



Webinar Resources & Session Summary

2020 Census City Undercounts: Risks, Consequences, and Solutions

On January 14th, the National League of Cities hosted a webinar on the questions that remain for all cities concerned about an undercount; how, and how accurately, the Bureau will be able to fill in the gaps for cities' population counts and characteristics, data that ultimately impact federal funding allocation, federal grant eligibility, and where and who is represented in city council districts, among other things.

Using the stark example of college towns after the spring 2020 exodus of students immediately following COVID-related lockdown orders, attendees learned about the sources and risks of an undercount in cities, obstacles to getting an accurate final count through data, and what cities may still be able to do ensure an accurate final count. Thank you to our partners, The Beek Center for Social Impact and the UMass Donahue Institute's Economic and Public Policy Research Unit, and our speakers, Denice Ross, Mayor Steve Patterson, and Susan Strate.

We've collected supporting materials plus additional resources to inform cities on how to best ensure accurate final count data by developing a strong relationship with their local or state demographer, Census Bureau regional or headquarters partner, and local universities, landlords, and other city agencies to ensure that people who should have been counted in your locality were.

From the Webinar:

Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates

Individuals in your state that you can reach out to for assistance with local count questions.

Census Self-Response Rates

- Census website: <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/self-response.html>
- Data World <https://data.world/uscensusbureau/2020-census-response-rate-data>

College Geographic Locations

- <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/SchoolLocations>
- See: [Postsecondary School File](#)
- Filtered by 4-year institutions with 1,000+ undergrads

Census Planning Database

- <https://www.census.gov/topics/research/guidance/planning-databases.html>
- Use for demographic data at small (block group) geographic area

U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey Data

- Block group data of 18-24 year olds and enrolled in college ACS_16_5YR_B14007
- Link - <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=B14007>

2010 Census data

- <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/datasets.2010.html>

2010 Census data and shapefiles

- Data link – <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/datasets.2010.html>
- Shapefile link – <https://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/tiger-line-file.2010.html>

Census@ncoc.org

Email the National Conference on Citizenship if you would like to stay informed about future initiatives around final count data quality.

Q&A and Shared Ideas

Will adjustments to counts via CQR or other means affect apportionment data?

No, it will probably not.

Won't some states receive more federal dollars than others due to issues with the count?

Data about the quality of the count does not usually come until a couple of years after. The Bureau, however, this time is seeking to release this information contemporaneously and allow outside experts to weigh in.

What is the process for someone that might be counted twice, say at their college location and their permanent address? How does the Census account for people that have been displaced by the pandemic or natural disasters, or other events?

The Census Bureau is the one to best answer to their de-duplication process.

Is there access to a list of colleges that provided administrative data?

Currently there isn't but this is something that Mayor Patterson expressed may be an initiative that could be taken up through the ITGA or NLC's University Cities Council.

Is a special census feasible for a large city?

It depends on the financial situation of the city. For now, it is best to focus on adjusting the Bureau's count question resolution and population estimate challenge programs to accommodate situations where cities are concerned about an undercount.

What happens to a city's count after annexation?

Make sure to submit annexation information via the annual [Census Bureau Boundary and Annexation Survey](#).