

Missing Texans in Census 2020

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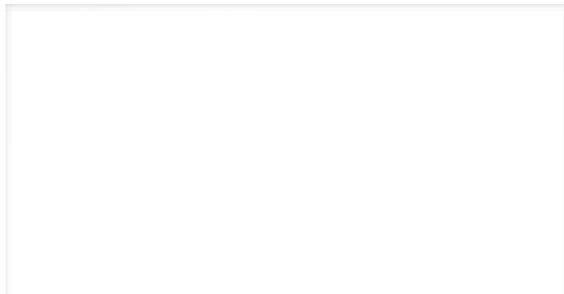
Takeaways

- Miscounts of the population in Corpus Christi and Texas may shortchange their local communities of political representation and federal funding.
- The Census Bureau and some researchers have found that the Black and Hispanic populations were more likely to be undercounted than the White and Asian populations in the 2020 Census.
- Should the census count all local residents, the Corpus Christi metro area could gain as much as \$600 million in federal funding for various public programs over the 2021-2030 period.

The population census, conducted every 10 years since 1790, is mandated by the U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 2). The original objective was to determine representations in Congress. Today, in addition to the amount of political representation for each of the 50 states, the census results have implications for federal funding among the states over the coming decade.

Like other surveys, the decennial censuses have never been perfect. Numerous factors could have affected the quality of the official surveys. These factors range from changes in the political climate, the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters to the shares of traditionally hard-to-count demographic groups, such as new immigrants, noncitizens and young children.

Follow-Up Survey



To evaluate the quality of the 2020 population Census, the Census Bureau conducted some follow-up analyses. In 2021, the Bureau conducted a [Post-Enumeration Survey \(PES\)](#) specifically to analyze the extent to which the 2020 Census overcounted or undercounted the nation's population and different demographic groups.

The PES showed that the 2020 Census had neither undercounted nor overcounted the nation's population as a whole. That follow-up survey revealed a net coverage error of -0.24% in the 2020 Census and that deviation was not statistically meaningful.

However, there is considerable variation in who was undercounted or overcounted in the Census. The results

showed that the Census had undercounted the Black, Hispanic and American Indian population groups, and overcounted the Asian and non-Hispanic White population groups. Among different age groups, the PES found that the decennial census persistently undercounted children four years old and younger.

The PES results, released in March 2022, covered the nation as a whole. Because of different shares of the various race/ethnic groups in different regions, those results also suggest variation in the Census's accuracy by geography.

Other than the Census Bureau, researchers at the policy think-tank [Urban Institute](#) have assessed the 2020 Census's performance using model simulations to project a hypothetical full count of the U.S. and state populations. Their [simulation results](#) for different states incorporate information on individual states' self-response rates and demographics, among other things.

They found that Black and Hispanic/Latinx people were most likely undercounted in Texas and nationwide. Conversely, the Census plausibly overcounted 0.39% of the nation's non-Hispanic White population due to such factors as counting the same person more than once.

According to the Urban Institute's [analysis](#), five states faced a net overcount. With the highest self-response rate of more than 75%, Minnesota is projected to have a net overcount of 0.76% for its state population. The Institute reported a net



undercount for 35 states, despite the nationwide average of 0.51%. The estimated 1.28% undercount for Texas is only smaller in percentage terms than that for Mississippi and Washington D.C.

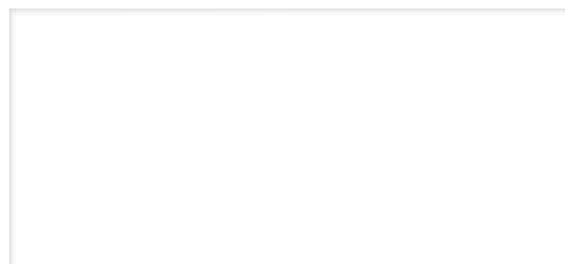
Undercounting Texas' Population

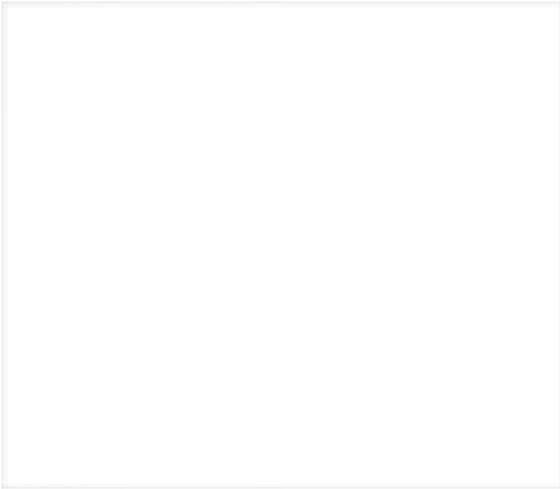
Texas is a state with much demographic diversity. The Census Bureau also reported a [self-response rate](#) of 62.8% for Texas in the 2020 Census, remarkably lower than the 67% national average. These factors potentially led to an undercount of the state's population size in the census.

The Urban Institute estimated that [1.28%](#) of the Texas population was not officially counted. That means more than 77,000 Texans! The researchers attributed much of the omission from the state population to its relatively high population shares of Blacks and Hispanics, noncitizens and young children.

Local Population Counts

Drawing on the county data from the 2020 Census, the Corpus Christi metro area had a total population of 445,763 in 2020. Following the methodology developed by the Urban Institute for evaluating the Census's accuracy, we estimate the true population size of the metro area.

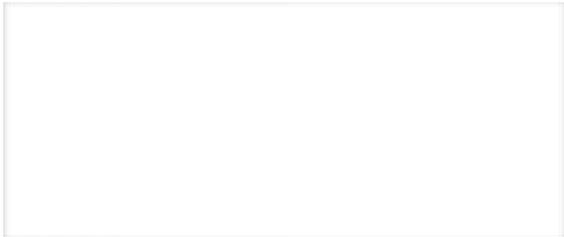




Basically, the estimate for a potential undercount or overcount of the area population derives from the Institute's projected miscounts of different demographic groups in Texas. For instance, the state of Texas faces a 2.32% undercount for its Hispanic population and a 2.57% undercount for its Black population.

Applying those statewide estimates to Corpus Christi's demographic groups produces a net undercount of 1.54% in the metro area's total population, or nearly 7,000 residents. The estimated omission from Corpus Christi's population is larger than the Urban Institute's estimated 1.28% omission of the state's population. This is mostly because of a much larger share of the Hispanic population (62%) in Corpus Christi as well as its remarkably lower self-response rate of 55.3% for the census in comparison to the state average of 62%.

The Census Bureau has also provided estimates of omissions in the census by demographic groups. Estimates for individual states are not available, so we draw on the national estimates. The results reveal that the 2020 Census potentially missed 2.67% of Corpus Christi's total population, or more than 12,000 residents.

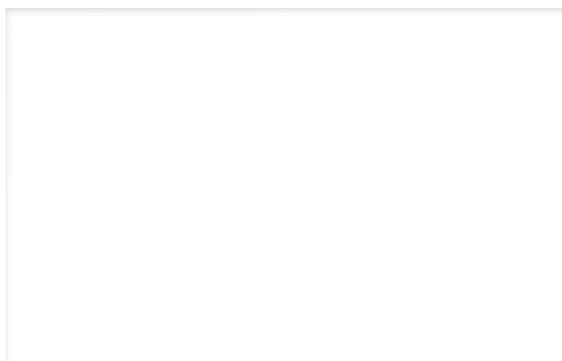


Despite the discrepancy in the estimated omissions drawing from the two different sources, it is clear that the 2020 Census likely undercounted the true population size of Corpus Christi.

Financial Consequences

One direct consequence of a population miscount is financial assistance. Hundreds of federal programs apply decennial census data in their funding formulas. When Corpus Christi has a population undercount, it would likely miss out on its rightful share of funding over the next 10 years.

The Perryman Group has estimated the potential losses of federal funding for various programs associated with undercounts in the 2020 Census. The study drew on the Urban Institute's estimate of a 1.28% undercount in the Texas population. The result is an average of \$4,916 per year for each Texan not officially counted. For the entire 2021-2030 period before the next decennial census, the state is projected to lose a cumulative total of \$18.5 billion from federal funding.



We applied those potential losses in federal dollars to the estimates of Corpus Christi residents missed by the Census. The results indicated that the metro area stands to lose between \$34 million and \$60 million per year, depending on the two alternative estimates for the Census's accuracy.

The majority of the losses are associated with shortfalls in healthcare programs. Medicaid is one of the largest federally funded programs that uses census data to determine the reimbursements for states and local authorities. An inaccurate count of the area's population would change its per capita income and Federal Medicaid Assistance percentage.

Drawing on Urban Institute's estimates for Texas, the potential loss of Medicaid reimbursements is estimated to be as much as \$8 million per year associated with an undercount of Corpus Christi's population by 2.67%.

Another major federally funded program is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). In 2021, Corpus Christi received roughly \$2.8 million from the CDBG program. Should the formula for this annual grant apply to the fully-counted population of Corpus Christi instead of the official census statistic, the area could gain nearly \$750,000 in this federal program over the 2021-2030 period.

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Cover Image U.S. Census Bureau