

Is Your County Prepared for the 2020 Census?

The 2020 Census is coming to your county in less than nine months. Billions of dollars in federal funding are at stake and the data gathered during this census will be tied to your county for the next 10 years. Aside from federal funding, census data is used to determine congressional representation by state, redistricting for all levels of government, grant and program eligibility, economic development resources, planning, location and expansion of businesses, and certain local sales tax distributions, just to name a few.

What Federal Funding Means to Georgia

There are 55 major federal programs that use census data to allocate funding to states and local governments. According to FY 2016 data prepared by the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, Georgia received over \$23 billion in funding from these programs based on the 2010 Census count. A full overview of this funding for Georgia broken out by program can be found at [Counting for Dollars 2020](#).

One person is calculated to be worth \$2200 in federal funding. Failure to count 50 people in your county results in a loss of \$110,000 in federal funding per year which is a cumulative loss of \$1.1 million over the 10-year period that census count is in effect. If every county in the state missed 50 people in their count, the 10-year impact for the state would be a loss of \$175 million. Therefore, counting every single person in your county is important.

While losing out on federal funding is a compelling reason to get serious about the 2020 Census, it is not the only negative impact of having an undercount. Liberty County suffered an undercount in the 2010 Census of 14,000-17,000 people. In addition to the \$140 million in federal funding that was lost, the county also missed out on economic opportunities such as recruitment and expansion of businesses. The undercount was especially damaging in that a military base covers a large portion of the county which means that alternative funding sources are needed to provide services to the public beyond what can be raised through the limited property tax base.

County Population Gains and Losses

While some may not think preparation for the upcoming census is necessary unless a county had a major gain or loss in population, as previously illustrated, missing as few as 50 people can have a serious impact. According to the 2018 estimated population numbers for Georgia, 86 counties gained population and 73 counties lost population with the average gain being 10,257 people and the average loss being 689 people. The tables provided below show counties with the largest percentage gains and losses from 2010-2018 population data.¹ A compilation of all county population gains and losses is available on the [ACCG Census Website](#).

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, County Population Totals and Components of Change: 2010-2018.
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

Counties with the Greatest Percentage Gains in Population Since 2010

County	2010 Census	2018 Estimate	Population Change #	Population Change %
Forsyth County	175,511	236,612	61,101	34.8%
Long County	14,464	18,998	4,534	31.3%
Bryan County	30,233	38,109	7,876	26.1%
Columbia County	124,053	154,291	30,238	24.4%
Oconee County	32,808	39,272	6,464	19.7%
Effingham County	52,250	62,190	9,940	19.0%
Cherokee County	214,346	254,149	39,803	18.6%
Barrow County	69,367	80,809	11,442	16.5%
Jackson County	60,485	70,422	9,937	16.4%
Paulding County	142,324	164,044	21,720	15.3%

Counties with the Greatest Percentage Loss in Population Since 2010

County	2010 Census	2018 Estimate	Population Change #	Population Change %
Hancock County	9,429	8,348	-1,081	-11.5%
Randolph County	7,719	6,833	-886	-11.5%
Turner County	8,930	7,912	-1,018	-11.4%
Macon County	14,740	13,143	-1,597	-10.8%
Baker County	3,451	3,092	-359	-10.4%
Warren County	5,834	5,251	-583	-10.0%
Taylor County	8,906	8,039	-867	-9.7%
Sumter County	32,819	29,733	-3,086	-9.4%
Clay County	3,183	2,887	-296	-9.3%
Georgetown-Quitman County	2,513	2,279	-234	-9.3%

County Response Rates

In planning for the 2020 Census, it may be helpful to examine how your county performed during the 2010 Census. The best way to determine the response rate is by looking at the number of households that mailed back their 2010 Census questionnaire in your county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 77.2% of Georgians mailed back their questionnaires. This means that for the remaining 22.8%, the Bureau had to have an in-person follow up which provides a much greater risk of someone being missed or not counted correctly.² Those who did not mail in their responses are considered to be [hard-to-count](#) and failure to count them can have a significant impact on your county's census count.

² U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/img/mappdfs/Georgia.pdf>

According to the 2010 Census, 33 counties had a response rate of under 70% and 58 counties had a response rate of over 80%.

Highest 2010 County Response Rates		Lowest 2010 County Response Rates	
County	% of County Households that Mailed Back Their 2010 Census	County	% of County Households that Mailed Back Their 2010 Census
Towns	87.3%	Wheeler	51.7%
Lee	86.8%	Telfair	53.5%
Glascocok	86.6%	Long	58.4%
Union	86.4%	Atkinson	61.0%
Wilkes	86.4%	Wilcox	61.9%
Hart	85.6%	Randolph	62.7%
Lincoln	85.3%	Clinch	63.5%
Taliaferro	85.1%	Evans	63.6%
Rabun	84.9%	Twiggs	63.8%
Worth	84.8%	Echols	63.9%

The Census Bureau offers numerous tools to identify hard-to-count areas in your county including [maps](#), [ROAM](#), [Census Engagement Navigator](#), and [Census Explorer](#). ACCG also has resources on our website on [hard-to-count populations](#) and [response rates](#).

Why Internet Access Is Important to the 2020 Census

For the first time, 80 percent of the country will be asked to complete the census online. Instead of receiving a hard copy of the census in the mail, the majority of the public will receive a postcard in the mail with a special code and instructions on how to electronically submit the census. This means areas that have no internet access, or limited access, or areas with a large elderly population who may not be familiar with computers, may be another barrier to having an accurate count for your county

As of 2017, 19.2% of households in Georgia had either no internet subscription or had dial up only.³ Thirty-four counties either have no internet access or only have dial up access for over 40% of the households located within their county.⁴ Of these thirty-four counties, eight has limited or no access for over 50% of the households in their county. A full listing of counties with their household internet access percentages is available on the [ACCG Census Website](#). Additional data on computer ownership and internet access by census tract is available through <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/home-internet-maps/>.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Communities Survey Data

⁴ Ibid

Counties with the Highest Percentage of Households with No or Limited Internet Access⁵

County	# People Living in Households	# of Households	% of County Households that have No Internet Access/Dial-up Only
Wheeler	6121	1972	73.6%
Telfair	13030	5167	67.2%
Taliaferro	1836	710	59.2%
Wilkes	9806	3971	55.4%
Warren	5326	2274	54.2%
Miller	5705	2326	53.7%
Echols	4011	1502	51.1%
Hancock	6016	2970	50.4%
Jefferson	15401	5797	49.8%
Jenkins	8852	3375	49.6%

As such, having public access to computers is very important in obtaining an accurate census count. Libraries across the state are gearing up to assist with census outreach and education efforts. Counties should take advantage of their local libraries and include library directors in their census planning activities. Contact information for local libraries are available [here](#) and [here](#).

The Importance of Forming a Local Complete Count Committee

A local complete count committee (LCCC) is a committee used to help educate and spread awareness about an upcoming census to maximize participation. These committees should be made up of leaders and trusted voices within the community who represent a wide spectrum of groups and networks. This is necessary to ensure that different communities within the county are aware of the importance of the 2020 Census and that the messages and information they are receiving are coming from someone they trust. This is particularly true for hard-to-count populations. Having an active and engaged LCCC is *the* key to having a strong census count in your county.

While LCCCs can be formed by any group or organization, traditionally they have been formed by government groups. During the 2010 Census, 99 counties formed single or joint LCCCs. As of the date of this article, 58 counties had formed a LCCC, 57 counties were in the process of forming a committee, and 24 counties indicated no committee would be formed.

ACCG has created a [toolkit and frequently asked questions page](#) that counties can use in creating a LCCC which includes the following:

◇ Process for creating a LCCC

◇ Sample resolutions, agenda, and invitations

⁵ Ibid

- ◇ Membership recommendations
- ◇ Data Tools
- ◇ Census contacts for Georgia

- ◇ County specific statistics and information
- ◇ Marketing materials

If you have questions about forming a LCCC in your county, please contact Michele NeSmith at mnesmith@accg.org or at 404-522-5022.