

# CENSUS 2020, EXPLAINED

## How It Works and What's At Stake for Massachusetts

The United States Census is the oldest regularly recurring data gathering exercise in the world. It provides invaluable information about who makes up our large, diverse country, and it helps us analyze how we're changing over time. Since it won't happen again until 2030, results from the 2020 count will have decade-long implications for how particular communities are represented and for how resources are distributed across our cities and towns.



### What's at stake for Boston and Massachusetts in the 2020 Census?

- Conducting an accurate census is critical for helping ensure that federal funding—**roughly \$16 billion for Massachusetts in Fiscal Year 2015**—gets to the people and projects it's intended to support. Much of this funding helps the most vulnerable among us.
- **Accurate counts also matter at the city and town level.** The federal government provides financial assistance to communities and schools that have higher numbers of children in poverty to ensure they have the resources to help children meet challenging academic state standards. These funding allocations are based primarily on census poverty estimates.
- **Boston has among the lowest census return rates in the nation.** Due to our large proportion of renters, college students and recent immigrants, Boston is ninth hardest to count among the largest 100 U.S. cities.
- **Other urban areas in Massachusetts, especially Gateway Cities like Lawrence and Fall River, have very low census return rates.** Generating an accurate count in these places is especially important because they are home to disproportionate shares of the state's people of color and recent immigrants.
- Massachusetts is not likely to lose or gain a seat in the federal House of Representatives, but if **vulnerable populations go undercounted they risk being underrepresented** in state and local offices when local political boundaries are redrawn.
- **Local nonprofits play a key role supplementing official US Census Bureau efforts to get out the count.** The Massachusetts Census Equity Fund is preparing for the 2020 count by: raising funds for local outreach efforts; educating the public on the importance of census; and coordinating efforts to increase response rates in hard to count communities in 2020.



### How do Census counts affect federal funding to Massachusetts?

An accurate state and local Census 2020 count for Massachusetts will help ensure that the more than **\$16 billion** in federal support for important social programs —education, health care, housing, transportation, food and nutrition programs, social service programs and more—goes to those in need.



## What areas in Massachusetts are the hardest to count?

### Identifying Hard to Count Tracts

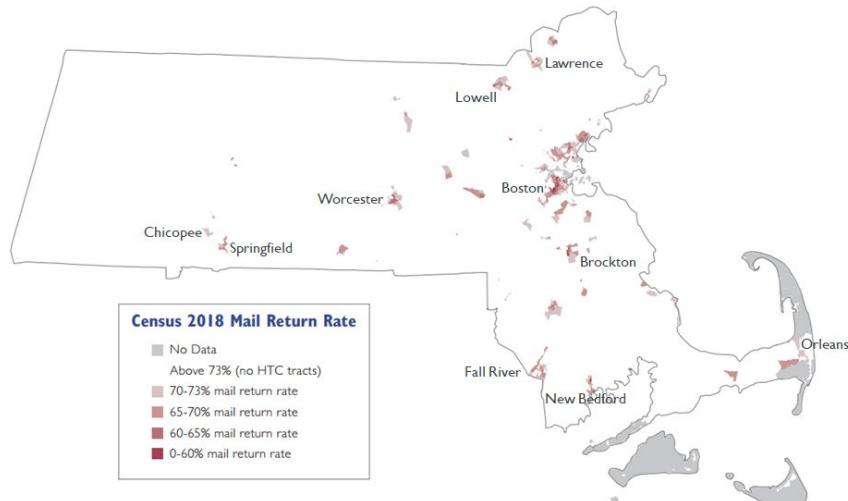
In Massachusetts, one quarter of all census tracts have higher shares of people who are less likely to return their census forms. These tracts are known as "hard to count," and include people who:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Rent or move frequently   | Have lower incomes or lower educational attainment  |
| Live in group quarters  | Live in homes with non-standard addresses, i.e. accessory dwelling units, rural homes, etc. |
| Live in non-family households (with unrelated friends or roommates) |   |
| Distrust the government   |   |
| Don't speak a commonly-spoken language                              |   |

A long history of unjust public policy decisions has disproportionately harmed communities of color, leading people of color to fall more often into one or more of the above categories.

Larger cities and towns tend to be harder to count.

*HTC tracts (census tracts with return rate less than 73%), Massachusetts*



Source: Census Planning Database, 2012-2016.

### Top 20 Hardest to Count Cities and Towns in Massachusetts

Ranking among 100 largest cities and towns in Massachusetts, 2014

Rank	City or Town	Percent of population in HTC tracts	Rank	City or Town	Percent of population in HTC tracts
1	Lawrence	86.6%	11	Boston	63.0%
2	Lynn	85.0%	12	Taunton	57.1%
3	Malden	82.9%	13	Southbridge Town	56.9%
4	Lowell	82.7%	14	Plymouth	56.1%
5	Everett	82.5%	15	Medford	53.8%
6	Chelsea	81.2%	16	New Bedford	53.6%
7	Revere	80.6%	17	Haverhill	51.1%
8	Fall River	70.3%	18	Worcester	49.3%
9	Amherst	70.2%	19	Winthrop Town	47.5%
10	Brockton	69.2%	20	Quincy	45.8%

Notes: *Gateway Cities in red.* Boston Indicators analysis of data provided by the City University of New York Mapping Service, using 2012-2016 data from the Census Planning Database and 5-Year ACS.

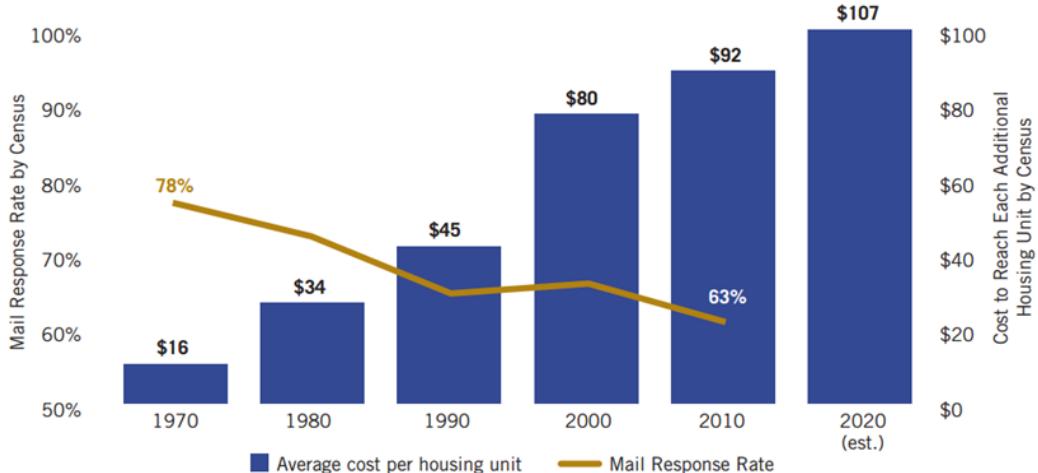
# ! What are the emerging issues of Census 2020?

## Census Funding

The census is one of the largest and most expensive undertakings in the United States. According to the Government Accountability Office, the 2020 census is highly at risk of not meeting its funding goals.

As mail response rates have decreased, the cost of reaching every household in the United States has increased.

*Average cost of reaching a single housing unit, adjusted for inflation (2020 \$)*



Source: 1970-2010 data from U.S. Government Accountability Office report "2020 Census: Continued Management Attention Needed to Mitigate Key Risks Jeopardizing a Cost-Effective and Secure Enumeration". 2020 data from Census Bureau's "2020 Census Life-Cycle Cost Estimate Executive Summary"

## Proposed and Altered Questions for 2020

In 2020, planned alterations include:

- A revision to the race and ethnicity question will generate slightly more detailed responses
- A revision to the household question will generate slightly more detailed information on same sex households
- A question on citizenship status. This question has not undergone the standard rigorous vetting process for new questions and could significantly depress response rates.

## Technology and the Census

Census 2020 is the first decennial census planned to take place online (neighborhoods with lower internet usage or high percentages of older populations will likely still receive paper forms). The Census Bureau has acknowledged that there is a high degree of risk associated with this change and is working to mitigate it through extensive communication with stakeholders from which the Bureau is pulling address data.

## Data Security

The Census Bureau has made significant efforts to protect the personal data that it receives. Federal law prohibits the Census Bureau from sharing any identifying information either with public or private entities.

## Collecting Data on Race, Ethnicity, and LGBTQ Populations

Advocates have been pressuring the Census Bureau to improve how it gathers data on race/ethnicity and LGBTQ populations. The 2020 Census will miss an opportunity to restructure these questions more broadly in order to gain better data on these populations.



# What questions are on the 2020 Census?

As of this publication, there are 12 planned questions for Census 2020:

1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2020?
2. Were there any additional people staying here on April 1, 2020 that you did not include in Question 1?
3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home – (owned, rented, occupied without payment of rent)?
4. What is your telephone number?
5. What is Person 1's name?
6. How is this person related to Person 1 (asked of additional residents)?
7. What is this person's sex?
8. What is this person's age and what is this person's date of birth?
9. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
10. What is this person's race?
11. Does this person usually live or stay somewhere else?
12. Is this person a citizen of the United States?



## How are local efforts being organized in Massachusetts?

The **Massachusetts Census Equity Fund** is a collaborative statewide funding initiative comprised of funders from across the Commonwealth with the mission to increase participation in the 2020 census in hard to count communities that are at a significant risk of being undercounted. Their work includes:

- Creating a **Learning Community** to build a communication network and provide resources to educate partners across the Commonwealth on the importance of the Census and promote active involvement to ensure a fair and complete count in Massachusetts. This includes working with foundations, nonprofits and Census representatives as well as local, state and federal officials.
- Launching a **Grant Process** that will target support for grassroots organizations coordinating education and outreach initiatives in HTC communities across the Commonwealth.

Note: This fact sheet is a distilled version of a more extensive report written and released by Boston Indicators, the research center at the Boston Foundation, in partnership with the Massachusetts Census Equity Fund. For the full report, visit [BostonIndicators.org](http://BostonIndicators.org).

## CONTACT THE MASSACHUSETTS CENSUS EQUITY FUND

[www.masscensusequity.org](http://www.masscensusequity.org)

Katie Campbell Simons, Project Consultant, [masscensusfund@accessstrategies.org](mailto:masscensusfund@accessstrategies.org)



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