



# An Accurate Census Is Essential for a Strong America

Effective allocation of federal dollars helps bolster national security, community safety and the economy.

**A decennial census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution and its accuracy is essential to ensure that federal dollars are allocated fairly and efficiently. To conduct an accurate census, the U.S. Census Bureau requires adequate funding. Young children (under age five), particularly those from disadvantaged families, are the age group most likely to be undercounted, with more than one million missed in the last census in 2010.<sup>1</sup> These children increasingly live in the suburbs, as well as in rural areas and cities, making the undercount a problem that affects all types of communities. Effective allocation of funds is essential so children will receive the programs they need to succeed, thereby strengthening national security, community safety and the economy.**

Each year, the federal government allocates billions of dollars to states and localities based on information derived from the census. In FY

2015, the figure was nearly \$600 billion for 16 key programs that include the National School Lunch program, Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and

**“ Young children (under age five), particularly those from disadvantaged families, are the age group most likely to be undercounted, with more than one million missed in the last census in 2010.**



Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start and Early Head Start.<sup>2</sup> Without an accurate census, funds for these and other programs may be misallocated, and the valuable resources from these programs will fail to reach the constituency that needs them the most.

## **An accurate census can enhance national security, community safety, and the economy**

### **National security**

Our national security depends on qualified young adults who are ready, willing, and able to serve in the U.S. military. However, educational deficits, health issues (including obesity), and behavior problems (substance abuse, criminal record) currently prevent 71

percent of all young Americans from qualifying for service.<sup>3</sup> Children from disadvantaged families are particularly likely to experience difficulties that can disqualify them for later military service. Programs, such as early care and education and nutrition services, can help prevent or overcome problems among disadvantaged children that can disqualify them from military service.<sup>4</sup>

### **Safer communities**

Likewise, programs that receive funding based on data derived from the census contribute to safer communities. High-quality early care and education is a path to better school outcomes and subsequently, less crime.<sup>5</sup> Health care, including CHIP and Medicaid, can help prevent crime by connecting youth with critical mental health services.<sup>6</sup> Further, demographic shifts have occurred in recent years, including many disadvantaged families moving from cities to inner-ring suburbs.<sup>7</sup> Law enforcement officials are on the front lines in communities and have witnessed these shifts and the changes they bring. For example, these families may need services that do not currently exist in their new neighborhoods. With an accurate census, resources can be allocated correctly and disadvantaged families can receive the services they need.

State and local police departments also use census data for crime mapping and forecasting to determine the effective allocation of law enforcement resources. For example, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) system maps census, crime, and local community resource data.<sup>8</sup>

### **Stronger economy**

Moreover, in order to develop a highly-skilled workforce to compete in the global





marketplace, we must invest in high-quality early care and education programs that can help children arrive at school ready to learn and increase their educational success.<sup>9</sup> Data derived from the census allows for effective allocations for early education programs such as Head Start and CCDBG. In addition, an accurate census benefits businesses in many other ways, as they use these data to make a host of decisions, such as where to locate facilities and what products to offer in particular locations.<sup>10</sup>

### **The 2020 census is not on track for success**

With new methods that are untested and funding that is considerably short of what the Census Bureau needs, the 2020 census is facing enormous challenges.<sup>11</sup> The U. S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently put the census on its “High Risk” list and enumerated several factors that

must be addressed.<sup>12</sup> The new methods aim to utilize technological advances to keep future costs down and produce a more accurate count. However, to be effective, they must first be tested. Without proper testing, the Census Bureau will be unable to properly evaluate which tactics were effective and which need improvement. This

**“ Adequately funding the census now could save us billions in wasteful, inefficient spending by the federal government over the next decade.**

could lead to a less organized and inefficient 2020 census that runs the risk of an even higher undercount of disadvantaged children (and other data errors as well).

## **Congress must act to ensure an accurate census**

Adequately funding the census now could save us billions in wasteful, inefficient spending by the federal government over the next decade. These resources will also increase the effectiveness of private sector investments, by providing data that businesses use to boost profits and employment.

The military, law enforcement and business leaders of Council for a Strong America are calling on Congress to act to secure adequate funding for the 2020 census. Without sufficient investment in this foundational duty established in the Constitution, we risk our country's future national security, community safety and economy.

**1** <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2014/demo/2014-undercount-children.pdf>

**2** <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>

**3** Department of Defense. 2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA). Acquired through personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at DoD in July 2014.

**4** <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/420-why-early-care-and-education-is-a-national-security-imperative> ; <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/14-retreat-is-not-an-option>

**5** <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11343481> ; [http://www.highscope.org/le/research/perryproject/specialsummary\\_rev2011\\_02\\_2.pdf](http://www.highscope.org/le/research/perryproject/specialsummary_rev2011_02_2.pdf)

**6** [https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/250/6e997d99-0591-4a1a-8669-bbba388afe96.pdf?1490025526&inline;%20filename=%22Preventing%20Crime%20Through%20CHIP\\_FC.pdf%22](https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/250/6e997d99-0591-4a1a-8669-bbba388afe96.pdf?1490025526&inline;%20filename=%22Preventing%20Crime%20Through%20CHIP_FC.pdf%22)

**7** <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-changing-geography-of-us-poverty/>

**8** <http://www.allwisyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/SMART.pdf>

**9** <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/Evidence-Based-on-Preschool-Education-FINAL.pdf>

**10** <http://www.aei.org/publication/act-now-to-save-the-2020-census>

**11** Ibid.

**12** [http://www.gao.gov/highrisk/2020\\_decennial\\_census/why\\_did\\_study#t=2](http://www.gao.gov/highrisk/2020_decennial_census/why_did_study#t=2)

**Council for a Strong America** is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be citizen-ready.

1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005

