

Correcting the Count:



The Population Estimates Challenge Program

The **Population Estimates Program** is the Census Bureau's annual effort to create an estimate of population change between decennial censuses, building off the census and previous years' estimates and incorporating data on births, deaths, and migration.¹

As these population estimates largely determine the federal government's allocation of funding to state, local, and tribal governments, their accuracy is critical to ensuring that federal funding is fairly and accurately distributed. Underlying errors in the census "base" or subsequent estimates can lead to inaccurate population estimates, particularly for groups which typically experience undercounts (including Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations and young children).

The Census Bureau's **Population Estimates Challenge Program** provides an opportunity for local governments to correct such inaccuracies.²

How the Population Estimates Challenge Program works

The Population Estimates Challenge Program serves to create more accurate population estimates by allowing county and local governments to challenge the Census Bureau's official count of housing units in their locality.

- To challenge their population number, governments must submit specific types of supporting data on housing units (construction permits, mobile home information, commercial-to-residential conversions, and demolition records) to the Census Bureau within 90 days of the release of the estimate.
- A challenge may result in a revised estimate if the Census Bureau finds a processing error or if it determines that incorrect input data was used to generate the estimate.
- The Population Estimates Challenge Program occurs annually, except during the decennial census year. However, because of pandemic-related delays to the 2020 Census, the program was not restarted in 2021. The program is set to restart for the current decade in 2023, after localities receive their 2022 population estimates.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. "Population and Housing Unit Estimates: About."
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/about.html>

² U.S. Census Bureau. "Population Estimates Challenge Program."
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/about/challenge-program.html>

Improving the Population Estimates Challenge Program

Many stakeholders believe the Challenge Program in the last decade was unnecessarily limited and largely ineffective for mitigating the consequences of population undercounts in the prior census, whether attributable to missing housing units or to people missed within households that otherwise were counted, due to restrictions on the type of data governments may submit when challenging their estimates. They urge the Census Bureau to improve the Challenge Program by:

- **Allowing changes to key variables** (such as housing occupancy rates and person-per-household figures) in the 2020 Census and throughout the decade, so that incorrect information does not serve as the base for a decade of official estimates;
- **Allowing more corrections to the estimates base for characteristics data** (such as race and age), as Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations and children are typically undercounted in base census data;
- **Allowing for the submission of other types of evidence of population change** (such as drivers' license records and school enrollment records); and
- **Removing the “county population control” rule**, which requires other towns/cities to lose population if another town/city in the county successfully gains population through a population estimates challenge.

Census advocate? Submit YOUR comments on the Challenge Program!

- Sometime during 2022, the Census Bureau will issue a Federal Register notice describing the Challenge Program's proposed scope for the decade, beginning in 2023.
- In the 60-day period following the notice, stakeholders can submit public comments to the bureau on the program's proposed scope.



Correcting the Group Quarters Count: the Post-Census Group Quarters Review

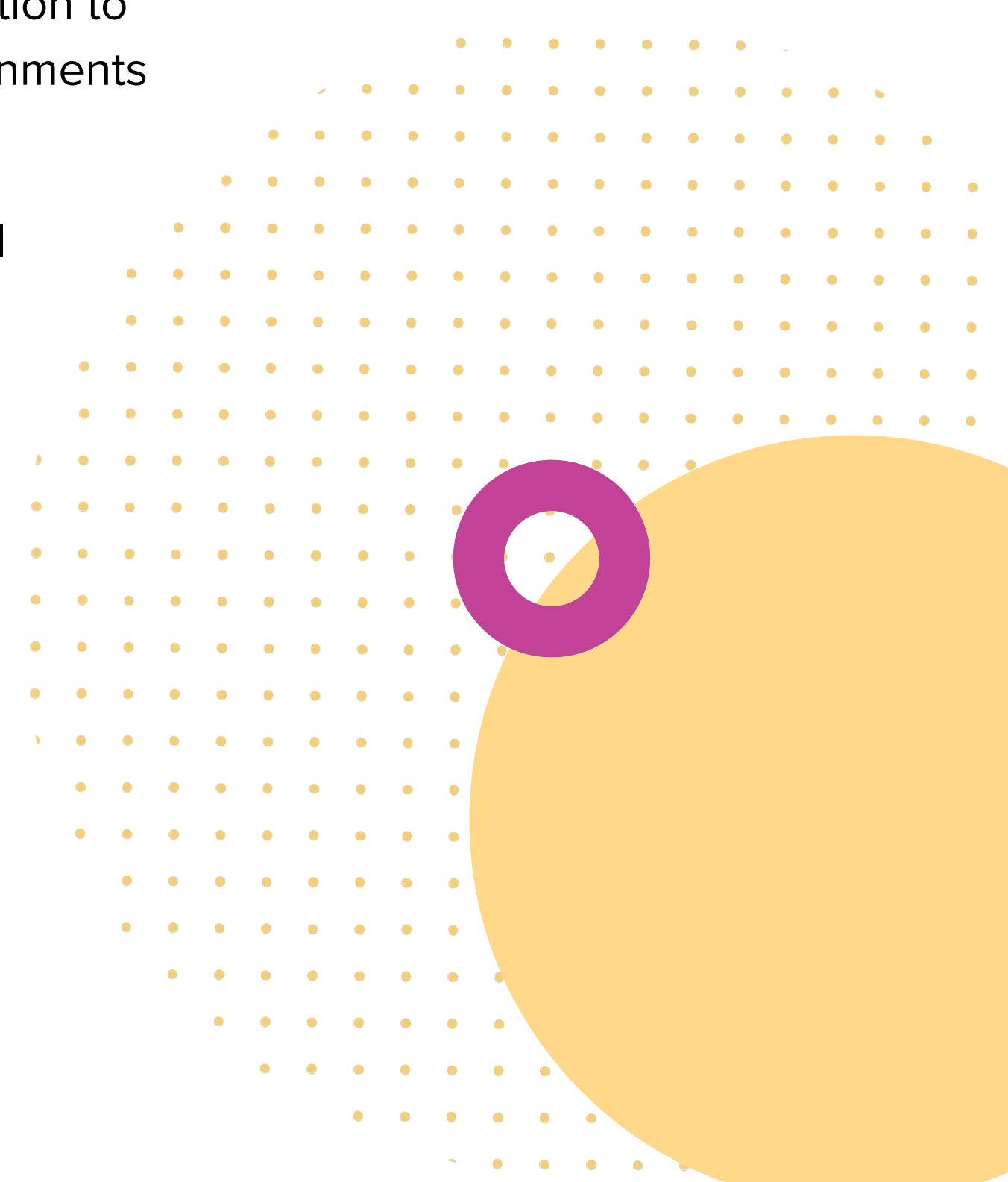


The 2020 **Post-Census Group Quarters Review** (PCGQR) is a new, one-time program that allows governmental units in the United States and Puerto Rico to ask the U.S. Census Bureau to review group quarters population counts if they believe any were missed or miscounted in the 2020 Census. The PCGQR was created in response to public feedback regarding the unprecedented challenges in counting group quarters' populations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the PCGQR, governments can seek to update group quarters population counts used for population estimates and surveys, including the American Community Survey. The PCGQR *cannot* change 2020 Census data products, such as apportionment and redistricting counts.

Post-Census Group Quarters Review Timeline:

- **May 31, 2022:** The Census Bureau began mailing information to approximately 40,000 eligible tribal, state, and local governments about participating in the PCGQR program.
- **June 6, 2022:** Eligible tribal, state, and local governmental units can start submitting 2020 PCGQR cases for review.
- **June 30, 2023:** Deadline for governments to submit PCGQR cases.³



³ U.S. Census Bureau. "2020 Post-Census Group Quarters Review (PCGQR)." <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2020/planning-management/evaluate/pcgqr.html>. May 31, 2022.

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