

# DELAWARE

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

<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

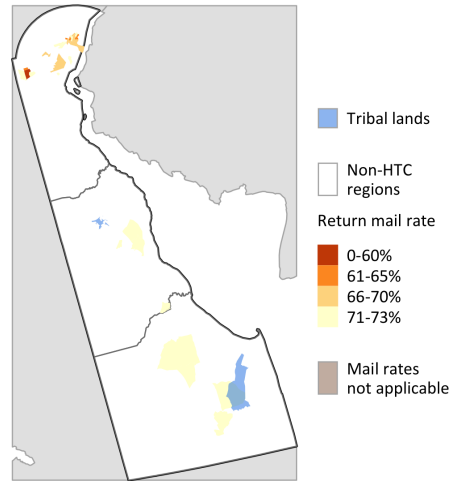
**949,495**

TOTAL POPULATION

**122,188**

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

## HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



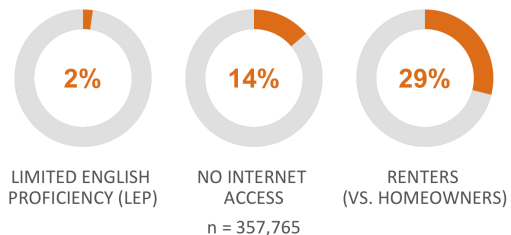
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

## 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).

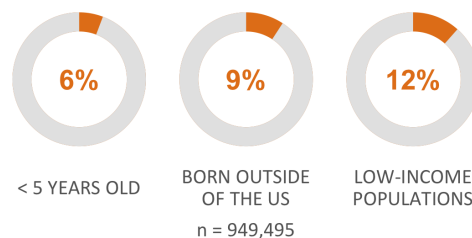
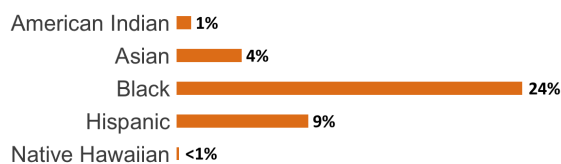
### HOUSEHOLDS

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:

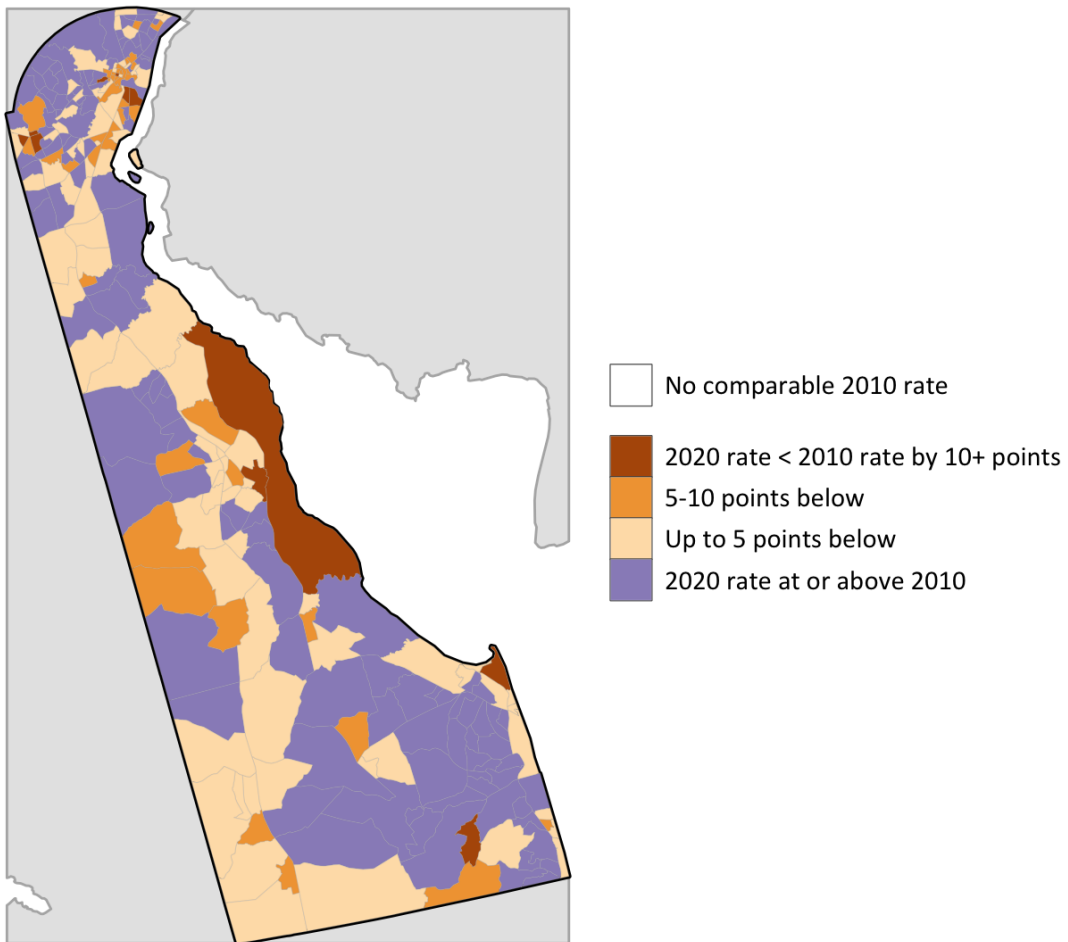




# OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
<b>2020</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>+0.8</b>
2010	64.1%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



## STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Delaware is a small state, with only three counties and under a million residents. Fearing that federal resources would not be sufficient to ensure an accurate count within the state, Philanthropy Delaware, a group representing local foundations, and the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA), a group representing Delaware nonprofit organizations, began advocating for the state legislature to form a State Complete Count Committee and provide appropriate funds to conduct additional census outreach. Recognizing the importance of an accurate and complete census count for determining state representation within the federal government and allocating federal resources to the states, the legislature took action, passing legislation to form a State Complete Count Committee in 2018 and providing \$650,000 for the Committee's census outreach work.

The State Complete Count Committee coordinated Delaware's efforts to support a fair and accurate census count, with representation from multiple sectors across the state, including government, nonprofits, and philanthropy. The Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Delaware was a leading voice on the Committee and coordinated efforts on behalf of the state government. Other state government departments also played leading roles. The Department of Technology developed an interactive dashboard to track census response rates, and the Department of Education's Office of Early Learning helped get the word out to preschool partners, as children under the age of five were undercounted in 2010. New Castle County Government was very active in local outreach as well. Two nonprofits, DANA and the First State Community Action Agency, played leading roles in coordinating efforts among nonprofits in the state. Outreach efforts took shape in early 2019. Philanthropy Delaware, which had been very active in advocating for state funding, continued to support the Committee's efforts in an advisory capacity as the work got underway.

The Committee decided to devote its resources to three areas:

- Developing a traditional communications strategy, using a wide range of media, to encourage state residents to complete the census
- Developing a state census website to track the count and allow for strategic adjustment
- Supporting outreach to historically undercounted populations within the state

The state government, working in partnership with an external consultant, led efforts in the first two areas, while DANA and the First State Community Action Agency took the lead on the third area. The Committee collaborated with county and local complete count committees as well, particularly in the Wilmington area, which represents the greatest concentration of population within the state.

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

Actor	Role
<b>Office of the Lieutenant Governor</b>	Led State Complete Count Committee and oversaw census communications efforts and development of state census website. In addition, the Office oversaw outreach to congregate populations within state institutions (i.e., hospitals, long-term care facilities, prisons).
<b>Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement and the First State Community Action Agency</b>	Jointly led outreach efforts in the state related to historically undercounted populations, including a Census Ambassadors program
<b>Philanthropy Delaware</b>	Served as a leading voice in planning the strategy for census outreach in the state and served on the State Complete Count Committee from its inception until efforts concluded.

<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

Resources for Delaware census efforts came from a combination of state-appropriated funds and in-kind contributions of materials and staff time. Overall, those involved in the efforts estimate that \$650,000 were leveraged within the state, with approximately \$650,000 coming from state government funding, and \$1.2 million representing in-kind resources from state government and nonprofit organizations.

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

<b>Funding Source and Amount</b>	<b>Funding Purpose</b>
<p><b>State Government:</b> <b>\$650,000</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half the funding was allocated to outreach strategies aimed at historically undercounted populations within the state. Outreach funds primarily supported mini-grants to “ambassadors,” individuals with strong credibility within their communities, to serve as messengers and encourage census participation in communities with high proportions of historically undercounted populations.</li> <li>• The other half of the funding was allocated to communications related to the census, including more generally targeted messaging and messaging tailored to specific historically undercounted populations or communities, and a contract with a web designer to develop a public website to track data related to the census count.</li> </ul>
<p><b>In-Kind Contributions:</b> <b>\$1.2 million</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of resources leveraged for census efforts in Delaware were in-kind contributions of staff time from state government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The state government also provided additional in-kind support in the form of printing and the use of signs on public transit with messaging to support communication efforts. Private companies such as Delmarva Power and ChristianaCare also donated in-kind printing support in some areas.</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

**The Committee’s census communications comprised efforts aimed broadly at the general population as well as messaging specifically targeted to historically undercounted populations.** The state government contracted with a communications consultant to develop both types of messaging. Once communications were developed, the messaging was pushed out broadly for use by those involved in the State Complete Count Committee’s efforts. Communications methods were wide ranging, including traditional print media, social media, advertising on buses, and inclusion of census messaging on government publications. The state also focused specifically on individuals living in government institutions who might otherwise be unlikely to complete the census, such as those living in long-term care facilities, prisons, and hospitals.

**A community ambassador program was the centerpiece of outreach to historically undercounted populations.** Early on in planning, the State Complete Count Committee recognized that a “one-size-fits-all” approach was not feasible given the need to find the right messengers (i.e., those likely to be trusted within specific communities). Accordingly, the Committee chose to implement a Census Ambassadors program whereby individuals or organizations with strong credibility within a certain community or population would serve as community messengers. Nonprofit organizations, chiefly DANA and the First State Community Action Agency, led the ambassador program, working to identify organizations and individuals best placed to engage with different populations or areas in the state. Selected ambassadors were provided small grants and given wide latitude to develop and implement an outreach approach that they believed would be effective for their community. Overall, 30 ambassadors were selected across all three counties in the state, with 15 concentrated in the southern, rural part of the state, where historic count rates were lower, and the remaining 15 allocated to other areas. Ambassadors represented diverse communities of color within the state, including the Haitian population as well as Spanish-speaking populations (Guatemala and Mexico). The efforts of the ambassadors were often supported and augmented by other localized census efforts, including those of other nonprofit organizations, businesses, and local complete count committees.

**Data played a critical role in the Committee’s work, allowing for tracking of progress and providing a means of communicating about the census.** Philanthropy Delaware partnered with PolicyMap to overlay which low-income communities to target for outreach. The Committee contracted a web designer to create a Delaware Census Count website to monitor the status of the count and provide real-time information on the progress of the count to local actors, including ambassadors. The data infrastructure helped inform strategic decisions on where to focus additional outreach. For example, when the Committee realized that federal census materials were not being sent to P.O. boxes, which for some state residents was their only address, the Committee was able to implement a new push to send out materials to ensure that those who receive mail through P.O. boxes were encouraged to complete the census. Data also played a role early on in communicating to legislators, using a one-page fact sheet from George Washington University detailing risks to public programs if an accurate count is not reached.

**Census activities were severely disrupted by COVID-19.** In-person or event-based activities were an important element of most localized strategies, all of which had to be suspended at the start of the pandemic. The shutdown in March 2020 required Committee actors, nonprofits, and community ambassadors to pivot to digital, phone banking, and texting strategies while also making increased use of print media (e.g., flyers, billboard campaigns). Some in-person engagement was still possible, as certain essential in-person businesses (such as daycare services) remained open. Some local efforts sought to leverage these venues, requesting that clients fill out the census in those spaces. When pandemic restrictions were eased in the summer of 2020, digital media strategies continued, but there was also a push to leverage opportunities for in-person engagement. Pandemic response volunteer teams also did double duty in getting the word out about the census to the communities hit hardest by the pandemic, which also happened to be undercounted communities.

**Bureaucratic rules hindered disbursement of the state-allocated funds.** Due to bureaucratic rules, \$600,000 of funding for census efforts—including the outreach work of census ambassadors—was not disbursed until January 2020, leading to delays.

**Not having addresses for residents who use P.O. boxes and having addresses for properties that are residential but are second homes or investment properties distorted census targets.** Some beach communities showed less than 20% self-response rates as of August 2020, which may in part reflect the assumption that all addresses are full-time residential properties when in fact some are second homes or investment properties where people do not live full time.



## LESSONS LEARNED

Actors involved in Delaware's 2020 Census efforts identified the following lessons.

- **Hyperlocal outreach was most effective for reaching historically undercounted communities.** Those involved in state census efforts indicated that the most successful outreach tactics were those employed by the ambassadors, which identified trusted individuals to implement hyperlocal strategies within their own communities (e.g., Haitian and Guatemalan communities).
- **Strong partnerships among nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, and state/local government were critical to efforts in the state.** The key nonprofit and philanthropic actors leading census outreach in the state, including DANA, the First State Community Action Agency, and Philanthropy Delaware, had a long history of collaboration on other issues, and the trust and relationships built over the years helped ensure collaboration went smoothly. The deep level of collaboration related to the census was an area of strength and has not been typical of civic engagement historically. Partnerships with supportive elected officials also propelled this work forward, despite initial issues disbursing funding. Finally, aligned communications, including with national operations such as the States Count Action Network (co-chaired by the Leadership Conference Education Fund and State Voices), and willingness to share materials and strategies contributed to the strength of census messaging efforts in the state.
- **Leveraging existing relationships is critical, but there is also a need to forge new partnerships to reach diverse communities.** In identifying local nonprofit partners to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations, DANA and the First State Community Action Agency relied primarily on their existing network of partners at the start. However, they were also able to form new relationships with some smaller community-based organizations and public-serving institutions, such as libraries, as they sought to engage the diverse populations within the state. These new relationships were also critical to census efforts.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The relationships built during the 2020 Census have already been leveraged as part of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the relationships may be further leveraged in the future for other efforts. The broad reach allowed for wider engagement by smaller, local nonprofits and may serve as a model for other public engagement efforts in the future, paving the way for more private-public collaborations.



## DATA SOURCES

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

- DANA
- Philanthropy Delaware