



Hardest to Count, Most to Lose

Billions of dollars and many services are at risk for Michigan residents based on the results of this year's census count. Estimates indicate that about 70,000 in Michigan were not counted in the 2000 Census. Many of the uncounted are likely the ones most in need of the services that are funded based on census numbers.

More than 140 federal programs use census data to distribute funds. In fiscal year 2008 alone, Michigan received over \$16 billion in federal assistance, and Wayne County, the state's largest county, received over \$2 billion for services—including cash assistance for needy families, education, child care and health care. These services, which help to meet the needs of some of the state's most vulnerable families, are allocated using data from the census count. If the census numbers are artificially low because not all people are counted, corresponding funding could be too low to provide adequate services for all of those in need.

For every 100 people not counted in the census, a community could lose \$1.2 million over 10 years. The combined loss of revenue and services would create a particular hardship in Michigan as state revenues continue to fall, while the demand for services continues to rise. This is coupled with the fact that population has fallen in Michigan since the last census, creating even greater concern that people not be missed in the counting for the census.

Historically in Michigan, the groups most likely to be undercounted include people of color, the low-income, those that are unemployed and children. Young children are the most undercounted group, with minority children the most undercounted children.

In the 1990 Census, it is estimated that just under 1 percent of the population in Michigan was undercounted. For whites, the undercount rate was 0.2 percent. In stark contrast, the undercount rate for African Americans was 3.3 percent and for Hispanics it was 2.6 percent. Minority populations are disproportionately undercounted in Michigan and across the nation.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there was a net undercount of just over 3 million people in the 2000 Census, a roughly 1.2 percent undercount rate. According to the NAACP, the undercount rate for African Americans was almost triple that—3 percent.

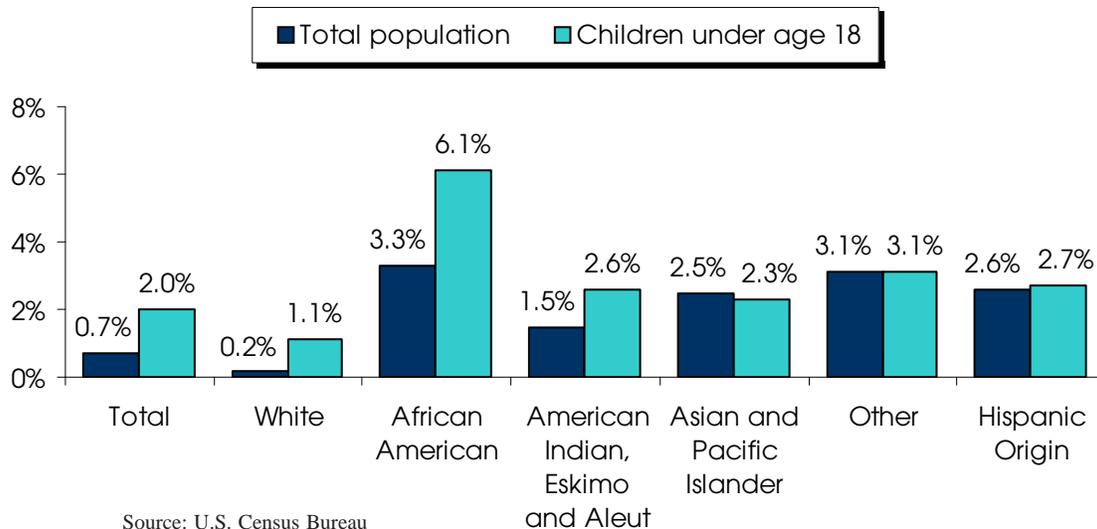
Children and the Census

Children under the age of 5 were missed more than any other age group in the 2000 Census, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, which issued a working paper on the census and young children, estimates that 750,000 children under the age of 5 were missed in 2000—4 percent of all children that age.

Undercounting is most prevalent among minority children. Nationwide, in 2000, African American males under the age of 5 were missed in the census count at a rate of 5.3 percent. This compares to a 3.3 percent rate for non-African American males under age 5. African American females under the age of 5 were undercounted at a rate of 5.4 percent, compared to 3.8 percent for non-African Americans.

Data from the 1990 Census produces similar findings. White children were undercounted at a rate of 2 percent, compared to Hispanics at 5 percent, African Americans at 7 percent and

Minority Children Most Undercounted in Michigan (1990 Census Undercount)



American Indians on reservations at 13.8 percent. There were similar results in Michigan. With the exception of Hispanics, children were undercounted more than adults. The data also suggests that these children are likely poor.

In addition to helping distribute federal funds, the census data is also used by state and local governments to estimate the need for child care, schools, health care and other services for children. When undercounts occur, it is difficult to effectively target funds where the greatest need for services exists.

Race and the Census

Race data from the census is particularly important as it is used in a number of ways. The data is used to assess racial health disparities, to promote equal employment opportunities and to evaluate civil rights protections. As one example, the data is used by the Office of Minority Health to compare health status among varying ethnic populations. In turn, policy changes can be made to help address health disparities.

In the past, African Americans have had one of the highest rates of undercounts. This is of growing

concern because the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the African American population will grow by more than 70 percent between now and 2050. It is also of concern because African American children and families are more likely to be affected by poverty and are more likely to be beneficiaries of federal programs directed at the poor. Michigan's overall poverty rate is 14.4 percent, but for African Americans it is just over 30 percent. About 40 percent of Michigan's African American children live in poverty.

Research shows that African American students have higher dropout rates than other students. African Americans also are more likely to live in urban areas with low-performing schools. Title 1 education programs and Head Start are just two examples of education-related programs that utilize census numbers and are targeted toward helping low-income and minority children succeed in school.

Because African Americans are less likely to have health insurance provided through their employers, they are more likely to rely on public health care programs. The State Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid and Medicare all rely on census data in distributing the federal funds.

Factors Contributing to Undercounting

Amongst the populations most likely to be undercounted, there are a number of factors attributing to the undercounts. For low-income people who are more likely to be less educated, it has been suggested that literacy and language issues keep them from understanding the census and being able to fill out the forms. Children living in larger households or with grandparents are also more likely to be missed. Families who rent and move frequently are less likely to be counted.

Several newer factors are expected to affect undercounting in the upcoming 2010 Census. The high rate of home foreclosures has resulted in people moving more, living with others and living in temporary situations. Based on January numbers, Michigan ranks 5th in the number of foreclosures in the country. Fears over immigration enforcement are expected to keep some from being counted. The growing concern since 9-11 about government monitoring could also inhibit some from participating in the census.

Many of the undercounted live in what the Census Bureau designates as “hard to count” areas. These are areas in which response to the census has

historically been low. Factors that contribute to making an area hard to count include poverty, low educational attainment, unemployment, complex household arrangements, high mobility and minority language status.

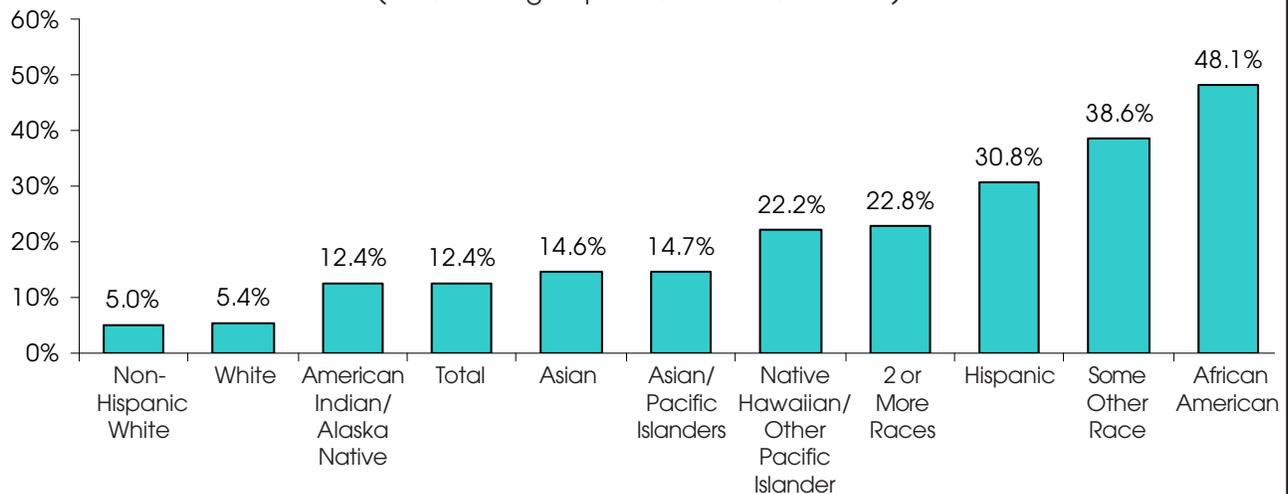
According to the Census Project, Michigan has over 1.2 million people living in hard to count areas—about 12.4 percent of the state’s population. Michigan’s hard to count population ranks 9th among the states.

Reviewing hard to count areas in Michigan by race shows a much higher percentage of minorities in hard to count areas than whites. Among the white population, 5.4 percent are in hard to count areas. In comparison, over 48 percent of African Americans and over 30 percent of Hispanics live in areas deemed hard to count. These numbers help explain why many more minorities are undercounted.

On the local level, over 640,000 people in Wayne County live in hard to count areas. This equals just over 30 percent of the county’s population. In comparison with other counties nationwide, Wayne County has the 13th highest hard to count population.

Hard to Count Populations in Michigan by Race and Hispanic Origin

(Percent of group in hard to count areas)



Source: U.S. Census Data, as compiled by Dr. William O’Hare and Edwin Quiamboa of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Top Ten Federal Assistance Programs Reliant in Whole or Part on Census Data for Michigan, Fiscal Year 2008

1. Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid)	\$10.4 billion
2. Highway Planning and Construction	\$1 billion
3. Very Low to Moderate Income Housing Loans	\$466 million
4. Special Education Grants	\$381 million
5. Housing Choice Vouchers	\$308 million
6. Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies	\$292 million
7. Head Start	\$219 million
8. Unemployment Insurance	\$215 million
9. State Children's Insurance Program	\$147 million
10. Low-Income Home Energy Assistance	\$141 million

Source: The Brookings Institution, *Federal Assistance Programs Reliant in Whole or Part on Decennial Census Statistics to Distribute Funds, Michigan, Fiscal Year 2008*, October 10, 2009.

unemployment rate. Although many families have had to rely on this income, the unemployed are among the groups that are often undercounted.

In addition to the programs already mentioned to assist children, there are others. They include the school lunch program, food assistance, foster care and child care programs. Again, this emphasizes the need for ensuring that there is a proper count of children in the census.

Services At Risk

An examination of the top 10 federal assistance programs reliant in whole or in part on census data, as distributed to Michigan in fiscal year 2008, provides a picture of which services are at risk with undercounting. With the exception of highway planning and construction, these services target low-income and vulnerable populations, including children. By far, the program receiving the most federal money is the state Medicaid program. In fiscal year 2008, that amount exceeded \$10.4 billion. The fiscal year 2009 expenditure is likely much higher with the escalating caseloads during this recession.

Unemployment Insurance has also been particularly important in Michigan with the state's high

Conclusion

The 2010 Census will be conducted at a time when Michigan continues to lead the nation in unemployment, home foreclosure rates are high and mistrust of government persists. Although these pose challenges for ensuring an accurate count in the census, the need to minimize undercounting has never been greater. The state's most vulnerable populations have proven to be the hardest to count, but they are also those most in need. Low-income and minority families and children, in particular, will be relying on services based on the 2010 count for years to come.

Sources:

2010 Census, <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>.

Brookings, <http://www.brookings.edu/>

The Census & Civil Rights-Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, <http://www.civilrights.org/census/civil-rights.html>

The Census Project, <http://www.thecensusproject.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau Data, <http://www.census.gov/>

William P. O'Hare, *Why Are Young Children Missed So Often in the Census*, KIDS COUNT Working Paper, December 2009.