

PENNSYLVANIA

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 Pennsylvania 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

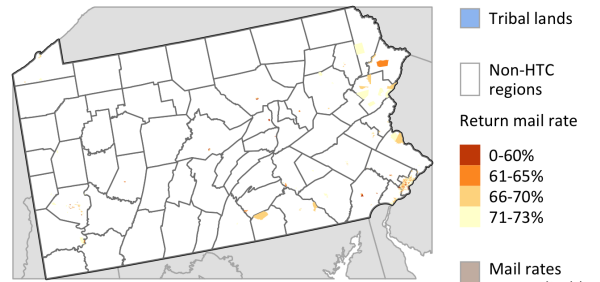
12,791,181

TOTAL POPULATION

1,461,716

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



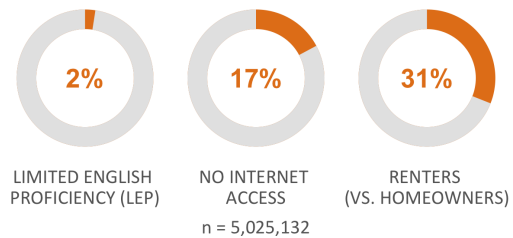
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

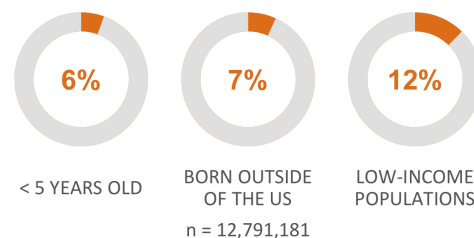
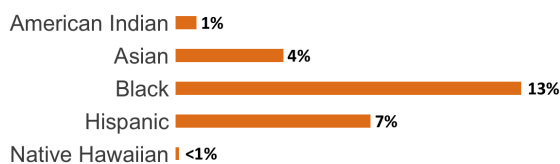
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

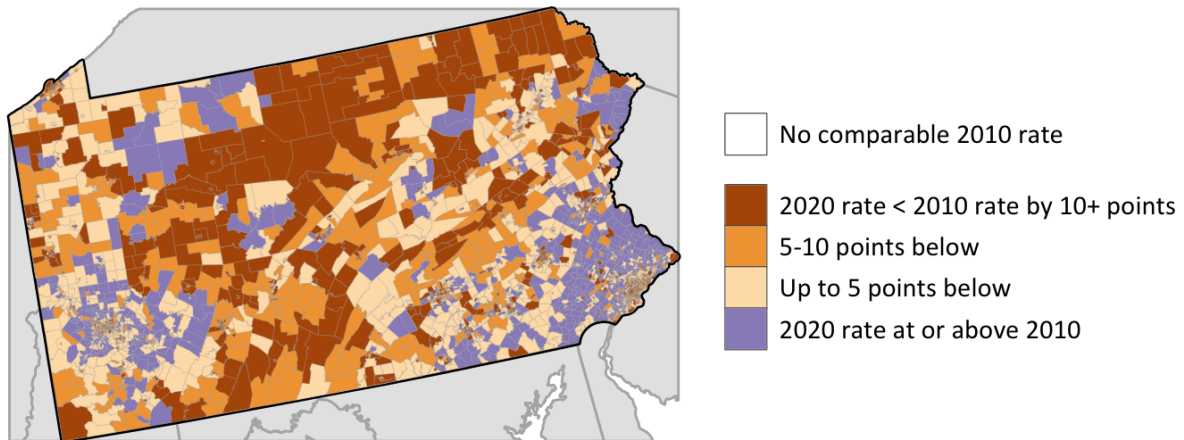




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	69.6%	-0.6
2010	70.2%	

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010





STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Pennsylvania Voice, a nonprofit organization focused on civic engagement, began early discussions on organizing a response to the 2020 Census in 2016. Early on, Pennsylvania Voice focused on building a coalition of nonprofits to engage in census efforts in the state, beginning with the organization's 24 member organizations. Recognizing that to reach diverse populations and new areas in the state with a census campaign that was grounded in civic engagement best practices would require diverse and new partnerships, Pennsylvania Voice recognized that it would be necessary to reach beyond their existing relationships to recruit new partners.

Ultimately, these early efforts coalesced into a campaign led and staffed by Pennsylvania Voice called Keystone Counts, which included 100 nonprofit organizations from across the state.

Local philanthropic funders, such as the Heinz Foundation and William Penn Foundation, and national funders, such as the national Census Equity Fund, both contributed funding to support the work of Keystone Counts. Keystone Counts worked closely with local complete count committees that were also active in promoting the census, particularly in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Early on, advocates in the state encouraged the state government to form a State Complete Count Committee and allocate funding to support the census. Advocacy efforts were made more challenging because many legislators and their staff had not been in office during the previous census, and therefore more education was required. The State Complete Count Committee formed in 2019. Although the state originally chose not to allocate funding to support census efforts in the state budget, funding was subsequently appropriated as part of a voting rights bill passed in fall of 2020.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Pennsylvania Voice	Staffed and organized the Keystone Counts coalition and provided resources, training, field coordination, and tools to groups on the ground to conduct census outreach and education
Local complete count committees	Multiple local complete count committees were instrumental to 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

State Complete Count Committee	Organized efforts on behalf of the state
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FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, an estimated \$9 million in philanthropic and state/city government funding supported efforts in the state.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$3.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, local and national foundations contributed \$3.5 million in funding to Keystone Counts work. \$3 million was regranted to partner organizations. • Of this funding, \$250,000 came from the national Census Equity Fund, while the remainder came from state and local funders.
State or City Government: \$5.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state allocated \$4 million to support census efforts in the state, some of which was available for granting to nonprofit organizations, while some was earmarked to support state government departments and agencies. • In addition, the City of Philadelphia provided \$1.5 million to support Philly Counts 2020
In-kind contribution: Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many organizations contributed staff time to efforts in the state.

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Early strategy meetings with a diverse group of community partners helped inform the statewide plan.

Pennsylvania Voice held three strategy meetings early on with partners from 26 organizations to talk about what it would take to get a fair and accurate count and how to partner to achieve that result. Early planning resulted in the launch of Keystone Counts and a two-year field, advocacy, and communications plan, which helped to minimize unnecessary duplication and maximize coverage.

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

Keystone Counts implemented a systematic campaign informed by data. Using data from the previous census on the distribution of historically undercounted populations, Keystone counts prioritized 24 counties where they would focus their efforts. Counties were prioritized for outreach based on the concentration of historically undercounted populations within the state.

The Keystone Counts RFP process funneled grant resources to local organizations to conduct on-the-ground education and outreach. The process was created collaboratively with partners, used consistent criteria, and was transparent to grantees.

Keystone Counts provided resources to organizations to implement phased civic engagement campaigns with multiple contacts planned for each household. In-person engagement was halted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and tactics shifted to texting and phone engagement. Originally, the plan called for in-person engagement followed by additional contacts by text, phone, and/or mail. When the pandemic struck, groups shifted to entirely phone and text engagement. This increased the number of contacts possible, although the loss of in-person engagement may have made outreach less likely to encourage engagement with the census. Overall, Keystone Counts reached around 1 million people with their census efforts.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Starting early is critical.** Conducting a census campaign requires building relationships, providing training to outreach staff, and developing materials. The fact that Keystone Counts had started earlier gave them adequate time to implement the campaign.
- **Advocacy efforts in relation to the census are made more challenging because of the 10-year gap between each census.** By the time the next census comes around, many of the legislators that were around for the previous census may have already left office. This creates challenges when educating legislators who are not familiar with the importance of the census.
- **Organizers lacked historical knowledge of previous census efforts and instead leaned on deep knowledge of civic engagement best practices.** In the absence of historical documentation and detailed knowledge of previous census efforts, those organizing census outreach navigated challenges by drawing on their civic engagement expertise.

LOOKING FORWARD

Overall, actors are hopeful they will be able to leverage infrastructure from the census for other civic engagement efforts, including redistricting and voter registration, among others.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Heinz Foundation
- Pennsylvania Voice/Keystone Counts
- Philly Counts