

Count All Kids: Protect the 2030 Census

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Written by: Martín Muñoz and Laneta Fitisemanu



This summer, Wasatch County [opened](#) Deer Creek High School in Heber City after enrollment at its only high school passed 2,600 students. In Saratoga Springs, a [new high school](#) now under construction will serve the rapidly growing cities of Saratoga Springs and Eagle Mountain when it opens in 2028.

When a Utah community considers building a new school, funding health services, or expanding child care, it needs a clear picture of who lives there and what they need.

Decisions like these depend on knowing how many children live in a community and how fast that number is changing. U.S. Census data, from both the decennial census and the American Community Survey (ACS), provides that picture and guides decisions that shape the lives of children and families.

In September, the Census Bureau released [proposed modifications](#) to the 2030 Decennial Census that would make it more difficult for communities to understand the needs of our Utah kids. Such proposed changes will hinder our capacity to understand children's needs and to advocate effectively for policies that address them.

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The proposal is still under review, so the public still has a chance to weigh in. [Comments](#) are due November 2, 2026.

What the Proposal Would Change

The [proposed rule](#) published on September 10th, would make two major changes outlined below.



For Utah families, the concern is practical; children require access to schools, healthcare, and other community services. Leaving out certain residents from the count would result in a less accurate reflection of the community's population. Fair representation should be based on an accurate and complete count of all residents.

Losing data on Utah's diverse kids

The proposed rule would also bar questions about race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation from the decennial census. The census has [asked](#) about race since 1790 and ethnicity since 1970. The Census Bureau's own explanation of [why it asks about race](#) lists uses like enforcing civil rights laws, identifying communities that lack medical services, and directing funding to school districts.

These data matter because statewide averages can hide big differences. When the majority's outcomes dominate the averages, the needs of other groups of children can disappear from view. Utah already struggles with this.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Utah's Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were hospitalized at rates 5 times higher than the state overall for 9 of 22 months, yet

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state health officials noted they [can't break data down by subgroup](#) to see which communities were most affected, from the state's larger Samoan and Tongan communities to its smaller Chamorro community. Rates like these depend on census counts of how many people in each group live in Utah. Without race and ethnicity data from the census, even this broad warning sign would be harder to see.

Utah has the youngest population in the nation, and while the state is majority White, its child population is [diversifying quickly](#). In 1990, about 1 in 9 Utah children under 5 was a racial or ethnic minority. By 2020, it nearly tripled. Utah's classrooms reflect that shift: in the 2024–25 school year, about 3 in 10 public school students were students of color, including 21.3% Latino, 3.8% multiracial, 1.7% Asian, 1.3% Black, 0.9% American Indian, and [1.5%] Pacific Islander, according to Utah State Board of Education enrollment data.

Some communities look very different from the statewide average: more than half of San Juan County students (53.6%) are American Indian, and 30.6% of Salt Lake County students are Latino. Understanding these communities helps us see whether public systems serve all families equitably and where more attention is needed.

Many of these communities have been underserved for generations, and some, including Native American communities, are [already undercounted](#). [KFF notes](#) that the decennial census is the *only* source of complete, neighborhood-level data on race and ethnicity, and that losing it could hurt research on health and health care disparities. Without race and ethnicity questions, it would be harder to spot patterns, track progress, and hold public systems accountable.

The proposal would not ban race and ethnicity questions on the American Community Survey (ACS), which collects data on poverty, housing, and health insurance. But ACS estimates are built on decennial census counts. Without race and ethnicity data from the census itself, the ACS numbers communities rely on to understand their children would become less reliable.

Counting every child

Counting children accurately takes deliberate effort. [Experimental estimates](#) the Census Bureau released in April 2024 showed that children ages 0–4 were undercounted in 2020 in every state, including Utah. Nationwide, the census missed

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roughly one million young children. Utah's [statewide undercount](#) was small, but in Duchesne County, about one in ten young children went uncoun­ted. Planning for 2030 should focus on strengthening these efforts.

The [proposal](#) also says the Census Bureau is considering adding a question about immigration status. [Research on a similar citizenship question](#) proposed for the 2020 Census found it would likely lower response rates in households with noncitizens. That matters for kids.

In Utah, an estimated 54,900 children who are U.S. citizens, or 6% of the state's citizen children, [lived with at least one undocumented family member in 2023](#), including 42,100 with an undocumented parent. A question that discourages some families from responding could mean even more Utah children go uncoun­ted. Those children would still fill Utah's classrooms, health clinics, and child care programs, but census-based funding wouldn't count them. That means fewer resources for every child, not just the ones who were missed.

Every Utah child deserves to be counted, and every community deserves accurate data to plan for them. That's why we urge the Census Bureau to count all residents, keep the race and ethnicity questions, and make accurately counting every child a priority.

Take Action Today

How to submit a public comment

Individuals and organizations can both comment. Submit yours by November 2, 2026.

[Click to Submit A Comment Today](#)

If the link doesn't work, visit [Regulations.gov](#), search for USBC-2026-0628, open the proposed rule, and click Comment.

Comment tips

- [Hands Off Our Census](#) is a great resource that guides users on how to

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comment, this campaign is a collaboration among several professional organizations involved in data and statistics.

- **Keep it short.** A few sentences is enough. For example: "I urge the Census Bureau to include all residents and retain race and ethnicity questions in the 2030 Census. Utah communities rely on precise data to plan for children and families, identify service gaps, and assess whether public services are accessible to all. Please prioritize accurate counting of every child."
- **Make it personal.** Share why complete population data matter to your family, work, or community. Personal experiences help decision-makers understand how these policies would affect local communities.
- **Mind your privacy.** Comments are public records, so only share what you're comfortable making public.

Submit your [comment](#) by November 2 to help protect the information Utah needs to plan for every child.