

# COLORADO

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 Colorado based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=4).

<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

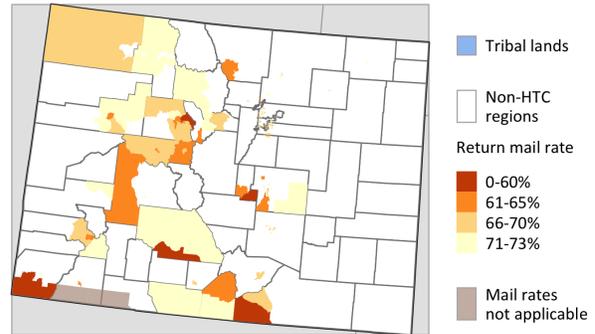
**5,531,141**

TOTAL POPULATION

**896,343**

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

## HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



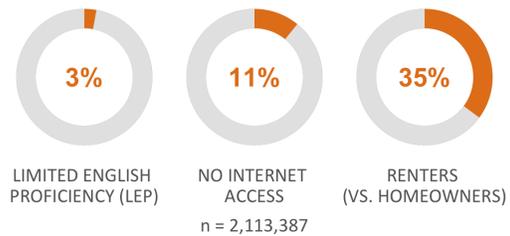
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

## 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).

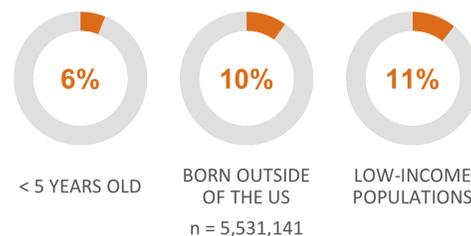
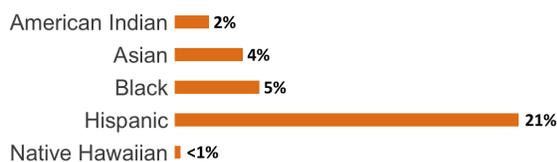
### HOUSEHOLDS

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:

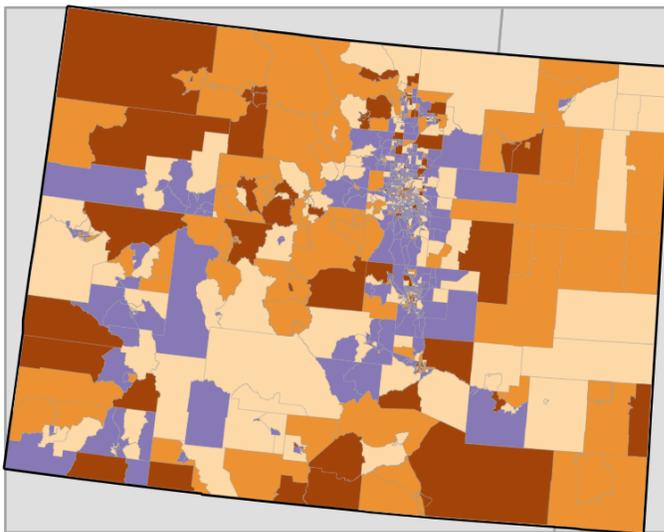




# OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
<b>2020</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>+2.8</b>
2010	67.2%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



- No comparable 2010 rate
- 2020 rate < 2010 rate by 10+ points
- 5-10 points below
- Up to 5 points below
- 2020 rate at or above 2010

## STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

A nonprofit and state government were both instrumental to 2020 Census outreach efforts in Colorado. Together We Count (TWC), a short-term nonprofit created specifically to promote the 2020 Census among historically undercounted populations within the state, was central to nonprofit efforts within the state. Recognizing the need for a statewide census response to help safeguard legislative representation and flow of federal resources into the state, TWC first formed in 2017. Through partnership with the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable, and other partners, TWC mobilized a coalition of around 100 organizations across the state. With TWC serving as a coordinator and resource hub, the coalition provided mini-grants to organizations across the state to conduct census outreach in historically undercounted communities, and also undertook a wide variety of education and public awareness campaigns related to the census.

Early in 2019, the Colorado Fiscal Institute released a report<sup>[1]</sup> advocating that the state government invest \$12 million to conduct census outreach to historically undercounted groups across all of Colorado's counties. The state government decided to open an application process for census outreach projects across the state, accepting proposals from local governments and nonprofit groups. The state received grant proposals totaling around \$18 million, but ultimately chose to allocate grants totaling \$6 million to groups across the state. The Department of Local Affairs was responsible for allocating the state dollars, which supported a wide range of educational and outreach efforts to historically undercounted groups within the state. TWC was one of the organizations to receive a state grant.

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

Actor	Role
<b>TWC</b>	TWC was the lead nonprofit that served as a coordinator and resource hub for census efforts across the state. TWC created a mini-grant program that provided funding to local nonprofit organizations to conduct census outreach.
<b>Colorado Department of Local Affairs</b>	Led the State Complete Count Committee and managed \$6 million in grant funding allocated by the state legislature to support census education and outreach efforts.
<b>Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable</b>	A statewide nonprofit that collaborated with philanthropic organizations and had a major role in mobilizing nonprofits and funders to participate in census efforts in the state.

<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

# FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, an estimated \$6.5 million of state government and philanthropic funding supported census efforts in Colorado.

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

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: <b>\$500,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national Census Equity Fund provided a grant of \$125,000 to support TWC’s work.</li> <li>• Other state philanthropic funders, including the Colorado Health Foundation, contributed an estimated \$375,000 to support TWC.</li> </ul>
State Government: <b>\$6,000,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state legislature allocated \$6 million to support local census outreach efforts by local governments and nonprofits.</li> </ul>
In-Kind Contributions: <b>Unknown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many organizations contributed staff time and other resources to census efforts within the state.</li> </ul>

# DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

**Grant funding to local organizations to conduct census support efforts was the centerpiece of state and nonprofit efforts within the state.** The state government, via the Department of Local Affairs, allocated \$6 million in grants to local and state government organizations to conduct outreach, while TWC’s mini-grant program provided \$474,000 in grants. Both grant programs were focused on historically undercounted populations and were targeted to specific regions with high concentrations of those populations. In making decisions on where to allocate grants, TWC and the state both relied on data from the previous census to identify areas where response rates had been lower.

**Local groups on the ground had planned to use a wide range of in-person engagement strategies to promote the census, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to delays and required groups to shift tactics.** Grant programs sought to encourage hyper-local outreach efforts led by community members. Many groups supported through the grant programs had planned in-person activities to support the census. For example,

<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

some groups had planned to leverage a nationwide pow-wow event—which was ultimately canceled—to promote the census among Native American populations within the state. In response, groups shifted to digital and online engagement strategies, including social media campaigns and phone banking, among others. In March and April, the Colorado Health Foundation funded consultants to support organizations in shifting toward digital tactics to accommodate changes as a result of COVID-19. In response to the census delays posed by the pandemic, TWC allowed grantees to extend their outreach window. However, organizations that had received state grants still had to spend down their grant by the original census end date, resulting in less time to conduct outreach activities.

**To ensure groups were prepared to conduct effective census outreach, TWC provided education and training to local groups.** Overall, 150 individuals received training. In addition, TWC developed a handbook to assist them.

**The debate around inclusion of a citizenship question eroded trust in the census process, particularly among immigrant communities.** Groups on the ground noted that lack of trust in historically undercounted communities regarding the census process was exacerbated by the debate around the citizenship question.

**Most businesses were not engaged due to “politicization,” but Comcast served as a big financial sponsor while other organizations helped on the ground level.** Some examples of organizations include the Community Resource Center who worked directly with food banks across the state. The Department of Local Affairs oversaw the state-level census operations and assisted hyper-local census organizing activities.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Grant programs can be an effective mechanism for conducting hyper-local civic engagement.** Getting resources to local groups was critical to state census efforts.
- **Starting early is critical.** It is important to start early so that the infrastructure to support census outreach can be built.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Together We Count's Advisory Committee was initially built for the purposes of the 2020 census. TWC received feedback to continue engagement through the committee to act as a sounding board for organizations to collaborate on external factors, such as disaster relief, community organizing, and other advocacy efforts. The Colorado Health Foundation and other supporting organizations can continue uplifting this already existing infrastructure to steer future collaborative efforts.



## DATA SOURCES

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

- Together We Count
- Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable

## NOTES

[1] <https://www.coloradofiscal.org/2019/01/31/ensuring-a-complete-count-the-2020-census/>