

CONNECTICUT

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 populations¹ 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 Connecticut based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=2).

¹We 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

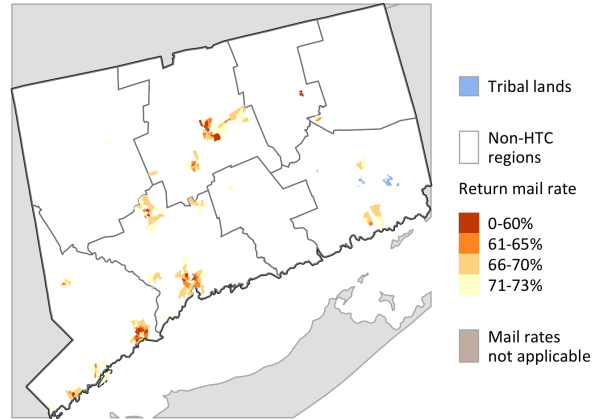
3,581,504

TOTAL POPULATION

800,384

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



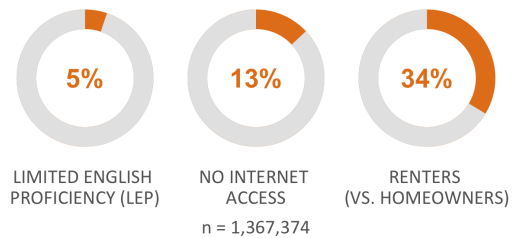
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

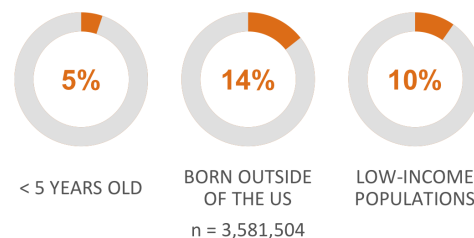
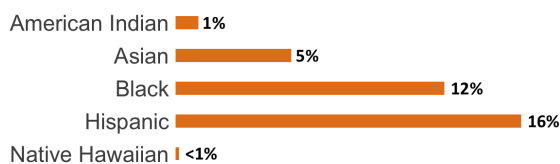
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

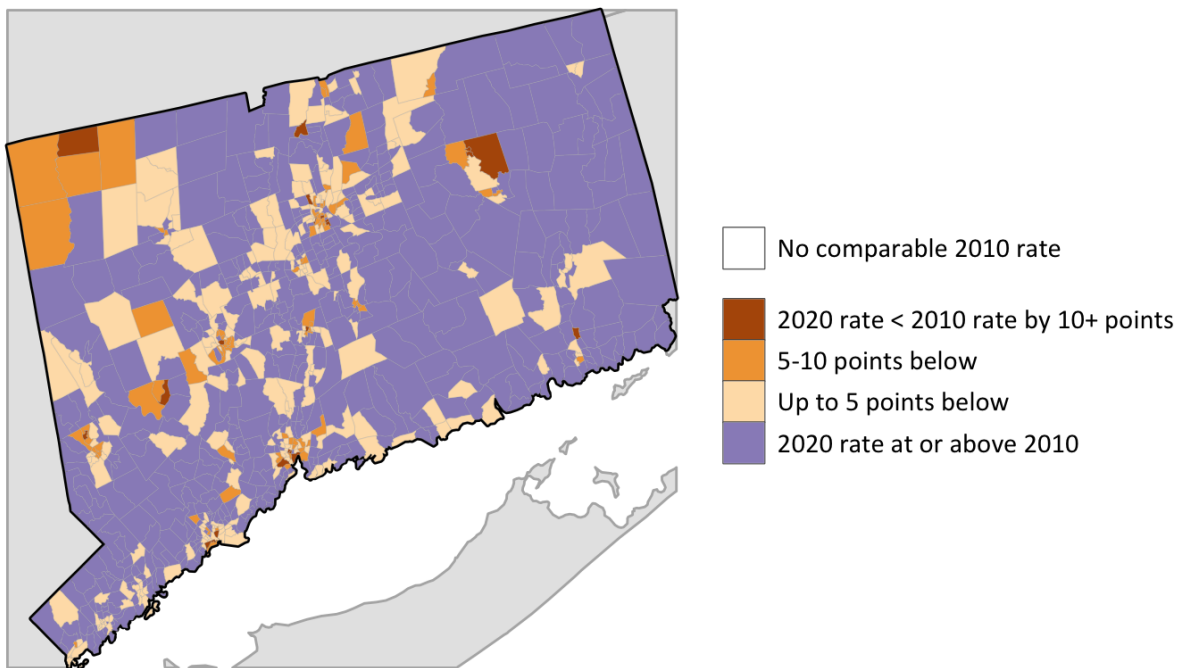




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	70.8%	+1.3
2010	69.5%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010





STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Both statewide and local groups contributed to the 2020 Census efforts in Connecticut. At the statewide level, the Connecticut Complete Count Committee, led by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, helped coordinate the state response to the census in close coordination with the US Census Bureau and other local partners. A wide array of organizations participated in the Complete Count Committee's efforts, including representatives from state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and business groups. Statewide nonprofit and philanthropic groups, such as The Alliance-Voice of Community Nonprofits and the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, played important roles in mobilizing funders and nonprofits to participate in census efforts via their existing networks.

The State Complete Count Committee worked to assist local communities in creating their own local complete count committees, providing outreach resources and data on historically undercounted populations via communications efforts and the Complete Count Committee website. The Connecticut Data Collaborative was a critical contributor on the data side, while the Census Bureau provided resources to support outreach to historically undercounted groups. To support outreach to historically undercounted populations, the State Complete Count Committee provided grants to local partners to support outreach activities. Similarly, philanthropic organizations, such as the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, also provided resources to support local outreach activities across the state. Although not all efforts received financial support from the Complete Count Committee or philanthropy, over 100 local complete count committees formed to support census count efforts at the local level.

Nonprofit organizations played a critical role in mobilizing other nonprofits to participate in local census outreach efforts. For example, The Alliance, an organization with hundreds of nonprofit member organizations across the state, partnered with the US Census Bureau to hold half a dozen workshops to educate and provide resources to nonprofits across the state. Similarly, in coordination with its national office, the League of Women Voters of Norwalk held a series of trainings in 2019 and 2020 to orient local nonprofit partners to the census and encourage participation in outreach activities.

The state government, through the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and the Connecticut Data Collaborative, the state data center, were instrumental in coordination efforts.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
State Complete Count Committee	Led by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the State Complete Count Committee coordinated efforts at the state level and provided resources and funding to local complete count efforts.
Connecticut Data Collaborative	Provided data on the distribution of historically undercounted populations in the state, which helped inform decisions on census outreach strategy
Local complete count committees	Undertook local outreach efforts to encourage people to complete the census. Some of the more active local committees were focused on urban centers, such as Hartford and Norwalk.
Statewide nonprofit and philanthropic organizations	Statewide nonprofit organizations, such as The Alliance, the League of Women Voters, and the Council for Philanthropy, were critical in mobilizing local support for census efforts.

²Data 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

A group of local foundations put out a challenge to the state government, promising to provide \$500,000 in funding to support census outreach activities to historically undercounted populations if the state would contribute the same amount. Ultimately, the government agreed to allocate \$500,000, triggering the philanthropic match. Overall, an estimated \$1.4 million of state and philanthropic funds supported efforts to promote the 2020 Census.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$900,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philanthropic organizations matched \$500,000 of state government funds from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to support grants to local groups to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations. Contributors of funding included the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, The Greater New Britain Community Foundation, The Connecticut Community Foundation (Waterbury), and the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. • In addition, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving provided an additional \$400,000 in funding to support census efforts locally.
State Government: \$500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government appropriated \$500,000 to support a grant program administered via the State Complete Count Committee. State government funds went to support nine regional community action agencies, which were nonprofits that undertook a wide variety of local outreach efforts.
In-Kind Contributions: unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many nonprofits, government organizations, and others provided staff time to support census efforts.

³Funding 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

Close collaboration between the US Census Bureau and State Complete Count Committee was critical to efforts in Connecticut. The State Complete Count Committee was well organized and coordinated with representatives from the US Census Bureau to provide insights to local groups into how to best conduct outreach with historically undercounted populations. Representatives from the Census Bureau regularly made themselves available to support local groups. For example, the Bureau held regularly scheduled press conferences in cities such as Stamford and Norwalk, where census staff could serve as resources for the duration of the outreach campaign.

In-person engagement via trusted messengers was a focus of outreach tactics early on, but these tactics shifted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted in-person outreach. In response, groups pivoted to digital strategies, traditional media, billboards, radio, or other means of engagement. For example, the city of Norwalk set up tents where they provided free food aid as well as handouts and palm cards with census information, which assisted in outreach methods to historically undercounted communities.

Investments in communications infrastructure helped set the stage for local groups to conduct effective messaging. The State Complete Count Committee created a centralized communications team, in which they hired consultants to formulate outreach strategies and a communications intern to assist in internal operations. Some local complete count committees made communications investments as well. For example, the local Stamford Complete Count Committee invested \$15,000 of internal funding and helped strengthen communications.

Different communication strategies were more appropriate for different populations. Demographic factors were important to consider in selecting appropriate engagement strategies. For example, older populations tend to be more comfortable with mail, whereas youth are typically more able to engage with online communications. For the new immigrant community in Connecticut, it was crucial to translate messages to ensure the accessibility of materials to those who did not speak English. For example, the port of Norwalk provided census mailers in English, Spanish, and Creole to include with residents' water bills. Media outlets for different cultures were also engaged to conduct outreach to non-English speaking communities in some areas. For example, the Stamford Complete Count Committee bought advertising on the web for outreach in Spanish through Telemundo. Cost was the biggest barrier to utilizing this sort of strategy more widely. Another challenge in some areas was the lack of connections within immigrant communities (e.g., engaging Russian and Haitian communities proved difficult in some areas). The Connecticut Data Collaborative provided census information on underserved communities to target communications efforts.

Urban areas in the state had the greatest concentrations of historically undercounted populations. There are seven major cities in Connecticut that tend to have higher concentrations of historically undercounted

groups. Residents who live in suburban and rural areas tend to be more affluent and thus have higher response rates. In the cities, there was more work for census staff to do to engage residents because of a lack of knowledge in these communities about the census and lack of trust of the census itself. For example, the negative press around the inclusion of the citizen question contributed to some disengagement in urban areas about the census, particularly in areas with higher concentrations of immigrants. In some areas, groups on the ground worked with immigration advocates to gain trust in these communities. For example, the Fairfield Complete Count Committee worked with a local immigration rights initiative which helped boost engagement in those communities.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Start building coalitions early.** Partnerships between the Governor’s office, the Lieutenant Governor’s office, hospitals, towns, philanthropy, and local complete count committees were critical to efforts in Connecticut. These relationships took time to build. Starting early helped get efforts off the ground and develop a plan for the census across the state.
- **Tying the census to local issues is effective for communicating about the census.** Voter registration and redistricting are key issues that the current structure can help mobilize for future efforts.
- **Data is critical to making decisions on how to target outreach.** The Connecticut Data Collaborative provided critical data in real time that supported efforts on the ground.
- **Invest in ongoing census outreach infrastructure.** The lack of ongoing support to census efforts makes it more of a challenge to ramp up efforts when the time comes. The actors noted that if you do something only every 10 years, it is hard to ramp up efforts quickly when the time comes.

LOOKING FORWARD

The actors involved hope they will be able to leverage this way of working and the relationships formed for future engagement efforts.



DATA SOURCES

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

- The Alliance: The Voice of Community Nonprofits
- League of Women Voters of Connecticut