A Glossary of Census Terms

By the Population Reference Bureau
KIDS COUNT
KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. At the national level, the principal activity of the initiative is the publication of the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book, which uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children. The Foundation also funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed community-by-community picture of the condition of children.

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB)
Founded in 1929, the Population Reference Bureau is the leader in providing timely, objective information on U.S. and international population trends and their implications. PRB informs policymakers, educators, the media, and concerned citizens working in the public interest around the world through a broad range of activities, including publications, information services, seminars and workshops, and technical support. PRB is a nonprofit, nonadvocacy organization. Our efforts are supported by government contracts, foundation grants, individual and corporate contributions, and the sale of publications.

KIDS COUNT/PRB Reports on Census 2000
This paper is part of a series of reports on the 2000 Census prepared for the nationwide network of KIDS COUNT projects. These reports have been guided by the recommendations of an expert advisory group of data users and child advocates, brought together in a series of meetings by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau. Members of the advisory group have provided valuable assistance about how to interpret and use data from the 2000 Census.

A list of the advisory group members can be found at the back of this report.

For more information or for a pdf version of this report, visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT Web site at www.kidscount.org or PRB’s Ameristat Web site at www.ameristat.org.

© 2001 Annie E. Casey Foundation
Material may be reproduced free of charge for classroom or non-commercial use, provided that full credit is given to the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
A Glossary of Census Terms

The Population Reference Bureau

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and
The Population Reference Bureau
July 2001
A Glossary of Census Terms

Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (ACE) survey
A scientific survey conducted by the Census Bureau after the 2000 Census to determine the accuracy of the direct enumeration of the population, accounting for any people missed or double-counted. After the direct enumeration, the Census Bureau reinterviewed 314,000 households. Once the error rates had been estimated at the national and local levels, the Census Bureau could have scientifically adjusted the numbers to “account” for the undercount—if it believed that doing so would yield more accurate results. In March 2001, the Bureau recommended against adjustment for congressional redistricting purposes. Information about the ACE is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/feasibility.htm.

Adjusted data
Decennial census data that account for people missed or double-counted in the direct enumeration of the population. Adjusted data from the 1990 Census are available on the Census Bureau website at: http://tier2.census.gov/pl94171/pl94index.htm. As of July 2001, adjusted data for the 2000 Census have not been released.

American Community Survey (ACS)
A large, continuous survey of U.S. households that is designed to provide annual data for state and local areas later this decade. Questions in the ACS closely match those in the decennial census long-form questionnaire. The survey is currently underway in 31 sites around the country, and will be implemented nationwide by 2003, assuming it receives the necessary funding from Congress. Information about the ACS and 1996-1999 data for selected sites can be found on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/acs/www/. Detailed ACS data are also available through American FactFinder at: http://factfinder.census.gov.

American FactFinder (AFF)
A web-based system for retrieving data from the 1990 Census, the 2000 Census, the American Community Survey, and the 1997 Economic Census. Data users can select detailed tables for states, counties, cities, congressional districts, and other geographic areas. Census 2000 redistricting data were released in March 2001, and detailed short form data for states and local areas will be available on a flow basis by state between June and September 2001. American FactFinder can be accessed on the Census Bureau website at: http://factfinder.census.gov.

Apportionment
The process of dividing up the 435 seats in the House of Representatives among the 50 states. The Census Bureau's role in apportionment is to conduct the census every 10 years as required by the Constitution, and to use the results of the census to calculate the number of House seats each state should have. The state population totals that will be used to apportion the 108th Congress are currently available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/apportionment.html.
Block
A subdivision of a census tract, and the smallest geographic unit for which the Census
Bureau tabulates short form (i.e., 100-percent) data. Many blocks correspond to
individual city blocks bounded by streets, but blocks—especially in rural areas—may
cover many square miles. More than 8 million blocks have been identified for the 2000
Census. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is
available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glosry2.html.

Block group
A subdivision of a census tract, and the smallest geographic area for which the Census
Bureau tabulates long form (i.e., sample) data. A block group consists of all the blocks
within a census tract that have the same initial number. For example, block group 3
consists of all blocks numbering from 3001 to 3999 within the same 2000 Census tract.
A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available
at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glosry2.html.

Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal
A trial run for the official 2000 Census, conducted in 1998 in three locations in the
United States: Sacramento, California; surrounding counties of Columbia, South
Carolina; and the Menomonee Reservation in Wisconsin. The Dress Rehearsal was
conducted in order to test and evaluate new procedures for the 2000 Census, such as
statistical sampling and identification of multiracial individuals.

Census 2000 Supplemental Survey (C2SS)
A survey conducted nationwide in 700,000 households in 2000, using the questionnaire
from the American Community Survey. Data for states and cities with more than
250,000 people will be available on the Census Bureau website beginning in late July
2001. The information available from the C2SS will be very similar to the state-level
data from the 2000 Census long form.

Census Day
The reference date for the decennial census. For the 2000 Census, Census Day was April
1, 2000.

Census long form (sample) questionnaire
Mailed to approximately one in six households nationally. It contains all of the questions
on the census short form, plus additional questions on education, family structure,
household characteristics, income, place of residence, and other characteristics. For more
information about the data available from the long form, visit the Census Bureau website

Census short form (100-percent) questionnaire
Mailed to every household identified by the Census Bureau. Contains basic population
and housing questions, including age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, and relationship to
householder. For more information about the data available from the short form, visit the
Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/infoquest.html.
Census tract
A small, relatively permanent subdivision of a county delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting data. Census tracts average about 4,000 inhabitants. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

Confidence interval
An interval that shows the degree of uncertainty associated with an estimate. For example, a 90 percent confidence interval for a poverty estimate can be interpreted roughly as providing 90 percent certainty that the true number of people in poverty falls between the upper and lower bounds.

Congressional district
After the census determines the number of House representatives for each state, each representative is assigned to a congressional district. The state population is equally divided among its congressional districts. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

County
The primary legal subdivision of most states. In Louisiana, these subdivisions are known as parishes, and in Alaska, which has no counties, the county equivalents are boroughs and census areas. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

Current Population Survey (CPS)
A monthly nationwide survey of the noninstitutionalized civilian population. About 50,000 households are interviewed each month. The basic monthly survey includes a wide variety of demographic and employment questions. Supplemental questions are often added to the regular CPS questionnaire to collect information on school enrollment, voting behavior, work schedules, fertility, food security, and other special topics. The Annual Demographic Survey or March CPS supplement is the primary source of detailed information on income and work experience in the United States. Numerous reports based on the monthly CPS data files are available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov. Additional information about this survey can be found on the Bureau of Labor Statistics website at: www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm.

Decennial census
The Constitution mandates that a census be conducted once every 10 years to determine how many representatives should be allocated to each state. The decennial census is our most comprehensive source of population and housing data at the local level.
Demographic analysis
A process used to estimate the size of the population using birth, death, and migration records. Population estimates based on demographic analysis can be compared with decennial census counts to determine the accuracy of the direct enumeration of the population.

Demographic Profiles
Reports based on the short form (i.e., 100-percent) data, including data on age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, household relationship, household type, group quarters, housing occupancy, and housing tenure. Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics are released as individual files for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Reports are available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/demoprofile.html.

Differential undercount
A phrase used to describe the disproportionate share of people missed among certain groups, including racial groups (especially African Americans and Hispanics), children, people in urban areas, and people in sparsely populated rural areas. There are also geographic differences in the undercount. For example, many high-growth states like California, Texas, and Arizona have higher undercounts than the rest of the country. More information about the differential undercount in the 2000 Census is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/EscapRep.html.

Economic census
Collective name for the censuses of construction, manufactures, minerals, minority- and women-owned businesses, retail trade, service industries, transportation, and wholesale trade, conducted by the Census Bureau every five years, in years ending in 2 and 7. Data from the 1997 Economic Census are currently available online through American FactFinder at: http://factfinder.census.gov.

Employed
Civilian people ages 16 and over who reported either to have been actively working or temporarily absent from work during the reference week.

Ethnicity (Hispanic origin)
The cultural practices, language, cuisine, and traditions—not biological or physical differences—used to distinguish groups of people. In the decennial census and most federal surveys, ethnicity is used to refer to Spanish/Hispanic/Latino heritage as a separate category from race. More information on ethnicity can be found on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic.html.

Extreme poverty
Usually defined as less than 50 percent of the poverty threshold.
Family
A householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Family household
A household in which any relatives of the householder are present in the household. There are three basic types of family households: married-couple, female-headed (no husband present), and male-headed (no wife present).

Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS)
Codes assigned to a variety of geographic entities including congressional districts, counties, places, and states. More information about FIPS codes is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/geo/www/fips/fips.html.

Full-time
Usually defined as working 35 or more hours per week and at least 50 weeks during the year.

Group quarters population
All people not living in households. The Census Bureau recognizes two general categories of people in group quarters: (1) the institutionalized population and (2) the noninstitutionalized population. The institutionalized population includes people living in correctional institutions, nursing homes, hospitals, juvenile institutions, and other institutions where residents are under supervised care or custody. The noninstitutionalized population includes all people living in college dormitories, group homes, military quarters, and other noninstitutional group quarters.

Hispanic origin (see Ethnicity.)

Household
One or more people occupying a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated people who share living arrangements.

Household income
The combined pre-tax income of each person in the household who is 15 years old or over. This measure refers to income reported for the year prior to the survey.

Householder
The person, or one of the people, who owns or rents the home. If there is no such person present, any household member 15 years old or over can serve as the householder for the purposes of the census.
Housing unit
A house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as a separate dwelling.

Imputation
When census data are missing or inconsistent, the Census Bureau uses a method called imputation to assign values. Imputation relies on the statistical principle of “homogeneity,” or the tendency for households within a small geographic area to have similar characteristics. For example, a housing unit that did not report owner/renter status is likely to be assigned to the “rented” category if that household is in a neighborhood with several apartment complexes.

Income
Collected for people ages 15 and over. It is the amount of money received during the previous year from a variety of sources, including earnings, unemployment and worker’s compensation, social security, supplemental security income, public assistance, veteran’s payments, survivor benefits, disability benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates and trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, financial assistance from outside of the household, and other income.

Labor force
Includes all people classified in the civilian labor force, plus members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The civilian labor force consists of people classified as employed or unemployed.

Married-couple household
A household in which the householder and his or her spouse are enumerated as members of the same household.

Microdata
Data on individuals that are not aggregated to a larger geographic area. Examples of microdata include Current Population Survey (CPS) data and the Public-Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). To ensure confidentiality, the Census Bureau publishes microdata only after it is stripped of all identifying information.

Net undercount
Used to describe the difference between the number of people missed (undercount) and the number of people double-counted (overcount) in the decennial census. In 1990, there was an undercount of 8.4 million people and an overcount of 4.4 million people, yielding a net undercount of about 4 million people. The net undercount rate is calculated by dividing the net undercount by the total adjusted population. The net undercount rate in 1990 was 1.6 percent for the total population, and 3.2 percent for children. In 2000, the net undercount was estimated at 1.2 percent for the total population and 1.5 percent for children. More information about the net undercount in the 2000 Census is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/EscapRep.html.
Nonfamily household
A householder living alone or with nonrelatives.

Overcount
A term used to describe the number of people in the census who are counted twice. These are mostly college students, people with two homes, and retirees who travel between states during the year. The overcount is determined after the results of a post-census survey are compared with the original census count. The post-census survey results are combined in a formula with the official census results to get an estimated adjusted count. If the official count is greater than the adjusted count, there has been an overcount. More information is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/EscaRep.html.

Own children
A child under 18 years old who is a son or daughter by birth, marriage (a stepchild), or adoption. For tables based on short form (i.e., 100-percent) data, own children consist of all sons and daughters of householders who are under 18 years of age. For sample data, own children consist of sons and daughters of householders who are under 18 years of age and who have never been married. The numbers of own children of householders may therefore be different in these two tabulations.

Part-time
Usually defined as working less than 35 hours per week or less than 50 weeks during the year.

Places
Include incorporated places or census-designated places (CDPs). Incorporated places are legally defined by a state government and include cities, towns, boroughs, and villages with state mandated powers. CDPs are areas constructed by the Census Bureau for census purposes. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

Post-enumeration survey (PES)
A procedure used in the 1990 Census to estimate statistically the extent of overcounting and undercounting. The PES is the 1990 equivalent of the Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation procedure conducted in 2000.

Poverty
Determined based on income received during the year prior to the interview. For example, tabulations of poverty status in 1999 are presented for people as of 2000.

Poverty thresholds
Used by the Census Bureau to determine who is “poor.” Poverty thresholds differ by family size and are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. However, they do not take into account geographic differences in the cost of living.
Public Law 105-119 (PL 105-119)
A 1997 law that requires the Census Bureau to release unadjusted data from the decennial census—regardless of whether or not these data ultimately become the official census numbers.

Public Law 94-171 (PL 94-171)
A 1975 law that requires the Census Bureau to provide redistricting data for the 50 states. Within a year after Census Day, the Census Bureau must send the data to redraw districts for the state legislature to each state's governor and the majority and minority legislative leaders.

Public Law 94-171 (redistricting) data
Data file containing counts of the total population and the adult population (ages 18 and older) by race and Hispanic origin for geographic areas down to the block level. Data are available through American FactFinder and on CD-ROM. For more information, visit the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/clo/www/redistricting.html

Public-Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)
Special geographic areas constructed by the Census Bureau for use in the Public-Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). These special areas are created in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

Public-Use Microdata Samples (PUMS)
Data files containing population and housing information from a subset of individual responses to the decennial census. The 2000 Census will include a 1-percent PUMS file, with data for geographic areas with at least 400,000 people, and a 5-percent PUMS file, for areas with at least 100,000 people. The 1-percent PUMS file will be released on CD-ROM in 2002 and the 5-percent file will be released in 2003.

Race
A subjective term—not biological or physical differences—used to distinguish groups of people. In the decennial census, respondents select the race or races with which they most closely identify. As defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the racial categories in the 2000 Census were: White, Black/African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and “Some other race.” The 2000 Census was the first census that allowed respondents to select more than one racial category. More information on race can be found on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race.html.

Reapportionment
The redistribution of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives on the basis of the most recent decennial census as required by Article 1, section 2 of the Constitution. State population totals that will be used to apportion the 108th Congress are currently available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/apportionment.html.
Redistricting
The process of revising the geographic boundaries of areas from which people elect representatives to the U.S. Congress, a state legislature, a county or city council, or a school board. Such areas are designed to be as equal in population as possible following a census. For more information, visit the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/clo/www/redistricting.html.

Reference person
A central person in a household or family. Others in the household are identified by their relationship to this reference person.

Related children
All people in a household under the age of 18 who are related to the householder. Does not include householder's spouse or foster children, regardless of age.

Rural
Territory, population, and housing units not classified as urban. There can be "rural" territories within both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

Sample
A scientific, random selection of individuals from a population.

Sampling error
Errors that occur because only part of the population is directly contacted. Sampling error, unlike nonsampling error, is measurable.

Single-parent household
A householder with no husband/wife present, residing with one or more children.

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)
This program provides estimates of income and poverty for states, counties, and school districts. Beginning with 1995, these estimates are available every year for states and every odd-numbered year for local areas. The data are modeled after the Current Population Survey’s income and poverty estimates. The main purpose of SAIPE is to distribute funds for state and local programs. SAIPE information and data are available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe.html.

Some other race
For data product purposes, “Some other race” includes race responses not included in the “White,” “Black or African American,” “American Indian and Alaska Native,” “Asian,” or “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” race categories. Respondents providing write-in entries such as multiracial, mixed, interracial, or a Hispanic/Latino group (for example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban) are included in the “Some other race” category.
Standard error
A measure of the deviation of a sample estimate from the average of all possible samples. The standard error is used to construct confidence intervals around an estimate.

State legislative district
An area from which members are elected to state legislatures.

Summary File 1 (SF1)
This file presents 100-percent population and housing data for the total population, for 63 race categories, and for many other racial and ethnic categories. SF1 data are available for the United States, regions, divisions, states, counties, county subdivisions, places, census tracts, block groups, blocks, metropolitan areas, urban areas, American Indian and Alaska Native areas, tribal subdivisions, Hawaiian home lands, congressional districts, and ZIP Code Tabulation Areas. Data for states and local areas are being released on CD-ROM and on American FactFinder on a flow basis by state between June and September 2001. For more information, visit the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/sumfile1.html.

Summary File 2 (SF2)
Presents data similar to the information included in Summary File 1. These data are shown down to the census tract level for detailed racial/ethnic categories and for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes that meet a specified minimum population size requirement. Data for states and local areas will be available on CD-ROM and on American FactFinder on a flow basis by state between September and December 2001.

Summary File 3 (SF3)
This file presents sample population and housing data for a limited number of racial and ethnic categories. The data are available for the United States, regions, divisions, states, counties, county subdivisions, places, census tracts, block groups, metropolitan areas, urban areas, American Indian and Alaska Native areas, tribal subdivisions, Hawaiian home lands, congressional districts, and Zip Code Tabulation Areas. Data for states and local areas will be available on CD-ROM and on American FactFinder on a flow basis by state between June and September 2002.

Summary File 4 (SF4)
This file presents data similar to the information included in Summary File 3. These data are shown down to the census tract level for detailed racial and ethnic categories, American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, and ancestry groups that meet a specified minimum population size requirement. Data for states and local areas will be available on CD-ROM and on American FactFinder on a flow basis by state between October 2002 and February 2003.
Town

Two or more races
For data product purposes, “Two or more races” refers to combinations of two or more racial categories selected on the census form. The 2000 Census is the first census that allowed respondents to select more than one racial category.

Unadjusted data
Decennial census data that have not accounted for people missed and people doubled-counted in the direct enumeration of the population. In agreement with the Census Bureau’s recommendation, unadjusted data are the official data being released for the 2000 Census.

Undercount
A term used to describe the number of people in the census who are missed or not counted. These are primarily minorities, children, people in inner city areas, and people in complex households or without permanent housing. The undercount is determined after the results of a post-census survey are compared with the original count. The post-census survey results are combined in a formula with the official census results to get an estimated adjusted count. If the official count is less than the adjusted count, there has been an undercount. More information is available on the Census Bureau website at: www.census.gov/dmd/www/EscapRep.html.

Urban area
A collective term referring to all areas that are urban. For the 2000 Census, there are two types of urban areas: urban clusters and urbanized areas. Urban clusters are densely settled territories with at least 2,500 people but fewer than 50,000. Urbanized areas consist of a central place and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people. There can be “urban” territories within both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.

Voting district
Any of a variety of areas, such as election districts, precincts, legislative districts, or wards, established by states and local governments for voting purposes. A detailed description of the geographic areas identified for the 2000 Census is available at: www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/glossry2.html.
Members of the KIDS COUNT Advisory Group on Census 2000:

Suzanne Bianchi  
University of Maryland at College Park

Brett Brown  
Child Trends, Inc.

Roderick Harrison  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Donald J. Hernandez  
State University of New York at Albany

Ken Hodges  
Claritas, Inc.

Laura Lippman  
National Center for Education Statistics

Louisa Miller  
U.S. Census Bureau

Martin O’Connell  
U.S. Census Bureau

Matt Snipp  
Stanford University

KIDS COUNT Members:

Laura Beavers  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Joan Benso  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Mike Crawford  
Child and Family Policy Center

Rich Huddleston  
Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

Thomas McDonald  
University of Kansas

Debbie Morgan  
KIDS COUNT Network

Kelly O’Donnell  
New Mexico Advocates for Children & Families

Terry Schooley  
University of Delaware

Annie E. Casey Foundation Staff:

William O’Hare
Megan Reynolds

PRB Staff:

John Haaga
Mark Mather
Kelvin Pollard
Kerri Rivers
Cheryl Stauffer

Opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the views of the advisory group members.