



# Detroit had its chance, experts say of census

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**Detroit** Mayor Dave Bing's goal to add 37,000 residents to get the city's official census count to 750,000 is a long shot, experts told the Free Press.

The best chance to boost the number was last year, by getting more people to turn in census forms, said Kurt Metzger, a demographer at Data Driven Detroit, a nonprofit data agency.

- [Database: 2010 census, percent change for Michigan counties](#)

"Coleman Young sent police and firefighters to knock on doors," Metzger said. "Bing had a complete count committee, but they just didn't get out there and push."

City officials insist they did the best they could while facing a foreclosure crisis.

"Mayor Bing led a coordinated campaign to increase response rates with community walks, public service announcements and events," spokesman Dan Lijana said.

The city's actual count came in at 713,777, compared with estimates that placed it

closer to 800,000. The smaller head count will cost the city millions of dollars, because each person counted nets about \$1,000 a year for local government.

Metzger said he doesn't doubt that some Detroiters were overlooked, but that challenges are unlikely to **yield** big changes.

Since the rules changed beginning with the 2000 census, challenges have resulted in minimal change.

## Detroit census recount won't be an easy task, officials say

If Detroit officials hope to recoup millions in state and federal aid by challenging the city's census count, they'd better have the data to back it up, said Ken Darga, Michigan's state demographer.

Three months before the counting began last year, Darga was huddled in Washington, D.C., staring at red dots on a

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computer screen representing Michigan addresses that the Census Bureau had missed.

"The software would take us to the clusters of red dots," Darga said. "Our task at the time was to identify clusters of 30 housing units or more and document that they should be in the census."

Officials would then review aerial photos, old address lists and other documents to confirm the homes, apartment houses, assisted living centers and other living quarters, were -- in fact -- there. When they were confirmed, they were added to the list of homes to get a census questionnaire in the mail.

"In some areas, there would be a surprising number," Darga said.

That tedious process represents the struggle Detroit faces in its effort to add people in a revised count.

"It has to be a very tight approach," said Kurt Metzger, demographer at Data Driven Detroit, a nonprofit data firm. "You can't just whine about missing people. You had plenty of opportunity to beat the bushes. Now your best chance is to launch this effort at the nitty-gritty."

The Census Bureau counted 713,777 Detroiters, and the city lagged well behind the county, state and the nation in its mail-in response. Just 64% of questionnaires were mailed back from the Detroit addresses, compared with 74% for all of Wayne County and 78% for the state.

When a questionnaire isn't returned by mail, the Census Bureau sends workers to knock on doors to try to determine how many people live at the address.

Experts said the city's best hope is to find housing units that were mistakenly listed in another community or missed entirely. Detroit did not challenge the 2000 census. But 69 Michigan locales did see their official counts change -- up or down -- as a result of challenges.

Of the 37 communities that gained population, the average increase was 405 people. Many of the biggest changes came in communities with prisons, such as Adrian, Ionia, Kinross Township and Marquette. Typically, the changes came because people were assigned to a bordering community. That meant when one gained, the other lost.

Pontiac had the biggest gain in metro Detroit, gaining 1,169 people wrongly credited to neighboring Waterford.

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At stake is about \$1,000 per person, per year, in state and federal money, for each person in the official count.

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing said his challenge aims to find enough missed residents to allow the city to hit the magical 750,000 population -- a key threshold for many federal and state funding programs.

"It's possible that many were missed, but I would be surprised if there are that many correctable errors," Darga said.

Mayoral spokesman Dan Lijana said residences that were inadvertently deleted or missed in the census database hold "the most promise for obtaining a more accurate count of Detroiters."

One population estimate by Social Compact, an independent agency, estimated Detroit's population at 850,259. Another, by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, put the figure at 762,789, Lijana said.

"It is likely the accurate count is somewhere between 713,000 and those figures," he said.

For complete coverage of the 2010 Michigan Census, visit [http://www.freep.com/article/99999999/NEWS06/1103230-03&template=theme&theme=2011\\_CENSUS-S](http://www.freep.com/article/99999999/NEWS06/1103230-03&template=theme&theme=2011_CENSUS-S)>freep.com/2010census. Contact John Wisely: 313-222-6825 or [jwisely@freepress.com](mailto:jwisely@freepress.com)



### Michigan challenges, 2000 census

Here are the Michigan communities that gained and lost the most population after challenges to the 2000 census.

#### TOP 10 POPULATION GAINS

Community	Original count	Gross change	% change	Revised count
1. Kearsaw Charter Twp.	5,922	2,218	37.5%	8,140
2. Madison Charter Twp.	6,200	1,416	22.8%	7,616
3. Pontiac	66,337	1,169	1.8%	67,506
4. Marquette	19,661	1,053	5.4%	20,714
5. Ionia	10,569	959	9.1%	11,528
6. St. Louis	4,494	959	21.3%	5,453
7. Pentland Twp.	1,788	937	52.4%	2,725
8. Adrian	21,574	641	3.0%	22,215
9. Bloomer Twp.	3,039	613	20.2%	3,652
10. Standish	1,581	515	32.6%	2,096

#### TOP 10 POPULATION LOSSES

Community	Original count	Gross change	% change	Revised count
1. Sault Ste. Marie	16,542	-2,218	-13.4%	14,324
2. Waterford	73,150	-1,169	-1.6%	71,981
3. Choclay Twp.	7,148	-1,053	-14.7%	6,095
4. Berlin Twp.	2,787	-959	-34.4%	1,828
5. Bethany Twp.	3,492	-937	-27.5%	2,555
6. McMillan Twp.	3,947	-937	-23.7%	3,010
7. Newberry	2,686	-937	-34.9%	1,749
8. Goshnell Twp.	2,111	-613	-29.0%	1,498
9. Lincoln Twp.	1,522	-515	-33.8%	1,007
10. Alameda Twp.	3,498	-450	-12.9%	3,048

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; BRIAN E. TODD/Detroit Free Press

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## Census challenges

The Census Bureau does not use the term recount but it does have a formal process to handle counts that are questioned. Challenges fall into three categories:

**Boundaries:** Correcting a border between two communities

**Geo-coding:** Correcting residences wrongly listed in another community

**Coverage:** Finding housing units and residents accidentally deleted from official lists

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