

The 2020 Census Undercount of Children in Texas Counties

Part 1 of 5, Research Series, The Children's Census Initiative

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

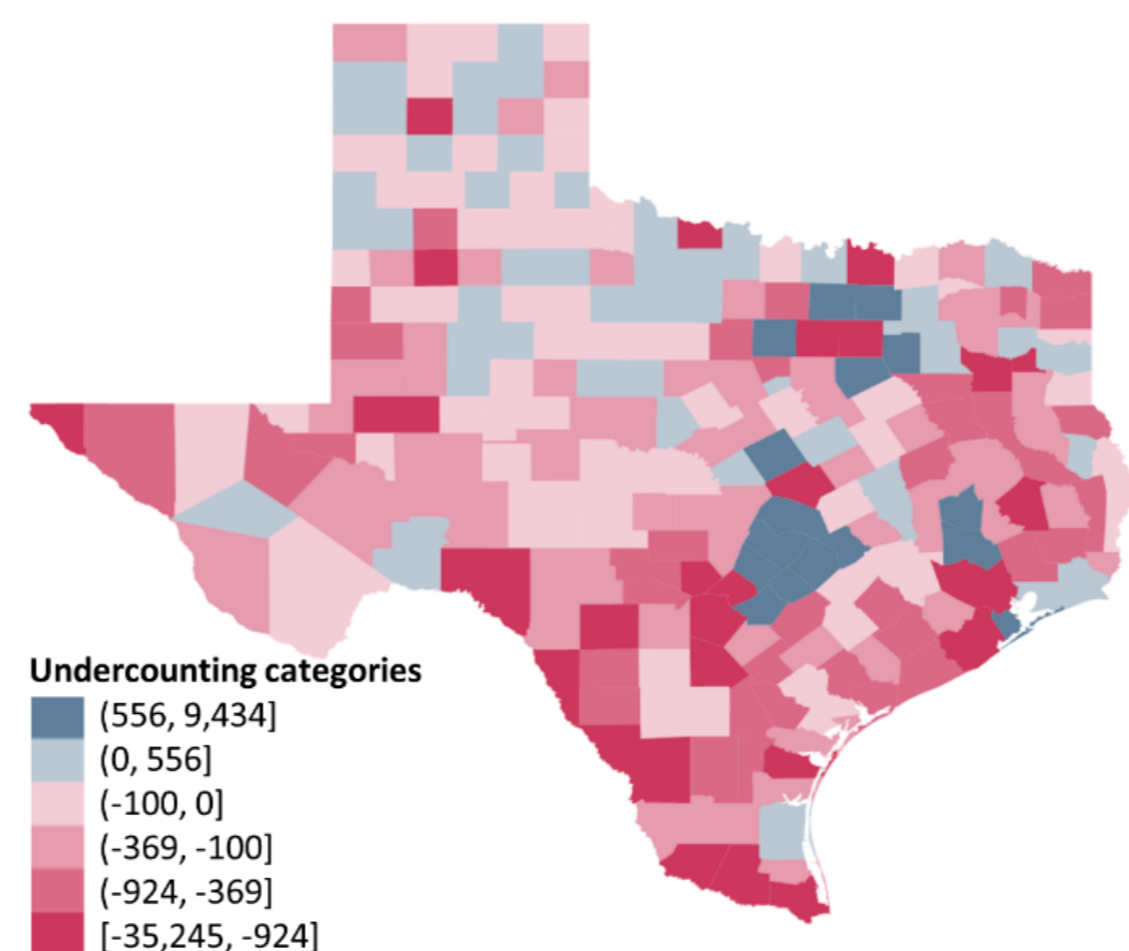
There was a substantial undercount of children in the 2020 U.S. Census and particularly in Texas. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Demographic Analysis, the net undercount of children in the U.S. Census increased from 1.7% in 2010 to 2.1% in 2020. The net undercount of children contrasts with a 0.2% overcount for adults. While these national numbers are informative, state and local data from the decennial census is critical to gain a constructive understanding of the issue.

However, little is known about undercounting children at the county level. To inform this issue, we estimated the Texas net child undercount at the county level and studied its spatial distribution using data from the 2020 Census and the Vintage 2020 population estimates. This study builds on the work of Dr. William P. O'Hare, who finds Texas had more counties with high net undercounts of children than any other state (either in number or rate terms).

MAIN FINDINGS

- ✓ The 2020 Census undercounted an estimated 153,633 children in Texas.
- ✓ 190 out of 254 Texas counties (74.8%) experienced a net child undercount.
- ✓ Dallas County, in the Metroplex region, experienced the largest county undercount (35,245 children).
- ✓ 71.8% of child undercount in Texas occurs in three of its twelve regions: South Texas, Gulf Coast, and Metroplex.

Child Undercount by County



AUTHOR'S MESSAGE

The net undercount of children (age 0 to 17) in the U.S. Census is high and has been growing in recent decades. This study provides a detailed analysis of child undercounts at the county and regional level in Texas and explores its regional patterns. These results can serve as a roadmap for deeper analysis.

Census-related data is used to determine the distribution of funding for 350+ federal programs, totalling more than \$2.8 trillion each year. Counties with an undercount will not receive the full federal funding they are entitled to, impacting budgets for things like schools, health centers, and childcare centers.

Furthermore, counties with an undercount will not have accurate data for future planning.

To address the impact of an undercount, leaders may want to explore ways to compensate counties that experience a high undercount of children. Similarly, leaders in counties with a high undercount of children may want to work with the Census Bureau to look for additional ways to correct the undercount of children in future censuses. The results shown here can be used to start building a targeted approach to increasing the count accuracy of children in the 2030 Census.