

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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 District of Columbia based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=6).

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

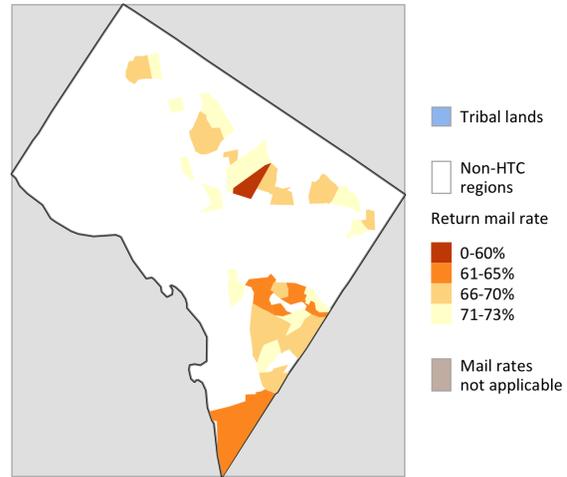
684,498

TOTAL POPULATION

134,466

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



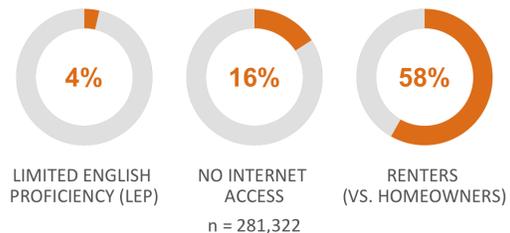
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

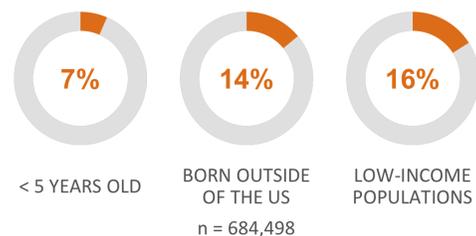
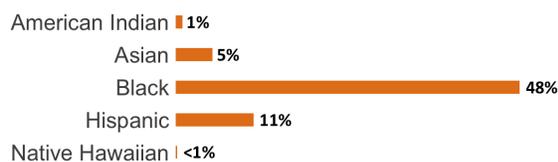
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

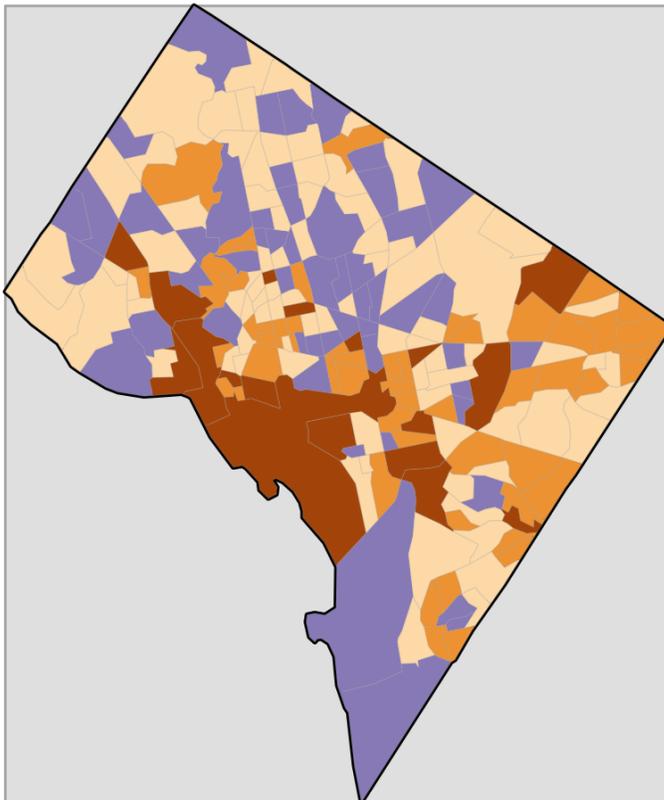




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	64.0%	-2.0
2010	66.0%	

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

The DC region consists of suburban Maryland, northern Virginia, and the DC city proper—collectively known as the DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia). Actors from across the region came together to support efforts related to the 2020 Census, including representatives from philanthropy, nonprofits, and government agencies. In 2018, the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG) and other regional funders came together for early conversations that set the stage for DMV collaboration around the census. Ultimately, the group coalesced into a working group that sought to leverage funding and serve as coordinating body for census efforts in the region. In addition to WRAG, the working group membership included the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MCOG), United Way of the National Capital Area, the Meyer Foundation, and the Consumer Health Foundation. The working group convened in 2019, inviting a wide range of local stakeholders, including representatives from nonprofits, faith organizations, local government, and other constituencies from the DMV region. The event was ultimately attended by over 300 participants and helped jumpstart DMV census efforts.

Garnering contributions from regional and national funders, the working group supported a regional census campaign called the Count DMV In Census Project. The campaign implemented a wide range of census activities, including developing factsheets for nonprofit leaders and staff, providing grants to local groups to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations, and implementing a communications campaign. The Count DMV In Census Project, led by the working group, also sought to establish partnerships with other local actors—including local governments, chambers of commerce, and universities—to provide resources, training, and other support as needed.

In addition to the Count DMV In Census Project, there were other efforts to promote the 2020 Census in the DMV. For example, the Community Health Foundation of Northern Virginia was involved in supporting census efforts in the Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax areas. Similarly, the Northern Virginia Regional Complete Count Committee was enlisted to support the census in the broader DMV region. The committee's efforts included hiring staff focused on coordinating with other regional actors, leveraging funding to support outreach efforts in Prince William County, and forming partnerships with the Census Bureau and the United Way of the National Capital Area.

The DC government was an important contributor to census efforts as well. The mayor allocated city funding to provide grants to nonprofits to conduct outreach to historically undercounted groups and the DC Office of Planning oversaw disbursement of the city funds.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG)	Member of the census working group and regional association that organized funders in the DMV (DC, Maryland, and Virginia) to support the 2020 Census.
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MCOG)	Member of the census working group and regional organization that helped to convene complete count committees from across jurisdictions in the DMV to collaborate on the 2020 Census.
United Way of the National Capital Area	Member of the census working group and leading nonprofit that had membership on four complete count committees in the DMV region.
DC Office of Planning	Led efforts on behalf of DC and managed city grant funds to support the census.

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, an estimated \$1,382,000 of philanthropic and city government funding supported census efforts in the DMV.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$582,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging support from regional funders, the Count DMV In Census Project granted \$287,000 in grants to 20 nonprofits to conduct outreach to historically undercounted groups in the DMV in 2019. In 2020, the groups also raised at least \$75,000 in additional grant funding, including \$25,000 from the national Census Equity Fund. In addition, local funders contributed an additional \$220,000 to support nonprofit census efforts in the DMV.

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

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

<p>State Government: \$800,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mayor allocated \$800,000 of city funding to support census outreach efforts. • In addition, an unknown amount of state funding from Maryland and Virginia state governments supported efforts in the DMV.
<p>In-Kind Contributions: Unknown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

The Community Foundation of Northern Virginia invested in hiring someone within their organization to lead the census count regional initiative engaging local jurisdictions in Northern Virginia to share best practices, as well as sending information to each of the organizations involved.

The foundation also constructed the Northern Virginia Regional Complete Count Committee, which had not been done previously, as local city complete count committees were formed but not necessarily a specific regionally based one. There was the opportunity to bring the private sector into census conversations and to join the complete count committee. Having two board members who were chairs of the Northern Virginia Complete Count Committee added relationships that included the nonprofit sector. Incorporating these different sectors added value to demonstrate that constituents and residents of the DMV region had assistance in understanding and completing their census forms.

Grant programs that sought to support local nonprofits to conduct outreach to specific historically undercounted groups were central to efforts in the DMV. The D.C. Office of Planning launched a grant program in July 2019, awarding grants totaling \$800,000 to 16 organizations in DC to conduct efforts focused on historically undercounted populations. Similarly, the Count DMV In Census project implanted their own grant program, leveraging over \$500,000 in funding to support local groups. Populations of focus included: Black, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, African, Arab, Middle East Muslim, and South Asian communities; children, youth, and students; older adults; people with disabilities; low-wage workers; returning citizens; patients and clients; small businesses; and faith-based communities.

COVID-19 forced changes in outreach tactics. Many groups working in the DMV prior to COVID-19 were using in-person engagement strategies, for example, hosting workshops and trainings and attending community events to share information about the census. The pandemic severely limited in-person engagement opportunities. Consequently, many groups pivoted to alternative engagement strategies, utilizing phone banks, texting, social media campaigns, and mailings to engage.

Communications and messaging were crucial to census efforts in the state. Count DMV In Census Project partners implemented several communications efforts. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments undertook a paid advertising campaign supportive of the census. The United Way of the Capital Area developed a video for sharing online and on social media. In addition, the campaign developed factsheets and messaging toolkits to help groups on the ground conduct effective outreach efforts.

Early work to set up the structure and build relationships facilitated collaboration. Early efforts to build collaborative structure were critical, as were investments in building relationships. These set the stage for collaboration when efforts on the ground got underway.

Ensuring census materials were accessible in multiple languages was critical. For the 2020 Census, there were multiple response options (i.e., online, paper, and phone). Ensuring that each of these mechanisms were available to those who did not speak English was critical. One strategy was to establish a toll-free helpline where people could call to get support in their own language about their census response. Translation services were offered in 13 languages to assist people in filling out the census form.

Translating printed census materials into multiple languages representative of the diversity of DC was another strategy. For example, the state of Maryland translated online materials into languages such as Chinese and Spanish. Prince George's County provided translated palm cards with census information and distributed them to ensure people would be aware of what the census was and how to complete it.

To support people with completing the census online, groups provided access to iPads, smartphones, and laptop computers to assist individuals in completing their census form.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **There is great value in starting early.** Having an early start allowed for solid planning of efforts.
- **Ongoing engagement could enhance future efforts.** One area of opportunity is to integrate information on the census into a civic curriculum for middle and high schoolers in the DMV. Doing so would ensure that students 10 years from now have the insight and knowledge to know what it is and when to complete it.
- **Access to translated materials in multiple mediums is critical.** Successful census outreach in the region included the efforts to provide accessible materials in both print and digital form, providing community-specific materials through translation services and language-specific print materials, and building relationships with trusted messengers in the involved communities.

LOOKING FORWARD

The organizations and individuals involved in this effort believe that the relationships and network developed for the 2020 Census can be leveraged for future civic engagement activities, although how and if these efforts will evolve is uncertain at this point. Hopefully, the close alignment between philanthropy, nonprofits, and government can serve as the groundwork for future efforts. The census working group members are considering how they might continue to work together even during years when there is no census.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG)
- Community Foundation of Northern Virginia
- United Way of the National Capital Area
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- Prince George’s County Complete Count Committee – Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission
- Office of Public Affairs for Fairfax County