



# U.S. Census Monitoring Board

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Phone: (301) 457-9900

4700 Silver Hill Road, Suite 1250 - 3, Suitland, MD 20746

Fax: (301) 457-9901

## **Census Affects Children in Poverty**

by Professors Donald Hernandez and Nancy Denton  
State University of New York, Albany

There is no doubt that children were disproportionately missed in the 1990 Census and that children in this country are disproportionately likely to live in poverty. Indeed, half the net undercount in the 1990 Census were children and 38 percent of people in poverty today are children. Poverty rates for children show us how well federal, state and local initiatives are working to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable members of our society. In order to accurately plan for our children, we asked how many children in poverty were missed in the 1990 Census and what are the implications for the results of the 2000 Census?

We studied the number of children missed in the last census to develop estimates of the number of children in poverty who were missed. In order to better understand how the census differential undercount affects the reporting of poverty rates, we produced new poverty estimates based on the Census Bureau's official poverty thresholds for 1990. The poverty threshold for a four person household with two children in 1990 was \$12,575.

These estimates provide an upper bound estimate and a lower bound estimate. The upper bound estimate assumes all of the children missed were in poverty whereas the lower bound estimate applies race-specific poverty rates to the number of children missed. For example, in the United States the 1990 Census counted 11,428,916 poor children but the census missed 2,099,620. If all of those children missed were in poverty, the number of children in poverty is 18 percent greater than the number counted in poverty. Applying race-specific poverty rates to the number of children missed increases the number in poverty by at least 539,769.

In reality, the actual number of children in poverty lies somewhere in between the upper bound estimates and the lower bound estimates we created. We composed estimates of the number of children in poverty missed in the last census for each state and the 50 largest cities. Overall, the number of children in poverty missed was between 539,769 and 2,099,620. Including these children, the number in poverty is 4.7 percent to 18.4 percent greater than indicated by the 1990 Census. It should be noted, however, that in geographic areas with very low child poverty rates, such as Virginia Beach, it is unlikely that the actual number of missed children in poverty approaches the total number of missed children.

Because the characteristics of persons most likely to be missed in the census – children and minorities – correlate highly with the characteristics of persons in poverty, an unadjusted 2000 Census will likely miss children in poverty. If we do not have the most accurate census numbers, federal, state and local initiatives such as Head Start, school lunch, and after-school programs will be hindered in effectively helping those who need help the most.

**Table 1. Undercount of Poor Children in 50 Largest U.S. Cities**

City	# of Poor Children Counted in 1990	Of Counted Children, % That Were Poor in 1990	Lower-Bound Estimate of Missed Poor Children		Upper-bound Estimate of Missed Poor Children	
			Total #	As % of Counted Poor Children	Total #	As % of Counted Poor Children
New York, NY	496,999	29.5	26,712	5.4	79,676	16.0
Los Angeles, CA	233,600	27.1	16,678	7.1	54,086	23.2
Chicago, IL	240,968	33.3	13,829	5.7	34,718	14.4
Houston, TX	128,602	29.5	8,906	6.9	28,846	22.4
Philadelphia, PA	112,622	29.7	7,641	6.8	18,485	16.4
San Diego, CA	49,703	19.4	3,140	6.3	11,256	22.6
Detroit, MI	138,242	45.7	8,105	5.9	17,328	12.5
Dallas, TX	67,611	26.9	4,616	6.8	16,011	23.7
Phoenix, AZ	53,169	19.9	2,611	4.9	9,730	18.3
San Antonio, TX	87,289	32.1	5,375	6.2	16,302	18.7
San Jose, CA	26,567	12.7	1,299	4.9	7,841	29.5
Baltimore, MD	57,203	31.8	3,800	6.6	11,318	19.8
San Francisco, CA	21,228	18.2	1,740	8.2	6,521	30.7
Indianapolis, IN	34,800	18.6	1,642	4.7	6,020	17.3
Jacksonville, FL	30,364	18.3	1,769	5.8	8,315	27.4
Columbus, OH	35,696	23.8	1,843	5.2	5,843	16.4
Milwaukee, WI	63,985	37.1	3,943	6.2	8,373	13.1
Memphis, TN	56,198	34.3	3,682	6.6	9,973	17.7
Washington, DC	28,610	24.5	2,086	7.3	8,369	29.3
Boston, MA	30,372	27.7	1,745	5.7	5,238	17.2
El Paso, TX	55,985	34.2	3,676	6.6	10,495	18.7
Seattle, WA	13,279	15.7	1,152	8.7	4,266	32.1
Cleveland, OH	57,692	42.3	3,207	5.6	6,666	11.6
New Orleans, LA	62,808	45.9	4,238	6.7	8,629	13.7
Nashville-Davidson, TN	22,301	20.0	1,445	6.5	6,073	27.2
Austin, TX	22,617	21.0	1,624	7.2	6,310	27.9
Denver, CO	27,499	26.9	2,179	7.9	6,006	21.8
Fort Worth, TX	29,051	24.4	1,947	6.7	7,148	24.6
Oklahoma City, OK	26,024	22.6	1,659	6.4	6,290	24.2
Long Beach, CA	29,167	26.7	2,316	7.9	7,188	24.6
Portland, OR	17,777	18.5	970	5.5	2,830	15.9
Kansas City, MO	24,064	22.4	1,463	6.1	4,288	17.8
Tucson, AZ	25,505	25.8	1,483	5.8	4,243	16.6
Atlanta, GA	39,836	41.9	2,806	7.0	6,276	15.8
Charlotte, NC	15,164	15.8	856	5.6	4,724	31.2
St. Louis, MO	38,796	38.8	2,505	6.5	5,276	13.6
Virginia Beach, VA	8,460	7.7	478	5.7	5,607	66.3*
Albuquerque, NM	18,254	19.0	820	4.5	3,278	18.0
Oakland, CA	27,580	29.8	2,896	10.5	8,817	32.0
Sacramento, CA	27,043	27.8	1,714	6.3	4,903	18.1
Miami, FL	35,367	42.9	2,831	8.0	6,560	18.5
Tulsa, OK	19,249	21.5	1,249	6.5	4,805	25.0
Minneapolis, MN	22,599	29.8	1,500	6.6	2,865	12.7
Pittsburgh, PA	23,545	32.0	1,169	5.0	2,066	8.8
Cincinnati, OH	33,638	36.9	2,287	6.8	4,879	14.5
Honolulu, HI	7,944	11.4	367	4.6	2,851	35.9
Fresno, CA	40,586	36.1	2,839	7.0	6,160	15.2
Omaha, NE	15,806	18.5	731	4.6	2,074	13.1
Toledo, OH	23,663	27.2	1,150	4.9	2,817	11.9
Buffalo, NY	30,400	38.2	1,567	5.2	2,902	9.5
<b>United States</b>	<b>11,428,916</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>532,769</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2,099,620</b>	<b>18.4</b>

\* It should be noted that in geographic areas with very low child poverty rates, such as Virginia Beach, it is especially unlikely that the actual number of missed children in poverty approaches the total number of missed children.

**Table 1 continued. Undercount of Poor Children in 50 Largest U.S. Cities**

City	# of Children Counted in 1990	# of Children Missed in 1990	Corrected # of Children in 1990	Lower-bound Estimated Poverty Rate	Upper-bound Estimated Poverty Rate
New York, NY	1,683,621	79,676	1,763,297	29.7	32.7
Los Angeles, CA	861,436	54,086	915,522	27.3	31.4
Chicago, IL	723,482	34,718	758,200	33.6	36.4
Houston, TX	435,602	28,846	464,448	29.6	33.9
Philadelphia, PA	379,287	18,485	397,772	30.2	33.0
San Diego, CA	256,853	11,256	268,109	19.7	22.7
Detroit, MI	302,457	17,328	319,785	45.8	48.6
Dallas, TX	251,238	16,011	267,249	27.0	31.3
Phoenix, AZ	266,520	9,730	276,250	20.2	22.8
San Antonio, TX	272,175	16,302	288,477	32.1	35.9
San Jose, CA	208,922	7,841	216,763	12.9	15.9
Baltimore, MD	180,043	11,318	191,361	31.9	35.8
San Francisco, CA	116,749	6,521	123,270	18.6	22.5
Indianapolis, IN	187,557	6,020	193,577	18.8	21.1
Jacksonville, FL	165,810	8,315	174,125	18.5	22.2
Columbus, OH	149,930	5,843	155,773	24.1	26.7
Milwaukee, WI	172,417	8,373	180,790	37.6	40.0
Memphis, TN	163,900	9,973	173,873	34.4	38.1
Washington, DC	116,624	8,369	124,993	24.6	29.6
Boston, MA	109,456	5,238	114,694	28.0	31.0
El Paso, TX	163,844	10,495	174,339	34.2	38.1
Seattle, WA	84,342	4,266	88,608	16.3	19.8
Cleveland, OH	136,406	6,666	143,072	42.6	45.0
New Orleans, LA	136,936	8,629	145,565	46.1	49.1
Nashville-Davidson, TN	111,630	6,073	117,703	20.2	24.1
Austin, TX	107,595	6,310	113,905	21.3	25.4
Denver, CO	102,161	6,006	108,167	27.4	31.0
Fort Worth, TX	118,885	7,148	126,033	24.6	28.7
Oklahoma City, OK	115,157	6,290	121,447	22.8	26.6
Long Beach, CA	109,189	7,188	116,377	27.1	31.2
Portland, OR	96,079	2,830	98,909	19.0	20.8
Kansas City, MO	107,649	4,288	111,937	22.8	25.3
Tucson, AZ	98,889	4,243	103,132	26.2	28.8
Atlanta, GA	95,001	6,276	101,277	42.1	45.5
Charlotte, NC	96,085	4,724	100,809	15.9	19.7
St. Louis, MO	100,104	5,276	105,380	39.2	41.8
Virginia Beach, VA	109,454	5,607	115,061	7.8	12.2
Albuquerque, NM	96,284	3,278	99,562	19.2	21.6
Oakland, CA	92,487	8,817	101,304	30.1	35.9
Sacramento, CA	97,140	4,903	102,043	28.2	31.3
Miami, FL	82,374	6,560	88,934	43.0	47.1
Tulsa, OK	89,346	4,805	94,151	21.8	25.5
Minneapolis, MN	75,817	2,865	78,682	30.6	32.4
Pittsburgh, PA	73,540	2,066	75,606	32.7	33.9
Cincinnati, OH	91,168	4,879	96,047	37.4	40.1
Honolulu, HI	69,690	2,851	72,541	11.5	14.9
Fresno, CA	112,394	6,160	118,554	36.6	39.4
Omaha, NE	85,553	2,074	87,627	18.9	20.4
Toledo, OH	87,145	2,817	89,962	27.6	29.4
Buffalo, NY	79,585	2,902	82,487	38.8	40.4

**Table 2. Undercount of Poor Children in the States**

State	# of Poor Children Counted in 1990	Of Counted Children, % That Were Poor in 1990	Lower-Bound Estimate of Missed Poor Children		Upper-bound Estimate of Missed Poor Children	
			Total #	As % of Counted Poor Children	Total #	As % of Counted Poor Children
Alaska	19,284	11.2	604	3.1	5,590	29.0
Alabama	253,636	23.9	13,209	5.2	43,888	17.3
Arkansas	155,399	25.0	7,558	4.9	25,577	16.5
Arizona	212,001	21.7	13,661	6.4	42,710	20.1
California	1,380,275	17.8	80,538	5.8	355,536	25.8
Colorado	129,565	15.1	6,840	5.3	31,268	24.1
Connecticut	79,020	10.5	3,545	4.5	12,853	16.3
District of Columbia	28,610	24.5	2,086	7.3	8,369	29.3
Delaware	19,256	11.8	1,077	5.6	7,124	37.0
Florida	525,446	18.3	29,541	5.6	136,214	25.9
Georgia	343,068	19.8	18,853	5.5	75,551	22.0
Hawaii	31,944	11.4	1,170	3.7	9,633	30.2
Iowa	101,661	14.1	1,918	1.9	8,288	8.2
Idaho	49,159	16.0	2,294	4.7	12,271	25.0
Illinois	495,505	16.8	20,620	4.2	68,623	13.8
Indiana	203,791	14.0	5,520	2.7	22,774	11.2
Kansas	93,066	14.1	2,687	2.9	11,007	11.8
Kentucky	234,012	24.5	9,158	3.9	34,717	14.8
Louisiana	380,942	31.0	21,102	5.5	55,246	14.5
Massachusetts	176,221	13.0	6,168	3.5	19,792	11.2
Maryland	128,523	11.1	7,142	5.6	52,158	40.6
Maine	41,897	13.5	656	1.6	4,684	11.2
Michigan	450,426	18.3	15,830	3.5	48,251	10.7
Minnesota	146,386	12.5	4,372	3.0	14,975	10.2
Missouri	230,058	17.5	6,880	3.0	24,366	10.6
Mississippi	248,705	33.3	13,792	5.5	34,918	14.0
Montana	44,706	20.1	2,498	5.6	9,161	20.5
North Carolina	272,923	17.0	14,571	5.3	66,325	24.3
North Dakota	29,732	16.9	1,066	3.6	2,726	9.2
Nebraska	58,474	13.6	1,555	2.7	6,457	11.0
New Hampshire	20,440	7.3	268	1.3	3,801	18.6
New Jersey	200,726	11.2	9,206	4.6	34,975	17.4
New Mexico	122,260	27.4	6,960	5.7	20,366	16.7
Nevada	38,232	13.0	2,716	7.1	13,709	35.9
New York	799,531	18.8	35,753	4.5	116,734	14.6
Ohio	493,206	17.6	15,571	3.2	52,542	10.7
Oklahoma	179,283	21.4	8,843	4.9	34,592	19.3
Oregon	111,629	15.4	4,536	4.1	25,000	22.4
Pennsylvania	432,227	15.5	14,683	3.4	47,931	11.1
Rhode Island	30,842	13.6	941	3.1	2,017	6.5
South Carolina	190,873	20.7	10,101	5.3	40,266	21.1
South Dakota	39,896	20.1	1,796	4.5	4,068	10.2
Tennessee	251,529	20.7	12,527	5.0	51,754	20.6
Texas	1,159,710	24.0	61,098	5.3	228,847	19.7
Utah	78,041	12.4	2,611	3.3	15,368	19.7
Virginia	197,382	13.1	10,410	5.3	66,369	33.6
Vermont	17,020	11.9	220	1.3	2,281	13.4
Washington	179,272	14.2	9,323	5.2	46,738	26.1
Wisconsin	188,863	14.6	6,835	3.6	21,195	11.2
West Virginia	115,073	25.9	3,996	3.5	14,612	12.7
Wyoming	19,190	14.2	912	4.8	5,403	28.2
Unweighted Average		17.3		4.3		18.7
<b>United States</b>	<b>11,428,916</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>532,769</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2,099,620</b>	<b>18.4</b>

**Table 2 continued. Undercount of Poor Children in the States**

U.S. / State	# of Children Counted in 1990	# of Children Missed in 1990	Corrected # of Children in 1990	Lower-bound Estimated Poverty Rate	Upper-bound Estimated Poverty Rate
United States	63,606,544	2,099,620	65,706,164	18.2	20.6
Alaska	171,688	5,590	177,278	11.2	14.0
Alabama	1,060,001	43,888	1,103,889	24.2	27.0
Arkansas	621,268	25,577	646,845	25.2	28.0
Arizona	978,783	42,710	1,021,493	22.1	24.9
California	7,739,479	355,536	8,095,015	18.0	21.4
Colorado	859,986	31,268	891,254	15.3	18.0
Connecticut	749,783	12,853	762,636	10.8	12.0
District of Columbia	116,624	8,369	124,993	24.6	29.6
Delaware	163,007	7,124	170,131	12.0	15.5
Florida	2,864,500	136,214	3,000,714	18.5	22.1
Georgia	1,730,650	75,551	1,806,201	20.0	23.2
Hawaii	280,225	9,633	289,858	11.4	14.3
Iowa	719,344	8,288	727,632	14.2	15.1
Idaho	307,837	12,271	320,108	16.1	19.2
Illinois	2,947,821	68,623	3,016,444	17.1	18.7
Indiana	1,457,525	22,774	1,480,299	14.1	15.3
Kansas	662,002	11,007	673,009	14.2	15.5
Kentucky	955,618	34,717	990,335	24.6	27.1
Louisiana	1,229,277	55,246	1,284,523	31.3	34.0
Massachusetts	1,351,385	19,792	1,371,177	13.3	14.3
Maryland	1,162,222	52,158	1,214,380	11.2	14.9
Maine	309,300	4,684	313,984	13.6	14.8
Michigan	2,461,723	48,251	2,509,974	18.6	19.9
Minnesota	1,167,909	14,975	1,182,884	12.7	13.6
Missouri	1,315,470	24,366	1,339,836	17.7	19.0
Mississippi	747,371	34,918	782,289	33.6	36.3
Montana	222,787	9,161	231,948	20.4	23.2
North Carolina	1,608,493	66,325	1,674,818	17.2	20.3
North Dakota	175,681	2,726	178,407	17.3	18.2
Nebraska	429,187	6,457	435,644	13.8	14.9
New Hampshire	279,123	3,801	282,924	7.3	8.6
New Jersey	1,798,664	34,975	1,833,639	11.4	12.9
New Mexico	446,439	20,366	466,805	27.7	30.6
Nevada	294,759	13,709	308,468	13.3	16.8
New York	4,256,301	116,734	4,373,035	19.1	21.0
Ohio	2,803,796	52,542	2,856,338	17.8	19.1
Oklahoma	836,845	34,592	871,437	21.6	24.5
Oregon	724,407	25,000	749,407	15.5	18.2
Pennsylvania	2,796,942	47,931	2,844,873	15.7	16.9
Rhode Island	226,005	2,017	228,022	13.9	14.4
South Carolina	922,048	40,266	962,314	20.9	24.0
South Dakota	198,945	4,068	203,013	20.5	21.7
Tennessee	1,215,656	51,754	1,267,410	20.8	23.9
Texas	4,835,352	228,847	5,064,199	24.1	27.4
Utah	627,928	15,368	643,296	12.5	14.5
Virginia	1,504,327	66,369	1,570,696	13.2	16.8
Vermont	143,580	2,281	145,861	11.8	13.2
Washington	1,258,460	46,738	1,305,198	14.4	17.3
Wisconsin	1,290,734	21,195	1,311,929	14.9	16.0
West Virginia	444,206	14,612	458,818	26.0	28.3
Wyoming	135,081	5,403	140,484	14.3	17.5
Unweighted Average				17.5	19.8

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The U.S. Census Monitoring Board, established by Congress in 1997, is a bipartisan board that monitors the Census Bureau's preparations for the 2000 Census. Its findings are reported periodically to Congress.

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