

Politics & Government

DC Children Under 5 At Risk Of Being Undercounted In 2020 Census

An undercounting in the 2020 Census could mean less federal money allocated to D.C. to support programs like Head Start and SNAP.

By Michael O'Connell, Patch Staff
Feb 10, 2020 6:57 pm ET | Updated Feb 10, 2020 8:19 pm ET

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A new report warns D.C. is at risk for undercounting children 5 and under in the 2020 Census. (Shutterstock)



WASHINGTON, DC -- Children under the age of 5 living in Washington, D.C., are at risk of being undercounted in the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 decennial count, according to a [new report](#) from the Population Reference Bureau. A significant undercount could negatively impact how much federal funding D.C. would receive for things like Head Start and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP).



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In the 2010 Census, more than 1 million children in same age bracket were undercounted across the U.S., according to PRB's estimates.



"This whole analysis was really done in order to help pinpoint the neighborhoods, basically to target the communities where kids are most likely to be missed in 2020," said Mark Mather, a demographer with the [Population Reference Bureau](#), a nonprofit that

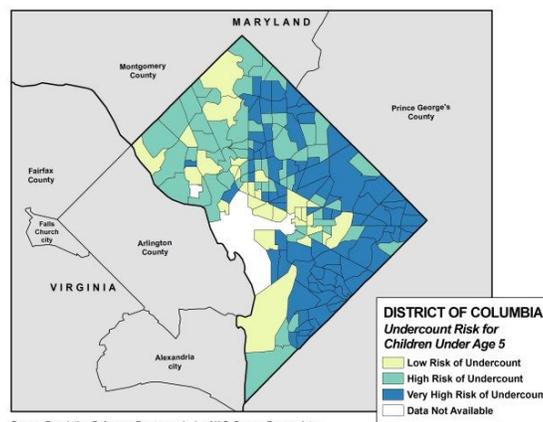


monitors population trends and the implications of those trends in the U.S. and around the world.

In studying the 2010 Census, PRB tried to determine why so many children were being undercounted. It turned out not to be matter of entire households being missed, instead, households were being counted, but the children living in those households were not being included in the count. PRB found that key factors as to why they weren't being counted related to the living arrangements, family structure and socioeconomic makeup of those households.

"Kids who are living in complex families, grandparent headed households, female headed households, seem to be more likely to be missed in those types of arrangements," Mather said.

One of the main reasons for the decennial count is to determine how much federal funding communities will receive for support programs like SNAP, Head Start, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which benefit populations at risk.



"In a lot of cases, the people who are most likely to be missed are the people who might need that funding the most," Mather said. "And so it's often people living in poor neighborhoods, racial-ethnic minorities, who might not have the same access to some of the services and schools and facilities that wealthier neighborhoods might have."

According to Mather, PRB released its report at the beginning of February to help local



important it is for the 2020 Census to get an accurate count.

In May 2019, Mayor Muriel Bowser in her Fiscal Year 2020 Budget proposal toward D.C.'s effort to secure an accurate count in the 2020 Census. The city receives more than \$3 billion in federal funding annually that's allocated based on the census count. Bowser also established the Complete Count Committee (CCC), a cross-section of leaders from D.C. agencies and community and non-profit groups, as well representatives from the private sector and higher education. CCC's mission is to raise awareness of the Census and its importance throughout the city's eight wards.

The Office of the Mayor has provided funding to nonprofit organizations throughout the city to help spread the word about the full count effort. In addition to coordinating that effort, CCC is distributing media materials, such as posters, cards and Metro bus stop signs, to remind people about the Census.

Kimberly Crews, a CCC member, demographer and professor at the University of the District of Columbia, is well aware of the impact undercounting young children can have. She worked as the Census In Schools project manager during the 2000 decennial count.

"Say your baby born on March 25 is not counted," she said. "That's 10 years of funding that is not allocated for that child. So, they're getting to sixth grade and their data has not been included in factors that determine schooling and all the other federal programs that community may be eligible for."

What CCC and the community advocacy groups are trying to do is reach individuals who might be at risk for being undercounted and explaining to them what the Census is all about and why an accurate count is so important.

"Especially if you have young parents because the other risk factor is adults ages 18 to 34 with less than a high school diploma," Crews said. "If you think about a young mother who is filling [out a Census form] as a single household, who's busy, who may not have a college education, and is just dealing with the day-to-day areas of life, responding to a Census, which they've never done before because it only happens every 10 years."



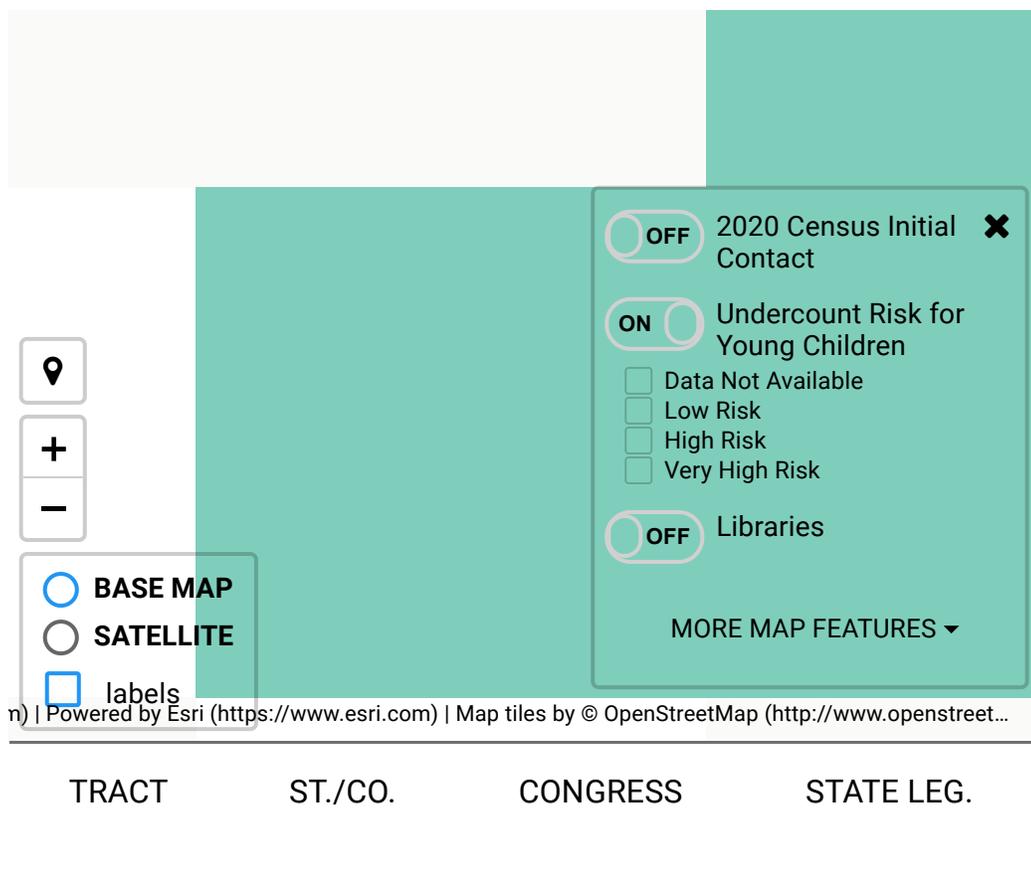
Another message CCC and community groups are delivering is that the personal information being collected will not be shared with other government agencies.

"The Census data is protected," Crews said. "The Census data is strictly confidential. There are laws protecting the confidentiality and protecting people's information. That is a message that has to be gotten to the public and it does help if that information is shared by partners who are trusted in the community."

With the 2020 Census, citizens will be able to fill out forms online for the first time. The public should begin to receive postcards in the mail around March 15 reminding them to fill out their Census form.

For more information, visit the [DC Census 2020 website](#).

[Map below is courtesy of Center for Urban Research at The Graduate Center / CUNY](#)



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



The 2020 Census is critically important to District of Columbia in District of Columbia!

🔍 ZOOM TO

Downloadable files for District of Columbia (data for District of Columbia is included in these files):

- Tract data (/exports/pdb2017tract_2010MRR_2018ACS_DC.xlsx) [in **Excel** format]
- Tract boundary file (ftp://ftp2.census.gov/geo/tiger/TIGER2018/TRACT/tl_2018_11_tract.zip [a **shapefile** for GIS])
- Map of District of Columbia (img/mappdfs/CountyMaps/CountyHTC_11001.pdf); tracts on this PDF

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