

# CALIFORNIA

August 2021

Census data determines the allocation of federal and other funds to vital social programs, guides redistricting, and informs research. Therefore, an accurate census that captures historically undercounted populations<sup>1</sup> is crucial for our democracy. Since 2016, a collaborative of philanthropic funders has worked to align and pool funding to build and strengthen the infrastructure needed to support a fair and accurate count.

The Democracy Funders Collaborative's Census Subgroup, which is the steering committee for the census funder collaborative, engaged ORS Impact as a partner to develop state-level reports that provide an overview of philanthropic efforts to promote the 2020 Census within and across the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. This report provides a summary of census efforts for the State of California based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=7).

<sup>1</sup>We have opted to use the term "historically undercounted populations" in our narrative, but the term is interchangeable with "hard to count," which we use when our informants opted to do so

# OVERVIEW GOING INTO 2020 CENSUS

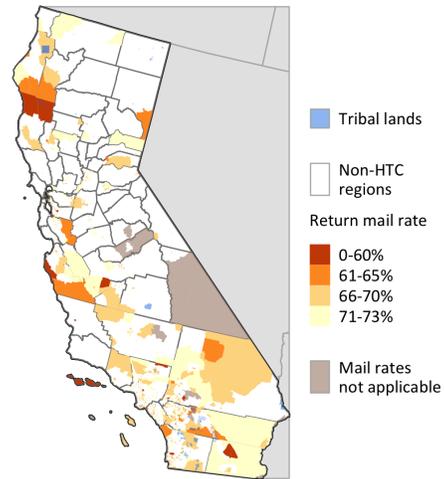
**39,148,760**

TOTAL POPULATION

**10,011,842**

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

## HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



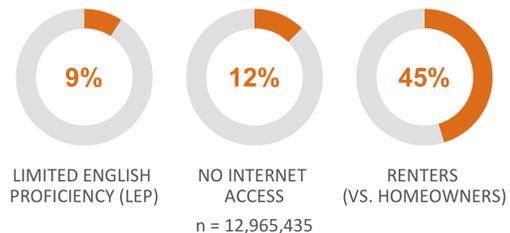
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

## Population

Past analyses of Census data have consistently shown differences in self-response rates based on household or individual characteristics, indicating that certain populations are at higher risk of being undercounted. The following graphs show the distribution of selected populations within the state that have historically been more likely to be undercounted. Data for all maps and graphs provided by CUNY Graduate Center via the Census 2020 Hard to Count/Response Rate map at [www.CensusHardToCountMaps2020.us](http://www.CensusHardToCountMaps2020.us).

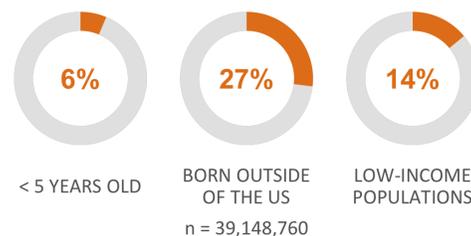
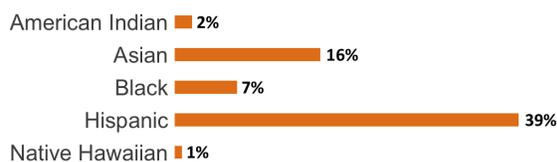
### HOUSEHOLDS

Percent of total number of households in the state that have the following characteristics:



### INDIVIDUALS

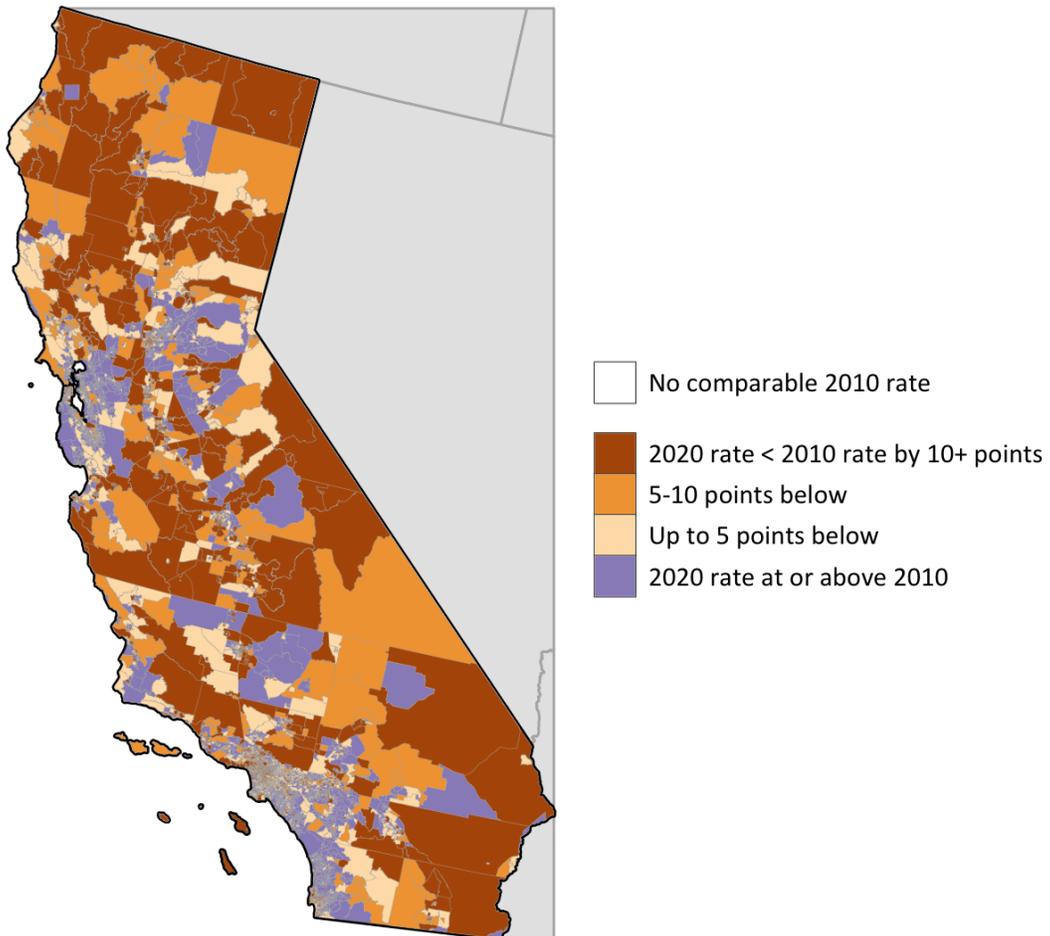
Percent of total number of individuals in the state that have characteristics of historically undercounted populations:



# OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
<b>2020</b>	<b>69.6%</b>	<b>+1.4</b>
2010	68.2%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



## STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

California's 2020 Census efforts were grounded in multiple complementary efforts to build infrastructure for data-driven, cross-sector collaborative engagement in powerful policy advocacy, aligned philanthropic funding, and effective census outreach. The efforts kicked off in the fall of 2016, when, based on learning from the prior census, demographers in California's Department of Finance submitted a Budget Change Proposal to fund incentives to cities and counties for participation in the Local Update of Census Addresses Operation (LUCA), which resulted in additions to the state's 2017-2018 budget for this purpose. Also around that time, Advancement Project California began participating in a national effort aimed at mobilizing advocacy organizations to engage in policy advocacy at the national level. Advancement Project California formed the Census Policy Advocacy Network (CPAN), a coalition of 22 equity-oriented advocacy agencies in the state, which decided to aim their collective efforts at ensuring sufficient state investment in census infrastructure and outreach in ways that supported a grassroots versus grass tops "surround-sound" approach. This approach included educating legislators and community-based organization leaders about what the census is, why it is important, and what they can do to try to ensure a fair and accurate census count. CPAN also activated other advocacy organizations to do the same by sharing opportunities for advocacy and inviting them to sign on to letters to the legislature.

In April 2017, the state hired a census coordinator who worked with others, including the Advancement Project, the James Irvine Foundation, The California Endowment, and the League of California Community Foundations, to build the data and collaboration infrastructure for effective census outreach. With an additional \$3 million from the state, and with support from these key partners, the state supported three foundational efforts:

- **Development of a social studies curriculum** for use in the 5th, 8th, 11th, and 12th grades, called *Count Me In*, designed with and for California teachers to inform and inspire civic engagement
- **Development of two integrated data tools to target and track census outreach efforts:** (1) Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment, which integrates geographic information system data, the Census Bureau's Response Outreach Area Mapper database, and a California-specific, hard-to-count metric based on broadband subscription and language data; and (2) a census tool from Political Data Inc. that is used to track canvassing activities
- **Regional stakeholder readiness meetings**, hosted by the Center for Collaborative Policy, to orient city, county, and nonprofit stakeholders to the census and Get Out the Count (GOTC), provide a platform for representatives of traditionally undercounted communities to educate others about their communities, and help stakeholders identify leading organizations, additional needed partners, and local ethnic media outlets

In late 2017 and early 2018, the James Irvine Foundation, The California Endowment, and California Community Foundation began forming a statewide funders' table. The funders' table, coordinated by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, was focused on motivating census participation among typically underrepresented communities and strengthening the movement- and power-building ecosystem in concert with and supplemental to state government efforts. In the spring of 2018, the funders' table hosted a series of three meetings to raise philanthropic awareness of importance of census and encourage commitment of dollars. The first meeting was with all California foundation chief executive officers, the second was with their programmatic staff, and the third was with a wide variety of stakeholders, including nonprofit anchors and representatives of the state government. The funders' table, eventually comprising more than 40 funders, aligned their funding efforts, collected and summarized key takeaways, shared learnings from national efforts with grantees and cross-sector stakeholders, and hosted meetings on different topics (e.g., data collection and tracking, coordinating with state government).

In large part due to continued advocacy by CPAN, the state devoted an additional \$90 million in the 2018-2019 budget for census work, which allowed the state to invest more in staffing for census infrastructure and coordination. Building on the stakeholder readiness meetings, existing regional networks of community-based organizations and funders, and additional demographic analysis, the state established and funded 10 regional hubs, each with its own local complete count committee and a lead organization as its administrative community-based organization (ACBO). Several foundations assumed the dual role of ACBO and philanthropic partner in the funders' table because community-based organizations expressed concerns that state funds would be disbursed only or largely through state contracts. This disbursement system would have rendered many smaller groups ineligible because of lack of organizational capacity to take on the heavy administrative burden and cash-flow pressures required by such contracts. Because the foundations saw the engagement of small, trusted groups as essential, they were motivated to be ACBOs so they could remove administrative hurdles to community-based group participation by providing grants.

After ongoing advocacy by CPAN, the state devoted an additional \$90 million in the 2019-2020 budget for census work. Of those funds, \$3 million was devoted specifically to outreach in the Native American population (i.e., Native People Count California). From 2017 through 2020, CPAN also engaged in advocacy related to several policy issues as they emerged, such as inclusion of a citizenship question on the census form, identification of citizenship status in other ways, differential privacy, and shifts in the Census Bureau's operational plan (e.g., changing deadlines). Through the funders' table and CPAN connections, many community foundations also engaged in advocacy to increase state investment and fight the addition of a citizenship question.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts<sup>2</sup>:

Actor	Role
<b>State of California</b>	Built data and information-sharing infrastructure; funded 10 regional coalitions/hubs that supported census outreach; provided funding directly to counties and cities for census outreach; funded communications (e.g., social media toolkits); and worked with state agencies to incorporate census outreach into their operations (e.g., Department Consumer Affairs) and otherwise support census outreach (e.g., Department of Public Health)
<b>Census Policy Advocacy Network (led by Advancement Project California)</b>	Engaged in a coordinated, vigilant, multiyear policy advocacy effort aimed at ensuring sufficient investment in and effective implementation of a grassroots approach to a census outreach
<b>Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees</b>	Led the statewide funders initiative, including planning, organizing, and staffing regular meetings of the initiative; supporting the statewide funders table and its subgroups; liaising with state officials; facilitating the collection and flow of information; and supporting learning and evaluation
<b>The California Endowment, Irvine Foundation, Latino Community Foundation, California Community Foundation, Grove Foundation</b>	As co-chairs and steering committee members, guided the statewide funders table, along with subgroup chairs: <b>Blue Shield of California Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Weingart Foundation</b> (The California Endowment was also a subgroup chair)

<sup>2</sup>Data reflects the Census Bureau’s last update of self-response data (published in January 2021), which differs from the CUNY maps that use data from October 2020

<p><b>ACBOs: Sacramento Region Community Foundation; United Way of the Wine Country, United Way of Bay Area, Faith in Action Network, Ventura County Community Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation: Center for Health Project Management, The Community Foundation, California Community Foundation, Charitable Ventures of Orange County, United Way of San Diego County</b></p>	<p>Provided funding, coordination, and support for the nonprofit organizations, and engaged media outlets in each of their 10 regions</p>
<p><b>California Primary Care Association (health care), PICO California (faith), ReadyNation California (business), First 5 California (early childhood education)</b></p>	<p>Coordinated outreach within their respective sectors efforts statewide, largely through their own networks</p>
<p><b>Latino Community Foundation and National Association of Elected Officials Educational Fund (Latinx), California Calls (Black/African American), Asian American Journalist Association, California Native Vote and California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc (Native American)</b></p>	<p>Engaged in outreach to their respective target communities statewide</p>
<p><b>Northern California Grantmakers, San Francisco Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation</b></p>	<p>Formed the Bay Area Census Funders Collaborative, along with other Bay Area foundations</p>
<p><b>LA Partnership for Early Childhood Education</b></p>	<p>Organized the “Early Childhood Census Fund,” a pooled fund to support outreach to families with young children in Los Angeles County</p>

# FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, \$217 million dollars of state government and philanthropic funding supported 2020 Census efforts in California (Table 2). In addition, many local governments committed funds to census outreach, giving cities more control than they would have had if they had relied solely on state support. Financial institutions and technology companies contributed funds to regional GOTC efforts in Orange County, Silicon Valley, and the Bay Area.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach<sup>3</sup>

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
<b>Philanthropy: \$30 million</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statewide funders’ table, comprising over 40 funders, contributed \$30 million to support 2020 Census efforts focused on historically undercounted communities and building a strong movement infrastructure across California.</li> <li>• As chair of the funders’ table subgroup focused on young children—the largest undercount population in the state’s 2010 Census—Blue Shield of California Foundation invested in national and California-based research on why young children were being undercounted and where they could anticipate higher young child populations in 2020 efforts.</li> </ul>
<b>State Government: \$187 million</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$7 million allocated in the state’s 2017-2018 budget to fund incentives to cities and counties for participation in LUCA</li> <li>• \$90 million allocated in the 2018-2019 budget for 2020 Census infrastructure, coordination, and outreach</li> <li>• \$90 million allocated in the 2019-2020 for 2020 Census infrastructure, coordination, and outreach. Of those funds, \$3 million was devoted specifically to outreach in the Native American population</li> </ul>
<b>In-Kind Contributions: Unknown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple philanthropic, state government, and municipal organizations provided in-kind support to 2020 Census efforts</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup>Funding data should be taken as estimates. We included data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and Census Equity Fund (CEF) grants where applicable; other figures are estimates provided by key informants

# DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

**Regional hubs orchestrated work within different regions and with different historically undercounted populations within the state.** With state support, the ACBOs and statewide partners focused on specific sectors and populations. They worked with other local community-based organizations and funders using a “TQM approach” that was focused on reaching the hardest to count populations, using **trusted** messengers; putting **questionnaire** assistance in the right places, staffed by the right people, in the right languages; and investing in **multicultural, multilingual, microtargeted media** (e.g., social media public service announcements codeveloped with local community organizations that serve particular and historically undercounted populations). The regional hub structure supported an approach wherein organizations that knew their local populations best had creative control. This was especially important because California’s historically undercounted populations live in many different communities throughout the state, so did not make sense to have one strategy for reaching a particular ethnic or racial population.

**Importantly, many local community organizations coordinated with local census officials (enumerators) to ensure that any door-knocking efforts included someone who “looked like and talked like” them and efforts were not duplicative and bothersome for households.** Even though much of the communications were microtargeted, major media outlets, such as Univision and Telemundo and newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times*, provided coverage about the importance of the census.

**COVID-19 required substantial adaptations to efforts, but the strength of infrastructure helped groups pivot as conditions changed.** Because of the strength of the collaborative infrastructure, the involved groups were able to pivot relatively smoothly when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and they continued to use data to target populations and areas with lower self-response rates. They linked census outreach to essential services, leaving information at grocery stores, foodbanks, and school lunch pick-up sites. The groups asked people who worked in those places to wear the “census swag” t-shirts that had been created for people who were going to staff the Questionnaire Assistance Centers. They also organized car caravans, expanded digital outreach (e.g., Facebook Live events), conducted phone banking, and, wearing personal protective equipment, continued door-knocking outreach. Some notable events included Census Chalk Art Contests, where children were invited to pick up chalk kits at a library, draw messages promoting the 2020 Census, and then email the picture or post it on a specified social media site; and a three-day Virtual Native Youth Gathering that combined hearing about the importance of census participation from Native leaders and working with an artist to create an art piece representing the importance of California Native Americans being counted in the census.

**Several GOTC strategies were informed by the intersection of membership in historically undercounted communities and other challenge factors.** For example, because research on the 2010 Census showed that children aged 5 years and younger were widely undercounted and because there are so many young Latino

children in the state, there were targeted efforts to educate Latino parents about the importance of counting their children. Because so many undocumented Latinos are essential workers who continue to use the roadways despite the pandemic, investments were made in billboards along main routes in rural farming communities in several regions across the state with messaging about the importance of the census. Because the census was online for the first time and the digital divide is particularly pronounced for communities of color, there were efforts to engage youth-serving organizations to equip young people to help their parents and grandparents navigate online census completion. This effort was also a strategy for strengthening the power- and movement-building ecosystem by engaging a new generation of civic engagement leaders.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Invest in cross-sector collaboration.** In a state as big as California, it was crucial to have both public and nonprofit sectors invested in the census and activated toward a complete count. The regional structure created by government allowed for truly statewide coverage of outreach efforts; however, having so many state government structures invested in census leadership—the governor’s office, the legislature, the State Complete Count Committee, and the group of staff charged with leading the census—combined with the bureaucratic hurdles associated with the accountability and oversight functions inherent to government operations, inevitably slowed state efforts. The highly committed, philanthropic collaborative structure was much more targeted and responsive to local and emergent circumstances and needs, and community foundations and regionally based nonprofit groups were able to serve as intermediaries between state government and other nonprofit organizations, effectively buffering the smaller organizations from bureaucratic barriers and allowing them to focus on local outreach. Within this complex ecosystem, stakeholders could have benefited from increased clarity regarding roles and avenues for disseminating information.
- **Earlier investment across multiple dimensions could lead to more successful outreach efforts for the next census. For example:**
  - Earlier organization by advocates would enable them to put pressure on the state government to adhere to its own timeline, which would result in early census infrastructure investments.
  - Earlier investment in infrastructure for statewide efforts would help prepare for targeted outreach, using data to identify where (geography) and who (communities), and activating assets to engage in the necessary sector or community outreach.
  - Earlier organization by funders and nonprofits statewide could result in a more robust LUCA effort, which research shows would greatly reduce the undercount; allow more time to invest in relationships with nontraditional partner networks or systems, like libraries, health care centers, and community clinics; and enable better understanding and communication of various engagement options for different types and levels of stakeholders.
- **Even better, the census could be conceptualized as year-round or even generational work.**
  - Those involved in efforts in California noted that “it’s a mistake to think about the census only in a 10-year cycle.” In fact, census infrastructure can support other activities (e.g., census follow-up activities, redistricting, the quality of the census population file, the American Community Survey). Building long-term capacity and understanding of the interlinkages among census, redistricting, and the apportionment process is important. With this frame as a guiding principle, groups might better be able to “turn down the burner” without turning it all the way off, and thus be in better position to start up again mid-decade as the next census arrives.
- **Invest in adaptive capacities. For example:**

- Investing in collaboration infrastructure, education, and motivation (rather than activities) builds organizational capacity to adapt, which was crucial in the face of COVID-19.
- Active, vigilant, and adaptive policy advocacy matters for sufficient state investment in infrastructure and for making sure that investment is used in ways that will most benefit historically disempowered communities.
- Hub leaders who understand how to use data and are connected to and understood operations at the local and federal levels are most successful.
- Building organizational capacity to use data makes organizations less dependent on others to inform adaptations in strategy and helps them be nimbler and more responsive to emergent needs and events.
- **Invest in culturally competent, local messages.** The state invested a lot of money (\$40 million) in a statewide communications effort led by one “traditional” communications contractor. The perceived limitations of this effort, combined with the success of more local communications and outreach efforts, revealed the importance of working with ethnically diverse media organizations staffed by people who are from the populations you are trying to reach (e.g., NUNA Consulting Group), and shifting state investment toward more localized outreach efforts.

## LOOKING FORWARD

All the stakeholders involved in the census effort may be considered part of a civic engagement or movement-building ecosystem aimed at equity and improving the lives of marginalized groups. This effort is activated cyclically (e.g., for census outreach, voter registration and Get Out the Vote efforts, redistricting). At the time of this writing, many CPAN members and others who participated in census efforts are involved in advocacy and activism related to redistricting. All CPAN members have affirmed that they wish to continue working together and leverage the trusting relationships they established through their census work. The funders’ table is also considering whether and how they want to continue working together as an independent table or within the structure of other census and redistricting networks. Some funders are also talking with ACBOs about how to leverage the regional coordination infrastructure for efforts beyond the census.

## DATA SOURCES

Representatives from the following organizations participated in interviews and/or contributed information for this report:

- California Community Foundation
- Latino Community Foundation
- The California Endowment
- Census 2020 CA Complete Count Committee
- Advancement Project California

Representatives from the following organizations provided additional input as part of a review process:

- Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation