

WASHINGTON

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 Washington 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

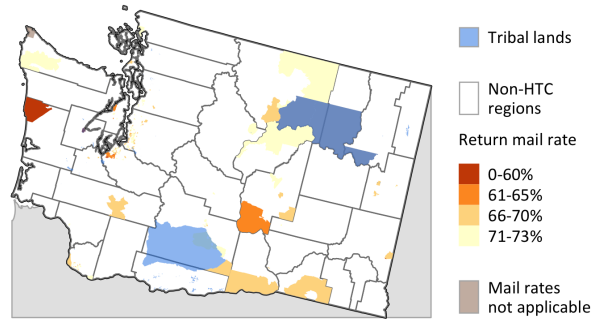
7,294,336

TOTAL POPULATION

857,260

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



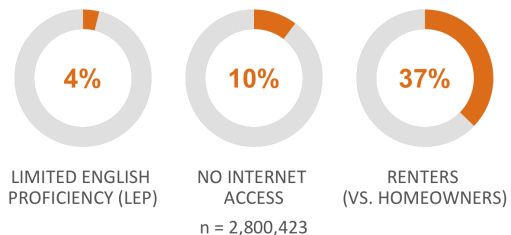
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

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.

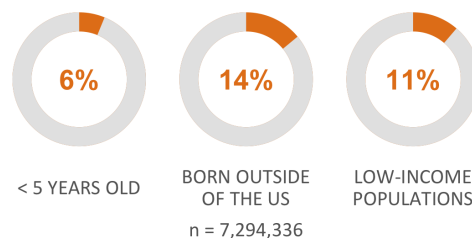
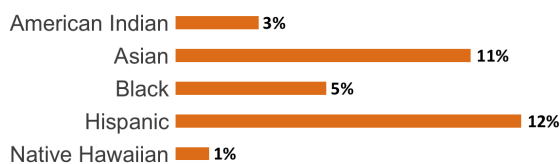
HOUSEHOLDS

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:

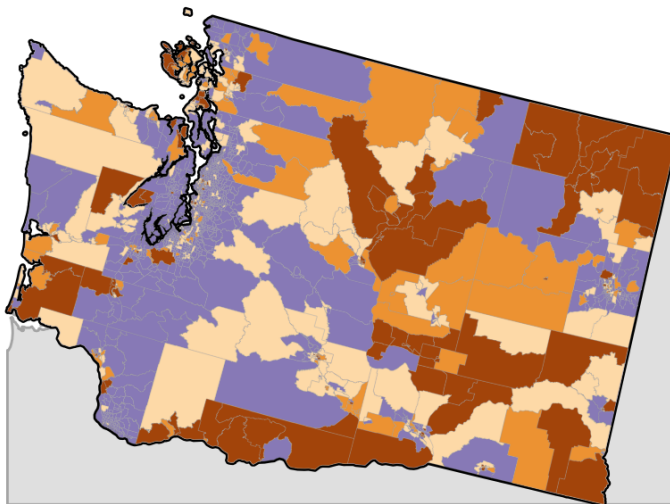




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

YEAR	SELF RESPONSE	CHANGE
2020	72.4%	+5.2
2010	67.2%	

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

Prior to the count itself, the earliest census efforts in Washington began in 2018, when the state undertook a Local Update of Census Addresses Operation (LUCA). LUCA is the only opportunity prior to the 2020 Census for tribal, state, and local governments to review and update the US Census Bureau's residential address list. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) led the LUCA effort, which set the stage for the state's subsequent efforts to conduct outreach to historically undercounted populations across the state.

In 2018, Washington Governor Jay Inslee issued an order to form a State Complete Count Committee, led by OFM, to organize a statewide response to the 2020 Census. The State Complete Count Committee included representation from a wide range of state and local government actors, as well as representatives from the philanthropic and nonprofit community. With funding from the state legislature, the State Complete Count Committee was able to provide grants to local nonprofit and government entities to conduct various outreach activities to promote the census.

Philanthropic organizations actively coordinated with the state to resource outreach efforts to promote the census. Led by Philanthropy Northwest, over 30 partners from across the state contributed to the Washington Census Equity Fund to support nonprofit and tribal organizations in conducting census outreach. Some members of the Washington Census Equity Fund contributed to a pooled fund, while other philanthropic organizations contributed directly to local organizations in their region. Still other partners played the role of community liaisons but did not contribute funding. While the funds regranted by the State Complete Count Committee and the Washington Census Equity Fund were administered separately, there was coordination between the two bodies to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.

Several statewide nonprofit organizations were central to mobilizing nonprofit organizations to respond to the census. For example, Washington Nonprofits, a statewide coalition of nonprofits, leveraged its network to identify partners that would be well positioned to reach areas of the state with large numbers of historically undercounted populations. Similarly, the Washington Census Alliance, a coalition of nonprofits led by Black, Indigenous, and other persons of color, was also very active in mobilizing local communities across the state to conduct census outreach. Tribal organizations were critical to outreach on reservations. For example, the Na'ah Illahee Fund, an Indigenous women-led philanthropic foundation based in Seattle, provided outreach to local tribes and communication materials to reservations.

Local city governments and complete count committees were also important to outreach efforts, with some investing city resources to support the effort. For example, the city of Seattle made a significant investment to support local census efforts. At the state level, there was less involvement from business groups. The Seattle business community was most engaged relative to other areas.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

Actor	Role
Washington State Complete Count Committee	Led by OFM, the State Complete Count Committee was central to census efforts within the state as an organizer, convener, and funder.
Washington Census Equity Fund	Overseen by Philanthropy Northwest, the fund pooled resources from 30 philanthropic organizations across the state to support census efforts.
Washington Nonprofits	Nonprofit organizations, such as Washington Nonprofits and the Washington Census Alliance, were central to governance of efforts. Local nonprofits performed outreach to historically undercounted populations.

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, approximately \$17.5 million from state/local government and philanthropy was leveraged to support 2020 Census efforts.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

Funding Source and Amount	Funding Purpose
Philanthropy: \$1.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Washington Census Equity Fund pooled funding from 30 funders for a total of \$1,500,000 Funds were primarily used to provide grants to conduct outreach to historically undercounted communities. There were two rounds of grantmaking, one in 2019 and one in 2020, to 83 total organizations.

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

<p>State and Local Government: \$16 million</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legislature allotted \$15 million to support the activities of the State Complete Count Committee. • The Seattle Foundation, the city of Seattle, King County and the city of Bellevue collectively provided \$1.05 million to a regional census fund to provide grants to community-based organizations to conduct outreach to historically undercounted groups.
<p>In-Kind Contributions: Unknown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many organizations provided in-kind contributions of staff time to support census-related efforts.

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Compared to the previous census, there was an increased focus on historically undercounted populations, which were prioritized in communications and outreach efforts. Different actors took the lead on outreach to populations and geographies based on where they had relationships and expertise. For example, Washington Nonprofits was instrumental in organizing outreach to rural communities because they had strong connections there. The Washington Census Alliance also helped to ensure that communities of color were counted. Other groups, such as the Na’ah Illahee Fund, were active in tribal communities.

Developing communication materials tailored to different audiences was critical to efforts in the state. Groups in Washington worked to develop messaging and materials that would be effective for engaging different groups across the state. The State Complete Count Committee created a website to share information about the census and bought media time for pro-census messaging. Washington Nonprofits developed a toolkit for nonprofits to use in conducting outreach. The outreach toolkit was translated into Spanish, seven African languages, Russian, Ukrainian, and Marshallese. Some local groups, such as the Innovia Foundation, which worked in the eastern part of the state, adapted the toolkit for their own partners and populations. Washington Nonprofits also hired professional photographers to develop diverse, community-specific advertising and marketing that would be likely to resonate with different groups.

Grants to trusted community messengers were critical to getting out the word in communities of color and other historically undercounted groups online. Nonprofit organizations leveraged their networks to identify local community partners that would be well positioned to conduct outreach. For example, Washington Nonprofits identified the Innovia Foundation as a partner to engage with rural populations in eastern Washington. In response to COVID-19, efforts that had been in person needed to be conducted digitally. Social media was effective but also had limitations relative to in-person engagement. Organizations such as the Na’ah Illahee Fund relied on members of the community to urge their connections to complete the census through a larger social media push using youth voices.

Lack of broadband and distrust of government were barriers to engaging with historically undercounted communities. With the census being implemented online, there were challenges in encouraging completion in areas with low levels of broadband connectivity. In areas where residents have experienced poverty for long periods, there was often a distrust of government that needed to be overcome to engage effectively. Other factors that made it difficult for census intake was the historical lack of trust of the government from members of the Japanese community due to the misused census information affecting the incarceration of Japanese Americans in World War II. There were also communities that didn't feel seen in their identity regarding race and ethnicity.

There were some specific challenges to contacting tribe members because not all of those living on reservations have physical addresses. The limitation of physical addresses in rural areas created a challenge in the count. Similarly, the COVID-19 lockdown on many of the reservations also created challenges, as outreach staff were unable to conduct in-person census activities. Those working on reservations used a number of methods to overcome these barriers. For example, the Na'ah Illahee Fund contracted with local community groups to deliver mail fliers, organized reservation parades and caravans, carried out food delivery, and used other methods as alternatives to door-knocking and person-to-person outreach. Tribal newspapers and radio stations were essential in getting the word out to reservations about completing the census.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Social media strengthens youth and civic engagement.** One of the biggest successes for census outreach was in the use of social media to spread awareness around census completion and community engagement. Na'ah Illahee Fund used their young staff to implement a creative TikTok campaign to encourage youth to get their family members to complete the census. The biggest challenge for census efforts was the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited amount of time to adjust and shift as deadlines came and previously scheduled in-person engagement was canceled.
- **Starting early for fundraising efforts can alleviate challenges along the way.** A big challenge for Philanthropy Northwest was a late start in fundraising efforts. This led to an inconsistency in growing the pooled fund and disbursing funds on time. When the pandemic happened, adjusting deliverables was key, especially for those who were immunocompromised, so some grantees helped to safely complete outreach in person. The US Census Bureau's Update Leave program was part of the post-outreach efforts, and there was misinformation on this. Census area offices were geographically spread out, with three offices in western Washington and one office in eastern Washington, and they lacked applicants for jobs through the bureau.
- **Coordination between diverse actors in the state enhanced reach.** Close partnerships among state and local government, philanthropy, and nonprofits were critical to efforts in the state. Having groups working separately would have increased duplication and reduced the influence of outreach efforts.
- **Staff turnover, both in the near and long term, can make it difficult to organize a strong census campaign.** During the 2020 Census, some organizations experienced staff turnover in the middle of the campaign, leading to severe challenges in implementation due to lost knowledge and capacity. In the longer term, staff turnover also impacts capacity, as organizational turnover could mean that there are entirely different actors working to formulate a response to the 2030 Census.

LOOKING FORWARD

Some groups that were active in census efforts will continue to leverage relationships toward other efforts. For example, the Washington Census Alliance has now transformed into an organization focused more broadly on civic engagement within the state.



DATA SOURCES

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

- Washington Nonprofits
- Philanthropy Northwest
- Na'ah Illahee Fund
- Washington State Office of Financial Management