

BLACK PEOPLE AND THE CENSUS: UNDERCOUNTED MEANS UNDERFUNDED AND UNDERREPRESENTED



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An important event that will impact the political power and economic resources of your community for the next decade is happening *right now*: the 2020 Census. The census—a *count of every person living in the United States and its territories*—is conducted every 10 years by the U.S. Census Bureau.^[1] The 2020 Census will be used to determine political representation, public services, and federal and state funding until 2030. There will not be a citizenship question on the 2020 Census, and your responses to the questionnaire are confidential. This edition of TMI Briefs focuses on the importance of the 2020 Census to Black people and their communities.



Many Important Programs are Funded Based on the Census

More than \$600 billion, and perhaps as much as \$1.5 trillion, in federal funding is allocated to communities based on Census data.² A large share of this funding serves people in poverty and people living in rural areas.³ Black Americans have a poverty rate higher than the U.S. average,⁴ and Black Americans make up a significant portion of America's rural population,⁵ especially the rural population of the southeastern region of the U.S.⁶ For these reasons, an accurate census count is important economically to Black Americans.

Over 300 federal programs use Census data in some way to distribute funds.⁷ Below is a listing of just a small number of these programs. They include health programs like Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), housing programs like Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and the HOME Investment Partnerships, and educational programs like the Federal Pell Grant Program and Career and Technical Education grants. These programs address a wide variety of needs and challenges facing communities. A Census undercount runs the risk of Black communities being underfunded for critical social services.

#BeCounted

As of mid-March 2020, every U.S. household has received instructions on how to complete the census survey online, by phone, or by mail. It only takes a few minutes and you are done.

Please complete your census today!

[Visit 2020census.gov.](https://2020census.gov)

Table 1. Selected List of Programs Utilizing Census Data⁸

Career and Technical Education – Basic Grants to the States	National School Lunch Program
Federal Pell Grant Program	Rural Rental Assistance Payments
Foster Care Title IV-E	Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
Grants for the Prevention & Treatment of Substance Abuse	State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
Head Start	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Home Investment Partnership Program	Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF)
Improving Teacher Quality State Grants	Unemployment Insurance
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance	Water & Waste Disposal Systems for Rural Communities
Medicaid (Medical Assistance Program)	



The vast majority of Black Americans know the importance of completing the census. Figure 1 (below) shows some top motivations for Black people when they fill out the census.⁹ Almost all Black people (96%) recognize that the census is used to allocate funding to hospitals and healthcare institutions. Medicaid, CHIP, and other health programs receive funding based on data from the Census.

Census Data Can be Key to Local Decisions about Public Services

Additionally, Census data can be used to help local governments determine the economic, social service, and infrastructure needs of their communities, such as where a new hospital or school should be located. A majority (84%) of Black people surveyed listed helping their local government as an important reason to complete the census (Figure 1).¹⁰ Local governments can learn about their community's changing needs based on data from the Census.

Is the number of school-aged children growing enough to warrant building a new school? Does the community need more resources for food assistance because household incomes are declining? Does a community need more affordable housing, and, if yes, how much? These are all questions that can be answered with data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The more accurate the Census counts the better local governments can address the needs of their communities. As the Census Bureau notes:

*Think of your morning commute: Census results influence highway planning and construction, as well as grants for buses, subways, and other public transit systems. Or think of your local schools: Census results help determine how money is allocated for the Head Start program and for grants that support teachers and special education.*¹¹

Census Data is the Cornerstone of Political Representation

Black people are also aware that the census is vitally important for political representation (Figure 1).¹² Representation in Congress is based upon census counts. Communities that are undercounted could lose out in political representation.

The U.S. House of Representatives has 435 seats that are divided amongst the states based upon Census population counts. The number of congressional Representatives a state has is determined based on its census counts.

Figure 1.

WHY BLACK PEOPLE ARE FILLING OUT THE CENSUS



96%

for hospitals and
healthcare funding

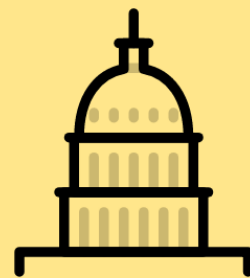


94%

to support schools
and education

84%

to help local
government plan
for change



76%

to ensure
congressional
representation

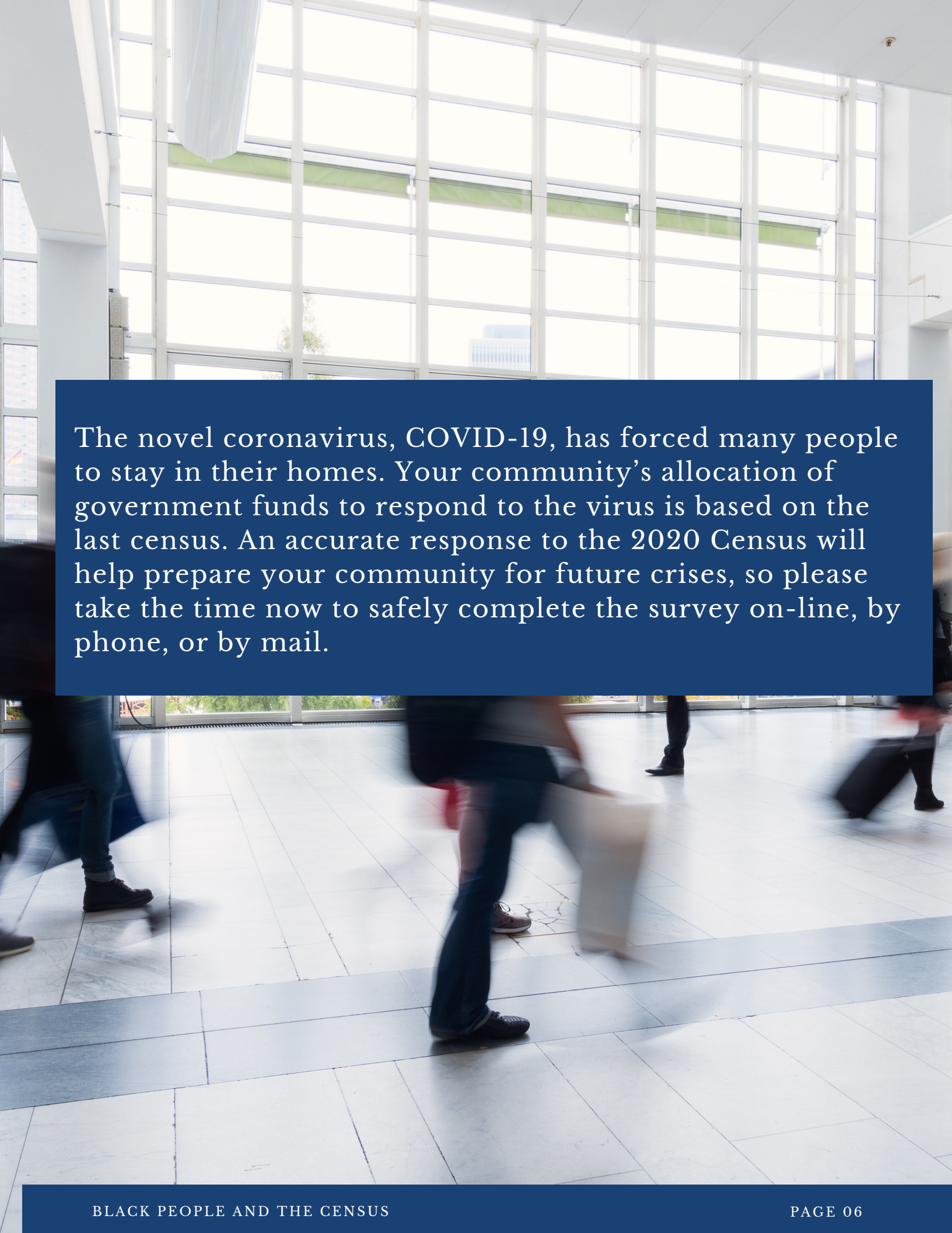
Kyley McGeeney et al., 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey Report: A New Design for the 21st Century (Version 2.0), U.S. Census Bureau (Jan. 24, 2019), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-cbams-study-survey.pdf>.



A significant undercount in a state could mean that the state loses representation in the House of Representatives. Some states face a higher undercount risk because they have significant populations of groups that have historically been undercounted. For example, “California has the greatest undercount risk, with projected 2020 undercounts ranging from 0.95 percent (low risk) to 1.98 percent (high risk). Other states at risk for serious undercounts are Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, Georgia, New York, and Florida.”¹³ When entire communities are significantly undercounted relative to others, it can mean that their voices are not adequately represented.

#CountMeIn

For useful information on the census, read [LDF's Census Guide](#).

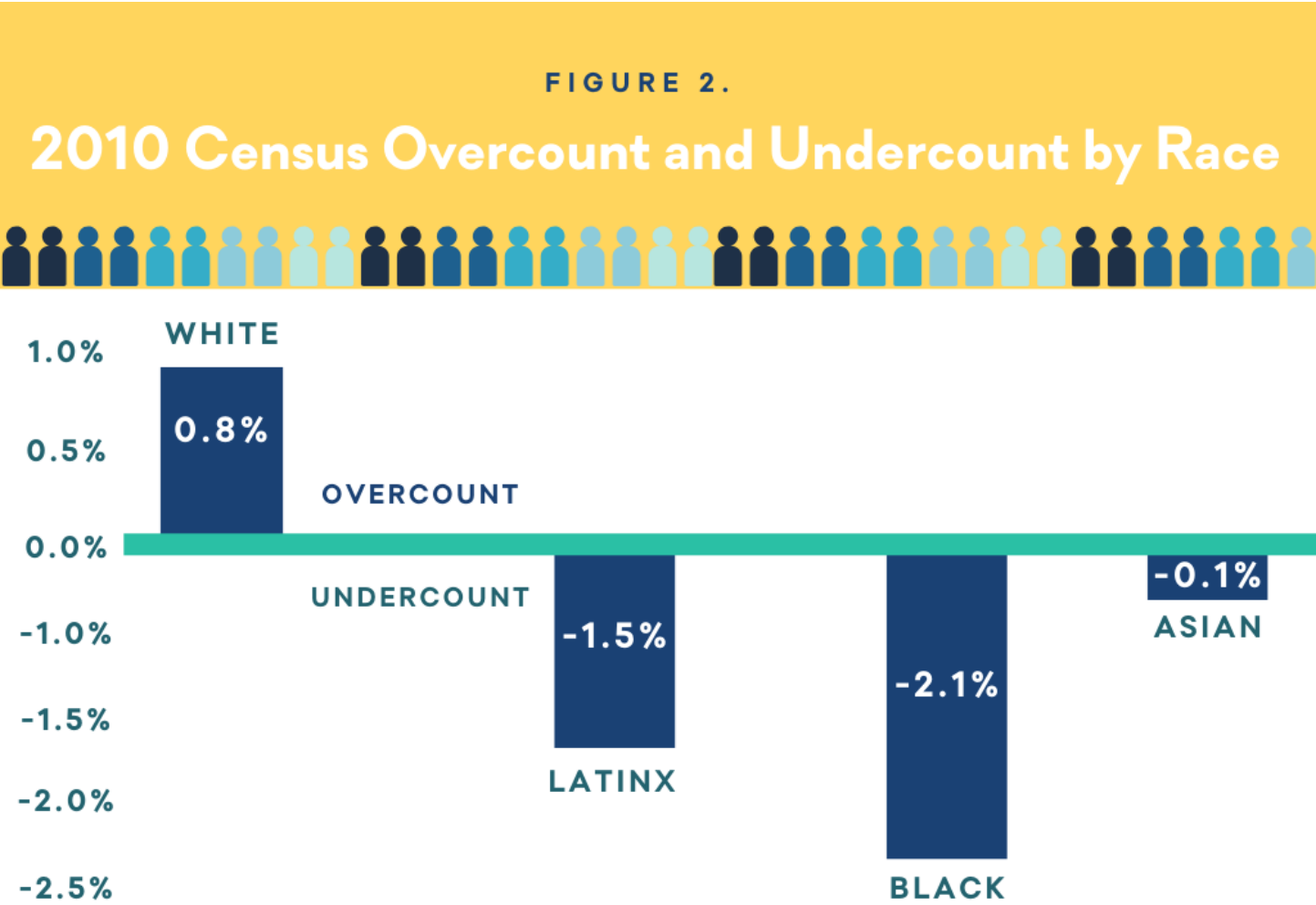


The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has forced many people to stay in their homes. Your community's allocation of government funds to respond to the virus is based on the last census. An accurate response to the 2020 Census will help prepare your community for future crises, so please take the time now to safely complete the survey on-line, by phone, or by mail.

The Costly Black Undercount

In the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, White Americans were overcounted.¹⁴ This means that some individuals were counted more than once. The Urban Institute projects that White Americans will be overcounted again in this year's census.¹⁵

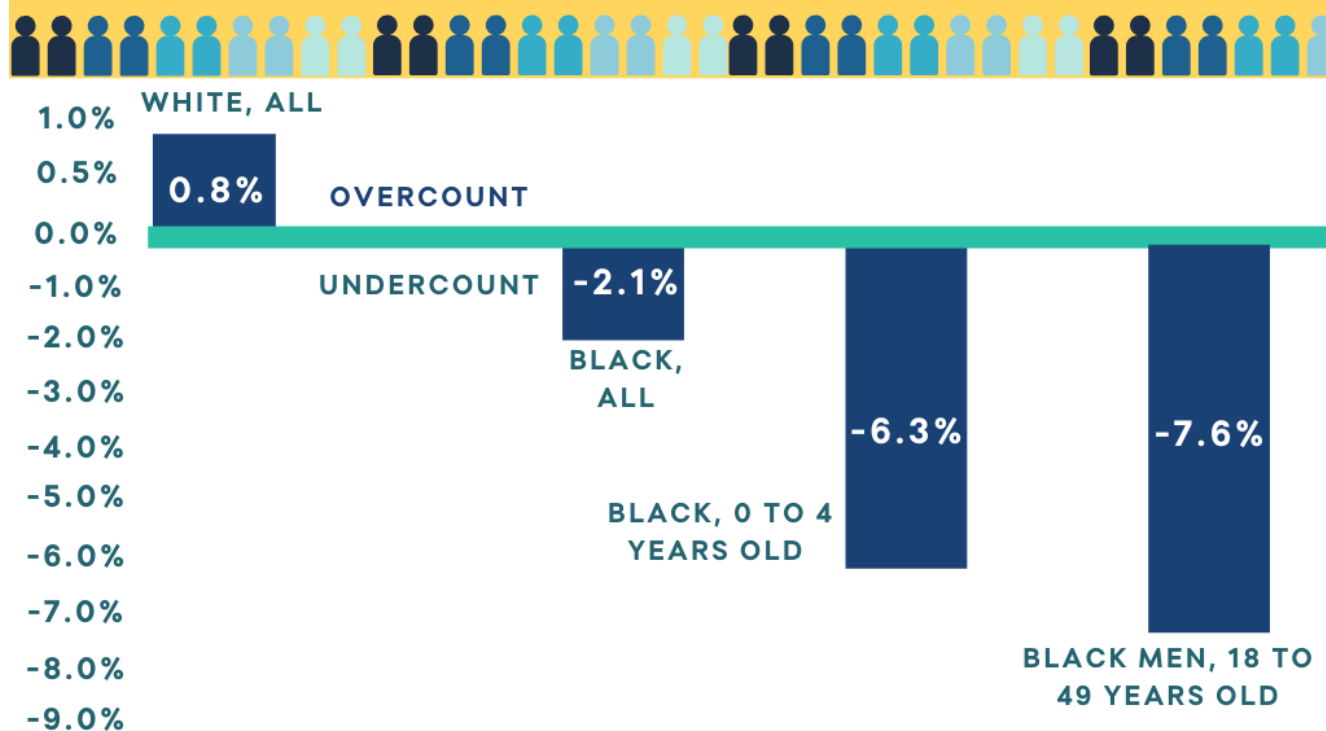
In the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, Black Americans were undercounted.¹⁶ This means that some individuals were not counted at all. In 2010, Black Americans had the largest undercount of America's major racial/ethnic groups (Figure 2).¹⁷ The Black undercount is driven by a large undercount of Black men and of Black children under five years old (Figure 3).¹⁸



Source: Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census [Press Release], U.S. Census Bureau (May 22, 2012).

FIGURE 3.

2010 Census White Overcount and Black Undercount by Selected Categories



Source: Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census [Pres Release], U.S. Census Bureau (May 22, 2012); Marc H. Morial, Testimony to House Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, 2020 Census Field Hearing (NYC) (May 28, 2019)

The Urban Institute projects that an undercount of Black people in 2020 could be even greater than the 2010 undercount.¹⁹ Any Black undercount puts a significant amount of funding for Black communities at risk. The Table in the Appendix below provides a rough estimate (using just five of over 300 federal programs) of the funding at risk, by state, from a “high” Black undercount in 2020.

These five programs all use the same funding formula. They are Medicaid (Medical Assistance Program), CHIP, Foster Care Title IV-E, Adoption Assistance Title IV-E, and the Child Care and Development Fund Matching Funds.

From these five programs, a “high” Black undercount in the 2020 Census risks about \$200 million for Texas, and about \$100 million for Florida, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Between \$50 million and \$100 million is at risk for an additional eight states. Again, these rough estimates only attempt to calculate the dollars at risk for just five of more than 300 programs. States, localities, and Black communities within them can lose substantial sums due to a Black undercount.

It is imperative that we ensure that every Black person in America is counted. As illustrated in Figure 3 above, it is worthwhile to do extra outreach to Black men and to Black households with young children, as these groups are at a heightened risk of being undercounted.

Table. Estimate of Federal Funding at Risk from Medicaid and Four Child Care Programs* Due to a Possible Black Undercount in 2020 by State

Texas	-\$169,700,000
Florida	-\$133,900,000
Pennsylvania	-\$103,000,000
Georgia	-\$97,400,000
North Carolina	-\$91,100,000
Louisiana	-\$85,600,000
Ohio	-\$72,700,000
Illinois	-\$70,800,000
Michigan	-\$54,700,000
Tennessee	-\$51,600,000
Mississippi	-\$47,800,000
South Carolina	-\$45,500,000
Alabama	-\$41,100,000
Missouri	-\$37,300,000

Indiana	-\$24,600,000
Wisconsin	-\$20,800,000
Arkansas	-\$17,300,000
Kentucky	-\$14,300,000
Delaware	-\$14,100,000
Oklahoma	-\$13,400,000
Arizona	-\$12,600,000
Colorado	-\$12,500,000
Nevada	-\$7,300,000
Kansas	-\$7,200,000
Iowa	-\$5,800,000
Nebraska	-\$4,000,000
Oregon	-\$4,000,000
West Virginia	-\$3,000,000

New Mexico	-\$2,200,000
Hawaii	-\$1,300,000
Maine	-\$1,300,000
South Dakota	-\$1,000,000
Utah	-\$900,000
Vermont	-\$700,000
Washington	-\$500,000
Idaho	-\$400,000
Montana	-\$200,000
New York**	\$0
California**	\$0
Maryland**	\$0
Virginia**	\$0
New Jersey**	\$0

Massachusetts**	\$0
Connecticut**	\$0
Minnesota**	\$0
District of Columbia**	\$0
Rhode Island**	\$0
North Dakota**	\$0
Alaska**	\$0
New Hampshire**	\$0
Wyoming**	\$0

*** State Children's Health Insurance Program, Title IV-E Foster Care, Title IV-E Adoption Assistance, and Child Care and Development Fund Matching Funds**

**** States with a relatively high per capita income or the District of Columbia which has a fixed Medicaid reimbursement rate would not be affected by a Black undercount in these five specific programs, but they could be harmed via other programs.**

Source: Author's calculations based on Andrew Reamer, *Report #2: Estimating Fiscal Costs of a Census Undercount to States*, Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, GW Inst. of Pub. Pol'y (March 19, 2018); Diana Elliott et al., *Assessing Miscounts in the 2020 Census*, Urb. Inst. (June 11, 2019).

Methodology: The Diana Elliott/Urban Institute high-risk-scenario

undercount percent was applied to the 2018 Black population count from the American Community Survey. This yielded an estimate of the number of uncounted Black individuals. These missing Black people were distributed proportionally among the states. Andrew Reamer's per person FMAP fiscal loss estimates was then multiplied by the state estimate of uncounted Black people. The final number is rounded. Note that these “at-risk” dollars calculated for each state assume that all the other states are not experiencing undercounts.

- [1] U.S. Const. art.1, § 2.
- [2] Andrew Reamer finds that Census data is involved in the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in public funding. The Census Bureau calculates the number at \$675 billion. Reamer argues that his accounting is more comprehensive than the Census Bureau's. It is more current. His analysis is based on Fiscal Year 2017; the Census Bureau analysis is based on Fiscal Year 2015. The Census Bureau finds 132 programs to Reamer's 316. In both cases, inflation and population growth would mean that the dollar amounts would be higher in 2020 than what is found in those analyses. Andrew Reamer, GW Inst. of Pub. Pol'y, Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Fed. Funds, Brief 7: Comprehensive Accounting of Census-Guided Federal Spending (FY2017) Part B: State Estimates 1, 9, (Feb. 2020), <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>; Marisa Hotchkiss & Jessica Phelan, Uses of Census Bureau Data in Federal Funds Distribution 3, U.S. Census Bureau (Sept. 2017), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/working-papers/Uses-of-Census-Bureau-Data-in-Federal-Funds-Distribution.pdf>.
- [3] Reamer, supra note 2, at 1.
- [4] Jessica Semega et al., Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018 at 13, U.S. Census Bureau (Sept. 2019), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-266.pdf>.
- [5] Rural Research Brief: Race & Ethnicity in Rural America 1, Housing Assistance Council (Apr. 2012), http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/research_notes/rrn-race-and-ethnicity-web.pdf.
- [6] Olugbenga Ajilore, 3 Ways to Improve the Outcomes for African Americans in the Rural South ¶1, Ctr. for Am. Progress: Economy (Aug. 6, 2019), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/08/06/470913/3-ways-improve-outcomes-african-americans-rural-south/>.
- [7] Reamer, supra note 2, at 1.
- [8] Hotchkiss & Phelan, supra note 2, at 3-5.
- [9] Kyley McGeeney et al., 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey Report: A New Design for the 21st Century (Version 2.0), U.S. Census Bureau (Jan. 24, 2019), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-cbams-study-survey.pdf>.
- [10] Id.
- [11] U.S. Census Bureau, Impact in Your Community, <https://2020census.gov/en/community-impact.html> (last visited Mar. 24, 2020).
- [12] McGeeney et al., supra note 9.
- [13] Diana Elliott et al., Assessing Miscounts in the 2020 Census 15, Urban Inst. (June 11, 2019), https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100324/assessing_miscounts_in_the_2020_census_1.pdf.
- [14] Press Release, Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census, U.S. Census Bureau (May 22, 2012), https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html.
- [15] Elliott et al., supra note 13, at 2, 15, 18.
- [16] U.S. Census Bureau, supra note 14.
- [17] American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest undercount of all the reported groups. Id.
- [18] Id.; Marc H. Morial, CEO and President, National Urban League, Testimony to House Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, 2020 Census Field Hearing (NYC) 4 (May 28, 2019).
- [19] Elliott et al., supra note 13, at 11.



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