitation letters and registration forms to participate were mailed to the highest elected official of all eligible governments (e.g. mayors and county executives). **Local governments must sign up as LUCA participants with the Census Bureau by Dec. 15, 2017.** In February 2018, participation materials (address lists to review and correct and software to submit corrections to the Census Bureau) will be mailed to all registered participants. Participants have 120 calendar days from the receipt of materials to complete their review.

## How can municipal offices that work with immigrant communities help address the undercount of immigrants?

1. Find out whether your local government is planning to participate in LUCA. A good starting point is the planning department and/or the Census Bureau's [interactive map of LUCA registrants](#).
2. Share your concerns about the potential missed opportunity for a more accurate count (and consequently more federal dollars) if a targeted approach to accounting for individuals living in "unusual" housing accommodations such as above commercial establishments, garages, basements, trailers, etc. is not implemented.
3. Educate and activate trusted community partners to lead a community-based address canvass with your support and that of local philanthropic partners. Many CBOs (Community Based Organizations) are already thinking about Census. Community-based address canvassing works because the people living in "hard to count" neighborhoods know much more about the kinds of places people live than outsiders do. **Reach out to your local partners and create a plan.**

## Create a Plan: Using community-based address canvassing to improve the local address list.\*

Research on the causes of undercount and the patterns of systematic differential census undercount of minority and immigrant families suggest that the vast majority of low-visibility housing omitted from the Census Bureau's address lists is concentrated in 10-20% of the census tracts in the nation. **Community-based address canvassing as a component of LUCA has a well-defined objective—to identify as many low-visibility housing units, which are not currently on the Census Bureau's address list as possible and add them.**

1. **In order to plan and efficiently conduct local community-based address canvassing, identify priority neighborhoods to focus on.** A targeting tool developed by census experts is a good resource for local governments and communities to use to decide where to focus community-based address canvassing efforts.

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\* [Census Outreach](#), a project of Greater Non Profits, has developed tools and training materials to help communities improve the LUCA process, including a targeting tool for identifying priority neighborhoods. To learn more about the targeting tool, contact Ed Kissam, [edkissam@me.com](mailto:edkissam@me.com).

2. **Once your priority neighborhoods have been identified, identify CBOs that have engaged with Census efforts in the past and/or can do a good job with local “in field” address canvassing.** A canvassing program that leverages local knowledge of the area as well as cultural and language skills is critical for building community trust and effectively identifying low-visibility housing accommodations. The pool of CBOs to consider should include: groups currently involved in some form of door-to-door contacts in low-income neighborhoods—e.g. voter registration groups; community health centers; affordable housing advocacy groups; immigrant advocacy and legal services groups (e.g. local NALEO affiliates); and youth program counselors and mentors.
3. **Identify resources to help implement local community-based address canvassing.** There is no federal, state, or foundation funding explicitly earmarked to support community-based address canvassing even though an accurate address list is critical for future federal funding. If your local government is unable to commit its own funds, look to a consortium of local businesses and/or the local community foundation to invest in this effort. While actual costs will vary based on characteristics of the community, an investment of approximately \$30,000 for a medium-size city of 300,000 should be adequate to support a robust local address canvassing campaign.
4. **Throughout the LUCA process, work with CBOs to provide structured supervision and monitoring of community-based canvassing teams.** The timeline for submission of local address corrections under the umbrella of LUCA is inflexible and will run from about March 1-July 1 but local governments only have 120 days from the date they receive LUCA materials from the Census Bureau to submit their corrections. [Engaging trusted CBO partners is critical](#) as is ensuring training, structured supervision, and monitoring of canvassers runs smoothly to assure that the canvassing cover all of the priority neighborhoods in the community which have been identified.

**Census Privacy Protections:** Title 13 of the U.S. Code has harsh penalties for any breach of confidentiality with census-related information. **By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's answers with anyone—not the IRS, not the FBI, not the CIA, and not with any other government agency.** While community-based address canvassing does not fall under the umbrella of Title 13, participating organizations and the canvassers they employ must be as committed to guaranteeing confidentiality as those who do fall under Title 13 (which includes local government LUCA liaisons).