

SOUTH 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 South Carolina 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

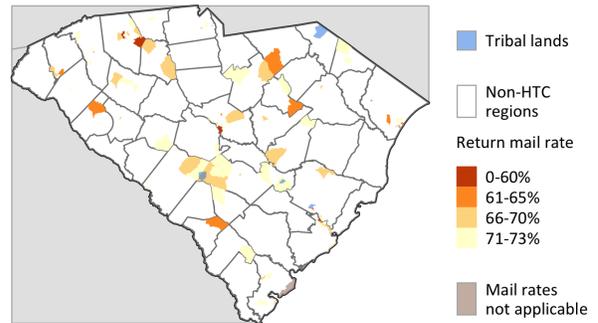
4,955,925

TOTAL POPULATION

375,679

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



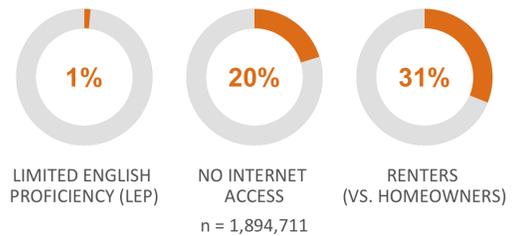
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

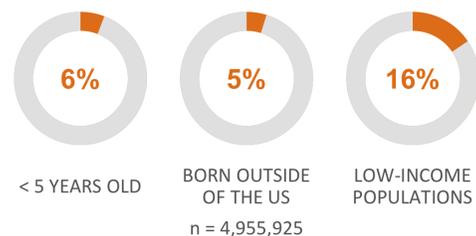
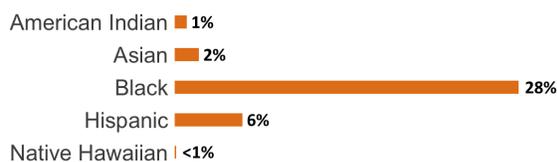
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

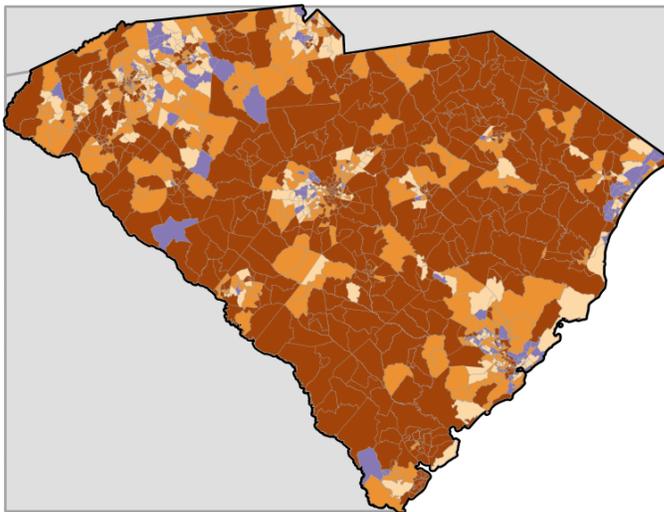




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	61.0%	-3.7
2010	64.7%	

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

Because of both political and cultural factors, past efforts to promote the census in South Carolina have been primarily regional, with little coordination at the state level. On the political side, the government of South Carolina has long been dominated by Republicans who have historically been less supportive of efforts to promote the census. On the cultural side, owing to the fact that communities within South Carolina tend to be highly independent and potentially distrustful of outsiders, civil society efforts in South Carolina historically have typically been organized at the regional level.

With previous censuses, there typically has been a Complete Count Committee in South Carolina; the break in tradition this time is that there was no funding for one. Typically, the state has invested \$1 million in the complete count. The lieutenant governor was not named chair of the State Complete Count Committee until fall 2019, so the Committee had a later start than they did in prior years.

The State Complete Count Committee convened representatives from across the state, primarily those from state and local governments and from large nonprofit organizations, such as the NAACP and the United Way, to develop a strategy to Get Out the Count (GOTC) throughout the state. The State Complete Count Committee structure was effective at engaging state agencies in a limited capacity within their existing framework to encourage employees and constituents to complete the census.

Although the State Complete Count Committee structure was well suited for organizing the state government's work, the Committee was less well suited to coordination efforts aimed at reaching historically undercounted populations. Part of the reason for this was related to resources. Although the state had chosen to form the Complete Count Committee, it had not successfully appropriated state funds to support outreach activities beyond what the state agencies could do with their existing resources, limiting the extent to which the state could promote work on the ground related to the census. Another issue was that the formality and lack of racial diversity on the State Complete Count Committee meant that it was difficult for the state to engage with the small community organizations that were best placed to conduct local census outreach.

Recognizing the need to support on-the-ground efforts focused explicitly on historically undercounted populations, two leading nonprofit organizations, the NAACP and the United Way Association of South Carolina (UWASC), who had been working on census outreach since spring 2019 before it became apparent that the state would be minimally engaged, stepped in to provide resources and coordinate local outreach efforts to promote the census. Drawing on their local chapters, as well as referrals from other partners in the months leading up to the census window opening on April 1, 2020, the United Way and NAACP worked to build relationships with local partners to conduct census outreach that, because of their size, might not typically have been able to receive philanthropic support. The South Carolina Complete Count Committee

funded more than 70 organizations and provided technical assistance to more than 200 organizations on the ground.

Grants from the New Venture Fund and from Fair Count allowed the United Way to provide mini-grants to support local census work. The grants were intentionally designed to be flexible, and local organizations were able to propose a wide range of outreach tactics tailored to local communities. In addition to organizations that received grants, some local nonprofits undertook efforts to promote the census without financial support by leveraging their existing resources and programs.

The 2020 Census infrastructure was new and not built on 2010 Census infrastructure, although many of the groups were the same as those who participated in 2010 Census outreach.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
NAACP and other grassroots organizations	The engagement of local NAACP chapters put boots on the ground, as they already had infrastructure to Get Out the Vote that helped the 2020 Census outreach efforts. They focused on areas with significant African American populations (some urban, but mostly rural).
South Carolina State Complete Count Committee	They were involved in messaging and awareness about the census; the lieutenant governor chaired the Committee, and the staff went above and beyond with no additional support or resources to assist with their existing duties to support the complete count effort.
United Way Association of South Carolina	Provided mini-grants and technical assistance to support grassroots organizations to reach undercounted communities, including grassroots organizations serving immigrant communities, like Alianza Latina, Latino Communications, and New Digital Press, as well as other community organizing groups and complete count committees.

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

As previously noted, the state government did not contribute money to support 2020 Census outreach efforts. Although there had originally been plans for the state to contribute \$1 million to these efforts, because of a clerical error, these funds were not added to the governor’s proposed 2020 budget. Subsequent lobbying to have these funds added after the original budget submission were not successful because of political opposition in the legislature.

Philanthropic organizations stepped in to fill the funding gap, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$405,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national Census Equity Fund contributed a total of \$335,000 to census efforts in the state and Fair Count contributed \$70,000. • The vast majority of funding was provided to the UWASC to support efforts across the state to GOTC. The United Way in turn regranted this money to support the work of organizations on the ground. Of the grant funding, 80% went to support local organizations either led by or serving people of color in communities across the state. Grants were made to organizations working in 30 of the 46 counties in the state, with resources being directed to areas with the greatest concentration of historically undercounted populations.
State Government: \$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state chose not to allocate funding to these efforts.
In-Kind Contributions: \$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, actors in the state estimate that there were also in-kind contributions of labor to support census efforts in the state totaling \$100,000.

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

Efforts in South Carolina were concentrated in areas with the highest proportion of historically undercounted populations. Census efforts were most heavily concentrated on areas with higher proportions of historically undercounted populations, focusing on counties with higher concentrations of people of color, immigrants, and rural residents. The United Way and the NAACP used data from the 2010 Census and real-time 2020 heat maps to inform their census strategy. Broadly speaking, there are three important regions in South Carolina: upstate, midlands, and the coastal areas. Upstate has two urban centers where 90% of the population is White. Although the United Way did identify a few key partners to work on promoting the census upstate, it was not a region of focus overall. The midland and coastal areas tend to have higher concentrations of communities of color, immigrants, and rural residents.

Local messengers were critical to outreach efforts. To effectively engage these communities, the United Way and NAACP sought to identify local partners that were already active on other issues within those communities. Several counties had very strong NAACP chapters who took the lead in leveraging systems in place for GOTC efforts. In counties without an established partner, local churches and community action groups played a significant role in running complete count efforts. They focused on rural areas because of the lack of broadband internet access there. They provided hot spots to help individuals who did not have internet access to complete the census. A regular meeting of organizations engaging Latinx communities helped facilitate collaborative efforts and pooled resources. This group worked to ensure there was effective and appropriate messaging in Spanish and opportunities to overcome census completion hesitancy in this population. This engagement provided the opportunity to build relationships and have a structure in place to engage in the dialogue around power dynamics and history.

Communications were strategically targeted. Because of cultural and political differences in communities across the state, messaging around the census was both strategically targeted and carefully worded. One of the important decisions was made around hiring a minority-owned communication firm that successfully developed content for print and digital media. Different messaging was used in different communities, although a common theme in messaging was a focus on the census as a means for ensuring state representation at the federal level. “South Carolina will not rest until every person is recognized, respected, valued, and counted” is one example.

Rural areas were the hardest to reach. Census outreach in the more rural communities in the coastal region was most challenging because of the isolation and distance between communities in that area. For example, driving between some communities in the coastal area that are located only 30 minutes from each other can sometimes take more than 3 hours because of the network of roads and regional geography. Given the isolation of these communities, it was even more important to build on existing voices and infrastructure to

get the word out about the census, as it would be difficult and more expensive to bring in outside resources and groups to work in those areas.

COVID-19 required adaptation of efforts. Originally, many of the local organizations planned to conduct outreach in person. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some chose to shift resources toward digital outreach and other activities that could be conducted at a distance, such as phone banking, texting, and social media campaigns. Another example of online activity was a virtual concert that drew in more than 100,000 people and included census-related messaging. Some organizations also leveraged in-person engagement opportunities created by the pandemic to encourage local residents to complete the census, while also providing other needed support, such as organizing food drives and flu shot drives. In rural areas, organizations delivered food and home COVID-19 test kits to mobile home developments and farm worker communities to get the word out about the census. The ability to shift efforts in response to the pandemic was facilitated by the trust developed between organizations during the grant proposal process. In some areas of the state, local governments did not require a full lockdown for COVID-19, and in those areas, in-person outreach activities could continue as planned.

Areas without broadband access were hard to reach using digital efforts. One of the challenges to shifting to a digital strategy in South Carolina is that in many areas, particularly rural areas, there is very limited access to broadband internet and computers, making digital outreach more difficult. Particularly in rural areas where in-person interactions had not been forbidden, door knocking remained an effective strategy to engage with people around the census even after the arrival of the pandemic. Some groups also used strategies to bridge the digital divide, including providing Chromebooks for people to complete the census. Another example from a rural library in Marlboro County was using the library's bookmobile to provide wireless internet access for scheduled periods of time in rural neighborhoods.

Other contextual factors also shaped outreach efforts in South Carolina. Beyond the challenges caused by the pandemic, another challenge for the census count in South Carolina was that many rural residences had locked gates, and it was therefore not possible for outreach staff or enumerators to access the property. Additionally, many people in South Carolina have P.O. Boxes and did not receive the census form originally, although there were subsequent efforts to send out additional mailings to P.O. Boxes. Additionally, there were tornados during the time of the GOTC outreach efforts, which displaced some counties' residents. The politicization of the census, anti-immigrant rhetoric by the federal government, and ever-changing census deadlines were other challenges.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Identifying credible and local census messengers was critical to the success of GOTC efforts.** Census efforts in certain areas of the state were more successful than in others. Those involved perceived a unifying factor among those efforts that were more successful: leadership by authentic members representing the communities that were the targets of outreach. Another characteristic that led to success was when it was possible to tie census outreach to other supports, for example, by providing food, or to issues of local concern. Efforts that were perceived as being led by outsiders were less successful. In addition, efforts that were overly reliant on technology and digital outreach did not achieve good results in some areas because of a lack of access to the internet and computers. Having the right partner deliver census messaging locally had more impact. For example, in some cases, organizations that did not receive mini-grants were perceived to be more effective advocates than were those that had received them because of the quality of their relationships within their community. Another characteristic of successful efforts was the ability to tailor messaging to local concerns. For example, in Marion County, an area that had been hit by hurricanes and flooding over the past 3 to 4 years, a successful messaging strategy was tying the census to access to disaster relief and the ability of the community to recover from future natural disasters.
- **Access to technology was a significant barrier to census outreach** because of the lack of access in many areas. Efforts that relied heavily on digital outreach were less effective because of these challenges.
- **Philanthropic funding was fundamental to the efforts in the state; funding specifically for coordination was critical.** Philanthropic resources were key to the efforts given the lack of funding from the state. In the absence of these resources, there would have only been limited capacity available to reach out to historically undercounted populations throughout the state. Having a coordinator for the collaborative was important for communication and flow of information. Another lesson learned is that there is value in beginning earlier, as more time would have allowed for deeper engagement and more time for effective planning of GOTC efforts.

LOOKING FORWARD

The foundation built during 2020 Census efforts lives on in a number of ways. For example, the partnerships that were built have already been leveraged to support the pandemic response within the state. It has also been leveraged to support efforts related to disaster relief. For example, the NAACP received the largest grant for a statewide emergency relief fund and has leveraged the structure created during the census to provide mini-grants to organizations on the ground in many communities. The strongest relationships that have been built are at a regional level rather than at the state level, suggesting that a regional approach may be more

effective than a statewide approach for those who wish to leverage the infrastructure built for future civic engagement efforts. The collaborative has also documented the process of 2020 Census GOTC, including what worked and what did not work, which will be important for the 2030 Census. Beyond the 2020 Census, SC Counts has moved from under the UWASC umbrella to become a project of the SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center. In partnership with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, SC Counts is facilitating five Community Redistricting Organizations Working for Democracy academy training for census coalition partners and will work for the next 2 years to support a fair redistricting effort.



DATA SOURCES

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

- UWASC
- NAACP South Carolina State Conference
- Fullerton Foundation
- Spartanburg Complete Count Committee