

KENTUCKY

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 Kentucky 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

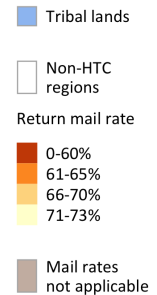
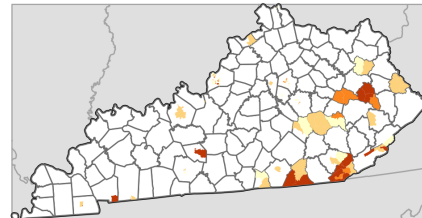
4,440,204

TOTAL POPULATION

435,403

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



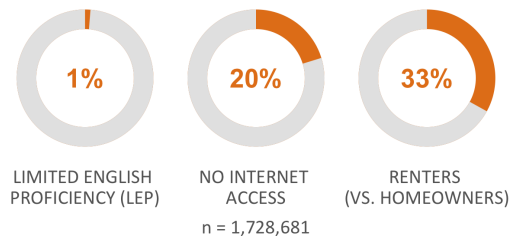
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

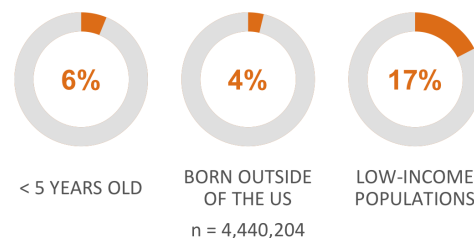
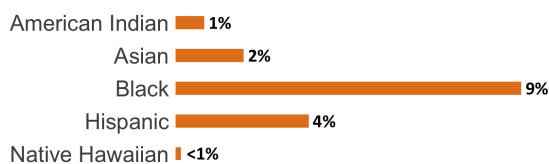
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

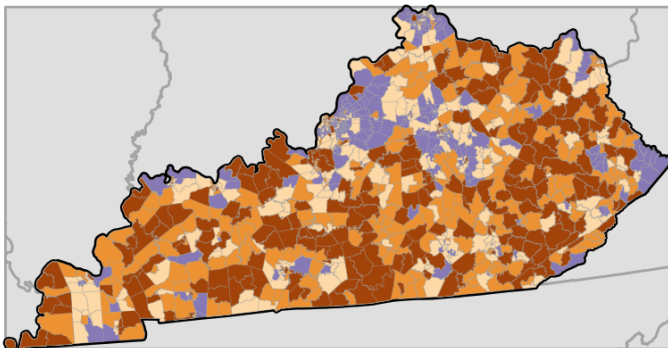




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	68.2%	+2.5
2010	65.7%	

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

Historically, Kentucky did not have a well-established infrastructure for coordinated census efforts. For the 2020 Census, it was structured in two new ways: through a coordinated mobilization of nonprofits and through the state's first administrative task force for census efforts. Kentucky Youth Advocates began educating groups about the upcoming census in late 2017 through a census "roadshow" across the state, after the Annie E. Casey Foundation raised the importance of the census for children and families to their Kids Count grantees. In early 2019, the Kentucky Nonprofit Network (KNN), the state association of nonprofits, organized a new "Count Me in KY 2020" statewide nonprofit coalition of 20 organizations invested in a fair and accurate census outreach efforts, including the United Way of Kentucky, Kentucky Youth Advocates, various church councils, social services agencies, and many health and children's advocacy groups. Although the formal coalition was new, it built off many existing relationships among these groups and was further strengthened through new partners with and without prior census engagement.

Preliminary census activities by the state were initiated by Governor Matt Bevin, who established the Kentucky Complete Count Task Force in 2018, the first of its kind; however, several events kept the task force from fully engaging in census work. Kentucky's biennial budgeting process meant there could be no attempt to allocate state-appropriated funds until 2020, and the lack of funds diluted any state-led leadership and outreach to organizations to engage with the task force. In addition, although the Republican governor publicly expressed support for a complete count, he was also one of the 17 gubernatorial signatories of an amicus brief proposing to include a citizenship question on the census, politicizing census efforts. Finally, an administration change also created delays: in January 2020, the newly elected Democratic Governor Andy Beshear took office, and he quickly reestablished the task force and encouraged census participation at the end of each daily COVID-19 briefing. The task force met once before the pandemic struck and provided some means of collaboration, but they otherwise were not highly engaged.

Most of the efforts were led by the KNN-led coalition, which worked alongside the state task force for the census launch. In working closely together for key activities, both groups benefited from the exchange of information for more effective complete count efforts. The KNN coalition also had the strong support of local-level partners, including many county mayors and judge executives who were involved with their local complete count committees. Census Bureau partnership specialists also played an important role as connectors by helping spread new information from coalition members and educating the local complete count committees with which they were frequently engaged. The network approach to nonprofit education and engagement activities was diffused across Kentucky's 120 counties, with most of the coalition partners stationed in different regions but performing statewide work and reaching out to their network of community nonprofits for on-the-ground census outreach efforts.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Kentucky Nonprofit Network	As Kentucky’s state association of nonprofits, KNN led a statewide coalition, organizing monthly calls and regular email updates to partners. It kept its over 800 nonprofit members and thousands more on its email list and social media channels informed of Census work through regular engagement; KNN also provided resources for census outreach, e.g., key messaging, digital materials, and strategies for reaching critical community outlets. KNN maintained a consistent advocacy presence with the state government and successfully engaged Governor Andy Beshear in a press conference to announce its website launch.
Kentucky Youth Advocates	Advocacy group for children’s issues in the state which became involved in the 2020 Census as Kentucky Kids Count grantees for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The group advocated for census efforts early on through conferences and meetings across the state to educate others on the importance of the census for children’s programming.
Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky (FHKY)	Funded mini-grants to community- and issue-based nonprofits working on census outreach and provided additional support by hosting a series of webinars to help organizations with capacity building for census efforts.
United Way of Kentucky	Provided essential advocacy and outreach support for census activities as a trusted statewide service provider. The group advocated for the state government to initiate a task force, submitted op-eds to KY newspapers, and provided soundbites for local radio.

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

Total census funding was approximately \$288,000. Of this total, \$100,000 came from the national Census Equity Fund. Resources for Kentucky census efforts came from a combination of state- and national-level philanthropy and some unknown amount of in-kind contributions of materials and staff time. Overall, those involved in the efforts estimate that **over \$160,000 in resources was leveraged within the state**, mostly in philanthropic dollars, as well as through an unknown amount of in-kind contributions.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
<p>Philanthropy: \$288,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky Youth Advocates leveraged a total of about \$120,000 to support census activities. The national Census Equity Fund contributed \$100,000 in late 2019. Some of the money was meant to be used for a large shipment of Kids Count books intended for outreach in Appalachian Kentucky, but because of some mishaps, the books did not arrive until after the pandemic began, thus negatively impacting the distribution strategies. The Annie E. Casey Foundation awarded a \$20,000 operational grant to Kentucky Youth Advocates for census activities. • FHKY awarded more than \$28,000 in mini-grants for organizations focused on outreach to historically undercounted groups and areas for the 2020 Census, such as Kentucky Youth Advocates. In addition, FHKY supported census efforts through overhead staff time, radio advertising, and outreach materials shared with public outlets. • KNN received about \$20,000 from cash sponsorships and in-kind donations from existing funding partners, primarily for census marketing materials and publicity. KNN secured Kroger and Passport Health, a state health care provider, as private sponsors. These sponsors supported KNN’s work to establish the Coalition and the statewide census website.
<p>State Government: \$0</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state chose not to allocate funding to support the work of the State Complete Count Committee. Some cities and local jurisdictions reportedly provided a few thousand dollars to fund census activities.

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

In-Kind Contributions: unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many organizations contributed staff time and other resources to census efforts within the state. For example, Vimarc provided in-kind design work to KNN for marketing efforts, and local radio stations provided public service announcements.
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DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Broad messaging strategies involved educating communities about the importance of the census and its constitutional nature through partner networks, ensuring that messaging was clear and accessible. The KNN coalition gathered statewide nonprofits with the goal of relying on their umbrella networks to reach community-based service providers and nonprofits for public education and engagement. KNN also worked closely with the governor’s task force to organize a press conference and launched a statewide website for census information. Although some census information was shared via social media and other digital channels, limited internet access in some areas of the state led to creative outreach tactics, including op-eds about the importance of the census written by a rotation of coalition partners, radio public service announcements, and a texting campaign led by United Way Worldwide.

Efforts were made to reach historically undercounted groups across the state. Outreach first began in the more populated areas where the key actor organizations were housed and later became more focused on eastern Kentucky and other rural areas as more information about response rates was gathered. Historically undercounted groups in the state included young children, households with grandparents raising children, same-sex families, colleges and universities, Latinx and Black communities, and areas without access to broadband internet and those experiencing poverty, many of which are rural. To reach these groups, the key actors worked closely with issue area leaders to design outreach materials with targeted messaging, including translated materials for distribution across organizations. Funding enabled culturally responsive outreach efforts for undercounted groups. For example, in Louisville, separate funds allowed the Nashville Complete Count Committee to hire a community-based coordinator for engagement activities with undercounted groups and enabled a local Spanish radio station to sponsor a prize competition.

A variety of data sources were used to develop outreach strategies for reaching undercounted groups. The US Census Bureau representative provided critical information to key actors, including lists of hard-to-count populations across the state and maps of the local complete count committees used as networking tools. The representative also actively updated the coalition with real-time feedback on census efforts and results, providing guidance for areas that needed more attention. Other maps that were referenced to guide efforts included the census self-response rate map for comparison with 2010 response rates and City University of New York maps to further narrow down areas with undercounted groups. In the absence of regular task force meetings, the coalition remained steadily informed by sharing this information with its members.

Delayed and insufficient funding hindered groups from performing census outreach activities. National groups did not prioritize Kentucky until later funding rounds. It was expressed by key actors that the delay in the release of funds, exacerbated by the onset of the pandemic as funders made decisions about shifting to pandemic relief aid, stalled the work of community-based organizations that needed funding for census campaigns. Groups had considered applying for funding together, but they abandoned the effort by the summer of 2019 because of a lack of bandwidth to develop their grant proposals and the short remaining timeline.

Other challenges, such as the politicization of the census and the onset of the pandemic, affected complete count activities. Partisan responses towards the census trickled into local efforts to various degrees depending on area distrust of government, but key actors believe some strides were still made in infrastructure development. The pandemic caused a number of problems, among which was the shortening of collaboration through the new state task force. Further, in-person efforts were curtailed, and the COVID-19 response took priority for many coalition members who had to shift their capacities to helping the nonprofit sector stay educated on the Paycheck Protection Program and loans and providing other forms of pandemic relief. The shifting deadlines and information in response to COVID-19 required coalition leaders to keep their information up to date across websites and materials.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **The establishment of a new state census task force shows promise but is feckless without state funding.** Kentucky started 2020 Census efforts with little to no historical infrastructure for statewide work, and advocates missed their window to allocate funds in the state's biennial budget. In hindsight, key actors believe work to secure state funds should start several years prior to the census. Although the task force participation was active at times, it felt empty without a budget.
- **Groups across the state united well under the shared goal of an accurate 2020 Census count despite competing program priorities.** Although many of the relationships among coalition members had already existed, the coalition structure allowed for new configurations of partnerships not seen before this. They successfully shared information among the networks statewide and developed a working relationship with the new governor's administration.
- **The coalition experience educated and empowered organizations to explore their role in civic engagement.** Nonprofits in a variety of interest areas were encouraged to use their positioning in the community and leverage public trust to deliver information about the importance of the census. Organizations outside the realm of civic engagement, such as social service providers and health advocates, found new ways of connecting to the work.
- **In united efforts, coalition members found strong, consistent messaging and a collaborative structure that engaged a variety of undercounted populations,** leveraging issue area expertise of language and engagement strategies. Some work remains to identify county-level champions of the census willing to engage in outreach activities despite its politicization.
- **Organizations representing undercounted communities are missing in census leadership.** Some historically undercounted groups were reached through service providers, their umbrella organizations, or advocacy groups representing their interests. Currently, there are few to no statewide organizations representing these communities involved in census efforts, an indicator of the work ahead for the state.

LOOKING FORWARD

Through the establishment of the state's first census task force and the formation of a new census coalition, Kentucky made progress in building its civic engagement infrastructure for the 2020 Census. Census activities were hampered by a lack of state funding and delays in philanthropic support. In the future, the relationships built with organizations through the network and with the state administration through the task force may be leveraged to encourage stronger leadership and funding advocacy. As a result of reflections on how to better engage local county and undercounted community leadership, the developing collaborative structure will evolve and endure.



DATA SOURCES

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

- FHKY
- KNN
- Kentucky Youth Advocates