

One million Black, Latino children missed in 2000 census

WASHINGTON (AP) - Black and Hispanic children, particularly those in urban areas, make up a disproportionately high percentage of the 1.1 million kids missed by the 2000 census, according to newly released government estimates.

Those children account for about half the undercount, but made up only about one-third of all U.S. children.

Los Angeles County and Cook County, Ill., which includes Chicago, were among the places with the highest minority undercounts of children and adults. Sparsely populated rural counties across the West and Midwest also had some of the highest rates of people missed.

The data, released by the Census Bureau under court order, showed that about 3.3 million people were missed nationwide, or about 1.2 percent of the entire population.

California, the most populous state, had the largest "undercount," 509,012, while Alaska had the highest percentage of people missed, 2.4 percent, or 15,136 residents.

Rep. William Lacy Clay, who supported the data release, said Americans "deserve to have the most accurate census data available." "It was unfortunate that we had to fight so hard to get this information, but now that we have, I hope we can use it to its fullest advantage," said Clay, D-Mo.

The newly released data was based on bureau research done through March 2001. Preston Jay Waite, an associate census director, said more study done since then shows the national net undercount may have been reduced to less than one-tenth of 1 percent.

Waite said they have not completed their additional re-

search, though it may be released in the future.

"The fact that the census was so accurate and the adjusted data had serious flaws" make the adjusted data useless, Waite said. "We envision no official use of this file."

The government takes a census every 10 years. The bureau sends census takers and questionnaires to every U.S. household, though not every one responds. The bureau tabulates the results and sends them to federal social service agencies, which use them to determine how to allocate billions of federal dol-

lars to each state for Medicaid, foster care and other social service programs.

The census also reallocates U.S. House seats based on population changes.

After the 2000 count, the Census Bureau used mathematical formulas to estimate how many people were missed, a population termed the "undercount." A 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling bars the use of those adjusted numbers for reapportioning congressional seats.

Typically, census-takers following up with people who did not return a form encounter more difficulty getting into

locked city apartment buildings, where more minorities tend to live. People who live in apartments tend also to be younger, have young children and move more often.

Rural households get missed because it may be difficult to find the home. Some undocumented immigrants may choose not to fill out their form, even though the census does not ask about legal status.

People who are counted twice include college students and people with two homes.

Democrats, big-city politicians and civil rights groups have charged that many com-

munities are being short-changed government funding because large numbers of their residents were missed in the original count.

Larry Jones, assistant executive director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, had not seen all the data but said he was not surprised that urban areas had the biggest undercounts. "We will see if this is a valid, good assessment of the undercount and take into account what the bureau said about its flaws," Jones said.

Opponents of adjusted data, mainly Republicans, (See Census, Page 13)

Questioning

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extraordinary means to get information about a plot to blow up the World Trade Center.

Attorney R. Samuel Paz, representing Martinez, tried to steer the discussion toward his client's tragic circumstances.

"The terrorist situation is a difficult one," Paz said. "It's not our case."

Lawrence S. Robbins, Chavez's lawyer, and Deputy Solicitor General Paul D. Clement told justices that the failure to give a Miranda warning should not be an issue since Martinez was never prosecuted.

"Miranda concerns in this case are an utter red herring," Robbins said.

The Bush administration, police organizations, the state of California and more than 50 California cities are siding with Chavez.

At one point Justice Stephen Breyer seemed to agree with Robbins. "No one is talking about weakening or overturning Miranda," Breyer said.

The Miranda warning takes its name from the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in a 1966 case involving the use of a confession in the rape prosecution of Ernesto Miranda.

But Paz argued the case is very much about the viability of the Miranda warning. Chavez's purpose in questioning Martinez was to build a case against him, he said.

Ben Wizner, an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer in Los Angeles who supports Martinez, said police will increasingly fail to advise people of their rights if the court rules against Martinez. "That's why we have been saying that the court has to somehow make clear that at least deliberate violations of Miranda are not constitutional," Wizner said.

The other aspect of Martinez's plight that drew the justices' interest was whether the questioning was reasonable.

Paz said it was not. "No reasonable police officer can believe the questioning was reasonable," he said.

Breyer pressed Chavez's lawyer on the same point.

With Martinez lying in agony, asking for help and believing he would die, why did Chavez continue to ask questions, even telling Martinez he would receive medical aid after talking, Breyer asked.

"Why isn't that the equivalent of beating someone up?" the justice asked.

Robbins said the officer was trying to elicit critical information because he believed the man would die.

"I acknowledge there is coercion in this case. We don't blanch on that," Robbins said. "But the reality is this: This officer was there to find out an extraordinarily important piece of information under exigent circumstances."

The case is Chavez v. Martinez, 01-1444.

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