

# AFRICAN AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS FALLING BEHIND IN 2020 CENSUS COUNT

June 16, 2020

The L.A. County Board of Supervisors is joining national and state government officials in recognizing Census Day of Action on Wednesday, June 17, encouraging Los Angeles County residents to be counted in the 2020 Census by completing and returning their census forms. Spreading the message of Our Power, Our Census, Supervisors are emphasizing how completing the census can not only build political power but protect our civil rights.

For Census Day of Action, L.A. County officials, together with Advancement Project California, a multi-racial, multi-generational racial justice organization with expertise in research, advocacy, and policy, revealed new analysis showing how many households have responded to the census. As of June 10, 2020, only 57.4% of L.A. County households have completed the census, well behind the national response rate of 60.9% and the California response rate of 62.1%. There are approximately 1.4 to 1.7 million households throughout Los Angeles County that still need to be counted based on response rate data and the estimated number of occupied housing units and residential addresses.

“It’s time for every one of our communities to complete this vital census. It’s urgent that our residents stand up, lend their voice, and be counted. So many of the programs and services that directly impact the wellbeing and quality of life of our communities are based in whole or part on census data. Don’t let another 10 years pass without garnering necessary resources and representation for your family and neighbors,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said.

Findings confirm there is significant work to be done to ensure 100% census participation in L.A. County. African American communities are among those most at-risk for being undercounted. L.A. County officials have estimated that as of June 10, 2020, an average of 55.1% of households have responded in census tracts with an African American population of 33.3% or higher. County

officials have identified areas of South and Central Los Angeles, including South Park, Watts, Inglewood, Long Beach, Compton and unincorporated Athens-Westmont, as most at-risk for being undercounted. The census affects the livelihoods of everyone in L.A. County, especially communities that have historically been undercounted. Past census surveys have shown that Latinos, African Americans, non-English speakers, non-traditional families and those with informal living arrangements are the hardest to count. Undercounting these communities would directly impact political representation and funding for vital resources available to those individuals.

“The 2020 Census is the first census that will be done primarily electronically, creating an additional barrier for low-income families and communities of color. We embrace LA County’s diversity and will make every effort to count everyone,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “An accurate census count is not only foundational to representative democracy, but it ensures that schools and communities throughout LA County receive their fair share of federal funding. We cannot afford to have our communities of color undercounted in the census. Health insurance and housing assistance for low-income residents could be jeopardized, workforce development programs could be affected, and school programs could be cut. The federal government must not leave our vulnerable communities underfunded and underrepresented. LA County will rise to the challenge to ensure our hardest-to-count areas are included in the 2020 Census.”

The census influences billions in federal funding for local hospitals, parks, schools and affordable housing programs in L.A. County. At the current overall response rate, L.A. County is at risk of losing funding for public schools, support for people who lose their jobs, services for seniors and resources for hospitals to respond to emergencies such as COVID-19. COVID-19 has forced a shift in outreach for L.A. County and the region’s “Get Out The Count” efforts.

In response to the evolving situation around the pandemic, the U.S. Census Bureau has extended the official deadline to participate in the census. The last day for households to self-respond online, by phone or by mail is October 31.

“As we observe Census Day of Action, we encourage residents to embrace the census and feel empowered during a time when some might feel powerless. By being counted, you have a voice that impacts political representation over

the next decade, determining how local, state and federal legislative districts lines are drawn,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said.

The 2020 Census officially kicked off March 12. Filling out the census form is simple and fast. Census forms can be completed and submitted by mail, online at [www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov) or by phone at 844-330-2020. A list of in-language options are available on the website and by mail if you receive a paper form. For non-English speaking residents, the L.A. County 2020 Census website offers county-specific information in 16 languages and the U.S 2020 Census website offers general information in 59 languages including in-language guides.

Visit <https://census.lacounty.gov/> and <https://2020census.gov/> for more information.

“We need residents to spread the word that completing the census is one of the most important things you can do to help your community. The funding we get for everything from affordable housing to programs that reduce poverty depends on the census count,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn. Completing the census is private. Responses are protected by federal law, specifically Title 13 of the United States Code, and cannot be shared with any other government agencies or other entities, including your landlord.

“During these troubled and disturbing times, people are looking for ways to contribute to positive change in their communities, and participating in the census is a really easy way to make an impact,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. “We are almost halfway through the census and we need everyone who hasn’t already submitted their form to understand how very important it is to do so and go to [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov) to fill it out. The resources we need to take care of all our residents are based on the census which means there’s a lot at stake, so please, County residents, fill out the census! It’s a great way to influence change over the next 10 years.”

Alejandra Ramírez-Zárate, policy and research analyst with Advancement Project California, added, “Advancement Project California appreciates the LA County Board of Supervisors’ data in lifting critically important awareness that everyone counts. Los Angeles County is the hardest-to-count county with South LA and Central LA being the hardest-to-count and lowest

responding regions. It will take a broad, collective effort to ensure a fair and accurate count in normal conditions, let alone during a pandemic. These regions must be our priority.”