



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
8128 Sewell Social Science Building
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1393
(ph) 608-262-2921 (fax) 608-265-5389
www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc

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Karen Humes, Chief, Population Division
U.S. Census Bureau, Room 5H174
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Karen Humes,

I am writing in response to your May 20 federal register notice regarding the Residence Rule and Residence Situations. I am a Professor of Sociology. I and my colleagues use Census data in a wide variety of ways to understand patterns of inequality in the United States. My own research has focused on identifying the causes and consequences of racial disparities in incarceration. As part of this research, I have discovered many cases in which the population characteristics of smaller rural counties have been extremely distorted by counting prisoners in the places where they are incarcerated. There would be a more accurate representation of the social characteristics of different places if people were counted where they resided at the time of their sentencing.

As I do quantitative analysis, I took the time to dig a little more into available statistics provided by the Prison Policy Initiative on county-level counts of incarcerated and non-incarcerated persons by race for my state of Wisconsin. There are seven Wisconsin counties in which incarcerated people are 3.2%-6.4% of the county's total enumerated population, a large enough fraction to distort local socioeconomic measures.

Only five Wisconsin counties are more than 2% Black for their non-incarcerated populations. Due to the locations of prisons, in 10 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, a *majority* (in some cases over 80%) of the apparent Black "residents" of the county are incarcerated, in another 6 counties 25-50% of the apparent Black residents are incarcerated, and in another 7 between 10-25% of the apparent residents are incarcerated. These incarcerated "residents" are unlikely to have resided in that county before incarceration and their presence distorts local statistics.

Although aggregate Census data do not permit identifying the home county of those incarcerated, using the criterion of counties whose non-incarcerated Black population is less than 2% and have a higher percentage of the state's Black prisoners than their percentage in the population, I estimate that at least 2.3% of the state of Wisconsin's total Black population (all ages, incarcerated and not) is attributed to "White" counties where they are imprisoned instead of to the place they resided before incarceration. This seems like a pretty large shift to me. As a citizen I am concerned about the undemocratic aspects of shifting representation from minorities and cities to predominantly-White rural areas.

Yours very truly

Pamela E. Oliver
Conway-Bascom Professor of Sociology