

HAWAII

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 Hawaii 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

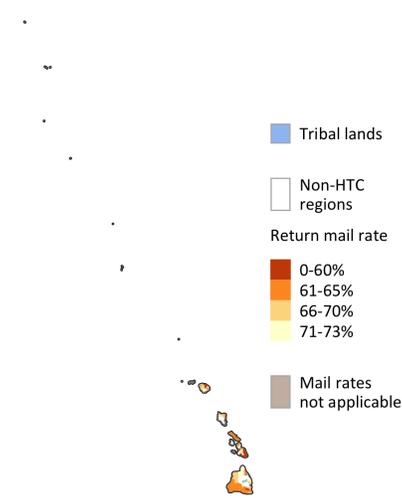
1,422,029

TOTAL POPULATION

475,131

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



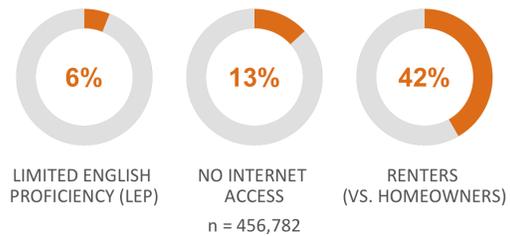
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

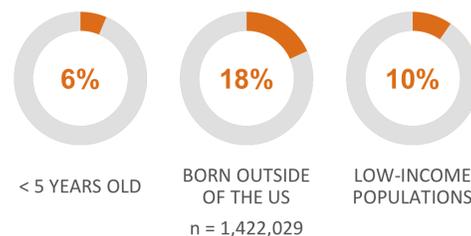
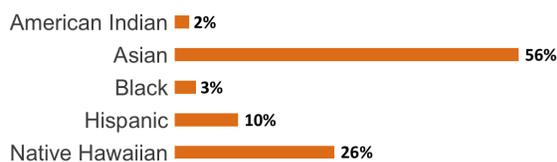
HOUSEHOLDS

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



INDIVIDUALS

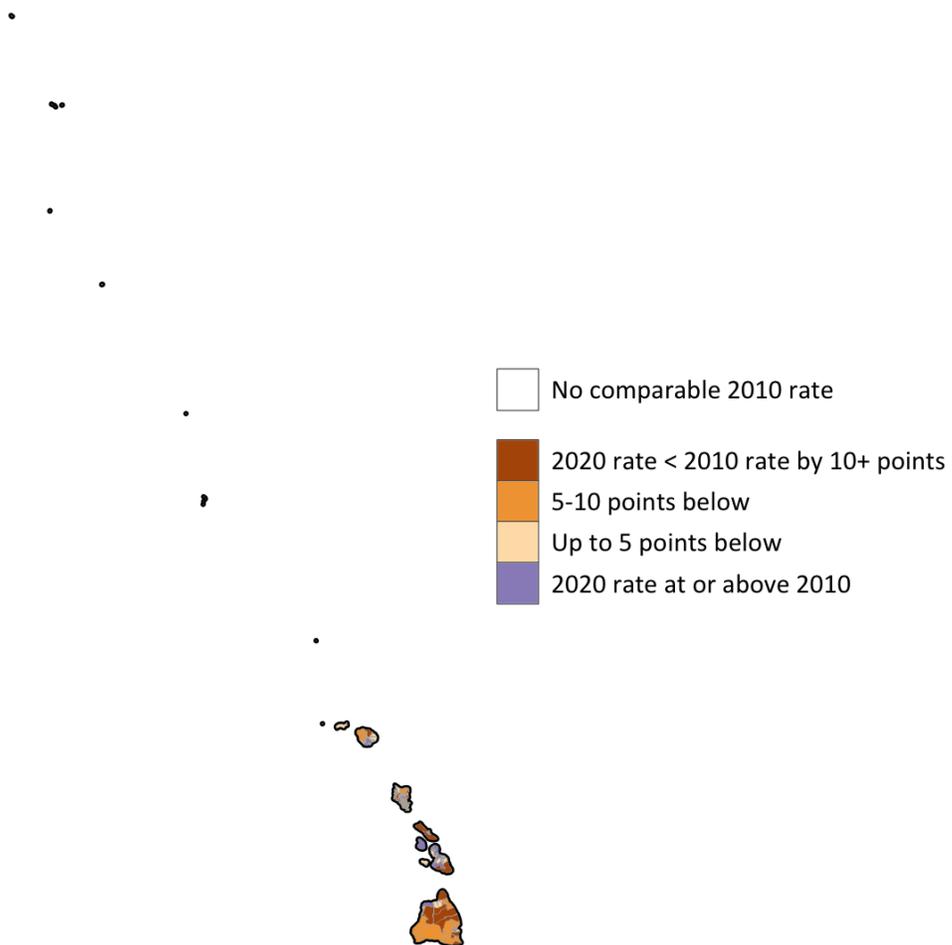
Percent of total number of individuals in the state that have characteristics of historically undercounted populations:



OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	63.1%	-1.0
2010	64.1%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Early efforts to promote a fair and accurate 2020 Census count in Hawaii first got underway in late 2018. During the previous census, the 2010 Census, state government and philanthropic and nonprofit actors in the state were only tangentially involved in census outreach. In the years leading up to the 2020 Census, there was a growing recognition of the need for a more organized effort within the state to promote the census due to its importance as a data source for decision making and the level of federal resources flowing to the state. Late in 2018, actors in the state—including the Hawaii Community Foundation (HCF)—and representatives of state government began discussing how the state might approach more systematic census outreach for the 2020 Census.

Coming out of these early discussions, two structures emerged that would be used to organize census efforts within the state. The state government formed a State Complete Count Committee to spearhead state government efforts. The State Complete Count Committee included representatives from all the state government departments and from county and local government. HCF formed a community-level complete count committee focused on conducting local outreach that included representation from community organizations, businesses, and foundations from across the state. Concurrently, both HCF and the state raised money for census efforts. Ultimately, the state legislature also agreed to allocate funds to support the census. After a proposal process, the state ultimately decided to award these funds to HCF for allocation to local groups through HCF's committee. HCF contributed its own funding to the effort, as did other philanthropic organizations within the state. In addition, a grant from the Census Equity Fund, an initiative of New Venture Fund, also supported efforts in the state.

HCF's status as a statewide funder with connections to diverse organizations across the state positioned it well to spearhead local outreach efforts. As it sought to identify partners to conduct census outreach at the community level, HCF drew on its existing relationships and forged new ones. Decisions about which organizations to partner with were driven in part by considerations related to an organization's ability to access hard-to-count populations across the state. For example, the NAACP was instrumental in efforts to conduct outreach with the Black community, while the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement supported outreach efforts to Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Hawaii Community Foundation	This philanthropic foundation organized and funded community-level Get Out the Count efforts.
Hawaii State Complete Count Committee	The state government organized a State Complete Count Committee and allocated funds to support census outreach at the local level.

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, the total budget for HCF’s census work totaled **about \$1.7 million**, with \$750,000 representing the state government contribution, and the remaining \$949,500 coming from philanthropy across the state and the national Census Equity Fund. Of the state funding appropriated, a small amount was directed toward the operations of the State Complete Count Committee itself. However, the bulk of funds was allocated to support local community efforts to reach hard-to-count populations.

In addition, some community foundations contributed funding to local census outreach beyond the funding allocated by HCF. In some cases, local businesses donated in-kind resources such as materials and labor to support census outreach. For example, Hawaiian Electric contributed volunteers to help with some localized census outreach efforts, while Becker Communications, Inc., provided branding and communications expertise.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
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Philanthropy: \$949,500	Of this total, \$225,000 came from a grant from the national Census Equity Fund. The remaining \$724,500 came from state philanthropic foundations.

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

State Government:
\$750,000

The state legislature appropriated \$750,000 to support state-wide census efforts especially locally in hard-to-count communities.

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

A mini-grant program was the centerpiece of efforts in Hawaii. HCF leveraged funding to provide small grants to organizations across the state to support the 2020 Census. At the peak of its activities, HCF convened a group that included over 250 people representing over 100 organizations across the state to work on census outreach. The work on the ground got underway in 2019 and stretched into 2020, until the census window closed. These grants were intended to support organizations with direct relationships with targeted hard-to-count communities to support outreach and education efforts.

Multiple complete count committees formed to target specific communities across the state. For example, the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander complete count committees spearheaded efforts to target the Native Hawaiian community with phone calls and other census outreach. The Hawaii Children’s Action Network, along with HCF, convened a committee focused on children under the age of 5.

The geography and distribution of historically undercounted populations in Hawaii played a role in targeting census efforts. Leveraging its network, HCF sought to identify partners that would be best positioned to be credible messengers. Many of the areas with the lowest response rates to the 2010 Census were rural areas with higher concentrations of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, along with other partners, was central to efforts to reach these communities. There were also efforts to engage with hard-to-count populations in the major population centers. For example, the NAACP was a key partner in reaching the Black community within the state.

Communication materials were developed by both HCF and the State Complete Count Committee, but the groups shared materials as needed. Both the State Complete Count Committee and HCF complete count group developed communication materials and messaging to publicize the census and collaborated and shared materials with each other when necessary/ and applicable. The HCF group worked with an external public relations consultant to develop materials and to design and implement a comprehensive communications campaign. In some cases, custom materials were provided to local groups to reach specific historically undercounted groups. In addition, community partners created materials for their target populations, such as children or elders.

Government organizations and nonprofits coordinated closely on census efforts, particularly around communications. County and local governments partnered closely on census efforts. Local communications campaigns leveraged communications and messaging resources from the broader HCF and the State Complete Count Committee. Different communication mediums were used in different areas, depending on

what would be most effective. Common tactics included a peer-to-peer text messaging system. Radio messages were effective for reaching the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Filipino communities.

Efforts in some areas sought to engage people around the census in ways that would be culturally relevant.

For example, one strategy was to build census engagement opportunities at the Merrie Monarch festival, an event honoring King David Kalākaua, which is important for the Native Hawaiian community.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many in- person engagements in 2020 had to be canceled. Outreach strategies shifted in response to changing conditions. Partners also tried holding online events, such as Facebook Live streams and online concerts that garnered attention. Direct phone calls also proved effective in the new context, as did other strategies that could be used given the demands of the pandemic.

Other challenges (e.g., bureaucratic rules) also shaped efforts. While the COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest challenge that partners faced in getting out the count, an additional challenge was related to the state contracting rule. Due to this rule, funds allocated in 2019 faced delayed deployment and were not actually able to be used until 2020, leading to delays in some planned census activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **The structure of HCF as the central hub of outreach efforts, in close coordination with the state, was effective.** As a funder that works across the state, HCF was well positioned to leverage relationships to reach different areas of the state. Its expertise as a funder also helped it get funds to organizations to conduct census work efficiently. The collaboration with the state was effective. The state's financial contribution, facilitated by both legislature and governor support, was critical and lent credibility to efforts.
- **Starting earlier could have supported greater census outreach success.** Funding from the state government was not appropriated until relatively late in the game, so less funding was available for planning the implementation earlier. Foreseeing this challenge and acting to mitigate it could support a better response to future census efforts.
- **Creating a diverse coalition was key to the efforts' success.** HCF and other nonprofits in the state were able to assemble a group of organizations that were well positioned to work with diverse groups throughout the state. Without this coalition, outreach efforts would have missed more groups.

LOOKING FORWARD

Actors involved 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. From the HCF perspective, there is hope that the approach of organizing multiple funding partners to fund around a key shared goal, as was done with the census, is a model that could be replicated in the future. There are also aspirations that the close alignment between philanthropy, nonprofits, and government could serve as a groundwork for future efforts.

DATA SOURCES

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

- Hawaii Community Foundation
- Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement