

ILLINOIS

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 Illinois based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=3).

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

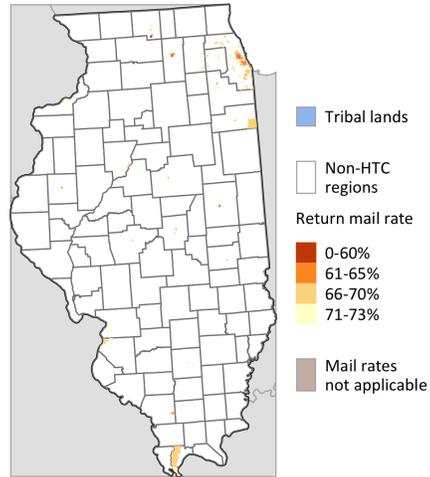
12,821,497

TOTAL POPULATION

1,999,599

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



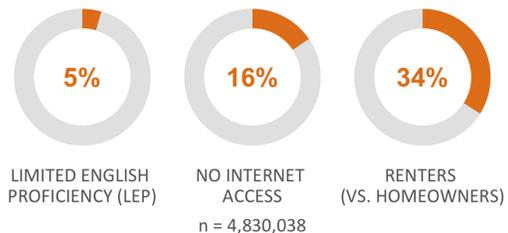
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

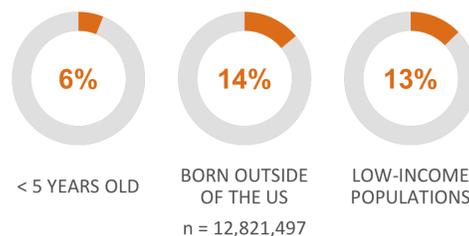
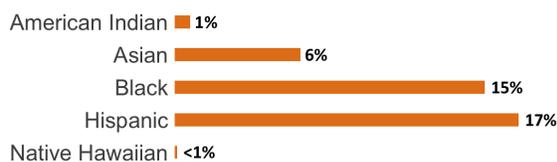
HOUSEHOLDS

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



INDIVIDUALS

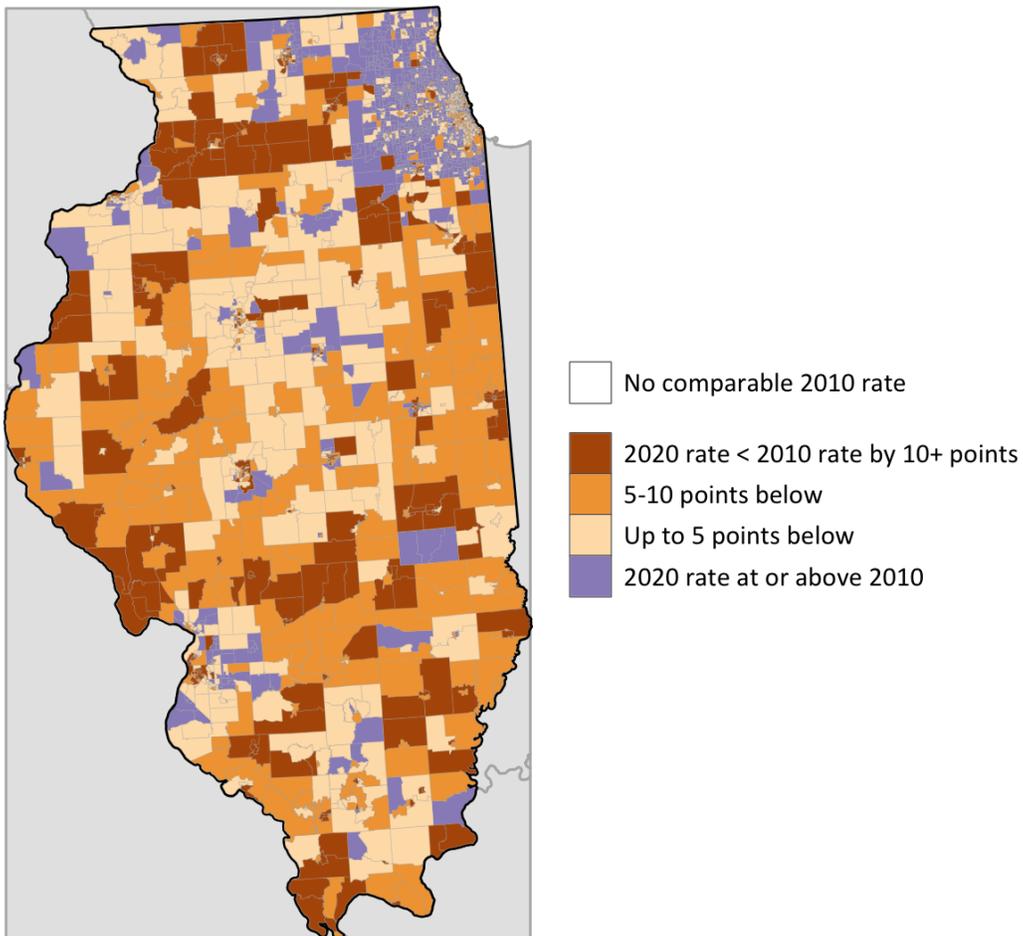
Percent of total number of individuals in the state that have characteristics of historically undercounted populations:



OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	71.4%	+0.9
2010	70.5%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

In Illinois, a diverse array of advocacy groups, government agencies, and community-based organizations worked to support the 2020 Census. Illinois is a large state of 102 counties, many of them rural. The state's urban centers, such as Cook County, are overwhelmingly composed of people of color. As there are so many distinct needs and barriers for communities across the state (including language access needs), philanthropy, advocates, and the state government knew it was imperative to begin planning early.

In the spring of 2017, Forefront, a group comprising both nonprofits and philanthropic organizations across Illinois, received a mini-grant from the United Philanthropy Forum to begin organizing a nonprofit partnership to promote the upcoming 2020 Census. Whereas previous efforts related to the 2010 Census had primarily focused on the Chicago area, Forefront's mandate was to mobilize a broader effort to promote a fair and accurate census count across the state. Early on, Forefront sought to identify a few core nonprofit partners to agree to participate in the partnership. By the fall of 2017, Common Cause Illinois and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) had agreed to join the partnership as core partners in the work.

Modeling their structure in part based on similar efforts in other states, the coalition created a steering committee consisting of the three core partners and other organizations, including the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Chicago Urban League, and Asian Americans Advancing Racial Justice. The steering committee served as a hub of philanthropic resources in the state and leveraged philanthropic funding to provide grants. The coalition grew to encompass about 50 other organizations that supported the steering committee in providing grants to smaller local groups that were seen as trusted messengers in local communities. This high level of collaboration early on set up the coalition to effectively respond when the COVID-19 crisis arrived.

The coalition, headed by Forefront, MALDEF, and Common Cause, sought to ensure its members included groups well positioned to target historically undercounted populations within the state. Groups including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, SEIU Healthcare, the Black Caucus of Illinois, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago, among others, ultimately joined the effort. The Fair Tax Coalition, which consists of social service organizations that rely on state funding and serve undercounted populations, was also an active participant in 2020 Census efforts. The Municipal League and public libraries, while not officially part of the coalition, also coordinated with the coalition while conducting their own 2020 Census efforts.

Due in part to advocacy from interest groups throughout the state, the Illinois Legislature chose to appropriate funds specifically to support outreach to historically undercounted populations across the state. In 2018, Illinois opened a state Census Office, headed by the Office of the Secretary of State and the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS acted as the lead agency to allocate state funding via grantmaking to support 2020 Census efforts. To ensure coverage of the state as a whole, the secretary of state and DHS

then identified and engaged regional intermediaries, lead organizations who in turn would identify local organizations to conduct census outreach efforts. The regional intermediaries handled disbursement and reporting for the 700 subgrantee organizations. While the efforts of Forefront, Common Cause, and MALDEF were independent of the state Census Office efforts, coordination and information sharing between the two coalitions ensured alignment and reduced duplication. Some organizations in the state participated in both efforts simultaneously. For example, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights was on the steering committee for the nonprofit/philanthropic coalition and a regional intermediary for the Illinois Complete Count Committee.

In addition to the State Complete Count Committee and the coalition headed by Forefront, Common Cause, and MALDEF, other groups also worked to support the 2020 Census throughout the state. For example, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition was active, particularly in the Chicago area, as a census advocate. Local and county complete count committees also supported this work.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Forefront, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund Midwest Region, Common Cause	Forefront was instrumental in communication development for the coalition. Forefront also worked with the state government to manage a grants pod for community-based organizations. MALDEF Midwest Region was instrumental in coordinating/convening organizations involved in nonprofit/philanthropic efforts. Common Cause chaired the policy table, which managed the day-to-day work of the census effort, including providing communications and materials for participating nonprofits.
State Census Office	The state Census Office was jointly led by the Office of the Secretary of State and DHS. Both agencies acted as grant makers for the funds disbursed by the state government. The secretary of state distributed the earlier pot of the state’s money, while DHS was chosen to distribute the second pot of funding, as the agency had a good understanding of the regional organizations across the state.

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

Overall, \$32.2 million dollars of state government and philanthropic funding supported efforts in Illinois.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
<p>Philanthropy: \$1.75 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 foundations across the state came together to create a joint fund for this work, managed through the Forefront-headed steering committee. These funds supported grantmaking to local organizations to conduct outreach work. Grants from the steering committee (typically \$100,000 to \$200,000) went to organizations across the state that were well positioned to reach certain populations or regions. These funds were in turn re-granted to smaller groups on the ground to carry out the actual work. The coalition developed a definition of hard-to-count to assemble requests for proposals for communities serving undercounted populations in alignment with the approved definition.
<p>State Government: \$30,500,000 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois was one of the first states to create a Census Office by statute. This executive establishing the Census Office was accompanied by a \$29 million appropriation allowing the State to implement a strategy in which 31 regional organizations established and local coalitions (totaling over 400 total members) to support getting out the count. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports a total of \$30.5 million, but key informants reported an additional \$14.5 million appropriation for fiscal year 2021.
<p>In-Kind Contributions: Unknown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown

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

Grantmaking to trusted local messengers was the centerpiece of nonprofit/philanthropic-led and state government-led census efforts within the state. Both efforts relied on local intermediary organizations to get grant resources to local groups to conduct outreach activities. Identifying partners that would be well positioned to reach specific communities, such as the African American, Hispanic, and Asian American communities, was critical. Both efforts used data on historically undercounted populations to make decisions on where and how to direct their resources. There was also collaboration between efforts to maximize coverage and reduce duplication.

Developing strong communication materials was also critical to efforts in the state. Similarly, census efforts relied on developing and sharing communication practices and messaging across the groups engaged. The state developed messaging and conducted training with its partners to spread good practices. Forefront took the lead on communications for their coalition, developing messaging to share with other partners. Groups employed multiple strategies to engage people around the 2020 Census. For example, coalition partners used social media “thunderclaps” as an effective means of engagement. Thunderclaps involve members of a coalition simultaneously putting out a cohesive message on social media platforms with shared hashtags and language for a designated period of time. The coalition provided a toolkit of messaging and graphics promoting the census for partners to use. Partners held a thunderclap on Census Day (April 1), garnering almost 2 million reactions across the state. City and county actors soon joined partners in planned

LESSONS LEARNED

- **The “hub and spoke” model, whereby coalitions use local intermediaries to help direct grant funding, was effective.** This allowed for greater reach across the state and helped ensure resources got into the hands of effective census messengers.
- **Undocumented immigrant communities in Southern and Central Illinois remained the hardest to count,** despite outreach attempts from Telemundo, Univision, and other media partners. The context of the citizenship question and reoccurring Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids likely created some fear regarding the census in those communities.
- **There is a need for ongoing support of the state’s census infrastructure so that it does not have to be “rebuilt” each time.** If enough funders came together to support infrastructure on an ongoing basis, there might not be a need rebuild efforts from the ground up for the next census.
- **Involvement from a wide range of groups, especially the state government, propelled efforts in Illinois.** Involving a diverse array of actors early on supported good planning and enabled groups to set priorities early and build a broad base of support. State government involvement was critical, as were the investments by philanthropic organizations and the state, which ultimately enhanced the final count. The governor’s support of the effort also ensured strong collaboration between state government and others across the state.
- **Good data contributes to good strategy.** This is especially true when it comes to understanding how to reach undercounted communities and creating nuanced messaging to encourage participation (i.e., openly dispelling the rhetoric coming from the Trump administration).

LOOKING FORWARD

There is hope that this model for civic engagement could be leveraged for future efforts. For example, some members of the nonprofit/philanthropic coalition have continued to work together and are seeking to leverage their influence for causes around the state. Parts of the coalition are also engaged in plans to address redistricting.

DATA SOURCES

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

- Forefront
- Common Cause Illinois
- MALDEF Midwest Region (Chicago)