

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS & THE CENSUS: DEBUNKING THE MYTHS**

### **Myth: Asian Americans were overcounted in the 2000 Census.**

**Fact:** The Census Bureau itself did not have confidence in its measures of census accuracy in 2000, especially for smaller population groups such as Asian Americans. The Census Bureau cited “troubling anomalies and unexplained results” in its decision not to use the results of its accuracy-check survey to adjust the final census numbers. An expert National Academy of Sciences panel concluded that while undercounts among traditionally hard-to-count communities such as minority groups were likely lower in the 2000 Census than in previous censuses, they still persisted. The seeming overcount of Asian Americans could be attributed, in part, to a relatively high rate of duplication of Asian Americans counted both at home and at their college dorms, which could “offset” an undercount of Asian Americans in communities that are more difficult to count due to lower income, language and other barriers.

### **Myth: Asian Americans have historically been overcounted.**

**Fact:** The Census Bureau has acknowledged that Asian Americans have been undercounted in past censuses and are considered a “hard to count” population. Asian Americans were *undercounted* by more than 2.3% in 1990. In fact, in 1990, segments of this population were missed at even greater (and alarming) rates: more than 10% of young adult Asian American men were estimated as not counted, by far the highest of any race/Hispanic origin subset in this age group. The Census Bureau also documents lower-than-average mail response rates in 1990 and 2000 for lower-income, predominantly Asian American communities, and notes that “language isolation” is one factor associated with counting difficulties. Any improvement in the 2000 Census is due to the increased investment in targeted advertising and outreach to the various Asian ethnic groups.

### **Myth: Asian Americans will be easy to count in 2010.**

**Fact:** Even more challenges exist to an accurate count of Asian Americans in the 2010 Census than in previous census counts, increasing the risk of a significant undercount.

- With continued high immigration, the diversity of the Asian American group has increased and has made them harder to reach through any one medium. The ethnic, religious, language and generational make up of the group has significantly changed since 2000.
- The Asian American group has grown 26% since 2000, with even higher growth rates in regions of the country that do not have extensive community infrastructure to assist the Census Bureau.

- There are generally high levels of mobility among some segments of the Asian American population. Also recent natural disasters and the economic crisis have displaced many people from their homes and have created a more complex, often multi-family household for many people.
- Asian immigrants are increasingly reluctant to voluntarily provide personal information to the government in an age of identity theft and in the wake of immigration raids and other dragnets that post-9/11 policies have created, including the use of housing enforcement to identify those who are undocumented.
- According to focus groups conducted by the Census Bureau, Asians have a general mistrust towards the government, a lack of knowledge about the census, and a high concern about data sharing with other agencies.

**Myth: Asian Americans do not need a robustly funded paid media campaign to ensure an accurate count in the 2010 Census.**

**Fact: It is imperative that the Census Bureau utilize some of its funding from the stimulus package to ensure an accurate count of Asian Americans.** In late 2008, the Census Bureau reported that the estimated budget for Asian American media outreach in the Bureau's budget was going to be 33% LESS than it was during the 2000 Census. This decrease was instituted despite the fact that there is has been a 300% growth in Asian American media outlets since 1990, including more Asian blogs, more new media vehicles, and dozens of new TV, radio and print media outlets. This decrease also ignores the number of languages and dialects spoken by Asian Americans and the dispersion of Asian Americans from traditional urban enclaves to new regions.