



Resolution on Counting Children in the U.S. 2020 Census

An official statement from the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice (formerly the American Orthopsychiatric Association)

The Global Alliance embeds its work in principles of human rights and social justice. As an organization committed to well-being for all, we are concerned that children being undercounted in the U.S. Census is a long-standing problem. Knowing how many children live in a community is critical to ensuring appropriate levels of investment in services and programs designed to promote their well-being.

In fact:

- Children represent the highest undercounted rate for any age group.
- Newborn babies and children under 5 are often missed in the Census.
- In the 2010 Census, Black and Hispanic children were much more likely to be undercounted than White children.
- Children are more likely to be living in poverty than other age groups.
- Low-income households are more likely to be missing from the Census.



The Census attempts to count every person living in the United States, every 10 years. It is an especially important civic exercise that impacts the federal funds that communities receive each year for programs and services that are critical for schools, students, and younger children. These include food assistance, Head Start, childcare, housing support, public schools, classroom technology, special education, early intervention services for children with special needs, maternal and child health programs, and children's health insurance. The Census also determines how many representatives each State can send to Congress, state and local budgets, and plans for public health crises.

A variety of factors may lead to undercounting children. For example, young children are more likely to live in complex households (e.g., large, extended families or multiple families living under one roof); families with young children may be less knowledgeable about the Census, which might reduce their willingness to participate; children may stay in more than one home; and children may not be related to the person filling out the questionnaire (e.g., foster parent) or may reside with someone experiencing a language barrier.

In 2020, there are two additional factors that may affect child counts in the Census. First, the Census will be conducted primarily online for the first time. This may reduce language barriers, as this year people can respond in more languages than ever before, with more than 99% of households being able to respond in the language they speak at home. Also, because the online version provides more space to list

household members than the paper version, more children may be counted. However, low-income households may not have access to the internet or other necessary resources (e.g., a computer or other device). Second, the current administration proposed adding a question about citizenship status to the 2020 Census. Even though the proposal was not implemented, the significant amount of discussion about the inclusion of this question and the potential lack of clarity as to whether the question is part of the 2020 Census, may leave immigrant families reluctant to respond.

The Global Alliance advocates for the promotion of equality and social justice. The organization recognizes the critical importance of investing in improving conditions for children from birth to accomplish these aims. Everyone has a part to play in ensuring that every child is counted. Failure to do so risks furthering disparities among vulnerable communities and populations.

<p style="text-align: center;">Additional Resources</p> <p>O’Hare, W. P. 2019. Differential undercounts in the U.S. Census: Who is missed? <i>Springer Open</i>. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-10973-8</p> <p>Seltzer, J. and D. K. Walker. 2020. Counting Children in the U.S. 2020 Census: Assure Our Future is Represented. <i>NAM Perspectives</i>. Commentary, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. https://doi.org/10.31478/202003d</p> <p>https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/press-kits/2018/counting-young-children-in-2020-census.pdf</p> <p>https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/languages.html</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Relevant articles from the <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i></p> <p>Jenkins, S., & Diamond, B. (1985). Ethnicity and foster care: Census data as predictors of placement variables. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i>, 55(2), 267–276.</p> <p>Bassuk, E. (1995). Dilemmas in counting the homeless: Introduction. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i>, 65(3), 318–319.</p> <p>Straw, R. B. (1995). Looking behind the numbers in counting the homeless: An invited commentary. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i>, 65(3), 330–333.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">How you can help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers and other community members to discuss the importance of families completing the 2020 Census within their networks. • Encourage adults with young children to respond. • Help promote ways to complete the Census and share good information on who should be included. • Share critical information, especially that all children should be counted, and that children and families without a permanent residence who are staying temporarily with a friend or family on April 1 should use that address. 	

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