

MONTANA

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 Montana 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

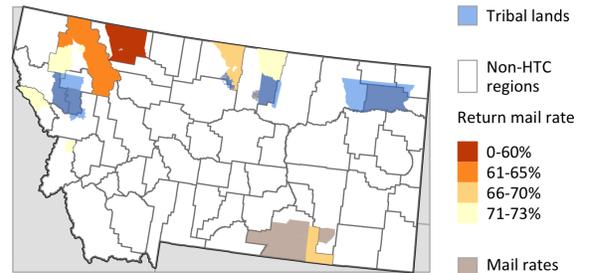
1,041,732

TOTAL POPULATION

104,004

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



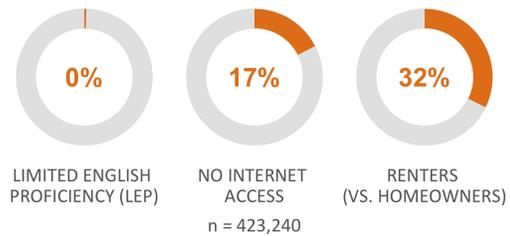
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

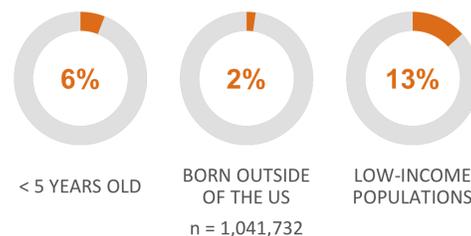
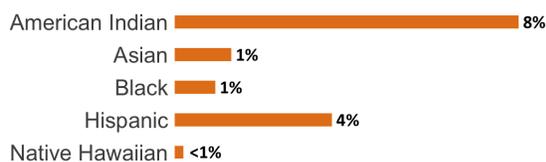
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

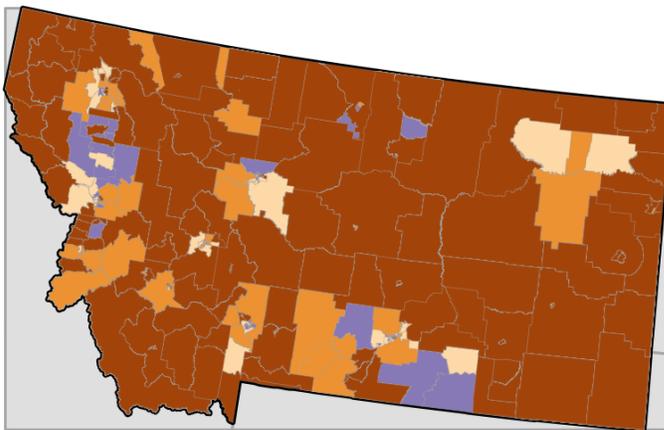




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	60.4%	-4.2
2010	64.6%	

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

Government, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations all contributed to census efforts in Montana. Early conversations among nonprofits in the state around a 2020 Census response began in 2018. Important actors that engaged early on to plan census efforts within the state included Montana Voices, the State Voices civic engagement table within the state; the Montana Nonprofit Association; Western Native Voice, a nonprofit working with native tribes; and philanthropic organizations such as the Montana Community Foundation.

Montana Voices undertook a campaign to engage with historically undercounted groups, focusing on outreach to Native Americans, low-income women and families, and young Montanans. The work of Montana Voices benefitted from a grant from the national funders group the Census Equity Fund. Member organizations involved in Montana Voices were key for outreach to various populations. Western Native Voice was a key partner for outreach to the tribes, while Montana Women Vote focused on reaching women and families. Forward Montana Foundation, a group focused on youth, were important for efforts to reach students and young people in the state. Other partners collaborated to reach as many Montanans as possible—senior groups, student advocacy groups, civic groups, school districts, libraries, local governments, and more.

The Montana Nonprofit Association took the lead on reaching rural (but nontribal) areas across the state, leveraging its network of local government and statewide nonprofits working in these areas. By engaging local partners, they sought to ensure that even those who would not normally be able to access the census due to distance, lack of broadband access, or other barriers would be able to be counted.

The state Complete Count Committee was also active in census efforts and collaborated with nonprofits on outreach efforts. Two members of Montana Voices sat on the state Complete Count Committee, helping facilitate communication. The state legislature allocated government funding for a census public awareness campaign. Subsequently, when the federal government passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in 2020, the state allocated a portion of the funding received toward census efforts, contributing to the Montana Nonprofit Association, Western Native Voice, and Forward Montana Foundation to support their ongoing census work.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Montana Voices	Organized outreach to historically undercounted groups, specifically Native Americans, low-income women and families, and young Montanans, with heavy engagement by Montana Women Vote, Forward Montana Foundation, and Western Native Voice, along with other partners
Montana Nonprofit Association	A key actor in census efforts within the state that organized outreach to rural Montanans and collaborated closely with other nonprofits, local governments with the help of the Montana Association of County Officials, the state library, extension agents, and others
State Complete Count Committee	Organized efforts on behalf of the state government and allocated funding from the state legislature

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, an estimated \$1,050,500 of state government and philanthropic funding were leveraged in support of census efforts in the state with an additional \$300,000 in in-kind contributions of staff time.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$420,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national funders group the Census Equity Fund provided \$250,000 to support the efforts of Montana Voices. These funds supported the hiring of census organizers to undertake local outreach efforts. • The Montana Community Foundation provided a \$40,000 grant to Montana Nonprofit Association early on to jumpstart efforts. • Montana Nonprofit Association also received \$130,000 from other local funders to support their efforts, which included re-granting some of these funds to other nonprofits across the state to engage in census outreach and education.
State Government: \$630,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State government initially contributed \$100,000 to conduct a broad-based public relations campaign. Later, \$530,500 in CARES Act funding received by the state also went toward census efforts and was passed along to some organizations for census work. For example, Montana Nonprofit Association and Western Native Voice both received grants of about \$120,000 each from this funding.
In-kind contributions: \$300,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana Voices estimated in-kind contributions from its partners in support of census efforts totaled around \$300,000.

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

Montana Voices hired and trained local organizers who were well positioned to engage with various populations concerning the census. Training focused on the logistics of the census itself and also on tactics that were likely to be effective in historically undercounted communities. Trained messengers were encouraged to integrate census outreach into efforts related to voter registration and other community issues. Organizers used a wide range of strategies to engage with residents. COVID-19 interrupted some of these efforts and required adaptation.

Montana Nonprofit Association implemented a grant program to support nonprofits to undertake census outreach efforts in hard-to-reach communities. Initially, grants were intended to support in-person activities and organizing. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, activities shifted. Groups tried new engagement methods including mailings, texting campaigns, and phone banking. Groups also conducted social media campaigns and direct outreach to hard-to-reach populations through emergency food distributions, etc.

Close collaboration among Montana Voices, Montana Nonprofit Association, Western Native Voice and Forward Montana Foundation helped extend the reach of efforts. Groups were collaborative rather than competitive, and this helped reduce duplication of effort and maximize efficient use of the limited resources available.

The rural nature of the state made outreach challenging. The fact that much of the state is rural and lacks broadband access was a challenge for census efforts. In addition, because the Census Bureau does not do mailings to PO boxes, their use as the primary means of receiving mail in many areas also created challenges.

Public support from a bipartisan group of leaders within the state helped to promote the census, particularly among more conservative groups. A number of prominent political leaders, including a republican senator, were publicly supportive of the census, which helped create momentum for outreach efforts.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Choosing the right messengers is key.** Census messages resonate more if delivered by local messengers with local credibility. If possible, it's best to recruit and work with messengers who can engage effectively with groups with both conservative and liberal political leanings.
- **Close collaboration with the state government provides credibility to nonprofit census efforts.**
- **Acquiring funding for this kind of civic engagement work is a challenge and requires ongoing investment.** More resources would have allowed for increased census outreach. Earlier funding could result in earlier outreach activities, and ongoing investment could ensure that knowledge gained during the 2020 Census is not lost and can be leveraged for future efforts.

LOOKING FORWARD

Many of the groups involved in the census work had preexisting relationships. Groups will continue to collaborate closely on important issues affecting the state.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Montana Nonprofit Association (n=2)
- Montana Community Foundation