

# 2020 CENSUS

## STATE-BY-STATE REPORTS

# OHIO

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 populations<sup>1</sup> 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 Ohio based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=3).

<sup>1</sup>We 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

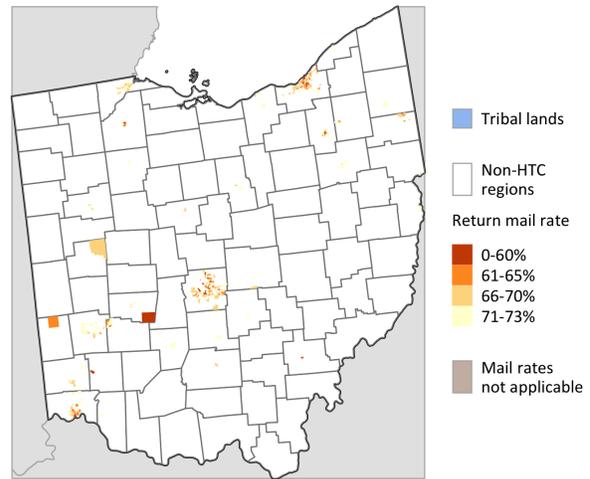
**11,641,879**

TOTAL POPULATION

**1,440,456**

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

## HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



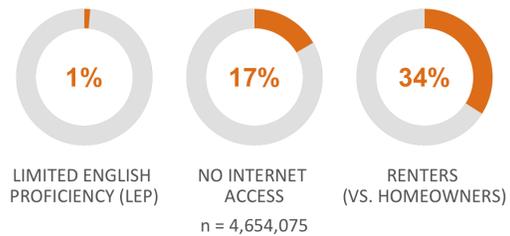
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

## 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](http://www.CensusHardToCountMaps2020.us).

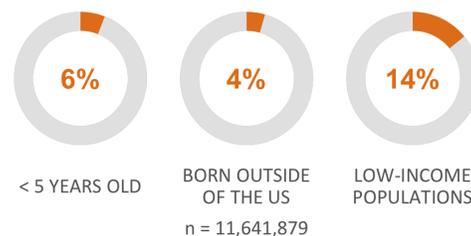
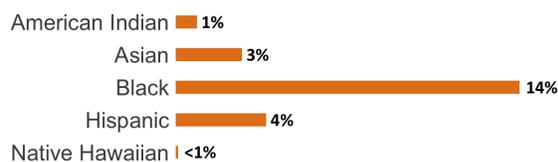
### HOUSEHOLDS

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:

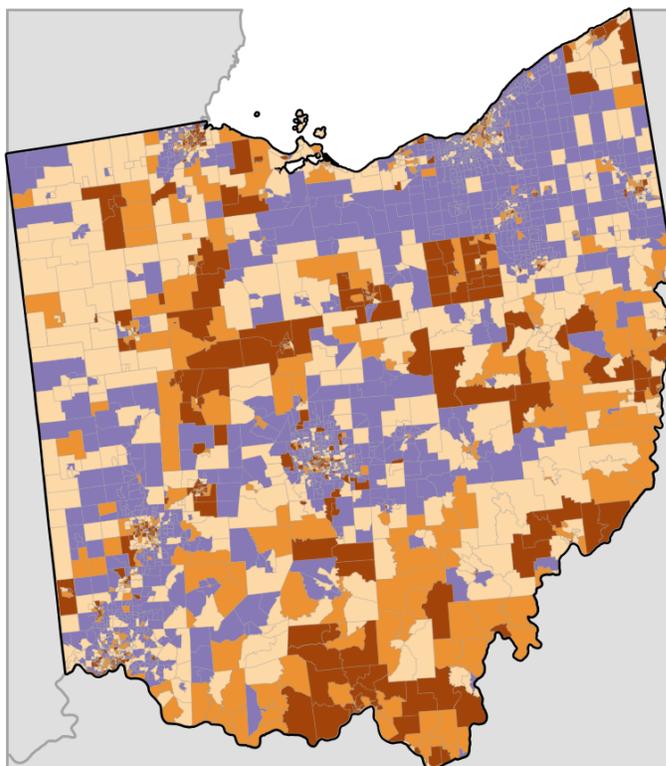




# OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
<b>2020</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>+1.7</b>
2010	69.0%	

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 in Ohio to promote the 2020 Census first got underway in 2018. Recognizing the importance of an accurate count for social programs within the state, The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) of Ohio, the Cleveland Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, and other actors across the state began discussing the possibility of a statewide response to the 2020 Census. Early on, the collaborative engaged with Philanthropy Ohio to convene foundations and nonprofits across the state to participate in the effort. Coming out of these early conversations, partners formed the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition, led by CDF, to serve as a hub for statewide efforts. In Northeast Ohio, the work was organized by the Cleveland Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, the Fowler Foundation, and Cleveland VOTES.

Local and national philanthropic funders were key to getting the census efforts in Ohio off the ground. The early formation of the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition was made possible by a grant from the Columbus Foundation. The George Gund Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation were heavily involved, both as funders and as thought partners around developing the state census strategy and implementing the work in Northeast Ohio/Cleveland.

There was recognition early on among the Ohio partners that census outreach did not lend itself well to a funder-led, top-down approach because the tactics that would be effective for reaching different historically undercounted populations were not the same. Consequently, the group decided that the best approach would be to leverage the expertise and trust of local community groups to decide on the best ways to engage around the census.

To facilitate this, the collaborative launched a mini-grant program to obtain resources from the coalition to give to local groups to conduct their own outreach activities. The group also invested heavily in the infrastructure needed to support these local nonprofit efforts, in which they hosted trainings, developed communication materials, and hosted meetings for coalition members to share information and learn from each other.

State and local Complete Count Committees were also important partners in the work. The Ohio state government formed a State Complete Count Committee but chose not to allocate state funding to support the State Complete Count Committee's work. The State Complete Count Committee did participate by developing census marketing materials and encouraging state agencies to spread the word about the census. Local city and county Complete Count Committees were often very active in the 2020 Census outreach, partnering closely with the philanthropic-nonprofit coalitions to help support statewide and local efforts. Some cities, such as Columbus, allocated funding to outreach efforts and convened their own diverse groups for local outreach, including higher-education actors and representatives from the business community.

There was recognition early on among the groups involved in Ohio census efforts that there was a need to have a strong infrastructure to conduct outreach that benefitted and amplified grassroots groups that work in the community and to focus on awareness and momentum building for a statewide coalition of nonprofits. However, efforts did not start funding outreach until six months after the initial meeting. CDF was able to secure two small grants to begin outreach efforts and reconvened a group of statewide organizations to begin planning.

**Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts<sup>2</sup>:**

Actor	Role
<b>Children’s Defense Fund of Ohio</b>	Lead for the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition, who acted as a key convener to support community-based groups doing outreach work
<b>The Cleveland Foundation</b>	Key funder that provided support to groups doing community outreach/engagement; also helped support efforts with the city- and county-level commissions, hosted and maintained website, and archived documents and materials
<b>The George Gund Foundation</b>	Key funder that pooled resources with the Cleveland Foundation and other funders to support grassroots groups doing community outreach work

<sup>2</sup>Data 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

Several foundations, including the Cleveland Foundation, George Gund Foundation, and the national Census Equity Fund, gave roughly \$600,000 in pooled resources in 2019 to fund outreach efforts.

The partnership secured a Census Equity Fund grant (Cleveland Foundation served as the fiscal agent) that funded microgrants to 60 community-based/grassroots organizations with \$5,000-6,000 in funding, each with multiple rounds. When the COVID-19 pandemic hampered outreach plans, community groups were given additional stipends to adjust plans and engage in trainings as needed.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach<sup>3</sup>

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
<b>Philanthropy:</b> <b>\$600,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$310,000 of the funding came from a grant from the national Census Equity Fund; the remainder was from local philanthropic organizations</li> <li>• Part of the funding went to support multiple rounds of grant making to local grassroots organizations to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations. Overall, CDF and Cleveland VOTES provided 60 grants of around \$5000-\$6,000 each to these groups</li> <li>• The remainder of the funding went to support the core infrastructure of the coalition, including training for grassroots organizations, coordination, communications, and message development</li> </ul>
<b>State Government:</b> \$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state chose not to allocate funding to these efforts. Some local governments did contribute but we do not have detailed information on that funding.</li> </ul>
<b>In-Kind Contributions:</b> <b>Unknown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many nonprofit, business, and government organizations devoted staff resources to Get Out the Count efforts in Ohio</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup>Funding 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

**Early investment in capacity building and coordination propelled efforts in Ohio.** The coalition made a concerted effort early on to build the capacity of local groups to conduct census outreach. For example, in January 2019, CDF worked with Design Impact, a local consulting group, to host a census retreat with 23 grassroots organizations from across the state to develop strategies and train local leaders. To ensure a diversity of involvement by groups across the state that would not necessarily have had resources to attend the retreat, CDF leveraged resources from local and national funders, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to provide stipends, mileage reimbursement, and lodging to retreat participants to enable broad participation. The group also invested early on in communications toolkits tailored to local groups to ensure that groups would have the resources they needed to implement census outreach work. To inform the development of the toolkit, CDF worked with a nonprofit partner to conduct surveys in Columbus prior to the census so they could use the data to inform marketing and determine which strategies were likely to be effective in different areas.

**The mini-grants program was the centerpiece of outreach to historically undercounted populations.** Identifying and providing grants to local nonprofits in areas with the largest populations (Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus) was a central element of outreach. Groups receiving grants focused efforts on outreach to certain populations, including families with young children, immigrants, students, renters and houseless populations. These populations were reached using a range of strategies, including bulletin boards, advertising at libraries, art and storytelling competitions, census caravans, door knocking, phone banking, and texting.

**Among grantees that received mini-grants, there was a high degree of collaboration.** The Cleveland Foundation started hosting monthly calls to bring partners together to promote learning and share strategies. Groups also formed new partnerships to create outreach media and social media content, specifically among partners that serve the Asian community. The Cleveland Foundation also created a landing page where partners shared their projects to inspire other organizations' strategic efforts. This process allowed grantees to share creative approaches, led to more-nuanced outreach strategies, and allowed partners to feel a greater sense of ownership.

**Some funders in the state contributed to efforts beyond just grant making.** For example, the Cleveland Foundation worked with the Chamber of Commerce to articulate how the census affects business and about the importance of an accurate count for thriving businesses so that they could communicate with their membership.

**Data was critical to targeting of census efforts, as well as for tracking progress in real time.** The Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition utilized resources from the US Census Bureau, state Kids Count data, and the Hard-To-Count maps from the City University of New York to understand which areas of the state had the lowest

counts. Consistent sharing of data through the Cleveland Foundation's Complete Count update website allowed partners to track progress in real time.

**The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person efforts.** Some groups were able to pivot to online efforts or leverage new opportunities provided by the pandemic (e.g., providing census material as part of make-up school photo shoots that had been rescheduled because of the pandemic).



## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Investing in capacity building and infrastructure in combination with a mini-grant program helped propel outreach efforts in Ohio.** This helped ensure that partners had both financial resources and other support to conduct effective outreach.
- **Allowing grassroots groups to lead was effective.** Partners believe that allowing grantees flexibility to drive efforts led to greater buy-in among community members.
- **The state government not devoting resources to the effort was a hindrance.** Partners believe they were effective given the resources available. However, more funding and leadership from the state could have greatly enhanced 2020 Census efforts.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The relationships and outreach capacity built among nonprofit partners involved in these efforts will endure and may be leveraged for future efforts, for example, to support vaccine dissemination to marginalized communities. Allowing grassroots groups to lead on the census may also provide a model for future efforts and allow for a higher degree of authentic collaboration among partners.



## DATA SOURCES

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

- The Cleveland Foundation
- Children’s Defense Fund of Ohio
- The George Gund Foundation