



CALIFORNIA CENSUS 2020 OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN FINAL REPORT

LET OUR COUNT BE HEARD

April 2021



Message from the State Census Deputy Secretary and Director

On behalf of the California Complete Count – Census 2020 Office, we are pleased to share this report that describes the unprecedented community mobilization and multi-faceted engagement effort undertaken by the State for the 2020 federal decennial census. It also provides the initial results from this effort and recommendations for future census outreach and communications campaigns.

The \$187.2 million four-year investment showed impressive results during a time of great uncertainty and turmoil. California's final Self-Response Rate was 69.6%, or approximately 10.5 million households. California outpaced the national Self-Response Rate, California's 2010 self-response results, and outperformed other large states in motivating Hard-to-Count communities to complete the census.

Beyond the fiscal and political impact of the 2020 Census, the investment will continue to support underserved and marginalized communities through the expansive network of local partnerships forged and strengthened, leaving our state more resilient and adaptable to meet the future challenges that lie ahead.

This enduring achievement would not have been possible without the commitment of community-based organizations, local governments, tribal nations, legislative and congressional offices, state agencies, philanthropy, advocates, the California Complete Count Committee members and the Governor's Administration. The support from the dedicated Census Office staff, in Sacramento and the regional offices, harnessed the collective energy to amplify the census surround sound messages and community efforts.

It has been an honor and pleasure to serve California in the historic effort to secure California's fair share of federal funding and representation in the 2020 Census.

Sincerely,

Sarah Soto-Taylor

Sarah Soto-Taylor
Deputy Secretary, Census
Government Operations Agency

Ditas Katague

Ditas Katague
Director
California Complete Count – Census 2020



Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Provides a comprehensive overview of Campaign outcomes and key strategies behind them. Each section also includes recommendations for 2030.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....1

The Plan and Outcomes

Provides a summary of key Campaign elements, including administrative structure leading to the extraordinary achievements with a brief history on the first steps to establishing State operations.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW.....7

California Leadership

Reviews the role of the California Complete Count Committee, elected officials, state agencies and leadership efforts in support of the Campaign.

**CALIFORNIA COMPLETE
COUNT COMMITTEE.....29**
ELECTED OFFICIALS.....34
STATE AGENCY PARTNERSHIP...41

Reaching Target Audiences Through Trusted Messengers

Details the outreach approach through partnerships forged and communication strategies and tools deployed.

THE PARTNERS.....48
COMMUNICATIONS.....103

The Solid Investment-Dollars and Data

Provides a budget and funding overview as well as methodology to allocate resources. Describes the mapping and data tools used to coordinate field activities and track real-time response rates.

BUDGET.....144
RESULTS.....152

Looking to the Future

Offers recommendations with a broad view toward a successful 2030 Census based on lessons learned and rewarding practices from the Campaign.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.....184

Appendices

A. GOALS AND METRICS..... 197
B. COURT DECISIONS IMPACTING THE CAMPAIGN..... 205
C. LIST OF STATE AGENCIES SUPPORTING THE 2020 CENSUS..... 209
D. PARTNER LIST.....212
E. REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE PARTNER SNAPSHOT.....220
F. PRIMARY FUNDING ALLOCATIONS.....315
G. DATA AND TECHNOLOGY.....317
H. 10 LARGEST STATES.....327
I. 50 STATES WITH DEMOGRAPHICS..... 338

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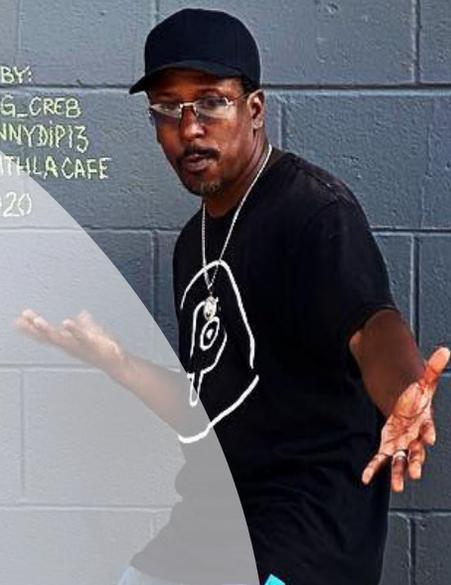


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





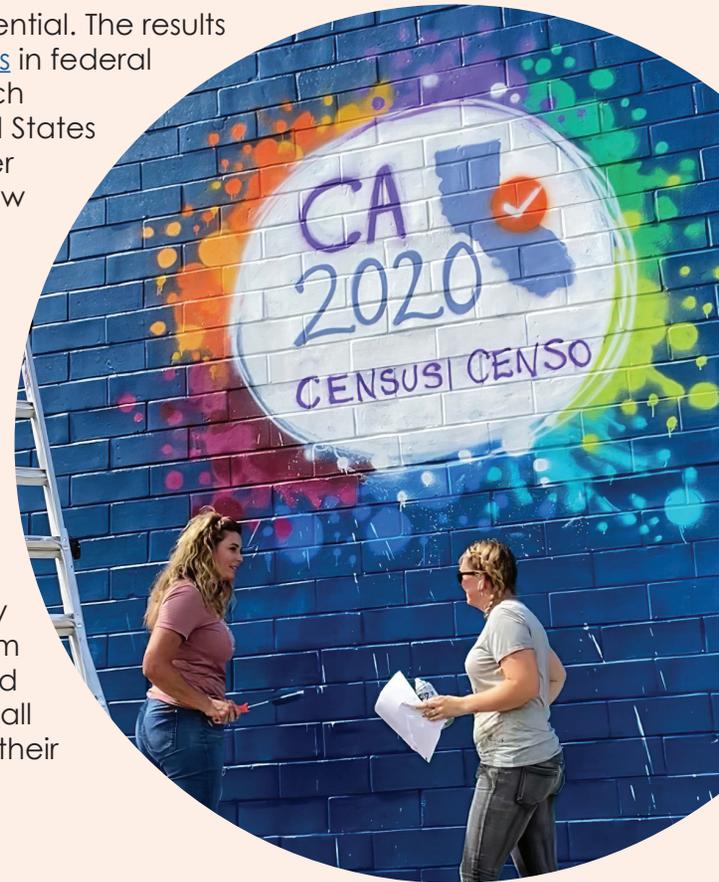
COUNTING CALIFORNIA

More than 39 million people and 14.2 million households span more than 163,000 square miles of Californian's urban, suburban and rural communities. California has the fifth largest economy in the world and is the most populous state in the nation, with nation-leading diversity in race, ethnicity, language and socioeconomic conditions. These characteristics make California amazingly unique amongst all 50 states, but also present significant challenges to counting every person and every household, no matter the census year.

A complete and accurate count of a state's population in a decennial census is essential. The results of the 2020 Census will inform decisions about allocating [hundreds of billions of dollars](#) in federal funding to communities across the country for hospitals, fire departments, school lunch programs and other critical programs and services. The data collected by the United States Census Bureau (referred hereafter as U.S. Census Bureau) also determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and will be used to redraw State Assembly and Senate boundaries.

- **Educate.**
- **Motivate.**
- **Activate.**

California launched a comprehensive Complete Count Census 2020 Campaign (referred to hereafter as the Campaign) to support an accurate and complete count of Californians in the 2020 Census. Due to the state's unique diversity and with insights from past censuses, the Campaign placed special emphasis on the hardest-to-count Californians and those least likely to participate in the census. The California Complete Count – Census 2020 Office (referred to hereafter as the Census Office) coordinated the State's operations to complement work done nationally by the U.S. Census Bureau to reach those households most likely to be missed because of barriers, operational or motivational, preventing people from filling out the census. The Campaign, which began in 2017, included key phases, titled Educate, Motivate and Activate. Each of these phases were designed to make sure all Californians knew about the census, how to respond, their information was safe and their participation would help their communities for the next 10 years.





What is the difference between the U.S. Census Bureau and the Census Office?



U.S. Census Bureau

Responsible for conducting the actual enumeration process nationally for each decennial census, with a focus on national outreach and media campaigns to inform all individuals living in the United States of the upcoming census.



Census Office

In support of the U.S. Census Bureau goals, the State of California implemented a statewide educational campaign focused on the hardest-to-count Californians through culturally appropriate grassroots outreach and multi-cultural, in-language media.



The State's investment in achieving a complete count was unprecedented and by far eclipsed any other state's funding for census outreach. The investment funded a multi-pronged, data-driven approach. This strategy relied upon historically proven methods to build a multi-lingual and multi-sector campaign with over 150 contracted outreach partners throughout the state. The combination of tried and tested tactics with innovation, technology and ingenuity, led to new levels of success for driving households to self-respond.



➤ The California Complete Count Census 2020 Campaign was formally established by [Executive Order B-49-18](#) on April 18, 2018.



SUCCESS FACTORS

It was through preparation, resilience, adaptability and total commitment that California achieved such a high Self-Response Rate. The success of the Campaign was made possible through the leadership of two gubernatorial administrations, local governments, the state Legislature and Congressional Delegation, philanthropic organizations, the hundreds of outreach partners and dozens of dedicated Census Office staff who all rose to meet the moment.

California achieved the highest average Self-Response Rate in the hardest-to-count tracts among the 10 largest population states. California also exceeded its own 2010 results for activating households to fill out their census questionnaire. While the U.S. Census Bureau continues to process response data, as of the date of this report, California achieved a statewide Self-Response Rate of 69.6%, or an estimated 10.5 million households. This was a 1.4 percentage point increase over the 2010 final Self-Response Rate. Despite a pandemic that emerged just as the 2020 Census invitations were mailed out, California's response rate reflected 2 million more households than self-responded in 2010.

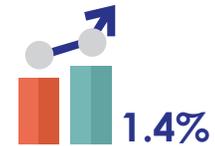
Critical factors contributing to the success of the Campaign were:

- Focusing specifically on California's hardest-to-count households
- Identifying census champions to build capacity
- Honoring established networks and nurturing collaborations
- Implementing data-driven decision making

CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE RESPONSE RATE



**Response rate of 69.6%,
or an estimated
10.5 million households**



**1.4 percentage point increase
over the 2010 final
Self-Response Rate**



**California achieved the
highest average Self-
Response Rate in the
hardest-to-count tracts
among the 10 largest
population states**



**California's response
rate included 2 million
more households than
self-responded in 2010**

Stronger connections and new community partnerships forged through the Campaign experience will continue to serve California at the local, regional and state level to support other outreach and education campaigns or community-based initiatives.



IN THIS REPORT

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Campaign outcomes and key strategies behind them. Each section also includes recommendations for 2030. The report is divided into the following sections:

THE PLAN AND OUTCOMES

- 1 Provides a summary of key Campaign elements, including administrative structure leading to the extraordinary achievements with a brief history on the first steps to establishing state operations.

CALIFORNIA LEADERSHIP

- 2 Reviews the role of the California Complete Count Committee, elected officials, state agencies and leadership efforts in support of the Campaign.

REACHING TARGET AUDIENCES THROUGH TRUSTED MESSENGERS

- 3 Details the outreach approach through partnerships forged and communication strategies and tools deployed.

THE SOLID INVESTMENT-DOLLARS AND DATA

- 4 Provides a budget and funding overview as well as methodology to allocate resources. Describes the mapping and data tools used to coordinate field activities and track real-time response rates.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- 5 Offers recommendations with a broad view toward a successful 2030 Census based on lessons learned and rewarding practices from the Campaign.





The California Census 2020 Outreach and Communication Campaign Final Report is one of three Census Office end-of-Campaign reports. This report was compiled by the Census Office with contributions from the Census Office program directors and senior staff. Original content is supported with census response rate and other data, including partner activity data reported to the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment mapping portal (referred hereafter as SwORD) and source documents such as the quarterly reports to the legislature, the Statewide Outreach and Communications Strategy, partner and vendor final reports and California Complete Count Committee reports to the Governor.



**FINAL MEASUREMENT
REPORT ON MESSAGES
THAT REACHED
HARDEST-TO-COUNT
POPULATIONS**



**INDEPENDENT
NARRATIVE EVALUATION
ON EXPERIENCES AND
OUTCOMES**



**FINAL REPORT ON THE
STATEWIDE OUTREACH
AND COMMUNICATIONS
CAMPAIGN**

THE CAMPAIGN REPORTS

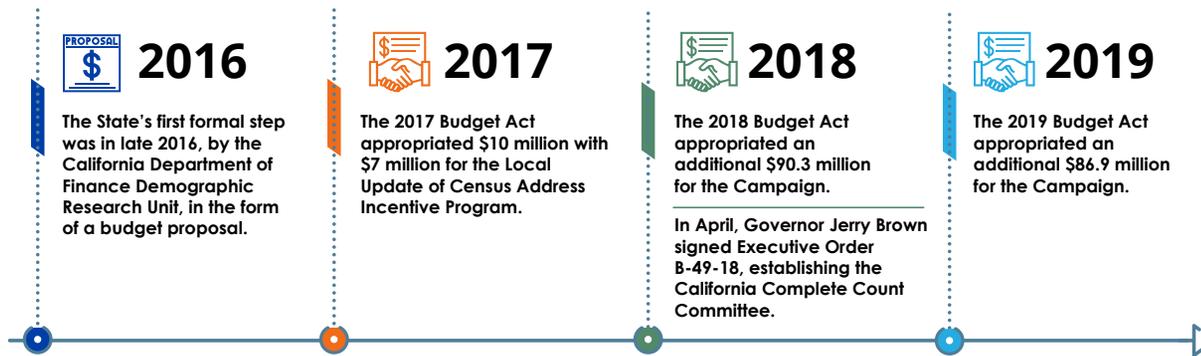


STRATEGIC OVERVIEW



THE JOURNEY BEGINS

California's plans for a successful Campaign were rooted in the critical success factors and lessons learned from its experiences with the 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses. The State started early and focused on building community partner capacity to implement creative and practical tactics. This early action would prove to be essential in overcoming the adversity of an unprecedented census count.



California's early planning and foresight placed it ahead of any other state's advance work effort. The State's first formal step was in late 2016, by the California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit, in the form of a budget proposal. The proposal requested funding for California's local governments to participate in the U.S. Census Bureau's Local Update of Census Addresses (also known as LUCA) to ensure an accurate count in their jurisdictions. The Local Update of Census Addresses is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's process to verify and update the national Master Address File.

The budget proposal was approved, and the 2017 Budget Act appropriated \$10 million with \$7 million for the Local Update of Census Address Incentive Program. The program, administered by the State Department of Finance, provided grants ranging from \$7,500 to \$125,000 to cities and counties to encourage their participation. In addition to Local Update of Census Addresses funding, the 2017 Budget Act also appropriated an initial

IN THIS SECTION:

- The Journey Begins
- The California Complete Count Census Office
- Data Driven from the Start
- The Campaign Approach
- External Influences





\$3 million in startup costs to organize, plan and support other related Campaign activities. The initial budget allocations prioritized five key investment areas to build infrastructure based on the successes and lessons learned from prior State census efforts.



STAFFING

Full-time staff positions, with a contingency plan to contract with state university consultants who worked on the 2010 Census, if no staff appointments were made.



SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A social science curriculum for 5th, 8th, 11th and 12th grades, developed by California teachers for California students, to ensure that it was not only relevant but also compatible with other state curriculum requirements.



GIS DATA MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Prioritizing the design and planning with early stakeholders for what became the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) portal.



STATEWIDE READINESS ASSESSMENTS

Twenty-three workshops throughout the state to identify ethnic media outlets; and engage local community leaders to serve as a platform to identify potential outreach lead organizations for each of the 10 state-designated census regions for Hard-to-Count demographics statewide and for sectors statewide.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Coordination with key stakeholders at the state and national levels including the U.S. Census Bureau, foundation/philanthropic funders, academic institutions, legislative staff, public policy groups and civic engagement advocates.

Absent this early investment, the Campaign effort likely would not have received any budget allocation until later in the summer of 2018, resulting in a critical loss of census count preparation time. In April 2018, Governor Jerry Brown signed [Executive Order B-49-18](#), establishing a State program to coordinate the Campaign and the California Complete Count Committee to serve as an advisory body. It also identified key outreach partner categories with high-level strategies to support the count. The Executive Order signified the State's full commitment to the complete count effort.

The 2018 Budget Act appropriated an additional \$90.3 million for the Campaign. This funding was for a comprehensive statewide outreach and communication strategy targeting households in the State's hardest-to-count areas to ensure full participation in the 2020 Census. The funding focused on finalizing staffing, establishing offices, operating/programmatic costs and establishing contracts with a variety of cities, counties, community-based organizations and governmental partners to educate, motivate and activate all Californians. The final Campaign allocation totaled \$187.2 million to fully implement the Campaign with priority on the critical factors for campaign success.



"We must acknowledge the early contributions and investment of legislative staff, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, consultants with previous decennial outreach experience, philanthropic foundations, academic institutions, civil society organizations, counties and the Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit. Without these mavericks pushing the importance of the census, the California Complete Count Census 2020 effort would not have been as successful as it was."

- Ditas Katague, California Complete Count - Census 2020, Director

CRITICAL FACTORS TO CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

Targeted Focus On California's Hardest-to-Count:

California's approach included in-language (i.e. the target audience's language) and customized messaging to reach its diverse population. Focus was placed on educational communication strategies to increase the prospect of those least likely to respond to the census, therefore delivering the highest impact. The work on the ground was complemented by a multi-media strategy including both statewide and micro-ethnic media outlets.

Identify Census Champions to Build Capacity:

Outreach began in 2018 with convenings throughout the state to understand the capacity of potential community partners who could conduct or manage outreach in collaboration with the State. As new challenges emerged, the Census Office and partners reassessed their outreach strategy to find the right approach for the low-responding census tracts.





CRITICAL FACTORS CONTINUED

Honoring Established Networks and Nurturing Collaborations:

The Census Office worked with community-based organizations, local governments, tribal governments, schools, higher education, state department service providers, unions, faith leaders, health care providers and business to leverage their trusted networks. In addition, the Census Office created an environment connecting trusted messengers to develop new networks to share census messaging within their own local ecosystems. Both the well-established and newly developed networks proved critical to meet the challenges with tactical shifts.

Data Driven:

Data shaped the framework supporting the Campaign. The effort featured the new SwORD mapping portal designed to help internal and external stakeholders plan, conduct and visualize census outreach, including completed activities. Data analytics guided efforts such as the creation of the California Hard-to-Count Index (also referred to as CA-HTC Index), which helped the Campaign allocate resources and identify parts of the state likely to need extra attention, as well as the Language and Communication Access Plan. Partners used SwORD during the Self-Response Phase to identify census tracts facing particular response-rate challenges.



Special Achievement in GIS
2020 Award Winner

California Complete Count - Census 2020 received a Special Achievement in GIS 2020 award from Esri.



THE CALIFORNIA COMPLETE COUNT CENSUS OFFICE

A complete and accurate count of California's population is essential for four fundamental reasons:

- Federal funding allocations for state and local services
- Data for businesses
- State legislative and local government redistricting
- Congressional representation

All of these outcomes are memorialized until the next decennial census is taken. With the stakes high, California launched a statewide effort to ensure an accurate and complete count of Californians in the 2020 Census, with a special emphasis on the hardest-to-count census tracts.



The California Complete Count - Census 2020 Mission:

Ensure that Californians get their fair share of federal resources and Congressional representation by encouraging the full participation of all Californians in Census 2020.



THE TEAM

The Census Office was established under the State of California Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and was transferred to Government Operations Agency with the passage of the 2018 Budget Act. During peak operations in 2019 and 2020, the Census Office had 36 positions, with its headquarters located in Sacramento and four regional offices located in Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland and San Diego. The infrastructure was comprised of the following functional areas:



EXECUTIVE

- Oversight and direction
- Liaison to the Governor's Office
- California Complete Count Committee
- Legal

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

- Liaison to congressional, state and local elected officials
- Bill and budget analysis
- Mandated quarterly reports

OPERATIONS

- Analytics and data management
- SwORD
- Technical assistance

ADMINISTRATION

- Human Resources
- Finance
- IT management
- Facilities/business services management
- Procurement
- Contracts management

OUTREACH

- Region-based partnerships
- Community-based organizations
- County governments
- Education
- Tribal governments
- Sectors
- Language and communication access
- State agencies

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MEDIA RELATIONS

- Public affairs
- Earned media
- Marketing and promotion
- Research
- Social media
- Digital media
- Website
- Collateral materials
- Community engagement



ACCOUNTABILITY AND SHARING INFORMATION

The Census Office was committed to operating with openness and accountability. This included holding California Complete Count Partners (partners) and vendors accountable for delivering results through contracts and sharing information.

Contracts were explicit in benchmark deliverables and associated budgets. Deliverables included detailed strategy plans and status reports. Ongoing monitoring by the Census Office provided oversight of the expended dollars and informed necessary Campaign adjustments.

In addition to complying with required legislative reporting and open meeting requirements, the Census Office also proactively shared information such as progress updates, key milestones, operations documents and financial reports for the public, stakeholders and Legislature in the following ways:

Participated in informational hearings before the State Legislative Select Committees on the Census and Budget Committees.

Provided quarterly updates during the California Complete Count Committee public meetings.

Developed the Language and Communication Access Plan (also referred to as LACAP).

Communicated information via press releases, e-blasts, newsletters, regular meetings, websites and webinars to stakeholders and partners.

Detailed strategy and tactics in the [Statewide Outreach Communications Strategy document](#).

Developed necessary operational documents, reports, fact sheets, updates and guidelines to inform, guide and support partners and stakeholders.

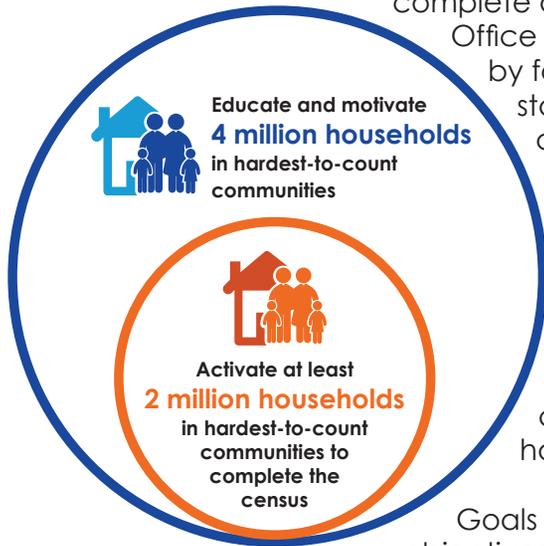
Updated the www.census.ca.gov web site regularly with financial information, key milestones and [mandated reports](#).





CENSUS OFFICE GOALS AND METRICS

The Campaign was designed to complement the U.S. Census Bureau's efforts to achieve a complete and accurate count of California's population. The Census Office chose to maximize the effectiveness of the national campaign by focusing outreach efforts in the hardest-to-count areas of the state. These areas, determined by analyzing various demographic, housing, and socioeconomic variables, contained an estimated 11.2 million people, approximately 4.1 million households in those areas.



To be considered successful, the Census Office's goal was to activate at least 2 million of those 4.1 million households to self-respond to the census. At the time of this report, 2.52 million households have self-responded in the hardest-to-count tracts, exceeding the 2 million hardest-to-count household goal by 25%.

Goals and Metrics were established to measure the achievement of objectives and the associated primary activities, intended outcomes and milestones. The Census Office Goals and Metrics are listed in Appendix A.



2.52 million households*

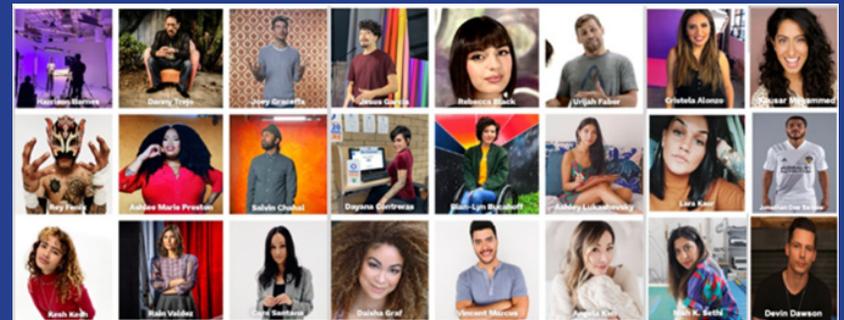
self-responded in the hardest-to-count tracts, exceeding the goal of 2 million.

* The U.S. Census Bureau released Census 2020 Self-Response Rates by census tract. The information did not include the actual number of households self-responding. The estimates in this report are based on the aggregated number of addresses in the U.S. Census Bureau's Master Address File following the 2018 Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA).

Examples of outcome goals and metrics tracked

PATCH-THROUGH PROGRAM
172,000
patch-throughs
to U.S. Census Bureau

SOCIAL MEDIA AMBASSADORS >
343 million
impressions and
4.8 million posts





U.S. CENSUS BUREAU COORDINATION

The Census Office supported and maximized the U.S. Census Bureau's enumeration efforts in California by complementing federal actions. To do this, the Census Office implemented a Campaign independent from the U.S. Census Bureau's campaign to fill in federal outreach gaps to California-specific populations, the hardest-to-count communities.

Critical to the Census Office's independent efforts was coordination with the U.S. Census Bureau to secure California specific operational details, particularly as COVID-19 adjustments were rolled out. Informational updates and enumeration activity concerns were shared, largely through the U.S. Census Bureau's Los Angeles Regional Office. The U.S. Census Bureau headquarter's staff was key when seeking clarification on essential operational updates, gaining insights into upcoming operational timeline changes and negotiating California-specific solutions.

Also critical to the Campaign's success was early coordination with the U.S. Census Bureau regional and national headquarter's staff who laid the foundation for the State's data-driven outreach approach.

At the field level, the U.S. Census Bureau hired Partnership Specialists. Their role was to work with all community partners, including Census Office contracted partners, and connect them to U. S. Census Bureau tools and resources assisting with outreach. The Partnership Specialists also coordinated directly with the Census Office staff to provide information and connections.

The U.S. Census Bureau participated in Census Office briefings, workshops for partners and California Complete Count Committee meetings to provide informational updates on its operations. Several webinars focused on special operations, such as counting persons experiencing homelessness, residents of group quarters, persons in areas impacted by disaster and those living in rural areas receiving mail only by P.O. box.



From this coordination, the Census Office provided guidance and suggested best practice documents for partners explaining U.S. Census Bureau operations for California-based stakeholders. This guidance provided critical support for partners to carry out their contracted duties in light of U.S. Census Bureau rules that remained unclear or that did not address conditions specific to California's communities. These documents were shared with the U.S. Census Bureau Los Angeles Regional Office either to ensure accuracy or for greater awareness amongst their staff.

Looking back, stronger coordination of efforts and collaboration would have resulted with the following three improvements:

1

Earlier hiring of both Census Office and U.S. Census Bureau staff as well as retaining this staff throughout the full Campaign.

2

Uniform information sharing across all stakeholders by the U.S. Census Bureau.

3

Synchronized announcements from U.S. Census Bureau headquarter and Los Angeles Regional Office on operational updates.





DATA DRIVEN FROM THE START

Data is critical for California given its uniqueness of size, demographics and language diversity. While these characteristics make California great, they also presented formidable obstacles for census outreach. To help meet these challenges, the Census Office turned to data and technology to inform its thoughtful decision-making. It was through data the Census Office was able to guide the allocation of taxpayer dollars, conduct Campaign planning and identify areas needing extra support during an exceedingly difficult enumeration period.

A cornerstone of the effort was the SwORD database and mapping portal. Built in collaboration with Geo-spatial software firm Esri, SwORD was a first-of-its-kind source of decision-making, data and visualization for outreach and media partners.

SwORD featured tools used to plan and review activities such as canvassing, phone banking and caravans. Interactive maps, dashboards and three-dimensional (3D) visuals consolidated information for users and involved complex analysis of census response rate data, completed activity reports and other inputs.

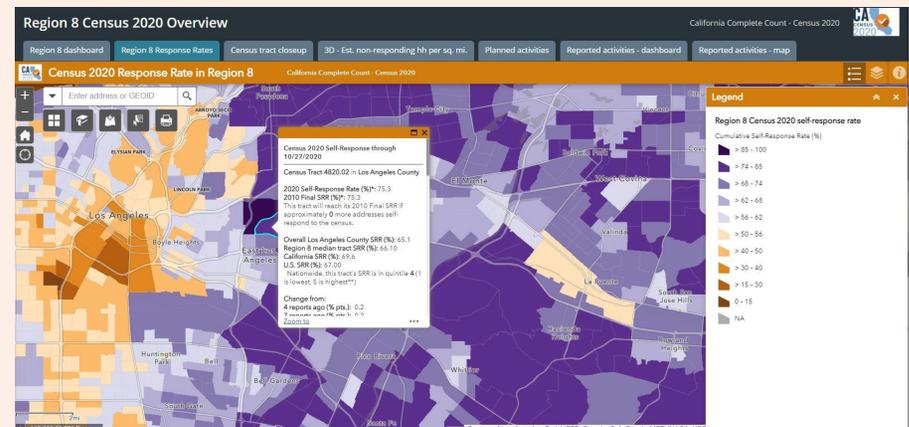
The Census Office was highly adaptable and responsive to partner and stakeholder needs and created opportunities to secure feedback on enhancements to improve targeting and transparency. Ongoing system updates, trainings and resource guides provided them with the tools and information necessary to inform their targeted census tract and population work.

In addition to SwORD, the Census Office hired Political Data, Inc. (also referred to as PDI) to develop a Census PDI web-based application (app). The Census PDI app served as a real-time snapshot of ground efforts to aid data analysis and

outcome measurements. Partners used Census PDI for canvassing and phone-banking, and Census PDI provided the means for partners to submit outreach activities conducted in regular PDI.

A key lesson of California's 2010 Census effort was the need for greater coordination and timely activity outcome reporting between the partners, the Census Office and other census stakeholders. SwORD, was the backbone of the State's efforts to increase participation and:

- Offered maps and high-quality data for users to quickly learn more about Hard-to-Count areas and to plan outreach efforts.
- Encouraged collaboration and coordination, enabling users to work together on outreach and guided decision-making.
- Provided regularly updated data on outreach activities and monitoring for rapid response to achieve a complete count.





DATA TO INFORM

Data was the foundation for planning, and used by the Census Office and stakeholders throughout the Campaign. To build the data, foremost among the regularly used datasets was the [American Community Survey](#) 5-year estimates, a U.S. Census Bureau product released each year including data on hundreds of demographics and socioeconomic variables.

For example, American Community Survey estimates provided all but one of the data inputs for the California Hard-to-Count Index, a California-focused metric developed by the California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit in collaboration with the Census Office. The index reflects 14 demographic, housing and socioeconomic variables. Tracts with higher index values would likely pose greater enumeration challenges, while tracts with lower index values likely would be easier to count. The Hard-to-Count Index allowed the Census Office to distill information and focus on neighborhoods where households were less likely to self-respond. Further, the State used the index to help guide the allocation of outreach funding. The Census Office provided a public version of the [California Hard-to-Count Index interactive map](#), which allowed people to learn about the Hard-to-Count characteristics in any part of the state.



The “Potter the Otter” chatbot on [census.ca.gov](#) and several partner websites offered a simple way for people to get information about completing their census, response rates and census tract information.

CA-HTC INDEX FACTORS

-  % of households without broadband subscriptions
-  % of population that is foreign-born
-  % limited-English households
-  % of households that are non-family
-  % of adults (25 or older) who are not high-school graduates
-  % of persons who moved from outside county in past year
-  % of occupied housing units that are renter-occupied
-  % of population with income below 150% of poverty level
-  % of population under 5
-  % of housing units that are vacant
-  % of households receiving public assistance income
-  % of total housing units with three or more units in a multi-unit structure
-  % crowded
-  % of persons (ages 16 or older) unemployed



Together, the California Hard-to-Count Index and U.S. Census Bureau Self-Response Rates, including the final 2010 Self-Response Rate, holistically informed efforts to increase participation in low-responding areas.

Data also helped guide the development of the Language and Communication Access Plan by identifying the most commonly spoken languages in each geographic area. The plan established language-support requirements for designated partners to reach the more than 6.7 million California residents ages 5-and-over who speak English less than “very well.” At least 91% of California’s estimated Limited English Proficient population was covered by the plan’s requirements. Additional information on data, technology and analytics may be found in the Results Chapter.

THE CAMPAIGN APPROACH

THE CALIFORNIA LANDSCAPE

California’s unique diversity, large population spanning across both urban and rural areas and sheer geographic size, present significant barriers to achieving a complete and accurate count. By the numbers, California is home to 12% of the nation’s population, yet accounts for 20% of people living in the nation’s hardest-to-count areas¹. Since the 2010 Census, California’s population has become even more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before.

California is home to a multi-cultural population speaking at least 130 different languages. Approximately 18% of Californians speak English less than “very well,” according to recent Census Bureau estimates. The 2020 Census questionnaires and U.S. Census Bureau phone centers covered only 12 non-English languages, and official language guides covered only 59, including American Sign Language.

Limited English Proficient individuals and people with disabilities are part of California’s Hard-to-Count demographic populations. Providing language and communication access to Limited English Proficient individuals and people with disabilities was a priority for the Census Office.



¹California’s estimated population is approximately 12% of the estimated U.S. population, based on 2015-2019 American Community Survey Estimates.

The Low Response Score is a U.S. Census Bureau Hard-to-Count metric which identifies what percentage of households in a census tract is unlikely to self-respond. The tract-level 2020 Planning Database includes the most recent Low Response Score. After recoding the Low Response Score with values 1 through 10, there are approximately 3,688 census tracts with recoded values of 8, 9, and 10. An estimated 91.1 million people live in those tracts, based on planning database data. Of those, an estimated 18.2 million are in California, representing approximately 20% of the 91.1 million people nationwide living in hardest-to-count census tracts.



To this end, in May 2019, the State released its [Language and Communication Access Plan](#). The plan established language-support requirements for on-the-ground partners to reach the more than 6.7 million California Limited English Proficient residents ages 5 and over. The Census Office evaluated multiple federal and state language datasets and methodologies in creating its approach. Detailed language information compiled from the most recent American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample was aggregated to 41 geographic data areas: 34 counties and seven multi-county areas. The plan established two types of language support triggers based on a geographic data area's estimated number of Limited English Proficient (referred hereafter as LEP) residents. Under the approach, at least 91% of the state's estimated LEP population were covered by the plan's requirements.

The Language and Communication Access Plan aimed to ensure language and communication access was linguistically and culturally appropriate and provided equal and meaningful access to California's vulnerable populations.

CAMPAIGN PHASES

The Campaign was planned with four phases to guide its messaging and outreach activities. This strategy intensified during the enumeration period when the U.S. Census Bureau adjusted operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Census Office adjusted the phases to align. The following table provides the four phases:

- > Educate.
- > Motivate.
- > Activate.



*Adjusted mid-Campaign due to revised U.S. Census Bureau operations time line. End of Activate extended from July to October; Assess and Report delayed from August to November.



The following are descriptions of each phase.

➤ **Convene, Collaborate and Capacity Build:**

Built capacity by convening grassroots leaders, engaging strategic partnerships, assessing readiness and needs and leveraging outside resources, including private foundations, to ensure the most effective strategies were funded and implemented.

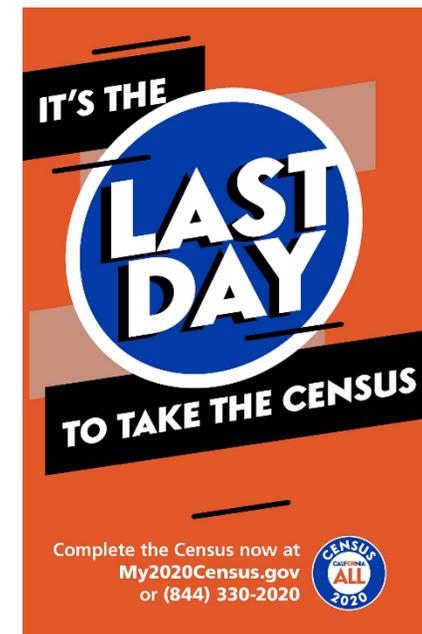
➤ **Educate and Motivate:**

Advised and connected both outreach and media partners throughout the state and oversaw the development of outreach and messaging plans. The Census Office shared insights and data on Hard-to-Count communities and the operations of the U.S. Census Bureau to help them understand census complexity. Outreach and media partners organized and networked and began their early education to Hard-to-Count census tracts.

➤ **Activate:**

The media campaign and partners executed their plans, spreading the message and reaching out to those least likely to respond.

- In the Pre-Census Questionnaire period from January to March 11, 2020, the outreach and media partners ensured those least likely to respond knew of the coming census and understood the need for a complete count.
- The census self-response period began March 12, 2020, when people could fill out the questionnaire online, by phone or by paper. During this “Get out the Count” and “Be Counted” effort, the majority of outreach and media efforts culminated with close coordination to ensure coverage.
- “It’s Not Too Late” started the Nonresponse Followup period from early August to October 15, 2020, a sensitive time when federal enumerators visited households not yet completing the census. The Census Office worked closely with the U.S. Census Bureau to determine the best approaches to guarantee a complete count during this phase. Partners were trusted messengers to encourage non-responding households to “open their doors” and relay that “It’s not too late to be counted” with media reinforcing and amplifying this message. Partner outreach also reflected permissible activities under various state and local health and safety restrictions.



Assess & Report:

Partners reviewed their outreach activity data and assessed the efficacy of their efforts, documenting their work in final Campaign reports submitted to the Census Office. This effort included uploading state-funded outreach activity data into SwORD. Media vendors also developed end-of-campaign reports for their respective campaign areas. To capture Campaign experiences and outcomes, the Census Office secured a research consulting firm to complete a comprehensive Campaign evaluation with a narrative report.

APPROACH TO ENSURE A COMPLETE COUNT

The historical foundation of the Campaign outreach approach was based on methods learned from two previous census cycles and divided into three components.



Reach the least likely to respond through messaging by saturating the hardest-to-count areas.



Partners that deployed trusted messengers in trusted places to communicate in a trusted way about the importance of being counted. These partnerships leveraged existing networks, relationships and infrastructure and coordinated with non-state funded local partners.



Use technology, data and analytics to make decisions and allocate resources. These tools also supported transparency and information sharing.





For 2020, the approach focused on California's hardest-to-count communities based on where they live, who they are and how they receive information.



WHERE

Focused on the most difficult areas to enumerate based on the State's unique California Hard-to-Count Index.



WHO

Identified the demographic populations through the state's 15 vulnerable populations as being least likely to respond.



HOW

Reached populations through:

- **Trusted messengers** such as: counties, service providers, cultural and faith-based organizations, employers, education institutions and other outreach partners who had existing relationships, networks and infrastructure.
- **Media** such as: Paid media (including print and broadcast media and out-of-home), social media and earned media (op-ed content and proactive pitches to media partners).

These elements were integrated at local, regional and statewide levels to create a “surround-sound” of Campaign messages, to reach and motivate those who are least likely to respond to be counted.

CALIFORNIA'S 15 VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

These groups, the focus of statewide outreach campaigns, may or may not reside in hardest-to-count census tracts.

- Latinos
- Black or African Americans
- Native Americans and Tribal Communities
- Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (AANHPI)
- Middle East and North African (MENA)
- Immigrants and Refugees
- Farmworkers
- People with Disabilities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+)
- Seniors/Older Adults
- Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness
- Children Under 5
- Veterans
- Areas with Low Broadband Subscription
- Households with Limited English Proficiency

The Campaign was implemented through an “ecosystem” of the following seven areas:

1

A regional outreach approach

delivered by local contracted partners through 10-designated outreach areas across the state while leveraging and coordinating outreach efforts funded by private philanthropy.

2

A communications and media campaign

with culturally relevant and sensitive messaging in paid and earned media.

3

A statewide approach

through contracted partners who had a statewide reach and expertise in designated vulnerable populations, as well as how to reach populations through sectors.

4

State agency outreach

where executive branch departments and constitutional offices' communication platforms were leveraged to reach hard-to-count individuals.

5

The California Complete Count Committee's

diverse 25 members reviewed and provided feedback on Census Office strategy at quarterly meetings and exercised outreach within their own community.

6

Elected officials

at the congressional, state and local levels conducted their own outreach to their constituencies. The State Legislature provided oversight of the Census Office funding.

7

Technology, data and analytics

provided the backbone of the Census Office decision-making as well as visualizing contracted partner work in SWORD.





THE CHALLENGING CLIMATE

The Campaign encountered many external challenges. Some of the challenges were anticipated and some were not, but all impeded the Census Office and partners' ability to reach Hard-to-Count communities. Despite these challenges, ingenuity and flexibility allowed the Census Office and its partners to quickly adapt existing plans to the ever-evolving environment.

Known challenges included:

- U.S. Census Bureau:
 - Shifted to offering an online census form. This created a digital barrier for some as approximately [one in 10 households in California](#) lack a broadband internet subscription or may lack digital literacy.
 - Reduced funding of approximately 50% per household from 2010. This reduction was based on a projected cost savings primarily related to converting to an online form.
 - Funded fewer local offices and field staff, which reduced resources to recruit and train qualified community hires for the in-person enumeration phase.
- Heightened concerns about data security with the introduction of an online census form.
- General fear and mistrust of the federal government to protect personal information, regardless of how a household completes the census.
- Increased concern among immigrant and historically undercounted communities over a potential question on citizenship status and use of their data after collection.

Notwithstanding these challenges, trusted voices and key messengers worked to provide a “surround sound” of essential information to Hard-to-Count communities. Additional State investments and partnerships also helped fill in the gaps as the U.S. Census Bureau reduced resources and implemented operational changes.



THE UNEXPECTED

Just as the Campaign effort was about to switch into the Activate Phase, the COVID-19 pandemic threat was fully realized in the United States. To protect California from this health threat, on March 7, 2020 public health officials released guidance for schools, colleges and large public events to prepare and protect them from COVID-19. For Census Office partners, the impact forced a sudden departure from planned in-person activities. They had to reimagine their community network and significantly boost their virtual outreach. Virtual outreach required additional partner training on digital tactics.

The communication campaign made a number of hard pivots in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Messaging and creative were adjusted to reflect the impact the census would have on the State receiving funding for COVID-19 services, and proactive story pitches with this new messaging received earned media coverage. The Campaign had planned multiple weeks of promotional events across the state that were changed to online virtual events due to California's statewide Stay at Home Order issued on March 19, 2020 (Executive Order N-33-20) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Out-of-home advertising (billboards, transit shelter, etc.) scheduled for March and April, were postponed to June or were pivoted to venues that were part of essential businesses such as gas stations or pharmacies.

While partners grappled with how to effectively conduct census outreach and education virtually, the impact of the pandemic also took a direct toll on individual organizations. Resources dwindled as staff were shifted to address immediate health and safety concerns, job losses and the day-to-day needs for food and financial support in the same Hard-to-Count community members.

However, the pandemic was likely the largest but not the only destabilizing event to the census. As 2020 continued, additional unanticipated events at the local, state and national levels once again threatened to push the Campaign off-track. These new threats included heat waves, record-setting wildfires, social unrest stemming from racial injustices and a volatile election season.

Just as destabilizing were the continuous changes to the U.S. Census Bureau timeline. Following a series of deadline changes announced by the U.S. Census Bureau, civic groups initiated lawsuits challenging the deadlines in federal court. As a result, the enumeration end date was in continuous flux throughout September and October 2020 until the United States Supreme Court issued a final ruling on October 13 paving the way for the U.S. Census Bureau to end the count on October 15. As deadlines changed back and forth between dates set by the U.S. Census Bureau and dates set by the courts, the Census Office and partners had to continually and rapidly adjust tactics and messaging.





COURT DECISIONS

State and federal courts were heavily engaged in the census with dozens of lawsuits filed challenging U.S. Census Bureau operations and federal administrative directives. The Census Office was not a party to any of the litigation; however, it closely monitored and reported developments as tactics had to adjust accordingly to an ever-evolving landscape. Changes resulting from court rulings also compelled the Census Office to assess funding and capacity to extend activities where possible through partners, vendors or Census Office staff.

The three primary areas of litigation were:

- 1. The possible inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census questionnaire;**
- 2. A White House memo excluding undocumented residents from the census count; and**
- 3. U.S. Census Bureau operational adjustments due to COVID-19.**

Questions about a person's citizenship status were ultimately never added to the 2020 Census questionnaire. Nevertheless, the federal administration's attempt to collect this data led to an atmosphere of distrust amongst California's hardest-to-count population, which is estimated to include over 2 million undocumented individuals. The Census Office's partners focused their work with trusted messengers to overcome this distrust and to assure people their responses were safe, regardless of their household members' citizenship status.

Culturally congruent messaging was developed to speak directly to this issue as litigation wound through the courts. Mis/disinformation tactics also addressed this through social media and earned media as a core message shared before, during, and even after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that effectively blocked a citizenship question. Similar tactics were employed by the Census Office and outreach partners when President Trump issued a memo in July 2020 seeking to exclude undocumented residents from the census count.

As referenced earlier, court rulings on the U.S. Census Bureau COVID-19 operational adjustments in the fall of 2020 required the Census Office to closely monitor and report developments to partners given the significant timeline fluctuations and abrupt changes. Flexibility and steadfast commitment from partners and the Census Office during the final enumeration period were critical to growing the Self-Response Rate as the time left to count households repeatedly extended and retracted, by weeks and sometimes by just days. See Appendix B for additional information on court decisions.



➤ **The Census Office scrambled to respond to challenges with adaptability and with the understanding it was necessary to consistently adjust operations and to reflect the current environment. To ensure the Campaign was relevant and sensitive to the challenges, the Census Office and partners infused messaging and imagery with census messaging and then layered in current topics such as COVID-19, social justice or wildfires. This approach ensured the information shared was relevant and up-to-date. Local regions adjusted their activities based on their understanding of the region and the local community. Many in-person activities shifted to virtual or were reimaged and delivered in new ways.**

