

Make Kids Count: Young Children and Census 2020

The Scope of the Problem

The net undercount of young children – the difference between the actual census count of children ages 0-4 and Census Bureau population estimates – has steadily worsened over the past 40 years. In the 2010 Decennial Census, children under 5 were missed at a higher rate than any other age group,¹ and an estimated 25,000 young children in North Carolina were not counted.²

A Higher Undercount Means Less Federal Support

Missing young children in the census can have a big impact on North Carolina's federal funding for family supports as well as the fairness of our local resource allocation, representation in Congress, and redistricting efforts.

Hundreds of federal programs rely on census data to guide funding to states and local areas; for just the 10 largest child-serving programs, North Carolina receives more than \$5 billion in federal support.³ If young kids are not counted, federal programs like Head Start, the National School Lunch Program, and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will funnel fewer dollars to North Carolina, making it difficult to meet the needs of all our children. In addition, an undercount will undermine local efforts to estimate the need for community resources like schools and child care providers.⁴

We Have to Reach the Hard-to-Count

Young children are overrepresented in populations considered "hard-to-count" by the U.S. Census Bureau. An estimated 73,000 children under 5 in North Carolina are part of these groups, which include low income households, homes with complex family structures, and racial and ethnic minorities.⁵ If missed in the count, these children also stand to suffer the most from reductions in funding to vital programs.

The good news is that it's not too late to address this problem! In 2019, legislators can allocate additional funds to support census outreach and strategies to inform the families of young children in hard-to-count census tracts. We can and should do more to ensure a fair and accurate count of all North Carolina residents.



How Can I Help?

Ask your candidates for legislative office the following question via email, phone, or in-person at a candidate forum:

North Carolina failed to count an estimated 25,000 young children in the 2010 Census. This represents the 8th highest undercount of 0-4-year-olds in the nation, impacting our state's federal funding and government representation.

Do you support allocating at least \$1 million in state funding to expand outreach ahead of the 2020 Census and ensure that North Carolinians of all ages are counted?

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Endnotes

¹ Fernandez, L. Shattuck, R., & Noon, J. (2018). The Use of Administrative Records and the American Community Survey to Study the Characteristics of Undercounted Young Children in the 2010 Census [Working Paper #2018-5]. United States Census Bureau, Center for Administrative Records Research and Applications.

² United States Census Bureau. (2014). The Undercount of Young Children.

³ Reamer, A. (2017). Counting for Dollars 2020: 16 Large Federal Assistance Programs that Distribute Funds on Basis of Decennial Census-derived Statistics, Fiscal Year 2015, North Carolina [Report #1], George Washington University Institute of Public Policy

⁴ Fernandez, L. Shattuck, R., & Noon, J. (2018). The Use of Administrative Records and the American Community Survey to Study the Characteristics of Undercounted Young Children in the 2010 Census [Working Paper #2018-5]. United States Census Bureau, Center for Administrative Records Research and Applications.

⁵ Estimates produced by Steven Romalewski, Mapping Services Director, Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center, www.censushardtountmaps2020.us, and compiled and analyzed by William O'Hare. Population totals are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012-2016 American Community Survey estimates.