



## From the Director's Desk: COVID Decimates Resort Census Reporting

Home to world class ski resorts, [top ranked healthy places to live](#), [top ranked for life expectancy](#) and [top ten places to live](#) are all cool accolades for our Counties. Unfortunately, those rankings don't determine allocation of billions of dollars of federal funding or have the potential to add a House seat for the state for the next decade like the 2020 Census.

In spite of active local efforts in every corner of our region, and the ease of self-reporting on-line, the Census effort which was to have hit high gear in March, seems to have entirely lost momentum which could be a major problem for the region.

I know, with everything else going on, of all the things to worry about right now, you may not be concerned about the miserable numbers NWCCOG region counties are posting. Recent numbers posted in an email from Brian Meinhart, US Census Director for Western Colorado on the 5/8/2020 Weekly update reveal that of the 64 Colorado Counties, here is how ours rank:



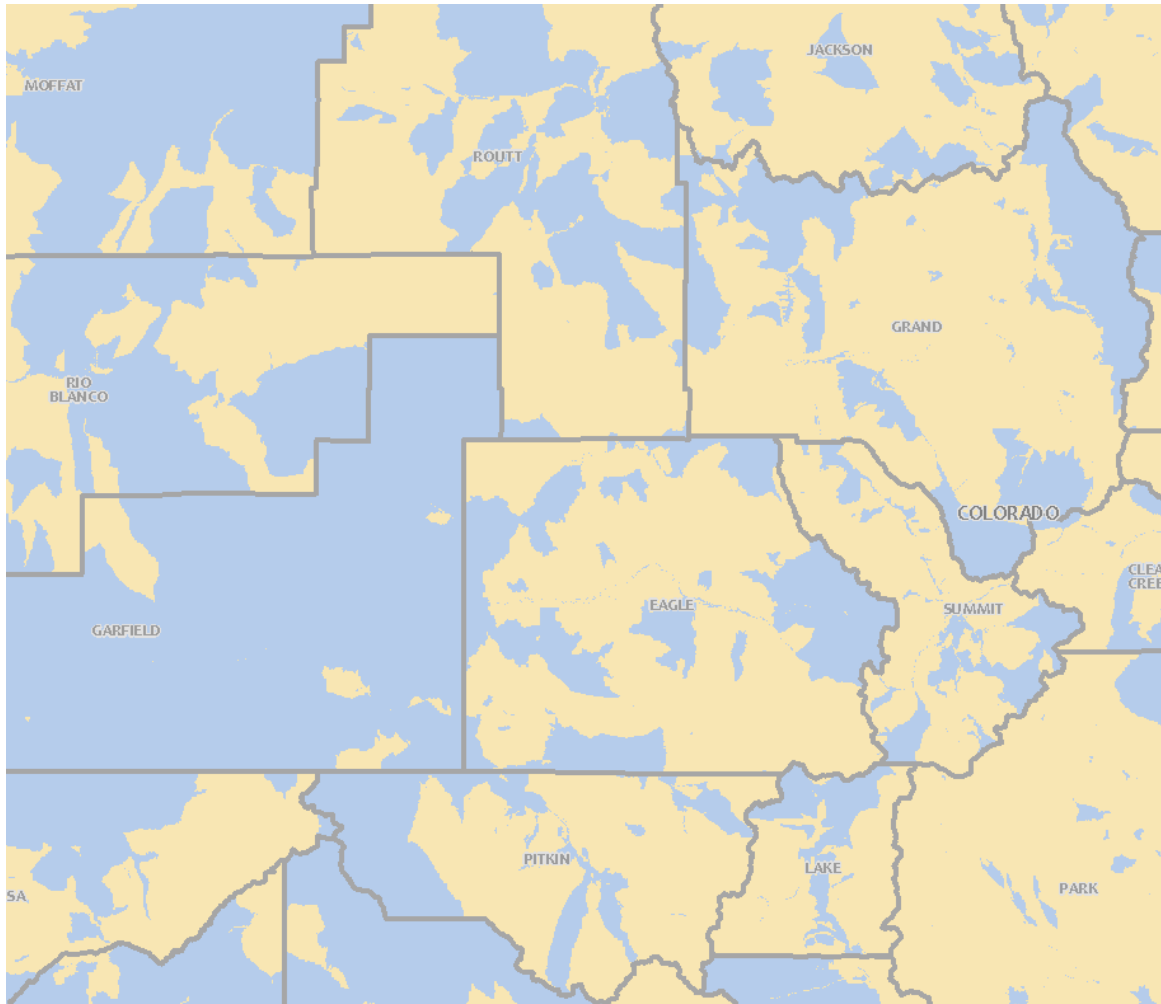
63rd	Jackson County	7.6% response rate
62nd	Grand County	8.4% response rate
59th	Summit County	15% response rate
55th	Eagle County	19.7% response rate
48th	Pitkin County	28.1% response rate

Hopefully, those numbers trigger the naturally competitive nature for one of the most active, healthy, and motivated populations in the state. Lake County is kicking all our butts at 39%!

In a phone interview, Meinhart expressed "some concern" because he "knows the reason behind it." He attributes these low numbers to usual high-country challenges, seasonal workers, a high second language population, PO Boxes, lots of rentals and second homes, each problems which are usually addressed through door-to-door, or what is called "Update, Leave Operations." With COVID, these have been postponed to the beginning of next week, when the "update" will be performed by volunteers walking neighborhoods, updating addresses, and "leaving" a paper packet prompting

responses at residences where there were none. All Census staff will have PPE when in the field and no contact will be made at the door. Without personal contact, lower numbers are certainly expected.

Areas designated as **Update/Leave** are shown in yellow on the map below. These swaths are broad in our Region since the majority of housing units either do not have mail delivered to the physical location, or the mail delivery information for the housing unit cannot be verified.



For those of us who are lately enjoying recreating with only our neighbors, driving without traffic, having the high country to ourselves, one has to wonder if the travel restrictions and suppression of our economic engine just means there are not as many residents to count. With health orders that include travel restrictions likely extending well into summer, can we hope for accurate counts?

It's important to remind folks that responding to the 2020 Census is [safe](#), and [secure](#). Individual responses are [confidential](#) and protected by law. [Online signup is easiest and can be done here](#).

Meinhart is looking for ideas, events or campaigns to "catch people's attention." How about a Regional County Commissioner Challenge with the county showing the highest percentage increase receiving dining gift certificates from County Commissioners showing the lowest percentage increase. Or how about "I Count: Census 2020" COVID masks? Anything.

If you've got ideas for increasing our counts send them to me.

*Jon Stavney*

## TESTING

### Major COVID-19 Testing Announcement -- Find a Testing Site Today

Today, Governor Polis announced that Colorado now has the supplies, the testing sites, and the capacity to test anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19, as well as all health care workers, all senior care facility workers, all first responders, and all essential workers who directly interact with the public while working, whether or not those individuals have symptoms or not.

Any individual who fits into these categories is encouraged to get tested.

### Testing in Colorado is FREE

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Whether a person is on Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance or has no health insurance at all, cost is not a barrier to testing in Colorado. Thanks to executive action taken by the Polis administration, Colorado-regulated insurance plans are prohibited from charging copays for testing, and Medicaid patients can also get tested without cost. For those without insurance, community testing sites can send samples to the state lab and the state will cover the cost.

Also, because of executive action taken by the Polis administration, Coloradans should not worry about their job status if they test positive. Most Colorado businesses are now required to provide paid leave for those who test positive, so you can worry about getting better instead of worrying about making ends meet.

It's not just a question of basic fairness - if Coloradans can't afford the test and can't afford to take off work if they get sick, they might not get tested, and that will put all of us at greater risk.

Were all in this together - that means making sure everyone can get tested so that everyone can be better protected.

For additional testing information [click here](#).

## [See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

*If you know someone who would enjoy our newsletter,  
please forward them to this link.*

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## SPECIAL EDITIONS

News is developing as fast as the speed of the spread of the virus. For the next few weeks - hopefully not months -- we'll publish more frequently as needed to get the most current information to our members. If you have information you think should be shared on this newsletter, please send suggested content to [jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org).

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

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