



POSSIBLE ROAD BLOCKS

Since federal education funding is determined largely by census data, an accurate count is necessary to ensure adequate levels of aid. Several factors threaten the integrity of the data.

The census categorized hard-to-count populations as hard to locate, hard to contact, hard to persuade, hard to interview, or overlapping segments of each. Among the groups historically undercounted are veterans, minority communities, college students, foreign-born Idaho residents (documented and undocumented), retirees spending the summer in Idaho and winter in warmer climates, farm families residing in rural counties, persons living in large housing units or apartment complexes, children under age five, and the homeless. The Casey Foundation warns that the 2020 census could significantly undercount children.

Based on the 2010 Census, challenges in Idaho for a complete count include possible undercounts of renters, children younger than five, seniors, homeless, foreign-born immigrants, and Idahoans with limited internet access.

In addition to the current challenges that lead to undercounts, the 2020 census will be conducted largely online, potentially omitting those without access to technology or who have difficulty using the system.

Aside from the complexities of the census, concerns center around various barriers that make collecting data even more difficult. Those barriers include privacy concerns, mobile populations, mistrust of the federal government, fear about confidentiality, people having a limited knowledge about how serious the data can be to their communities and their schools, and getting the numbers as right as possible to ensure accurate representation and distribution of funds.

School districts with large numbers of undocumented immigrants – those residing in the U. S. without the proper legal documentation – tend to be at greater risk of census undercount. Undocumented immigrants may avoid participating in the census for fear that the federal immigration authorities may separate them from their families or deport them.

A completed census form is anonymous. The responses are used to produce statistics and cannot be used by any local, state, or the federal government or agency. In fact, sizeable fines can be imposed if the data are used illegally.