

OREGON

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 Oregon based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=4).

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

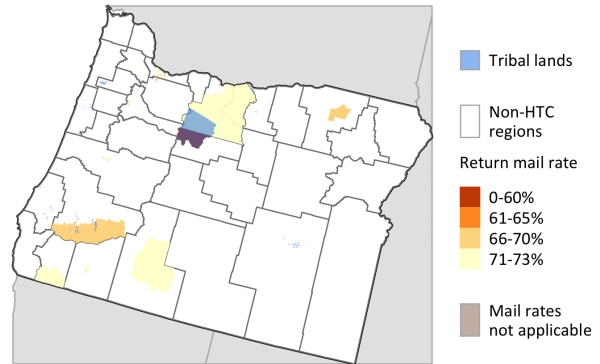
4,081,943

TOTAL POPULATION

397,057

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



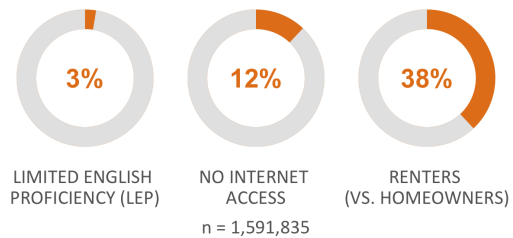
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

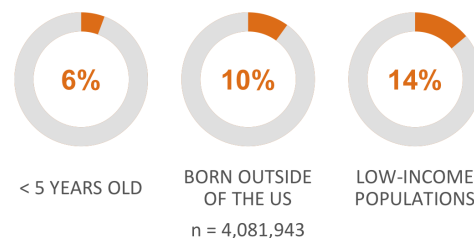
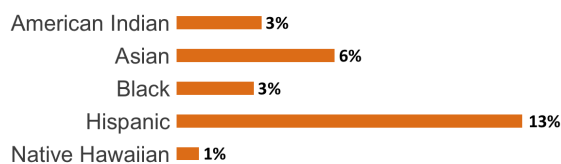
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

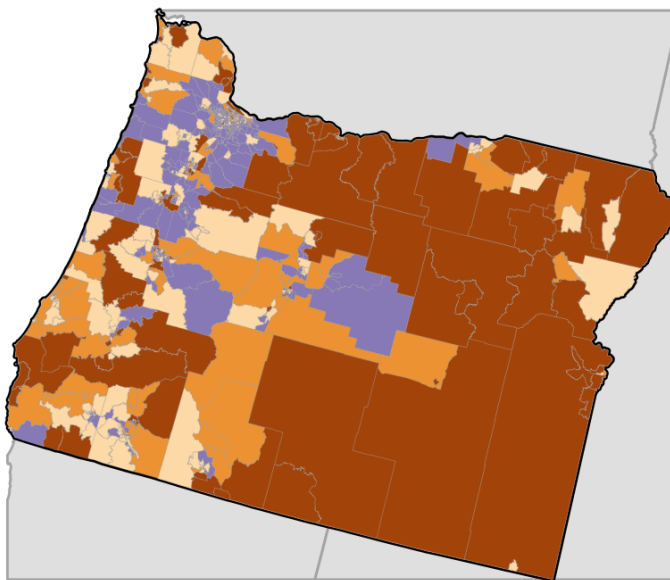




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	69.2%	+2.3
2010	66.9%	

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

In July of 2018, a group of philanthropic funders and nonprofits, including United Way of the Columbia-Willamette (UWCW), gathered for early discussion on how to support an accurate and complete census count in the state, particularly within historically undercounted communities. From these early discussions, these actors formed the Census Equity Funders of Oregon (CEFCO). An important early step was selecting a partner to serve as a census coordinator for the group's efforts. After a request for a proposal process led by UWCW, the group selected Dancing Hearts Consulting, LLC, a local firm with expertise in this area, to serve in the role. Another early step was recruiting partners to contribute to the state census effort. Dancing Hearts Consulting played an important role in this process, building a collaborative network with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)-led organizations to work together to conduct outreach in historically undercounted communities. Ultimately, these early efforts coalesced in the We Count Oregon campaign.

The We Count Oregon campaign was a grassroots-led effort by 12 organizational partners, each focused on outreach to specific historically undercounted populations within the state. Each of these lead organizations hired a full-time census equity coordinator, and in all, the campaign partnered with more than 100 local organizations across the state to conduct census outreach efforts. UWCW was the backbone organization for CEFCO and the affiliated Oregon Census Equity Fund, a public-private pooled fund, to support the campaign. In partnership with Dancing Hearts Consulting, CEFCO disbursed funding to groups across the state to conduct local outreach. There were also nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon that were partners in this effort.

State and local governments actively partnered with CEFCO and the We Count Oregon campaign while also conducting their own independent census-related efforts. The state government formed a State Complete Count Committee and contributed funding through the Oregon Census Equity Fund for outreach to historically undercounted communities via the We Count Oregon campaign. Local city and county governments, such as the city of Portland and Portland Metro, were also active in the campaign and in some cases contributed funding to support the effort. Beyond the efforts implemented in partnership with We Count Oregon, governments also conducted their own communications campaigns to get out the word about the census.

Historically, state census outreach efforts were run through the Secretary of State's office, though in 2020, they were run through the Governor's office. The 2020 Census was the first census for which the state chose to form a State Complete Count Committee.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
We Count Oregon	Led hard-to-count campaign; oversaw census communications efforts
Census Equity Funders of Oregon	A collaboration of philanthropies in Oregon who pooled public and private funding for census outreach efforts in the state
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette	Was a fiscal sponsor and backbone for pooled census funding to support the We Count Oregon campaign and provided monthly reports to the Oregon Complete Count Committee
State and Local Complete Count Committees	Contributed to the Oregon Census Equity Fund and implemented their own census efforts, including the Oregon Complete Count Committee

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, a total of \$10,300,000 of funding from government and philanthropic sources supported outreach to historically undercounted populations. UWCW was the fiscal agent in charge of disbursing both public and private funds to groups on the ground.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$2,000,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEFCO raised \$2 million to support outreach to historically undercounted populations. Most funds went to grants to support groups conducting local census outreach efforts, while some funds went to support coordination of the We Count Oregon campaign.
State Government: \$8,300,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$7.7 million of the funding came from the state government, while \$600,000 came from the city of Portland and Portland Metro, a regional government entity. State funds were earmarked for census outreach to historically undercounted populations.
In-Kind Contributions: Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a

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

Twelve grassroots organizations served to coordinate efforts across the state focused on different historically undercounted populations. The primary field organizations were BIPOC-led, which was an intentional decision by the We Count Campaign. Each organization had experience in campaigning and outreach to underrepresented communities. Specific populations of focus included Black, Latinx, Asian, and immigrant communities.

The centerpieces of efforts were grants and other support to community-based organizations to serve as trusted messengers. Because of a lack of trust between government and local communities, organizations worked to identify and provide resources to local trusted messengers. In addition, the campaign set up census assistance centers, which consisted of 48 different organizations across all 36 counties in Oregon who were available to provide support locally to people around completing the census.

Outreach to tribal communities was an emphasis for some efforts. Learning from challenges in 2010, the We Count Oregon campaign was intentional in engaging with tribal groups to help improve the count in those areas. Outreach to tribal organizations required different state-level investments that were lacking in the 2010 Census. The addition of a tribal coordinator was crucial in working directly with tribes to create connections and communicate helpful information. We Count Oregon and CEFCO worked closely with a community partner who conducted outreach to in-lieu sites consisting of tribal communities, resulting in 10 tribal grants.

There were 101 organizations that ultimately partnered with We Count Oregon. A total of 215,000 Oregonians were contacted through phone-banking efforts. A total of 3.5 million people engaged in online events. They utilized a partnership with Spanish-language television network Univision. Following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, We Count Oregon used messaging to tie the census to organizing for social justice to help to build trust in BIPOC communities.

Service organizations and government entities (libraries, food banks) were helpful in amplifying the message of the efforts in Oregon. There were multiple partnerships with cities and towns, but service organizations had the most impact in reaching out to communities for this effort, especially because of limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **The funding infrastructure established with the 2020 Census gave CEFCO a foundation for its start.** Building on existing structures will be helpful for future census and state-level advocacy in Oregon.
- **The public-private partnership was key to efforts in the state.** A key civic engagement lesson to be learned is to mix private and public funding with a centralized campaign to assist state-level census outreach efforts.
- **Data obtained for BIPOC communities may not be as representative or helpful in interpreting larger problems or challenges.** In addition, having weak structure or a decentralized approach to outreach will present difficulties in continuing outreach.

LOOKING FORWARD

Currently, partners involved in CEFCO are leveraging census infrastructure to tackle issues such as redistricting. Many of the organizations that were part of CEFCO expanded their capacity to engage with historically undercounted communities in effective ways while working on the census, and there are opportunities to leverage these new capacities in other efforts.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Dancing Hearts Consulting
- CEFCO
- UWCW
- Community Health Foundation