

NORTH CAROLINA

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 North Carolina 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

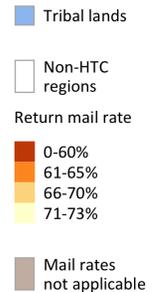
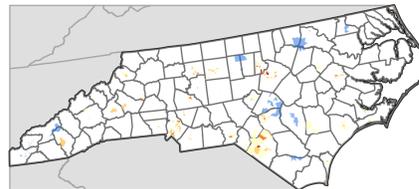
10,155,624

TOTAL POPULATION

970,769

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



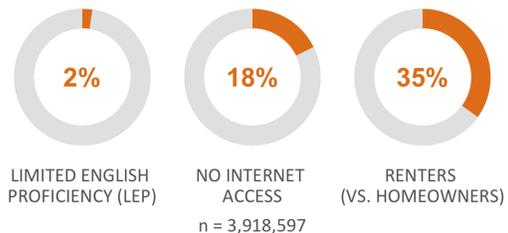
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

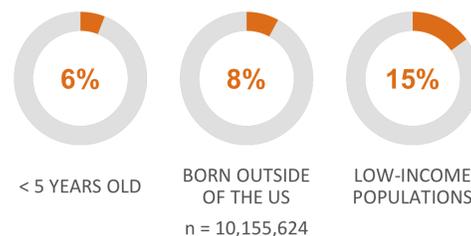
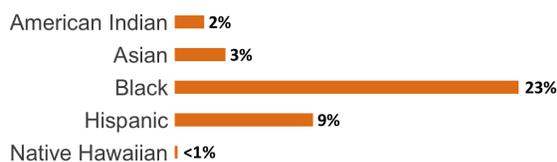
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

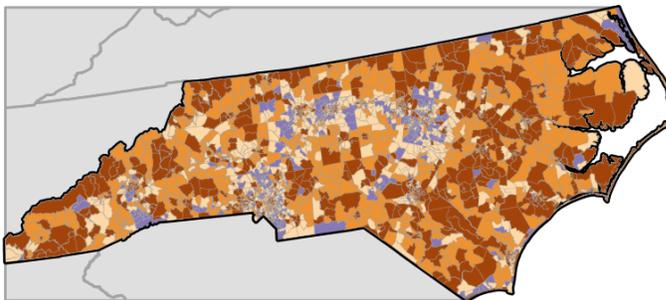




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	63.4%	-1.4
2010	64.8%	

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

Efforts to support an accurate and fair 2020 Census count in North Carolina started in 2017, when nonprofit actors from across the state began discussing how to ensure representation in the 2020 Census among historically undercounted groups. From these early discussions, the NC Counts Coalition was formed to organize a statewide response. Several prominent nonprofit organizations (NPOs), including NC Child, a children-and-family-focused advocacy group, and the NALEO Education Fund, an NPO focused on Latino civic engagement, were heavily involved in forming the Coalition. Similarly, the NC Counts Coalition benefited from the early involvement of Carolina Demography, a local firm specializing in demography research, to provide insights into the distribution of historically undercounted populations from the 2010 Census.

Early on, the Coalition's efforts focused on building a base of support for efforts within the state. The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation stepped up as one of the first funders of the NC Counts Coalition in 2018. Other important funders, including the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, also provided funding to support these efforts. The John Rex Endowment, a health-focused county-level foundation, helped NC Count build an outreach program in Wake County, one of the largest counties in the state. Overall, NC Counts Coalition had raised \$1.4 million from philanthropic donors across the state.

In 2018, The governor of North Carolina issued an executive order to form a State Complete Count Committee. Despite support from the governor and advocacy from NPOs across the state, including the NC Counts Coalition, the state legislature chose not to appropriate support for the State Complete Count Committee's outreach activities. Even without a funding appropriation, the State Complete Count Committee contributed to efforts in the state, coordinating state agencies to promote the census by developing and disseminating communication materials. The governor also spoke publicly about the census several times during the window and encouraged North Carolinians to complete the census at COVID-19 briefings.

The funding from philanthropy enabled the NC Counts Coalition to hire an executive director to lead efforts in the state. Dedicated staffing was critical to efforts within the state, facilitating better coordination among local governments and NPOs across the state in their efforts to engage with historically undercounted communities. The NC Counts Coalition hosted meetings for partners to share information. Based on their expertise and relationships, certain Coalition members headed up efforts to reach specific target populations. For example, the NALEO Education Fund worked to improve Latino count numbers, while NC Child created messaging from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Book to target families with young children. The centerpiece of the NC Counts Coalition's outreach effort was a "trusted messengers" program that provided small grants to community-based groups to help them reach undercounted communities. In addition, the NC Counts Coalition implemented a peer texting program. The Coalition also established

partnerships with groups across the state that were not official members of the Coalition, including hospitals, local government, and the United Way. It also sought to partner with the State Complete Count Commission.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
NC Counts Coalition	Key umbrella group that built partnerships, coordinated events, and ran the regranting program to get resources to smaller, community-based organizations working to reach undercounted communities
NALEO Education Fund	NC Counts Coalition partner that convened other NPOs across the state and produced Spanish-language ads and materials for the state’s Latino community
NC Child	NC Counts Coalition partner that sat on the State Complete Count Commission and conducted outreach campaigns targeted at families with young children; also served as a key convener to support community-based groups conducting outreach work

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, philanthropic organizations contributed an estimated \$2 million to support census outreach efforts. The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation led efforts to get other funders involved in supporting the 2020 Census, working together to recruit partners such as the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding came from both local funders, and also included a \$660,000 grant from the national Census Equity Fund The funds supported grantmaking to “trusted messengers” and also supported the NC Counts Coalition in its coordination role

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: \$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
In-Kind Contributions: Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC Child was given Facebook ad credits that it used to amplify materials and reach families with children under 5 years of age. The posts were successful and even generated engagement from families in South Carolina, especially Black and Latino families

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Using data from Carolina Demography and Democracy North Carolina, NC Counts focused on three historically undercounted populations in their census efforts: families of color, low-income communities, and families with young children. With these populations in mind, the Coalition developed tailored communications and messaging. It also relied on research by the Count All Kids initiative, which included focus groups, to tweak messaging to reach specific populations.

A regranting program involving trusted messengers was the centerpiece of efforts in the state. Different messengers were identified that would be well positioned to reach specific groups within the state. For example, as the African American community is primarily in the central and eastern parts of the state, NC Counts worked with historically Black fraternities and sororities to hold events and phone banking sessions in these communities. The NALEO Education Fund focused on Latino outreach across the state, identifying trusted members in their network.

COVID-19 required substantial adaptations. NC Counts was in the second round of regranting when the pandemic began. Pandemic-related changes derailed many grantees’ plans to conduct door knocking campaigns and other planned events. Groups on the ground shifted their efforts. For example, a census toolkit for early childhood education providers developed by NC Child was converted into a PDF shared digitally with childcare providers in the state. Because of restrictions on in-person gathering, all partners put more focus on digital media campaigns across the state. Targeted social media and texting campaigns, phone banking, and census caravans were key to reaching hard-to-count populations.

When the pandemic started, the NC Counts Coalition started a partnership with several food banks across the state. NC Child produced materials, such as postcard reminders to fill out the census, with food deliveries. For instance, in school delivery meals for low-income children who lost school lunches because of the pandemic, partners distributed these materials to families to inform them about the census while receiving a critical service for their livelihood.

In response to the rhetoric from the Trump administration about the citizenship question, the NC Counts Coalition and partners developed messaging for undocumented communities emphasizing that the census would not affect their immigration status. Later in the campaign, after the deadline for the census had been

extended, commission partners ramped up messaging on public radio and public TV, emphasizing the “safeness” of the census to undocumented communities.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **It is important to have a dedicated staff person who can coordinate across the Coalition.** The NC Counts Coalition benefitted from hiring a dedicated director to lead efforts. This addition was critical to ensuring success.
- **The role of state government could have been better used.** If the state legislature had contributed funding, it would have helped support efforts.

LOOKING FORWARD

At this point, the future of the Coalition is uncertain. There may be opportunities to use infrastructure and relationships for other civic engagement efforts, although there are no concrete plans at present.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (formerly at NC Child)