



# Minnesota State Demographic Center

March 25, 2015

Dear Minnesota County Leaders,

My name is Susan Brower and I am Minnesota's State Demographer. I want to let you know about something that is happening right now in Washington D.C. that could seriously impact the future availability and quality of census data in the years to come. I'm talking about *the* census data. Census data which state, county and city leaders use every day to understand challenges, make decisions, distribute resources, and govern efficiently. Census data help us answer the most basic questions, such as "How many people live in my county?" and more difficult questions such as, "How many people in my county are living in poverty?" and "How many older adults with disabilities live alone?" and "How is the economic recovery taking hold?" The census data are our primary way of knowing the characteristics of the people who live in our state.

**I wanted to let you know that right now—late March 2015—there are real and serious threats to the future availability and quality of the census data.** What are these threats?

- Because of budget constraints, the Census Bureau has recently said that it will publish data less frequently for many cities and counties (those with 20,000 to 65,000 residents). These Minnesota counties and cities that currently receive new census data every 3 years would only be able to get it every 5 years. A list of the Minnesota counties and cities that would be affected by this change is on page 3 of this letter.
- Sufficient funding to plan 2020 census operations is needed now. Without adequate resources, the accuracy of the 2020 Census is at great risk, given Congress' directive to keep the cost of the next census at the 2010 level. This doesn't allow for the population growth that has occurred since 2010, nor for testing new data collection methods that would allow for cost-savings in the long run.
- In recent years, there have been a number of bills proposed to make the American Community Survey (the modern version of the census long form) a voluntary survey. Most recently, a voluntary ACS amendment was passed by the U.S. House in May 2014. These threats have not yet been successful, but are real. A voluntary ACS would seriously degrade the quality of the resulting statistics. Data for less populous areas, or for smaller groups such as American Indians and other cultural communities, would be especially vulnerable if the American Community Survey became a voluntary survey. Canada made its census voluntary in 2011 and, as a result, data are no longer available for a quarter of Canada's towns and counties.

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The census data has always been there for us, and most people assume it will always be there. But many of us who are tracking the situation in Washington have serious concerns about the future of the data.

**What can you do to help support census data?**

1. Pass a resolution in support of a sufficiently funded 2020 Census and a *mandatory* American Community Survey.
2. Let your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives know that you rely on census data to make smart decisions and to govern efficiently.
3. [Sign on](#) as a public supporter of census data through the non-partisan, educational, grassroots organization called Minnesotans for the American Community Survey.
4. Learn more about what's at stake at <http://minnesotansforacs.org>
5. Tell your colleagues and partners about the real threats to census data that is so essential for decision-making.

Voicing support for census data seems almost too obvious to have to say, right? My fear is that not enough of us will speak up in support of the data before it's too late. Please join me in doing that today.

Regards,



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[mn.gov/demography](http://mn.gov/demography)

p.s. See the next page for a list of Minnesota counties and cities that would lose data if the proposal to eliminate the 3-year estimates from the American Community Survey succeeds.

**Geographies  
 affected by  
 Census  
 Bureau’s plan  
 to eliminate  
 “3-year”  
 American  
 Community  
 Survey  
 estimates**

**COUNTIES (35)**

Becker  
 Beltrami  
 Benton  
 Brown  
 Carlton  
 Cass  
 Chisago  
 Clay  
 Crow Wing  
 Dodge  
 Douglas  
 Fillmore  
 Freeborn  
 Goodhue  
 Hubbard  
 Isanti  
 Itasca  
 Kandiyohi  
 Le Sueur  
 Lyon  
 Martin  
 McLeod  
 Meeker

Mille Lacs  
 Morrison  
 Mower  
 Nicollet  
 Nobles  
 Otter Tail  
 Pine  
 Polk  
 Steele  
 Todd  
 Wabasha  
 Winona

**CITIES (44)**

Andover  
 Apple Valley  
 Austin  
 Blaine  
 Brooklyn Center  
 Burnsville  
 Champlin  
 Chanhassen  
 Chaska  
 Coon Rapids  
 Cottage Grove  
 Crystal  
 Eden Prairie  
 Edina  
 Elk River  
 Faribault  
 Farmington  
 Fridley  
 Golden Valley  
 Hastings  
 Inver Grove Heights  
 Lakeville  
 Lino Lakes

Mankato  
 Maplewood  
 Minnetonka  
 Moorhead  
 New Brighton  
 New Hope  
 Northfield  
 Oakdale  
 Owatonna  
 Prior Lake  
 Ramsey  
 Richfield  
 Rosemount  
 Roseville  
 Savage  
 Shakopee  
 Shoreview  
 South St. Paul  
 St. Louis Park  
 White Bear Lake  
 Winona