TEXAS CENSUS INSTITUTE

The 2020 Census Undercount of Children in Texas Counties

Part 2 of 5, Research Series, The Children's Census Initiative

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Estimates suggest the 2020 Census undercounted 153,633 children in net terms (2.1% of Texas children). While these state-level numbers are informative, some counties experienced much higher undercount rates. To inform this issue, we examine the 2020 county-level high net child undercount in Texas and study 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

✓ In Texas, 117 of 254 counties (46.1%) had a high net undercount of children (rate, number, or both).

✓ 65.7% of Texas children live in a county with a high net child undercount (rate, number, or both).

✓ 30 counties (11.8%) in Texas had a high net child undercount rate and number, with a net 92,679 child undercount, which is 6.4% of their children.

✓ 30 counties had a high net child undercount rate and number, accounting for 46.7% of the net child undercount that occurs among the 190 counties with a net child undercount.

✓ 65 counties with a high percentage of undercounted children also had a low undercount number.

✓ 11 of the 14 Texas counties on the U.S.-Mexico border have high net child undercounts (rate, number, or both).

✓ The 14 counties on the U.S.-Mexico border have a net child undercount of 37,892 children (24.7% of the net child undercount in Texas).

Figure 1 Net undercount rate for children and adults:1950-2020

Note: Negative and positive values indicate net undercounting and net overcounting respectively.

Figure 2 Texas' counties net child undercount rates and numbers.

Undercounting categories
- Low Rate & Low Number
- Low Rate & High Number
- High Rate & Low Number
- High Rate & High Number

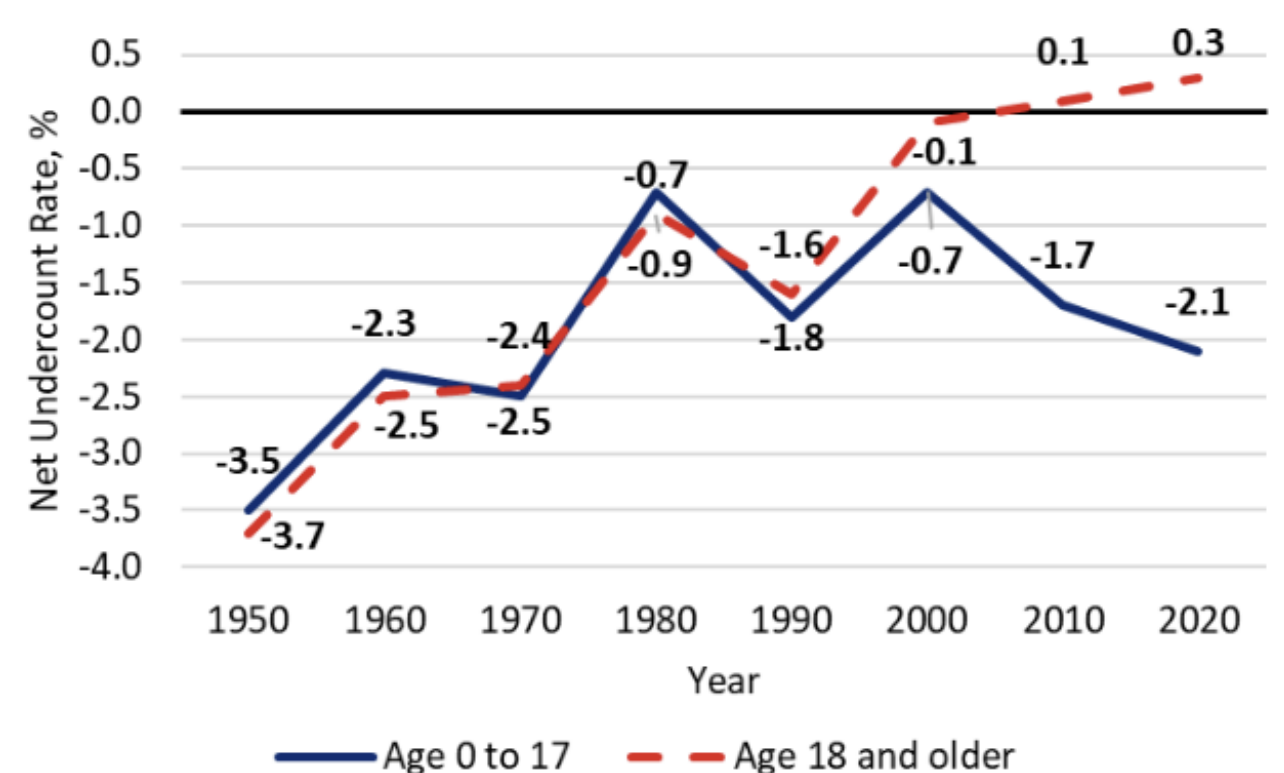**Note:** Uncolored counties experienced a net child overcounting.

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 high child undercounts at the county 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, totaling 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.

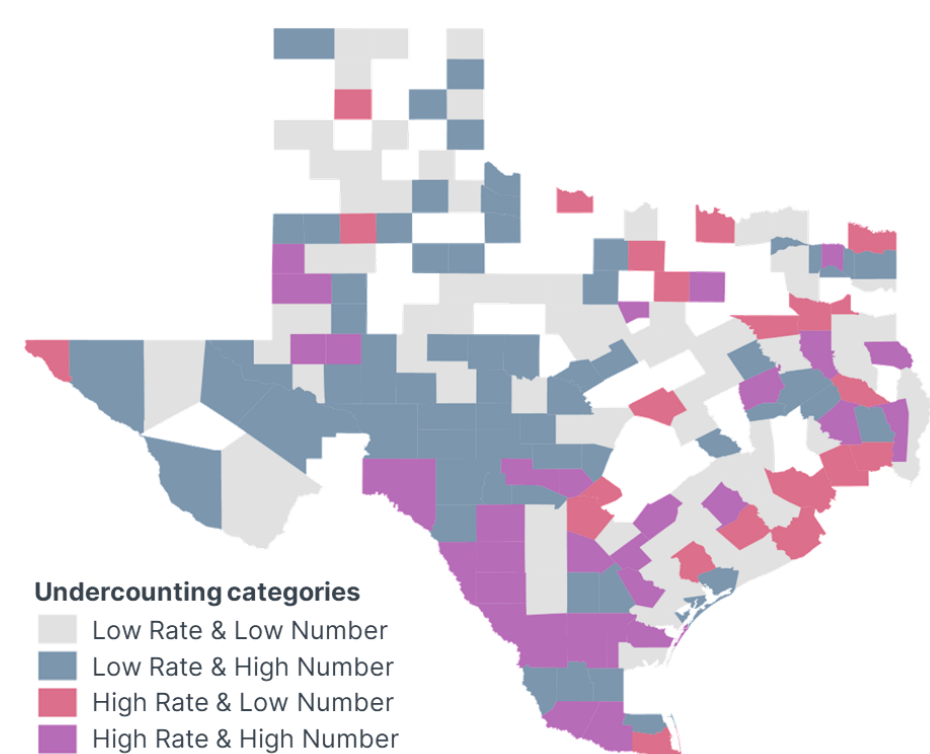Furthermore, counties with an undercount will not have accurate data for future planning.

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.