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## Census: Detroit population difficult to estimate

By The Associated Press

(AP) — Widespread home foreclosures and vacancies appear to be making it harder for census takers to accurately count residents in Detroit than in other large cities.

Two recent estimates of the city's population showed a 17.3 percent difference, the *Detroit Free Press* reported.

The **American Community Survey**, an arm of the **U.S. Census Bureau**, last month estimated Detroit's 2008 population at 777,493. That compares with a 2008 estimate using different techniques that produced an estimate of 912,062.

While all cities show some variance in the two estimates, no other U.S. city in the top 25 showed a comparable difference. Most large cities showed gaps between the estimates of less than 3 percent.

"I think the Census Bureau is probably concerned, or should be concerned," said Kurt Metzger, the director of the **Detroit-Area Community Information System** research center in Detroit. "What is a good number? I think Detroit deserves an explanation because they're so far apart, so much more so than anybody else."

While demographers have no clear explanation for the gap in the two estimates, Metzger said the city's widespread problem of foreclosures and abandonment make getting an accurate count more difficult.

The Census Bureau derives the higher of the two population estimates by taking its head count from the 2000 census and updating it annually based on estimates of the number of housing units, demolitions and other data. For the lower estimate, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey conducts research into American lifestyles and then derives population estimates from it based on statistical sampling.

Demographers say the extreme variance in the two estimates shows the importance of getting an accurate count in the 2010 census. That head count will be used to determine congressional representation and billions of dollars in federal and state aid apportioned by population.

But the state's budget crisis and other issues have delayed planning for the census, said Sam Singh, a senior consultant on census issues for the **Michigan Nonprofit Association**, and Detroit isn't prepared.

"Our political leaders think that this is down the road," Singh said. "The reality is, it's only a few months away, and you have to have the right plan and preparation to have a successful census."

But Kim Hunter, a spokesman for the Census Bureau in Detroit, said that Mayor Dave Bing's office has been working with the bureau to get out the message by helping the agency get booth space at citywide events and giving it access to the city's cable TV channel.

Detroit's population peaked somewhere around 1.8 million in the 1950s and has declined since then. The city has disputed census estimates in the past and has had some success in getting the Census Bureau to revise its estimates upward.

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