

Delaware hopes to get its Census count right this time, to keep more money in state

[Jeanne Kuang](#), Delaware News Journal Published 12:03 p.m. ET Feb. 14, 2019 | Updated 10:29 p.m. ET Feb. 16, 2019

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Delaware is one of a dozen states planning to sue the federal government in an attempt to keep a controversial citizenship question from appearing on the 2020 U.S. Census. Daniel Sato/The News Journal/Wochit

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In 2000, Delaware learned that its native-born residents were a new minority, with out-of-state and foreign-born transplants making up more than half the state's population.

Ten years later, the Hispanic population had doubled, racial minorities made up nearly a third of the state and the population of the largest city, Wilmington, dipped for the first time in three decades.

Next year, the 2020 Census will again update the picture of the First State.

Federal officials are gearing up for more than a year of preparation to make the April 1, 2020 count as accurate as possible.

The constitutionally mandated, [every-10-years count of all American residents](#) does more than tell Delawareans who their neighbors are. It's used to draw district lines for government representation, and to allocate billions of dollars in federal funds.

[Delaware population to approach 1 million in 2020](#)

Delaware gets one of the nation's smallest slices of the federal pie, about \$2 billion annually. But [the money is critical](#), going toward everything from health care programs and school lunches to grants for housing and highways.

"It's amazing how many uses the data is needed for," said Jane Konstanty, assistant regional Census manager for the Census Bureau's Philadelphia region.

The goal next year, as always, is to count everyone, though some areas and populations are often difficult to count accurately.

[2020 Census study: 10,000 Delaware children will likely not be included](#)

There might be an over-count of some people, such as in Sussex County's beach towns, where out-of-staters have second homes. And there might be an undercount, often of children younger than 5, said Devon Reed, the bureau's Delaware partnership specialist.

"There are economic factors and language factors, and kids," Reed said. "Sometimes people don't know their kids are counted in those surveys."

The hardest-to-count areas in the state, according to Census survey data measuring response rates, include parts of Newark covering the University of Delaware and low-income tracts in Wilmington.

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The 2010 Census showed the Wilmington population dipped for the first time in three decades (Photo: THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Undercounts of the population are often revealed afterward, upon comparison with birth, data and immigration data.

[Wilmington mayor creates committee to prepare for 2020 Census after council inaction](#)

Filling out the [Census form online will be an option for the first time in 2020](#), which means the bureau needs to ensure elderly residents are not deterred, and work with local libraries to provide Internet access, Reed said.

Officials estimate the state gets a little over \$2,000 per year for each person counted. Historically, undercounts, especially of residents of color, are not uncommon.

In 2010, the Census Bureau missed about 4,500 Delaware residents, Reed estimated. That undercount has cost the state \$10 million in federal funds each year.