

2020 CENSUS

STATE-BY-STATE REPORTS

NEW JERSEY

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 New Jersey 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

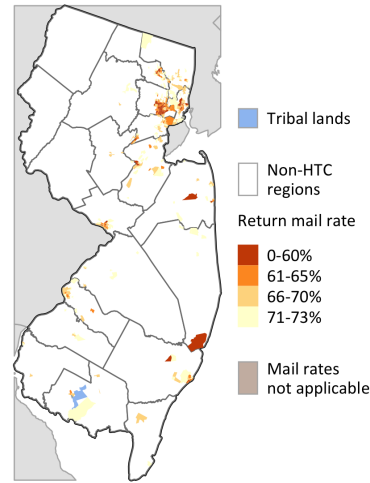
8,881,845

TOTAL POPULATION

1,938,520

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



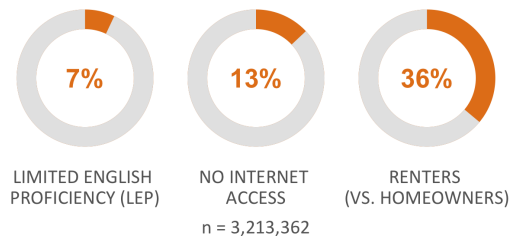
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

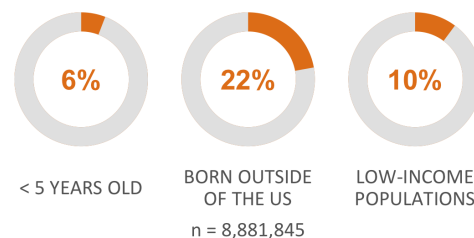
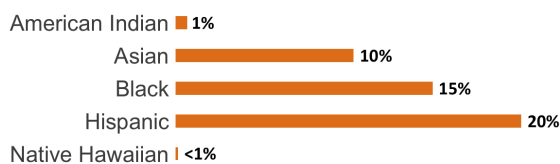
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

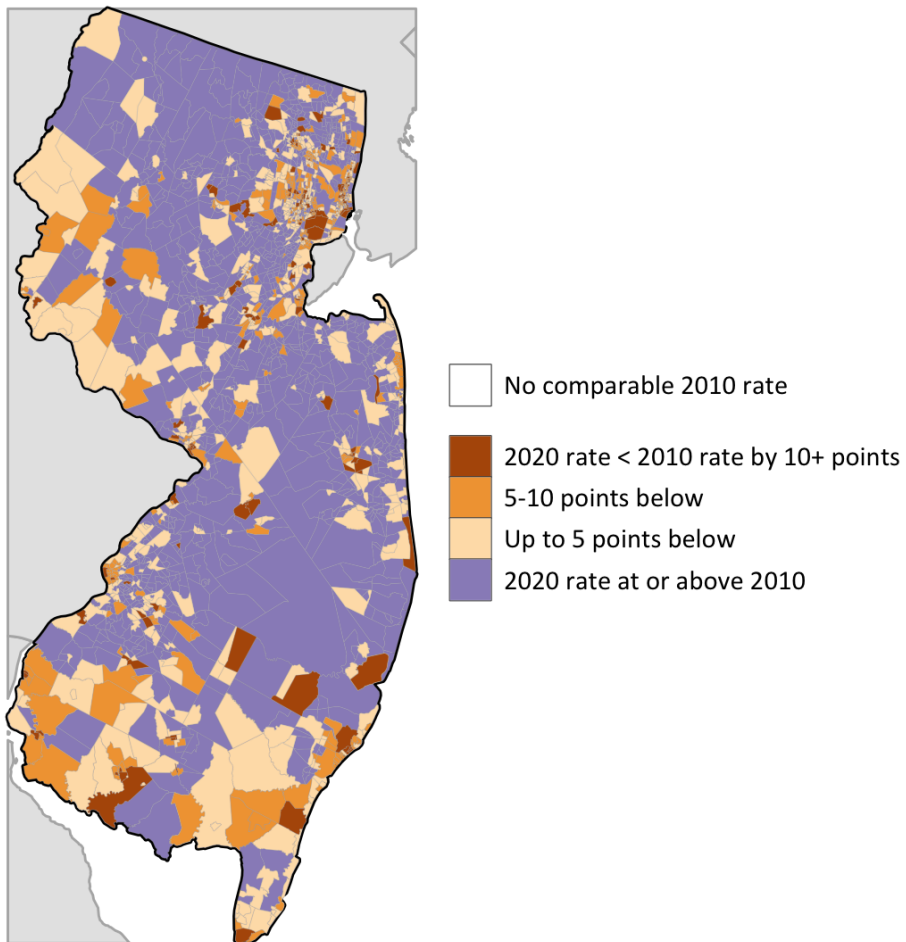




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	69.5%	+1.9
2010	67.6%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

There was not a robust statewide response to the 2010 Census in New Jersey. In contrast, the federal Census Bureau, state funders, and a nonprofit collective collaborated to promote 2020 Census efforts within the state. Early conversations between nonprofit organizations and philanthropic funders began in 2017. Initially, the focus was on advocating the state government to form a State Complete Count Committee and to allocate funds to support outreach for a strong 2020 Census count. In 2018, under the leadership of The Fund for New Jersey, a nonprofit coalition formed to guide a statewide response to the 2020 Census. The Census 2020 NJ Coalition focused on recruiting organizations that worked with historically undercounted communities (mostly communities of color). The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers and The Fund for New Jersey actively encouraged foundations to participate in the effort.

Ultimately, the Coalition grew to comprise over 100 organizations, with many member organizations receiving funding to conduct census outreach. While The Fund for New Jersey was a key funder, twenty funders contributed to the effort. Advocates for Children of New Jersey acted as the lead convener for the Coalition. The Coalition's structure promoted relationship building among diverse actors within the state. While some of the larger organizations had preexisting relationships, many of the groups involved were working together for the first time. The breadth of actors involved allowed for increased opportunities for engagement among groups that typically would have had opportunities to collaborate.

Due in part to advocacy to the state legislature, the state of New Jersey formed a State Complete Count Committee under the leadership of the Office of the Secretary of State. The state also allocated funding to the State Complete Count Committee's efforts. The State Complete Count Committee mobilized state government agencies to communicate about the census and also provided grants to nonprofit organizations across the state to conduct outreach efforts. The State Complete Count Committee and the Census 2020 NJ Coalition actively collaborated in their efforts. Both groups closely collaborated with the regional Census Bureau office and The Fund for New Jersey, representing funders. All four groups worked in concert to ensure that there was no duplication of efforts and that they were maximizing engagement opportunities with historically undercounted populations.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Advocates for Children of New Jersey	Local advocacy nonprofit that focused on counting children under the age of 5. The nonprofit acted as a leader of the Census 2020 NJ Coalition.
The Fund for New Jersey	Private foundation and key state funder that led the formation of the Census 2020 NJ Coalition. The foundation also played a large role in coordinating with state officials and institutions.
Office of the Secretary of State of New Jersey	The Office headed the State Complete Count Committee, which undertook various outreach efforts across the state.

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, the state government and philanthropy contributed over \$11.4 million to support census outreach within the state.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$2.4 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 funders supported the Census 2020 NJ Coalition. Funds went primarily to grantmaking to local organizations. • Some funders participated in pooled funds led directly by The Fund for New Jersey and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, who were involved directly with the Coalition’s work. Others participated in aligned funding, providing grants directly to community partners in support of the Coalition’s work. • The national funders group the National Census Equity Fund made a grant totaling \$70,000 to support efforts in 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

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: \$9 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state allocated \$9 million to the State Complete Count Committee’s work. Some of the funding was allocated directly via grants to community organizations to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations, whereas some was directed to state counties to support local governments’ Get Out the Count efforts.
In-Kind Contributions: Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside of efforts supported by the State Complete Count Committee or the Census 2020 NJ Coalition, most other contributions were in-kind donations of staff time on the part of local nonprofit organizations and complete count committees. For example, local chambers of commerce and businesses were helpful for getting the word out by posting flyers and informing their employees about the census.

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Continuous communication between groups in the state allowed for tight coordination and information sharing. The State Complete Count Committee hosted monthly calls with grantees, and the Census 2020 NJ Coalition also hosted monthly calls to distribute information and track progress. Information was shared openly among Coalition actors and the State Complete Count Committee, enabling trusting relationships among these actors. Toward the end of the effort, in late 2020, the Census Bureau, State Complete Count Committee, The Fund for New Jersey and the Census 2020 NJ Coalition collectively held weekly coordination calls to keep momentum going for the effort.

Grants to local organizations to undertake outreach was the centerpiece of efforts in New Jersey. Both the State Complete Count Committee and New Jersey Funds provided grants to local groups to undertake census outreach efforts to historically undercounted groups. The state provided grants to a combination of county governments and nonprofit organizations. Counties received grants in part based on data from the American Community Survey and 2010 Census indicating a low self-response rate. Many organizations involved focused on outreach to specific hard-to-count populations within the state. New Jersey Funders made grants to groups well-positioned to target specific undercounted groups. For example, Make the Road New Jersey focused on outreach to immigrant and refugee immigrant populations, whereas Advocates for Children of New Jersey focused on counting children under age 5. Other grantees focused on specific geographical areas rather than a specific population group. Given the concentration of population within the state, many efforts centered on more urban areas within the state, particularly areas that had low census response rates in 2010.

Local groups used grant funding to undertake a wide range of engagement efforts. Efforts included digital media campaigns (including social media), phone banking, and texting campaigns. Billboards, bus ads, and flyers were also important to engage with populations that did not use social media and had low broadband access throughout the state. In-person outreach from trusted messengers (such as teachers or nurses) was important to reach all groups, but particularly immigrant groups that were unfamiliar with the census. Some

groups were able to leverage involvement of local businesses. For example, in Trenton, the Guatemalan Merchants Association was crucial for engaging with the Guatemalan immigrant population that spoke only indigenous languages instead of Spanish. Some local business associations, such as the Business Industry Association, also participated by giving their employees a half-hour break to complete the census.

COVID-19 severely disrupted efforts in New Jersey, effectively putting an end to most in-person census engagement. COVID-19 forced groups in the state to adapt their efforts, interrupting plans for in-person events. Many groups pivoted to online events and were still able to engage with large numbers of people, although perhaps not as effectively as would have been possible with in-person engagement. Leveraging opportunities provided by COVID-19 relief efforts to engage on the census was another adaptive strategy; for example, outreach workers visited food banks to count people waiting for assistance.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Starting early with a group of cross-sector partners was crucial to building the trust and infrastructure needed to support the New Jersey census efforts.** An organized state-level structure that included the regional Census Bureau director, leading nonprofit organizations, a state lead, and funders was crucial to the success of efforts. The strong collaboration allowed the group to direct resources effectively and to respond quickly to the challenges posed by the pandemic.
- **Recruiting local census champions that had the community's trust was the most effective way of educating people about the importance of the census.** Although digital strategy is important, having an in-person strategy to provide a personal touch is irreplaceable for reaching hard-to-count communities. The Census 2020 NJ Coalition recruited organizations that had strong relationships with local communities. Community partners were also able to leverage their networks to recruit additional people. As the immigrant population of New Jersey is quite diverse, language access was very important to ensure that each population had materials in their native language for outreach.
- **Tailoring census messaging to local concerns was a useful communication tactic.** Proportionally, New Jersey receives the least federal funding relative to what it pays in taxes. One message that resonated was that the census was an opportunity for New Jersey to get its fair share from the government. The debate around inclusion of the citizenship question provided a new avenue to communicate the importance of the census in immigrant communities. Better understanding of media preferences of hard-to-count populations would have been helpful in developing messaging and identifying messengers.
- **Leveraging nationally available data on historically undercounted populations informed decisions about resource allocations.** The state used the maps from City University of New York's Hard to Count mapping tool, based on data from the 2010 Census, to pinpoint the areas where response was low. They also used the American Community Survey to determine which areas had a preponderance of non-white residents for targeted outreach. Advocates for Children of New Jersey assembled fact sheets about hard-to-count populations to share with partners across the state.

LOOKING FORWARD

The relationships formed among the organizations that participated in census efforts will endure and may be leveraged for other engagement efforts. The precise mechanism this will take is not known at present, but the possibility is there.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Advocates for Children of New Jersey
- The Fund for New Jersey
- Make the Road New Jersey