



UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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Inaccurate Census Could Jeopardize Progress for Washington's Children

Citizenship question, inadequate funding for outreach, other factors will mean too many kids don't get counted in the 2020 census

SEATTLE — Nearly 1 in 6 Washington children under age 5 live in neighborhoods where there's a high risk that the U.S. census will fail to count them accurately, says a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. An inaccurate 2020 census will erode essential public services for children in Washington and across the country, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today.

Funding for essential health care, early education and K-12 learning, and other basic services depend on an accurate count of our communities. In Washington state, more than \$3 billion in federal dollars are allocated yearly to Medicaid, food assistance, Head Start and other programs that help families meet basic needs.

Low-income children, children of color and children living in immigrant households are at greatest risk of being undercounted. The census may also miss children growing up in rural areas, tribal lands or in urban neighborhoods where census workers may have a hard time reaching households.

Some kids won't be counted in the census because they may be living with nonrelatives, highly mobile or homeless, or their households may lack an adult fluent in English. Other households may not provide full information about all household members on the survey because they are multigenerational households or families who share custody of children.

Further, the Trump administration's proposed addition of an unnecessary question about citizenship will discourage countless others from filling out the 2020 census. People without documentation and their families will be afraid that participation will result in having their lives, their families or their communities torn apart by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"To give kids the full and equal opportunities to grow and thrive so they can be counted on in the future, we need to count them now," said Paola Maranan, executive director of the Children's

Alliance. “Without robust efforts to get an accurate 2020 census, we place our shared future in jeopardy.”

In Washington state, an estimated 67,000 of the state’s 447,000 children under age 5 live in census tracts where households responded poorly by mail to the 2010 census—and may do so again in 2020. These census tracts are located in urban and suburban King, Pierce and Thurston counties; on tribal lands far from the I-5 corridor; and in rural areas across the state.

The *Data Book* notes that the threat of greater inaccuracies in the census coincides with the child population passing a landmark: in 2020, most of the U.S. population aged 18 and under will be of color.

“This is doubly troubling,” said Misha Werschkul, executive director of the Washington State Budget & Policy Center. “Low-income children, children of color and kids living in immigrant families stand to be disproportionately undercounted, while also having the most to lose as vital programs are sapped of public investment.”

“Quality data paint a picture of kids in all our communities, so we can all share the civic responsibility of making wise policy choices,” said Maranan. “The last-minute addition of a citizenship question by the Trump administration is a grave threat to the health of that project.”

“An inaccurate 2020 census also undermines our cherished democratic norms of fair representation,” says George Cheung, program director of the Washington non-profit More Equitable Democracy, which is working alongside other community-based organizations to encourage full participation in the 2020 count.

“Political power starts with the census,” says Cheung. “When we fail to count kids and families, we fail to live up to the most fundamental value of a representative democracy.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* ranks each state across four domains of child well-being: health; education; economic well-being; and family and community.

Washington state, which ranked 15th among the 50 states overall, ranked in the top 5 for child health. The percentage of uninsured Washington children fell by half from 2010 to 2016, from 6 to 3 percent. This progress is partially due to state-level efforts to connect more children with affordable, preventive health care through Apple Health for Kids. Apple Health for Kids is supported by federal investments in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, with funding allocations that depend on population estimates derived from the census.

Our state has the greatest room for improvement in the education domain, where it ranks 26th. One in 5 students don’t graduate on time, and almost 60 percent of three- and four-year-olds are not enrolled in preschool.

The broader indicators also harbor significant disparities by race and ethnicity, according to KIDS COUNT in Washington. For example, while the state’s childhood poverty rate has declined by 22 percent from 2010 to 2016, poverty levels among children of color remain much

higher. Poverty is 71 percent more prevalent among Latino children, for example, than among the general population.

KIDS COUNT in Washington recommends that two things about the flawed census be changed. First, federal officials need to allocate sufficient funds to support a more accurate census in which as many people as possible can be counted. Second, the census form should be true to the purpose of the count that was originally stipulated in the U.S. Constitution: to count *all* people who live within U.S. borders. Questions that ask about citizenship will undermine participation—and they are simply not required.

“For kids to count, we have to count them,” said Werschkul. “The time we have to plan for the 2020 census is rapidly fleeting. Robust outreach to fully count all kids must be a priority of the U.S. Census Bureau.”

Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About KIDS COUNT in Washington

[KIDS COUNT in Washington](#) is a partnership of the [Children’s Alliance](#) and the [Washington State Budget & Policy Center](#), pursuing measurable improvements in child outcomes through equitable public policy measures. The two organizations offer policymakers and the public the knowledge they need to remove the barriers kids face to brighter, freer, more equal futures. For more information, visit www.kidscountwa.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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