Why the Census Matters for LGBTQ People

Introduction
Every 10 years, the federal government attempts to count every person living in the country for the U.S. Census. However, certain populations are inevitably undercounted. Transgender and queer people, LGB people, people of color, immigrants, people who are experiencing homelessness, people living in rural areas, people with low incomes, renters, single-parent households, people with limited English proficiency, and young children are overwhelmingly undercounted in the Census. Meanwhile, white people and homeowners tend to be overcounted.

So what’s the big deal?

The Census results directly affect issues of democracy – such as redrawing district lines and distributing representative seats – and determine funding of social services for each state, including Medicaid, Section 8 housing vouchers, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

What does it mean to be “undercounted”?

Since the Census was created, it has served the interests of white and wealthy populations and has funneled more resources into those communities and away from the communities that need it the most. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 16 million people were not counted or possibly incorrectly counted in the 2010 Census – generally people who experience multiple forms of oppressions. An estimated 2.1% of the black population, 1.5% of the Latinx population, and 4.9% of Native Americans and Alaska Natives were undercounted.

Being counted means being heard - it means having our needs met.

For more information on specific undercounted populations, please visit the Leadership Conference Education Fund’s 2020 Census resources.

But I thought the Census doesn’t even count us?

Though the Census does not explicitly ask about gender identity or sexual orientation, LGBTQ people exist within all the different populations that are undercounted and underserved. It is important for us to be counted in the 2020 Census to ensure that our communities have fair access to democracy and social services funding. We are part of this country and we need to be represented.

Let’s fight to make our voices heard in the 2020 Census.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT COLORADO

Social Services
Results from the Census are used to determine what share of $883 billion in federal funding goes to each state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNAP funds for Colorado: $728 million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of LGBTQ families receiving SNAP nationally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of LGBTQ families receiving SNAP in the West</td>
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<tr>
<th>Medicaid funds for Colorado: $5.12 billion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of LGBTQ families participating in Medicaid nationally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of LGBTQ families participating in Medicaid in the West</td>
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How does the Census impact our democracy?

### U.S. House Representatives

There are 435 representative seats - each representing one congressional district - which are allocated throughout the country based on population sizes surveyed in the Census. The 2010 Census results caused 12 seats to shift among several states, which translates directly into the shifting of power. Populations that are overcounted - generally white, wealthy, and homeowner populations - are apportioned more political power than are undercounted populations, and their interests are better represented.

### Electoral College

One example of this shift in power can be seen through the Electoral College, which is a state’s number of U.S. senators and U.S. House Representatives combined. In all but two states (Nebraska and Maine), every electoral vote during a Presidential Election will go to the party with a majority or plurality of the popular vote in that state. So, if a majority of the popular vote in Colorado was for a particular party, that party would receive all 9 of Colorado’s electoral votes.

### Gerrymandering

Sometimes, members of the majority political party engage in practices that manipulate electoral districts to either dilute or concentrate voting power. This practice, called gerrymandering, is illegal. However, the majority party plans and approves district lines in most states, and because it is very difficult to prove in court, gerrymandering frequently occurs. It is a tactic used by political parties to maintain power and suppress the voting power of certain populations - usually communities of color.

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**QUICK FACTS ABOUT COLORADO (CONT.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher funds for Colorado:</th>
<th>CHIP funds for Colorado:</th>
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<td><strong>$258 million</strong></td>
<td>$228 million</td>
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<tr>
<th>WIC funds for Colorado:</th>
<th>Health Center Programs funds for Colorado:</th>
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<td><strong>$76.0 million</strong></td>
<td>$101 million</td>
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Numbers reflect funding for FY 2016. For more information on funding, visit the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy’s Counting for Dollars Project.

**Democracy**

Results from the Census are used to determine many aspects of our democracy

- Number of state representatives: 7
- Number of electoral votes: 9
- Estimated number of people living in hard-to-count tracts: 871,569
- Estimated percentage of people living in hard-to-count tracts: 16%
- Number of seats lost or gained based on 2010 Census numbers: 0
- Projected number of seats lost or gained based on 2020 Census numbers: +1

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**So what can we do about it?**

There are many actions we can take to prepare for the 2020 Census. Below are a few suggestions. Learn more at [www.queerthecensus.org](http://www.queerthecensus.org).

**2018 - 2019**

- Form a group of dedicated people to call state representatives to secure a fully funded Census
- Join your state’s count committee to ensure representation from undercounted districts

**2019 - 2020**

- Learn to navigate the Block Boundary Suggestion Program to ensure a fair redistricting process
- Continue to drive calls to state representatives to obtain funding for an accurate and fair count

**2020 - 2021**

- Host Census parties providing people with access and resources to complete the form online
- Contact your Census Bureau regional office and State Data Center Program for questions

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**QUEER THE CENSUS PARTNERS**

- **Queer the Census**
- **National LGBTQ Task Force**
- **Center for American Progress**

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Colorado has 4 Democrats and 3 Republicans in the US House of Representatives.

Call your representatives to urge them to support a full and accurate Census.

**BE YOU. BE COUNTED.**

#QueertheCensus

Join the movement at [thetaskforce.org](http://thetaskforce.org)

The 2020 U.S. House of Representatives primary election will likely take place in Colorado in March 2020*

*subject to change

The 2020 U.S. House of Representatives general election will take place on November 3, 2020