

# CENSUS 2020: OHIOANS AT RISK OF UNDERCOUNTING AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

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Every 10 years, the United States counts every resident in the country through the Census. Census 2020 is already under way. The decennial Census count affects representation in Congress, state funding and decision-making at all levels. An accurate count ensures funding for schools, roads, public transportation, housing assistance and much more.

The Census Bureau always struggles to capture accurate estimates of certain populations—including young children, immigrants and people of color—that are historically less likely to be counted, especially when households fail to self-respond to the Census. Projections from the Urban Institute show potential miscounts for some of these groups in Ohio. In total, at least 70,000 Ohioans (0.62%) are at risk of being uncouncted.

The reasons these populations are difficult to capture are complex. They include a mix of factors that make people hard to locate, difficult to communicate with and/or unwilling to participate due to mistrust of authority:

- Those who experience poverty and housing instability are harder to locate. As lower-income individuals are more likely to move frequently, live in temporary housing units and couch surf, simply finding lower-income families is difficult. Black Ohioans tend to experience higher levels of poverty and housing insecurity than white Ohioans, which may lead to an undercount of nearly 4%.
- Families with foreign-born household members—whether naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents or undocumented immigrants—face similar challenges of housing instability, often compounded by language barriers and mistrust of authority stemming from fear of deportation. Such challenges persist in Ohio’s Hispanic community, which is projected to be undercounted by more than 3%.
- Children under five are difficult to count for several reasons. As an example, young children who split time between homes, either with divorced parents or a grandparent, may be missed if it’s not clear where they live or sleep. Parents of young children also tend to be lower-income, with a higher risk of housing instability. As such, the youngest Ohioans are at risk of being undercounted by almost 6%.

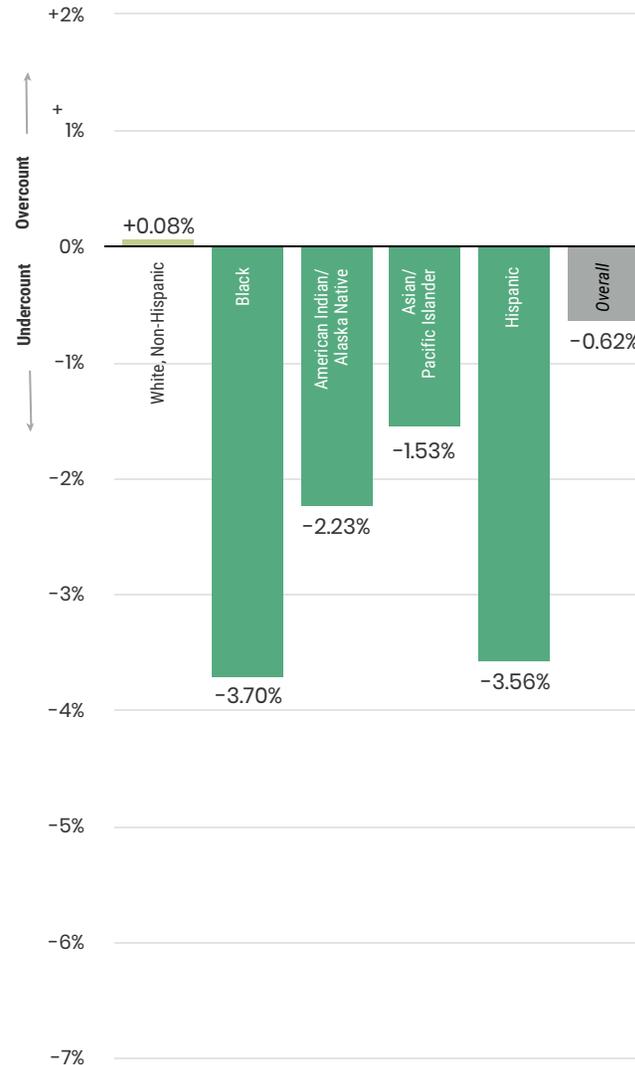
Census 2020 is now faced with an additional challenge: COVID-19.

The aforementioned projections were made before the outbreak of the disease, and likely understate the miscounting risk. Social distancing measures, as well as health concerns for Census takers, who often skew older, canvassing door-to-door during a pandemic to capture those ‘hard-to-count’ populations set up a worst-case scenario for the Census.

This is a critical issue for Ohio for a number of reasons. An undercount of the state’s population could mean a loss of seats in Congress, potentially more than would occur due to population loss alone. It would also translate into reduced funding for government programs, such as the Housing Tax Credit and Community Development Block Grants, which play a large role in providing resources for Ohio’s most vulnerable residents.

To help do your part to ensure an accurate, fair and complete count of Ohio’s population, apply to work part-time as a [Census taker](#) or get involved in a [Complete Count Committee](#). Most importantly, all Ohioans can help by completing their Census questionnaire today, either [online](#), by phone, or by mail. Visit [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov) for more information.

Potential Miscounts by Race and Ethnicity



Potential Miscounts by Age Group

