2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan Final Report

MAY 27, 2021

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United States® Census 2020

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ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FINAL REPORT

This 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan Final Report captures the highlights of the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign, as implemented according to the approved 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan, Version 2.0 and Version 1.0 (collectively known as the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan).

Version 2.0 of the plan, released by the U.S. Census Bureau in May 2020, built on the foundation laid by Version 1.0. Released in June 2017, Version 1.0 of the plan laid out steps for developing a comprehensive communications campaign while providing a high-level overview of anticipated communication strategies.

Version 2.0 expanded on Version 1.0 to incorporate insights from extensive campaign research, as well as details of the campaign theme, messaging, creative development, and testing. All aspects of the Census Bureau's approach to the "Shape your future. Start here." campaign were developed with input from audiences from across the country. Version 2.0 is available on the Census Bureau's website.

In addition to summarizing how campaign execution aligned with the original plans, this report describes changes made to the campaign in response to challenges encountered during its execution, including the COVID-19 pandemic, other emerging national events, changing media consumption habits, government activities and decisions, and Census Bureau operational adjustments. Finally, the report addresses the impacts and outcomes of the communications campaign as it was ultimately executed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shape your future. Start here.

The 2020 Census was unlike any of the 23 decennial censuses that came before it. It was, after all, the first in U.S. history to give everyone the chance to respond online. The year 2020 also presented an unprecedented set of circumstances in which to count every single person living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas (comprising American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

The U.S. Census Bureau, in launching the 2020 Census and the communications campaign, announced its rallying cry: "Shape your future. Start here." Throughout the campaign and through a variety of communication channels, this message encouraged people in communities large and small to participate. And while a global pandemic, an intensely contentious presidential campaign, and nationwide protests for racial justice underscored the urgency of that message, the vision for the future it invoked was different for everyone.

By October 15, 2020, at the end of an extended campaign to count everyone, more than 99.9% of households had been accounted for in the 2020 Census, and the majority of those households had self-responded online, by phone, or by mail. This strong result was a testament to the collective effort of hundreds of thousands of people and partners.

The success of the 2020 Census also reflected the success of the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign (ICC). The 2020 Census ICC aimed to increase census awareness and to maximize the self-response rate. The ICC also sought to promote public cooperation with census takers (formally called enumerators) during Nonresponse Followup (NRFU)—an operation in which enumerators knock on the doors of and collect census responses from households that have not self-responded. To ensure that these goals were met, the Census Bureau pivoted quickly when the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped life for many in the country.

This document summarizes the approach to planning and executing the ICC, as well as reimagining it, when needed, to adapt to challenging circumstances.

Motivating Everyone To Respond

Every 10 years, the decennial census provides the opportunity for every person living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas to be counted, giving voice to our communities and the people who constitute them. The resulting data determines states' congressional representation and informs decisions about how billions of dollars in annual federal funding flows into states and communities in the following years. This funding, in turn,

affects decisions about our neighborhoods—from roads and infrastructure to health care, schools, jobs, and much more.

Because census participation is so important to achieving a complete count of the population, it is vital that we at the Census Bureau promote the numerous benefits of the census and that we make it easy for people to take part. Since 2000, Congress has allocated funding for the Census Bureau to conduct a paid communications campaign that educates the population about the decennial count and urges people to participate. This has been critical to the Census Bureau's success in delivering an accurate count.

For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau used the message "Shape your future. Start here." as a creative platform to raise awareness and drive participation, with the goal of **counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place**. This census made history: **For the first time, the majority of census respondents could choose to complete the questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.** The 2020 Census represented the first time an online response option was offered to the population at large.

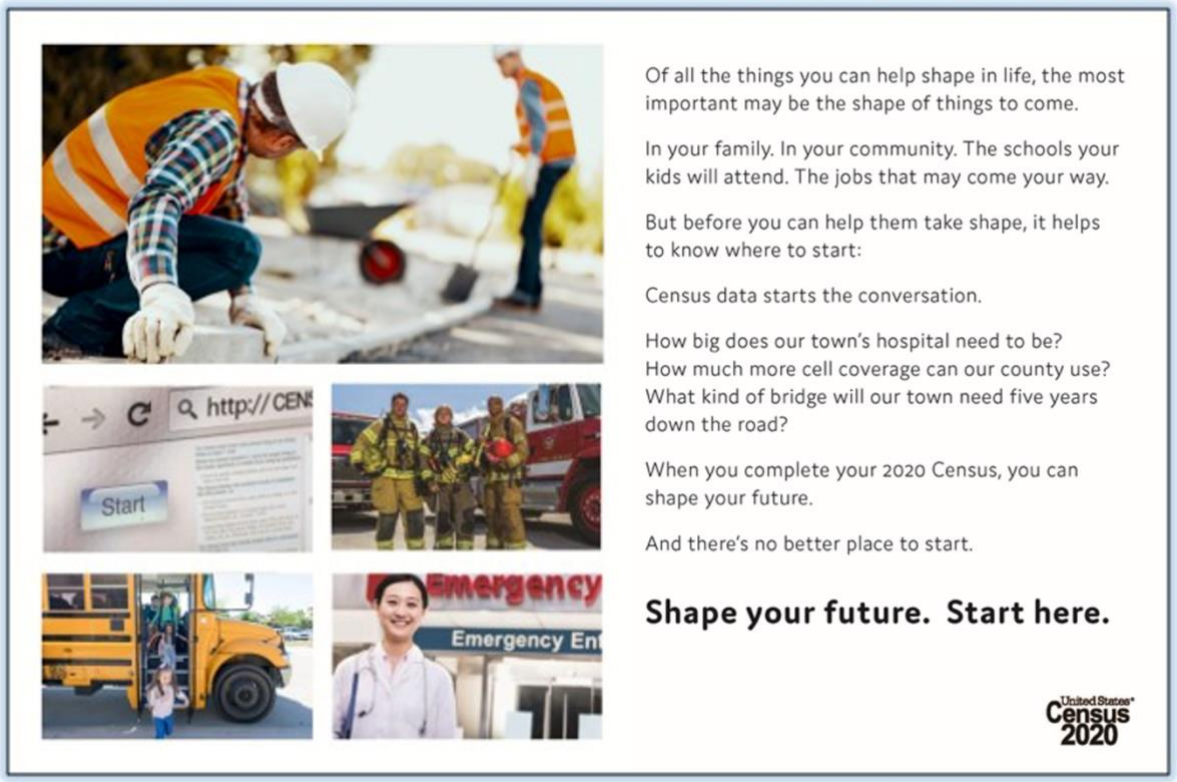


Figure 1: Presentation Summary of the "Shape Your future. Start Here." Creative Platform

The modern digital environment offered unprecedented opportunities, not only to reach audiences in new ways, but also to quickly refine our outreach and engagement during the response period as results and data on self-response rates and patterns became available. As we sought to engage people of various ages, socioeconomic statuses, backgrounds, and languages, we took a multichannel, audience-tailored approach to promoting the importance and relevance of the 2020 Census. We did this while keeping in mind the need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and to show respect for the public's time and privacy.

From the start, the Census Bureau relied on data and systematic research and analysis to reach campaign audiences where they were and to address their concerns.

For instance, the Census Bureau tested the communications campaign's creative platform—"Shape your future. Start here."—and determined that this performed strongly with respondents, who found it to be personable and relatable as if "speaking directly to me."

In addition, we relied on results from our 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS), which showed that funding for community benefits ranked as the No. 1 motivator for census participation.

Creative execution testing later underscored CBAMS findings about how important it was for the campaign to stress that census data brings about community benefits—from supporting the building of schools, hospitals, and clinics to funding the improvement of roads, bridges, and public transit services. These details, more than dollar figures in the billions, were shown to resonate with the public.

Pivoting in a Pandemic

Just as the Census Bureau was beginning to collect online responses in mid-March, much of the United States began to hunker down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing became widespread to prevent transmission of the virus, and large gatherings, such as sports events, festivals, concerts, and conferences, were canceled or held with very limited in-person attendance. With stay-at-home orders in place throughout the country, people adapted to virtual formats for conducting business, attending school classes, and socializing with friends and family members. In addition, many people in hard-to-count (HTC) population groups, especially, were faced with continued in-person work at essential businesses and in the service industry, and this in-person work contributed to COVID-19's disproportionate impact on these communities. Given these changes and challenges, the Census Bureau suspended all in-person enumeration operations from March through May 2020. Further, the self-response period was extended into October, and the NRFU operation was rescheduled to be conducted from July to October.

The sudden changes in the public environment also significantly affected the communications campaign. The unanticipated and unfamiliar pandemic environment required immediate changes to campaign plans (made months in advance) for paid media, outreach activities, communication materials, and public engagement strategies. Despite the pandemic and related challenges, we continued to work toward a full and accurate count of the population.

Our communication efforts quickly shifted toward accomplishing several goals in response to the pandemic, including:

- Emphasizing to all audiences the importance and ease of responding to the 2020 Census from the safety of their homes, either online, over the phone, or by mail—without having to interact with a census taker.
- Communicating critical updates to the 2020 Census timeline.
- Ensuring that campaign messaging, imagery, and outreach spoke sensitively and authentically to a changing country where significant health and economic concerns were taking root and where new public health practices, such as wearing protective face masks and maintaining six feet of distance from others, were becoming common.
- Refining messaging, creative, and tactical efforts, as necessary, to respond to emerging trends in self-response across our diverse and complex audience at large.

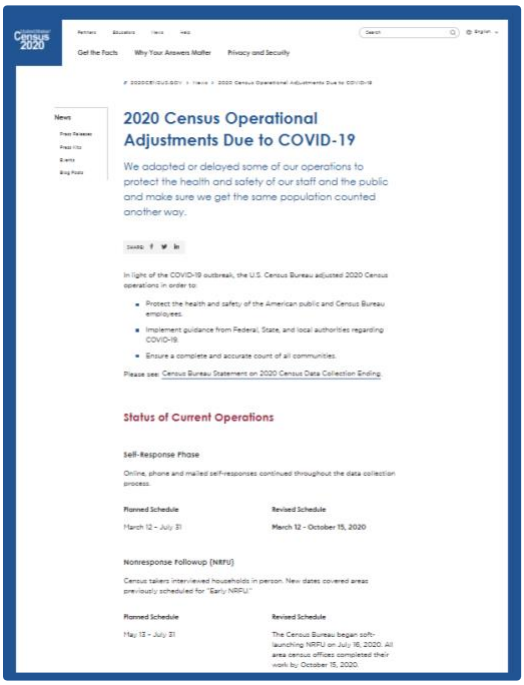


Figure 2: Screenshot of a Page on 2020Census.gov Detailing Census Operational Adjustments Due to COVID-19

A Multipronged Approach

To raise awareness, motivate self-response, and respond to a changing environmental backdrop of health, societal, and economic concerns, the 2020 Census communications campaign employed a multipronged approach, encompassing activities in the following program areas:

- **Stakeholder Relations.** Stakeholders helped raise awareness of the count in communities and neighborhoods across the country—work that became even more valuable in the complex COVID-19 pandemic environment.
- **Partnership Program.** Local, regional, and national partners played a valuable role in helping us connect with the public and reach HTC audiences through targeted communications, distribution of materials, and unique engagement opportunities, such as text-message outreach.
- **Advertising and Media Buying.** The paid media and advertising strategy incorporated both traditional and evolving technologies to raise awareness and drive response among all audience groups. Television, radio, print, and out-of-home advertising kept the 2020 Census front and center in the public mind. The campaign also deployed a broad range of digital, paid social, email marketing, and keyword search advertisements that could be easily tailored, targeted, and adapted to reach distinct audience groups. These assets connected viewers to Census Bureau web properties with one click, providing quick access to the census's online response tool.
- **Public and Media Relations.** Public and media relations activities helped drive education and awareness efforts through press releases on the 2020 Census website and other owned media platforms, virtual news briefings and events, and earned media coverage, which included media mentions of and stories about the 2020 Census. These efforts were particularly important to reaching HTC audiences. Public and media relations were invaluable in keeping audiences up to date on changes to Census Bureau operations and the communications campaign.
- **Crisis Communications.** With the rapid spread of information in the current digital environment, crisis communications were critical, especially when the pandemic presented challenging circumstances. The crisis communications team conducted threat monitoring and social listening activities, while also deploying messaging for public announcements and to mitigate the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Crisis communication efforts were coordinated closely with public relations, partnership, 2020 Census website, and stakeholder management efforts to ensure a comprehensive approach across communication activities.

- **Website Development and Digital Activities.** The 2020 Census website, at 2020Census.gov, was a critical element of the campaign, particularly given the campaign's emphasis on internet self-response. The website and integrated owned media activities engaged diverse audiences with relevant, digestible content and encouraged them to participate in the census. Both the website and other owned media activities, including opt-in email marketing, were optimized for mobile devices.
- **Social Media.** Social media outreach offered a unique and valuable opportunity to personally engage with the public on a variety of platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube. Social media efforts leveraged existing Census Bureau channels and used a variety of interactive elements—such as customer service chatbots and live events—to raise awareness of the census and drive self-response.
- **2020 Statistics in Schools Program.** The 2020 Statistics in Schools (SIS) program aimed to raise statistical literacy among students at the pre-K through 12th grade levels nationwide, including in Puerto Rico. SIS created materials in English and Spanish for the 2020 Census and worked with partners, who promoted the materials' use in schools and at home. The program held live and virtual events and produced free worksheets, maps, videos, and the "Everyone Counts!" song with an accompanying story and workbook to engage students and build awareness of the census. Resources targeting parents and caregivers were also developed for at-home use during the pandemic.

Figure 3: Photo Still From "Everyone Counts!" Song With Animated Video (Left) and Story and Activity Book Cover (Right)

- **Integrated Efforts To Improve the Count of Young Children.** Efforts to improve the count of young children were jointly executed by the 2020 SIS program, partnership program, public and media relations, and other teams across the ICC. Activities included developing print and promotional materials; distributing radio and television public service announcements (PSAs) that encouraged households to include young children

when responding to the census; and, before the onset of the pandemic, hosting the Counting Young Children National Event for households with young children.

- **Communications Efforts for Field Recruitment.** The Census Bureau created recruitment marketing materials in multiple languages and developed a centralized recruiting resource—the 2020 Census jobs website, at 2020Census.gov/jobs —to generate interest in decennial census jobs. An added paid media component enabled us to rapidly expand our employee base, helping ensure that there were enough enumerators and office staff to count people across the country once COVID-19 safety measures were implemented.
- **Campaign Monitoring and Optimization.** This program component was crucial in facilitating timely and data-driven adjustments to the communications campaign during its execution. Continuous monitoring of census response rates and campaign engagement metrics enabled us to refine our communication strategies, which informed adjustments to campaign messaging and creative assets. This was especially true as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and census operations had to continually adapt in response. The Census Bureau also reallocated media resources, helping address specific response rate challenges and outreach needs in diverse communities across the country.

The 2020 Census was a massive undertaking—and it presented a huge opportunity for all in the United States, including Puerto Rico and the Island Areas, to be counted. The Census Bureau created the ICC to promote that opportunity, adapting campaign activities as unexpected challenges arose. As we publicly release a summary of the important data collected during the count, we look forward to discovering how people across the country use this data to shape the future of the communities they call home.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1790, the United States has conducted a census every 10 years to count its population. The decennial census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution and was specifically delegated to the federal government by the nation's founders. The census represents the country's largest nonmilitary mobilization of its workforce. Its results are critical in helping federal, state, and local government bodies make decisions about funding, community planning, and representation in Congress.

In conducting the decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau strives to attain a complete and accurate count. In 2020, we endeavored to reach and count every person living in the United States and its territories—regardless of their age, type of residence, location, cultural background, or citizenship status. This included all people living in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Respondents could complete the census questionnaire online (using a smartphone, tablet, or computer), by phone, by mail, or through in-person enumeration. The 2020 count was also conducted in the Island Areas by enumerators who collected responses on paper forms.

The 2020 Census represented the first time an online response option was offered to the population at large in the states and in Puerto Rico. This opportunity proved especially valuable since the pandemic took hold just as the census launched. The use of technology in the 2020 Census also provided the Census Bureau with opportunities for advanced, cost-efficient communications, enabling campaign messaging to reach audiences quickly and effectively. In planning the campaign, we aimed to balance internet-based communications and advertising with mailings and traditional advertising.

Regardless of how the communications campaign's target audiences learned about the 2020 Census, and regardless of whether they participated online or through another response mode, the Census Bureau prioritized the safety and security of respondents' data. We emphasized that any information submitted through the new internet self-response tool—or through any response mode—would be kept confidential.

INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

The 2020 Integrated Partnership and Communications (IPC) program was one of 35 major operations that the Census Bureau engaged in to execute the 2020 Census. A critical component of the decennial census operation, the program aimed to reach, and encourage participation by, everyone living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas—

regardless of their education, literacy level, language, country of origin, citizenship status, income, familiarity with technology, or general views and interests.

Despite the challenging 2020 environment—which included a global pandemic—the combined efforts of the IPC program helped the Census Bureau achieve a final self-response rate of 67.0% for the 2020 Census, exceeding the final 66.5% self-response rate in 2010. In addition, 99.9% of all housing units were accounted for in 2020.

The IPC program provided leadership and strategic support for its two components, the 2020 Census Partnership Program and the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign.

2020 CENSUS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The 2020 Census Partnership Program cultivated relationships with organizations and stakeholders. These relationships strengthened awareness of the census and of the partner organizations' presence in the community. The program was carried out by the National Partnership Program (NPP) at the national level and by the Community Partnership and Engagement Program (CPEP) at the local and regional levels, with support from the Census Open Innovation Labs (COIL) team. Partner engagement helped build trust, as well as raise awareness and encourage participation in the 2020 Census.

2020 CENSUS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

All decisions related to the ICC were driven by comprehensive research results, which included data from the 2020 CBAMS, the 2020 Census Tracking Survey (which measured public awareness of and intent to participate in the census), and previous Census Bureau data collections. The Census Bureau used these results—along with insights from subject matter and communications industry experts—to form the campaign's fundamental strategy, which laid the groundwork for execution. We conducted a range of activities and designed, developed, and disseminated creative, educational, and promotional assets within the communications campaign's "Shape your future. Start here." platform. The Census Bureau and its stakeholders and partners used these assets across multiple communication channels to motivate participation in the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census communications campaign, which built on previous successes, was one of the most extensive and far-reaching marketing campaigns ever conducted in the United States. Designed to reach over 99% of the nation's 140 million households, the campaign leveraged stakeholder relations, partnership programs, paid advertising and media buying, public and media relations and events, crisis communications, web properties, social media, field recruitment efforts, omnichannel campaign monitoring and optimization, and the Census Bureau's 2020 SIS program. Collectively, these tactics and activities enabled us to understand, educate, and engage audiences across the country.

ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN DOCUMENTS

Every successful communications campaign begins with a robust strategic plan, and the ICC was no exception. Versions 2.0 and 1.0 of the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan were the product of ongoing collaboration among Census Bureau subject matter experts, program management officials, and contractors. This final report has similarly been developed with contributions from across the Census Bureau's communications team.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS VERSIONS 2.0 AND 1.0

The 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan, in Versions 2.0 and 1.0, described how the Census Bureau would strategically reach all audiences and motivate them to respond. Version 2.0, which was approved and publicly released in May 2020, incorporated the results of the campaign's fundamental research, and it built on the foundation laid by its predecessor, Version 1.0. Version 1.0 was approved and publicly released several years prior, in June 2017.

The plan detailed the communication channels and messaging themes the campaign would use to increase awareness and motivate census participation across the country. Inputs to the 2020 plan included the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign Plan and the 2010 ICC Lessons Learned Report; lessons learned from previous censuses, previous research, and tests conducted in preparation for the 2020 Census (including the 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019 Census Tests); insights from the Census Bureau's regional offices and field teams; and guidance and feedback from key stakeholders.

The campaign's research and creative development process, as described in the plan, helped the Census Bureau confirm foundational elements of the campaign, including target audiences (e.g., diverse mass, multicultural, HTC audiences) and communication channels (e.g., television commercials, social media, out-of-home ads). We emerged from this process having identified key tactics and relevant messages for each audience. We then finalized the audience-level and program-component-level plans and identified the right resources to meet audiences where they were most engaged.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FINAL REPORT

As the third and final installment of the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan series, this document, the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan Final Report, summarizes the execution of the communications campaign across all areas and program components. This report identifies activities that were conducted as described in the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Plan Version 2.0 and Version 1.0. It also details challenges faced by the campaign, highlights activities that were added or changed during campaign execution, and

explains the reasons for such modifications (including the COVID-19 pandemic and related adjustments to census operations). Throughout the report, we address how census response rates, public sentiment insights, 2020 Census Tracking Survey data, and other key metrics were used to guide decision-making regarding campaign activities. This document is meant to serve as a high-level summary for government leaders and agencies, stakeholders, partners, members of the media, and members of the public to refer to in the future.

INPUTS FOR THE INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FINAL REPORT

This Integrated Communications Plan Final Report was developed with inputs from across the communications campaign and throughout the Census Bureau, including the IPC program, the Decennial Census Management Division, the Associate Director for Communications and the Communications Directorate, the Decennial Statistical Studies Division, and other units.

This report also captures inputs from operational memos and campaign decision documents internal to the Census Bureau and its communications team. Examples of these materials are approved proposals and campaign-level plans, such as those created during the campaign in response to communication challenges presented by COVID-19 and federal government decisions.

This report also captures key details about outreach efforts and communication materials from program-component-level documents and final reports. Our use of these materials added specificity and nuance to the program component sections later in the report (see Page 102).

It is important to note that many campaign-level and program-component-level references are not public-facing materials. Any information captured from those references is high level and has been vetted for inclusion in this public-facing report.

LANDSCAPE FOR THE 2020 CENSUS COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

The 2020 Census marked the 24th time that the United States has counted its population. However, it was the first census that offered an online response option to the population at large. The 2020 Census was also novel in that the Census Bureau expanded the ease of non-ID census response (i.e., response without an identifying code unique to the respondent's household address). While we continued to provide a paper self-response option in 2020 as we had in previous decennial counts—and while we added a phone response option, too—our

goal was to maximize online response to promote efficiency and minimize taxpayer costs. With greater digital technology capabilities and capacity in 2020 than in previous counts, we were prepared to quickly process large volumes of data collected through the internet self-response tool. Further, we used new and existing systems and protocols to ensure that all data collected—including data submitted through the new internet self-response tool—would be kept safe, secure, and confidential.

The 2020 Census was the third time the Census Bureau had used a paid advertising and communications campaign to increase awareness of and participation in the decennial count. But the 2020 campaign expanded on the earlier 2000 and 2010 Census advertising campaigns, partnership efforts, and other communication tactics. The larger paid media budget allowed for increased social and digital advertising as well as an expanded traditional media plan, which included radio and television broadcast, out-of-home placements, and print materials. There were also more opportunities in 2020 for precise geographic and audience targeting—such as through paid social and digital media ad serving platforms—which proved highly beneficial.

To achieve the goals of the 2020 Census and maximize the impact of the communications campaign, it was crucial to understand the landscape in which both the count and the campaign would occur. Key elements considered in the landscape analysis, as well as the Census Bureau's response to these elements, are described below.

Use of Technology and Data-Driven Optimization. The country's widespread use of technology and the Census Bureau's access to common, yet sophisticated technologies presented many opportunities for the 2020 Census communications campaign. We harnessed digital engagement, social media platforms, paid search engine advertising, search engine optimization, and other technologies—alone and in conjunction with partnership and other program engagement—to encourage self-response. For example, Census Bureau partnership specialists in field locations across the country encouraged partners to communicate about the 2020 Census through digital and social media channels, meeting potential respondents in the online environments where they engaged with partners already. Reaching potential respondents through digital channels was especially important because online communications directly linked internet users to the 2020 Census campaign website to learn how to self-respond. While the online response option made responding to the census easier than ever before, digital media facilitated use of this option.

Digital technology provided an important means of delivering the 2020 Census campaign messaging as well as enhancing our data-driven approach to campaign planning. Data was used continually throughout the campaign to inform decisions about communication tactics. The Census Bureau used sophisticated algorithms along with digital advertising and media management tools to direct messages to audiences at very specific geographic levels (e.g.,

census tract,[1] ZIP code, designated market area). As respondents received such digital messages and completed their census forms, campaign performance data was collected by advanced digital and social media ad serving platforms in near real time. By tracking and analyzing this data alongside census response rates, the Census Bureau could quickly adjust campaign elements during campaign execution if issues were noted. More broadly, the advanced technology helped us optimize the campaign, enabling us to reach audiences with messages that were likely to appeal to them, through channels with which they were likely to engage.

Across all media deployment and campaign optimization efforts, the Census Bureau followed industry best practices, while observing federal government protocol regarding communicating with the public and protecting individuals' privacy.

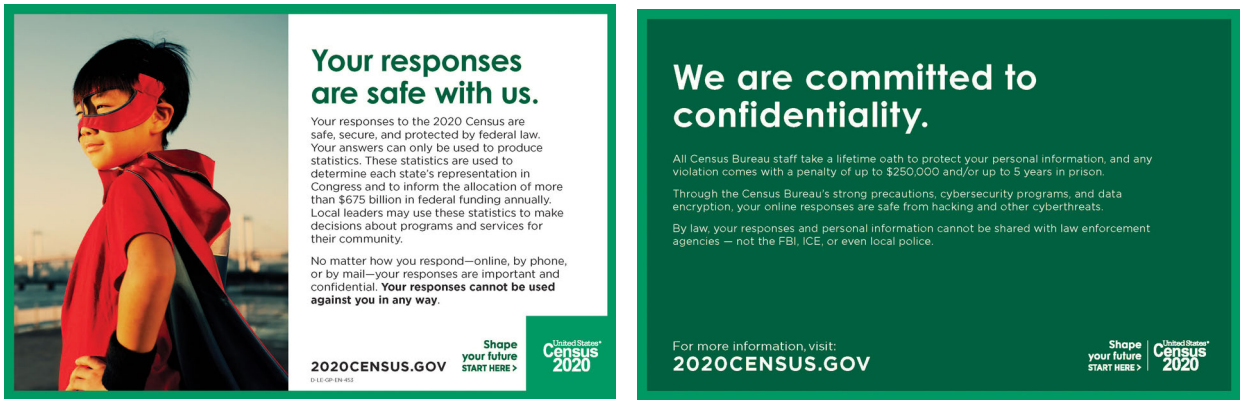


Figure 4: Front (Left) and Back (Right) of Half-Page Handout Highlighting the Confidentiality of Census Responses

Reaching an Increasingly Diverse Audience. Conveying the value of census participation to a large and increasingly diverse U.S. population presented both a challenge and an opportunity to the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau first sought to understand the audience at large[2] for the count and the communications campaign by conducting several years of robust research,

[1] Census tracts are geographic units that each contain approximately 4,000 people. These units help the Census Bureau conceptualize and aggregate census data at a local level.

[2] For the purposes of this plan, the audience at large encompasses the Census Bureau's entire target audience for the 2020 Census communications campaign. The audience at large included adults age 18 and over and contained all audience groups, including the diverse mass.

including the 2020 CBAMS quantitative and qualitative efforts. We used the CBAMS survey and focus group findings to identify six mindsets within the U.S. population. Each mindset reflected a different perspective that potential respondents could have about responding to the census, and delineation of each mindset included that perspective's likely motivators or barriers to participation.

We also studied population data and growth trends and developed statistical models to predict the likelihood of census response across the country's population, by audience group and census tract. The Census Bureau considered various aspects of each audience group and tract, including race and ethnicity, cultural background, geographic location, attitudes and beliefs, and language. We conducted a cluster analysis using three inputs: predicted self-response percentages (as derived from the statistical models), demographic information, and socioeconomic data. The cluster analysis helped us identify eight distinct groupings of census tracts, referred to as the audience segments, that represented the population. The tracts encompassed by each audience segment demonstrated similar characteristics based on the inputs we considered. Finally, we applied data associated with each mindset to each of the eight segments to more fully understand the campaign's many audience members. While the mindsets represented potential respondents' attitudes and perspectives about the census, the segments represented the geographic distribution of respondents according to shared demographic traits and predicted self-response percentages. Understanding the differences within and between the country's diverse audience groups was an important focus of this research. For more information about mindsets and segments, see Pages 73-80.

The 2020 "Shape your future. Start here." campaign was developed and adapted, in numerous forms of media and through various forms of messaging, to reach the following audience groups:

- Diverse mass audiences.[3]
- Hispanic audiences.
- Black/African American audiences, including Haitian Creole and Sub-Saharan African.

[3] For the purposes of this plan, diverse mass audiences include all those, regardless of race or ethnicity, who consume English-language media, such as the English-speaking Hispanic population. People within diverse mass audiences might speak other languages but have English proficiency and consume various broadcast, digital, and other media in English.

- Asian American audiences, including Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, South Asian, and additional Southeast Asian.
- American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) audiences.
- Audiences in Puerto Rico.
- Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) audiences.
- Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) audiences.
- Other audiences, including Brazilian as well as Polish- and Russian-speaking audience groups.

The Census Bureau aimed to use those communication channels that would most effectively reach each population group. To ensure that campaign messaging could be comprehended by and resonate with various population groups, we made paid media and promotional materials available in English as well as the following 12 languages[4]:

- Spanish (tailored to both mainland Spanish speakers and Spanish speakers in Puerto Rico)
- Chinese (Simplified and Traditional, Mandarin and Cantonese)[5]
- Vietnamese
- Korean
- Tagalog
- Russian
- Polish
- Arabic

[4] Non-English core campaign languages are listed in descending order based on each language's associated number of limited-English-speaking households in the country.

[5] Throughout this document, Chinese refers to the written language that is expressed using a common set of characters. The written language appears in two related yet different forms: Simplified and Traditional Chinese. Both Simplified and Traditional Chinese were used in the campaign's print advertisements, for example, and in other visual materials. Mandarin and Cantonese are two distinct spoken Chinese languages. They were used in the campaign's television and radio voice-overs, for example, and in other materials in which the use of spoken language was most appropriate.

- Haitian Creole
- French (Sub-Saharan African)[6]
- Portuguese
- Japanese

It is important to note that campaign materials were not simply translated from English into the languages listed above. The themes expressed through those assets were individually adapted for each campaign language in a process known as transcreation. In this process, we considered the cultural norms, preferences, and nuances related to the use of each language, and these aspects informed how messages and visuals were developed.

For language groups not listed above, we tapped into our network of partnership specialists who focused on small language groups, including those that are geographically concentrated. We supported efforts to recruit partnership staff with extensive language capabilities, and we provided staff members with resources to engage respondents in their preferred language. Further, we made materials available to our 2020 Census partners and encouraged them to translate materials into other languages. Our goal was to reach as many people as possible, in the languages familiar to them, to motivate them to participate in the census.

The Census Bureau was also committed to using taxpayer funds efficiently. In selecting the 13 language options (English and 12 non-English languages) for internet and phone self-response—which became the 13 core languages for the communications campaign—the Census Bureau's Decennial Directorate conducted research, reviewed testing results, and consulted with experts and advisory committees. Specifically, the Census Bureau analyzed data from the 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates and verified the findings with state- and region-level data. The 12 non-English languages were ultimately chosen because they were widely spoken among members of the audience at large who did not speak English at all or did not speak it very well. In using these 13 core languages for the communications campaign—as well as for the internet self-response tool and questionnaire support—the Census Bureau covered more than 99% of all households in the United States (including Puerto

[6] While the Sub-Saharan African subgroup of the Black/African American audience group consumed mostly English-language media and was, therefore, targeted mostly in English, French was used, in limited cases, in messaging and materials to reach Sub-Saharan African speakers of French.

Rico). This broad, nationwide coverage included people who spoke English as their primary language or very well, in addition to people who spoke only languages other than English or did not speak English very well. The 12 primary non-English languages are named in the center circle shown in Figure 5 with additional languages covered by Census Bureau operational support identified in the outer ring.

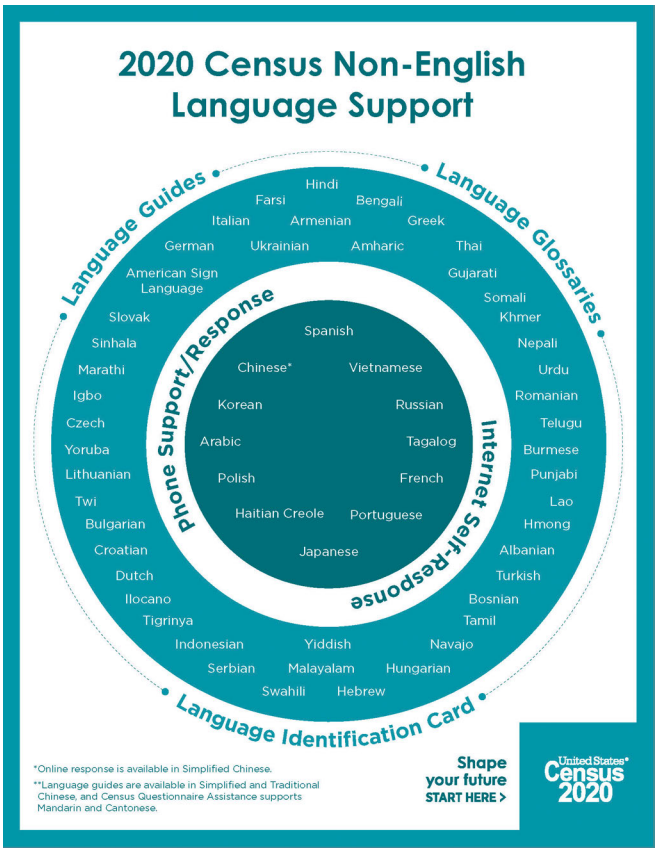


Figure 5: 2020 Census Non-English Languages and Forms of Non-English Language Support

Throughout the campaign's creative development process—from ideation through design—the Census Bureau collaborated intensively with its multicultural communications agency contractors. In collaborating, we sought to advance only those creative pieces that would resonate with the intended audiences, in each of the campaign's languages. Drawing from cultural and language-related insights gathered early during campaign planning helped ensure accurate adaptations of the campaign platform, resulting in unique creative executions and tailored messages that were appropriate and meaningful to diverse audiences.

Addressing Hard-To-Count Populations. Reaching HTC populations at risk of being undercounted in the census was a high priority for the communications campaign. HTC

audiences are defined as "population groups for whom a real or perceived barrier exists to full and representative inclusion in the data collection process" (U.S. Census Bureau et al., 2019). Groups who are considered HTC may be classified as such because they are hard to locate, hard to contact, hard to persuade, or hard to interview (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). This means that it may be difficult for the Census Bureau to reach, communicate with, and enumerate members of HTC audience groups—whether by mail, through in-person canvassing, through advertising or partner outreach, or by other means.

In planning how best to develop and disseminate 2020 Census campaign messaging, the Census Bureau consulted research published after the 2010 Census (Erdman & Bates, 2014; Letourneau, 2012; Schwede et al., 2014). In referencing this research and in analyzing the 2020 CBAMS results, we identified attributes or factors that could lead to a person's or community's being characterized as HTC in the 2020 Census, including:

- Having a low level of internet proficiency.
- Having a low level of English proficiency (defined as speaking English at a self-reported level that is below "very well").
- Being born outside the United States.
- Living in a household of six or more people.
- Fearing repercussions for responding.
- Feeling apathy about being counted.
- Having concerns about privacy.

We also consulted research (Erdman & Bates, 2016) that helped us identify patterns in the 2020 CBAMS survey responses. These patterns highlighted certain factors that correlated with a lower statistical likelihood of self-responding to the 2020 Census. Factors shown to be possible indicators of a lower likelihood of self-responding included:

- Being designated as "low income."
- Living in rented housing.
- Being designated as "young and mobile."
- Not having a high school diploma.
- Living in rural or other geographically isolated areas.
- Living in places that are difficult for enumerators to access, such as gated communities, basement apartments, or buildings with security personnel or other protections in place.

The Census Bureau weighed this range of factors heavily in the campaign planning process, selecting relevant communication channels and creating tailored messages that would resonate with audience groups that might be considered HTC or less likely to self-respond to the census.

Audience-Focused Tactics for an Integrated Campaign. Based on experiences from previous census communications campaigns, research insights about the various audience groups, industry standards for strategic planning, and best practices for developing communications campaigns, the Census Bureau developed a comprehensive, integrated campaign for the 2020 Census. This campaign encompassed a wide range of communication elements, such as traditional paid media, organic social and earned media, a dedicated website, videos and other owned media, partnership and SIS program outreach, and other strategic touch points. The Census Bureau recognized that no one communication form or tactic could motivate response on its own. To achieve the intended impact, it was crucial that the campaign's elements work together to spread and reinforce messaging in the minds of the campaign's multiple audiences.

The paid media plan was informed by the results of the 2010 Census media buys, the 2020 CBAMS research, the campaign's eight audience segment profiles, and census testing. The media plan was also shaped by insights from the Census Bureau's regional office directors. Based on these inputs, the Census Bureau concluded that an audience-focused approach to the development of creative materials and to paid media planning and buying would help maximize the reach of our messaging to all audiences. Further, research and experience have shown that using communication modes, messaging, and creative elements that are relatable at the local level helps build an emotional connection between a campaign and its target audiences. This approach was especially important for the 2020 Census, as the needs and interests of its audiences, particularly its HTC audiences, varied greatly. The 2020 Census paid media plan prioritized HTC audiences and consciously incorporated grassroots and local tactics to reach them. We maintained an audience-focused approach throughout the execution of the media plan by targeting communications, especially digital messaging, to audience groups in languages familiar to them, concentrating on geographic areas that demonstrated lower levels of census response.

To appeal to various audiences, the Census Bureau also conducted local and hyperlocal outreach alongside traditional media and other paid efforts. In this local and hyperlocal outreach, we partnered with local social and digital media influencers to convey the value and benefits of the census. (Influencers are individuals or organizations that develop a broad public following, especially online, based on social clout or demonstrated expertise related to a certain topic or issue.) These partners were trusted voices among HTC audiences, and their statements, which resonated in the local communities, helped validate Census Bureau messages.

All media decisions—from those affecting the audience at large to those affecting HTC or small, cultural audience subgroups—were driven by data. The Census Bureau consulted inputs such as the 2020 CBAMS data, predictive model scores, data from previous Census Bureau collections, and proprietary media data related to audience consumption and channel efficacy. Data informed the Census Bureau's understanding of all audience members' propensity for self-response; their preferred modes of communication; and their language preferences, living arrangements, interests, and other characteristics. Data also enabled us to identify which communications strategies would work best for which areas and audiences—for instance, which neighborhoods might best be reached through out-of-home or print ads and which groups could be reached through partner outreach.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

The Census Bureau was tasked with executing an engaging and effective campaign to drive census response; however, the environment in which the campaign was executed presented a variety of complications for communications activities. These complications included federal government activities and decisions, major elections in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide protests, and other significant events. We anticipated some of these environmental factors, such as the 2020 elections, well in advance of the 2020 count; accordingly, we executed activities, such as advance media buying, to mitigate the risks these complexities posed. Other factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, were unexpected, and the Census Bureau was unable to plan specific mitigation strategies in advance of the virus's taking hold. All complexities—both those we could plan for and those we could not—challenged our ability to execute the campaign as originally planned. In the following sections, we discuss each factor, its impact on the campaign, and the mitigation actions taken and adjustments made to the campaign in response.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES DURING THE 2020 CENSUS

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES AND DECISIONS

The Census Bureau experienced operational and communications-related challenges due to several activities conducted and decisions made by the federal government, comprised of the

executive, legislative, and judicial branches. First, from early 2018 through mid-2019, there was contentious political and public debate about the possible inclusion on the 2020 Census form of a question about a respondent's citizenship status. Some stakeholders indicated that including such a question might diminish census participation among the populations they represented, while lessening public trust in the Census Bureau. In addition, statistical analysts and researchers raised the concern that the question's inclusion could negatively affect response rates and overall data quality and hinder the ability to obtain a complete and accurate count.

While this debate was occurring, the Census Bureau was pressed, from an operational perspective, to finalize the questionnaire in order to complete 2020 Census hiring processes, meet printing deadlines, and develop the internet self-response tool. At this time, we acknowledged that adding a citizenship question to the questionnaire would require additional—and more nuanced—communication with the respondent audience. The possibility of the question's inclusion prompted significant public discussion and captured media attention. It also generated misinformation and fear among some communities about how census data would be used.

To better understand the potential effects of including a citizenship question on the 2020 Census form, the Census Bureau conducted the 2019 Census Test. The test was a nationally representative experiment that tested two versions of a census questionnaire: one that included a question on citizenship and one that did not. Although there was no statistically significant difference in overall self-response rates between the two versions, there were lower self-response rates in some areas, such as tracts designated to receive bilingual materials and tracts with a greater than 4.9% noncitizen population, and for some subgroups of the population, including mail respondents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Even though, ultimately, the citizenship question was not included on the 2020 Census form, the Census Bureau's audience at large was aware of its possible inclusion. There was much public confusion and misinformation about whether the question would be asked, and experts warned that even public discussion about the question's potential inclusion could threaten a complete and accurate count. To address this risk, the Census Bureau needed to develop targeted communications to reach multicultural populations—especially those already at risk of being undercounted. Communications emphasized that the census would not ask about citizenship status, and they also stressed that the government, by law, must protect and cannot share or use respondents' private data against them.

Figure 6: Digital Ad and Partner Handout in Spanish for Hispanic Audiences Emphasizing That Census Responses Are Protected

Federal government activities and decisions also presented operational challenges to the completion of the census count. After the suspension of in-person enumeration efforts from March through May 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, operations resumed incrementally, based on regional circumstances and guidelines. With safety measures in place, the Census Bureau then worked to conduct enumeration as efficiently as possible; however, an extended period was required to complete the NRFU operation. Against this backdrop, the federal administration and several federal judges issued multiple operational deadlines that did not align with the Census Bureau's projected timelines. Despite changing timelines, the Census Bureau successfully communicated the closure of the census response period and ultimately enumerated 99.9% of all housing units by the final October 15, 2020, deadline. (For more detail about operational adjustments due to COVID-19 and related federal government decisions, see Page 37.)

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL AND OTHER ELECTIONS IN 2020

The political environment and media atmosphere surrounding national elections can profoundly affect public attention and attitudes. In planning the 2020 Census communications

campaign, the Census Bureau had considered the public environment and the media landscape in which the count and the campaign would occur. Especially significant in 2020 was the competitive presidential election. Trends from previous elections suggested that political advertising—which typically begins well in advance of an election—would draw heightened public attention, consume paid media inventory, increase paid media pricing, and generally create a more cluttered and unpredictable media landscape for the 2020 Census. These expectations were borne out in 2020, especially during the spring and summer, which were critical enumeration months for the census.

In addition, the Census Bureau recognized that the country's population was generally more partisan than it had been during previous censuses and that an overtly political tone was carrying over to all forms of national news, popular culture, and social media. With a crowded primary field, the elections, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, created a powerful media force field that pushed other news out of focus. As a nonpartisan federal agency, the Census Bureau faced the challenge of creating compelling messages that would resonate with everyone. The 2020 Census communications campaign was developed with the goal of breaking through the media noise to emphasize the importance of participating in the census. We also took steps to distinguish communications about the census from political, and other state and federal government, communications.

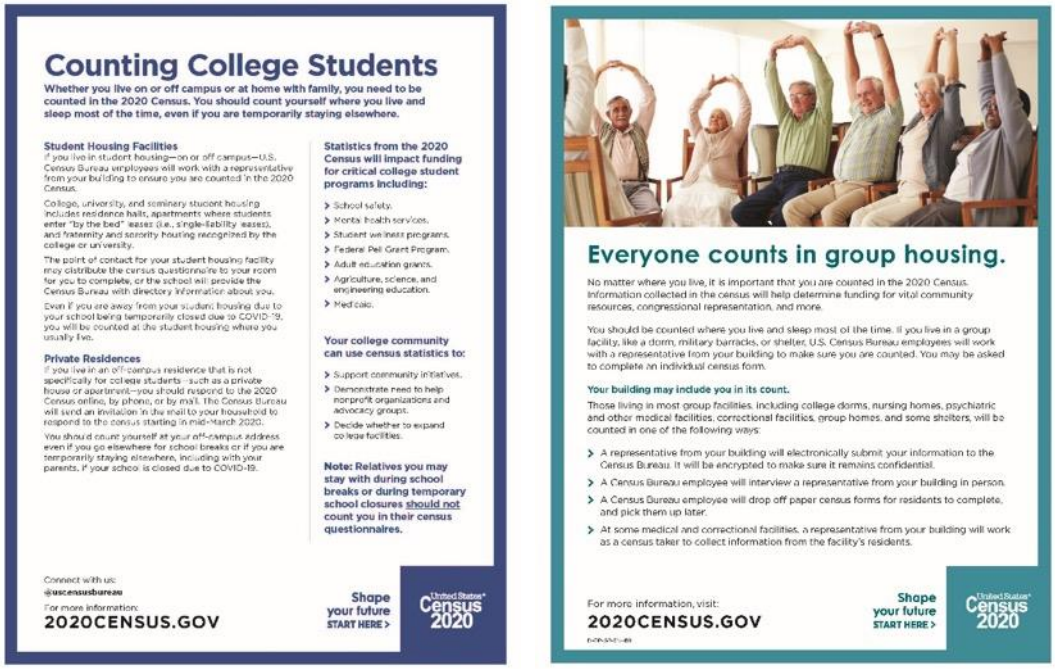
A related challenge faced by the Census Bureau was that of channeling partisan political questions or commentary into apolitical discussions about the decennial census and its importance to the country. The ICC's messaging stressed that census participation was crucial for all communities. The messaging was also designed not to impede or diminish other messages about the importance of voting or adhering to public health guidelines.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As enumeration operations began and the communications campaign launched, from late January through February 2020, the world was beginning to experience what eventually became known as the COVID-19 pandemic. Caused by a coronavirus, this highly contagious respiratory disease quickly spread internationally in late 2019 and took full hold in the United States by March 2020. Initially, it was unclear how rapidly the virus would spread and how best to prevent transmission. COVID-19 outbreaks were first identified in discrete "hot spots" in Washington state, California, Massachusetts, and Texas, as well as in many urban areas, especially Chicago and New York City. However, as the summer began, communities throughout the country—including in Puerto Rico—were experiencing outbreaks. As more information became known, cities, states, and other jurisdictions established a range of protocols related to social distancing and mask wearing and issued temporary operating

restrictions for nonessential businesses (including restaurants, gyms, and entertainment venues).

Prioritizing the health and safety of the public and employees (including temporary workers hired for the 2020 Census), the Census Bureau suspended all in-person enumeration operations from March through May 2020. We also canceled all scheduled in-person promotional events. Originally planned to end on July 31, 2020, the self-response period was extended through October, and the delayed NRFU operation took place from July to October. Further, the Census Bureau COVID-19 Internal Task Force was established to monitor pandemic conditions and to plan and prepare for operational challenges and changes, as necessary.



Counting College Students

Whether you live on or off campus or at home with family, you need to be counted in the 2020 Census. You should count yourself where you live and sleep most of the time, even if you are temporarily staying elsewhere.

Student Housing Facilities

If you live in student housing—on or off campus—U.S. Census Bureau employees will work with a representative from your building to ensure you are counted in the 2020 Census.

College, university, and seminary student housing includes residence halls, apartments where students enter "by the bed" leases (i.e., single-liability leases), and fraternity and sorority housing recognized by the college or university.

The point of contact for your student housing facility may distribute the census questionnaire to your room for you to complete, or the school will provide the Census Bureau with directory information about you.

Even if you are away from your student housing due to your school being temporarily closed due to COVID-19, you will be counted at the student housing where you usually live.

Private Residences

If you live in an off-campus residence that is not specifically for college students—such as a private house or apartment—you should respond to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail. The Census Bureau will send an invitation in the mail to your household to respond to the census starting in mid-March 2020.

You should count yourself at your off-campus address even if you go elsewhere for school breaks or if you are temporarily staying elsewhere, including with your parents, if your school is closed due to COVID-19.

Statistics from the 2020 Census will impact funding for critical college student programs including:

- School safety.
- Mental health services.
- Student wellness programs.
- Federal Pell Grant Program.
- Adult education grants.
- Agriculture, science, and engineering education.
- Medicaid.

Your college community can use census statistics to:

- Support community initiatives.
- Demonstrate need to help nonprofit organizations and advocacy groups.
- Decide whether to expand college facilities.

Note: Relatives you may stay with during school breaks or during temporary school closures should not count you in their census questionnaires.

Connect with us:
@uscensusbureau
For more information:
2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020

Everyone counts in group housing.

No matter where you live, it is important that you are counted in the 2020 Census. Information collected in the census will help determine funding for vital community resources, congressional representation, and more.

You should be counted where you live and sleep most of the time. If you live in a group facility, like a dorm, military barracks, or shelter, U.S. Census Bureau employees will work with a representative from your building to make sure you are counted. You may be asked to complete an individual census form.

Your building may include you in its count.

Those living in most group facilities, including college dorms, nursing homes, psychiatric and other medical facilities, correctional facilities, group homes, and some shelters, will be counted in one of the following ways:

- A representative from your building will electronically submit your information to the Census Bureau. It will be encrypted to make sure it remains confidential.
- A Census Bureau employee will interview a representative from your building in person.
- A Census Bureau employee will drop off paper census forms for residents to complete, and pick them up later.
- At some medical and correctional facilities, a representative from your building will work as a census taker to collect information from the facility's residents.

For more information, visit:
2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020

Figure 7: Fact Sheets About Counting College Students and People Living in Group Housing

In light of the pandemic and the variation in emergency response by region, the communications campaign sought to emphasize to all audiences the ease of responding to the census online, over the phone, or by mail without the need for an in-person interaction with a census taker. Communications also needed to relay information about enumeration activities and timing, especially for those anticipating in-person enumeration, such as people living on tribal lands, in remote areas, and in group quarters (places where people live or stay in a group living environment, such as college or university housing, nursing facilities, correctional facilities, military barracks, and other group homes). Public relations, media outreach, partner

outreach, and frequent website updates were critical in conveying information on operational changes to the public.

While messaging in some elements could easily be changed—in social and digital media advertisements, for example—other elements of the campaign, such as television and radio commercials, required significant time and resources to adjust. As COVID-19 became widespread across the country, the Census Bureau rapidly pivoted to adjust the campaign's paid media plan. Adjustments included shifting channel placements for campaign ads and reallocating portions of the paid media budget. For example, when sports games and entertainment events, such as awards shows, were canceled, we shifted television commercials that we had planned to run during those events to other channels, programs, and broadcast dayparts, such as morning news and daytime programming. Because televised games and events typically attract large numbers of viewers from diverse audience groups, it was important, too, that we reallocate the media budget to other tactics that would reach target audiences in the changed environment. Accordingly, we secured ad placements on video streaming platforms and increased the campaign's use of paid digital media, including paid search advertising.

In addition, some materials, such as television commercials, had to be completely reworked. We removed scenes of public crowds and large gatherings from visual materials and instead showed people maintaining six feet of distance from each other and staying at home. We also developed some entirely new commercials. In terms of messaging, we revised materials to emphasize safety, promote community recovery and resilience, and encourage self-response to the 2020 Census.

Other campaign communication tactics, such as media briefings, partnership events, and SIS program events, were canceled or, when possible, held virtually. We adapted media events for social media platform livestreaming, and we conducted and participated in interviews remotely. Because months of research and planning had gone into preparing the campaign's creative platform and related assets, the Census Bureau had to ensure that any strategic, creative, or messaging changes would still align with the "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform, while also speaking to pandemic circumstances with sensitivity.

As the count and the pandemic continued, the Census Bureau kept a close eye on self-response rates. We identified trends in response, considered the pandemic's influence on census participation, and sought to gain an understanding of the potential impacts of campaign messaging, creative, or tactical changes on response. When necessary, further changes were made. In addition, we planned and conducted integrated communication surges to encourage census participation among specific audience segments, multicultural audience

groups, and the campaign's audience at large. (For more information about the eight audience segments defined for the 2020 Census campaign, refer to Page 77.)

COVID-19 SOCIAL IMPACTS, CIVIL UNREST, AND THE MEDIA

COVID-19 produced significant impacts beyond the severe waves of illness and fatalities it caused directly. For example, in response to the pandemic, education was interrupted or transformed, job losses spiraled upwards, hours were slashed for many who remained employed, and economic strain increased nationwide. Record numbers of people sought assistance from food banks, and many families struggled to pay their bills. Further, fatigue with wearing masks and sheltering in place added to concerns about the ongoing spread of the virus, causing worry and frustration about when life would return to normal.

Against this backdrop, racial tensions came to a head in June 2020 in response to a string of violent incidents involving Black/African American individuals and members of law enforcement. Individuals and organizations across the United States mounted protests and participated in activism calling for racial justice. Although the protests were mostly peaceful, some led to rioting and looting.

The violent incidents, and the public responses and unrest that followed, drew significant media coverage. Further, as many people across the country reflected on the circumstances, social and digital media were a fundamental means for individuals and organizations to mobilize their communities, share news, or participate in national conversations. This flurry of social and digital media activity on such an emotionally charged topic, at a moment of heightened tension and sensitivities, meant that advertising deployed through these platforms was subject to closer-than-usual scrutiny. This scrutiny affected the media environment for the 2020 Census communications campaign. Specifically, as many brands temporarily changed their messaging or suspended advertising activities to demonstrate cultural sensitivity or to take an activist stance, the Census Bureau faced critical choices. We had a major paid media campaign in progress, and, having already faced unforeseen operational delays and media plan changes due to the pandemic, hesitated to halt census-related communication efforts. At the same time, we recognized that a key priority of the 2020 Census was to enumerate HTC and multicultural population groups, some of which were involved in the protests and related events. Moreover, the Census Bureau was seeking to build trust with these HTC and multicultural audiences even as public trust in the federal government was threatened due to the government's race-related statements and policies that were widely seen as divisive.

The confluence of these forces required the Census Bureau to make difficult decisions about adjusting the campaign's use of paid media while factoring in the count's continued momentum. We ultimately decided to swap out the active radio assets intended for the

Black/African American audience in favor of advertisements that were more sensitive to the cultural moment. We also paused organic and paid social media communication for several days. These actions proved appropriate, and we stayed the course with all other campaign elements. Partnership support and outreach about the census increased among organizations that focus on Black/African American populations, including the National Urban League, the NAACP, and the National Action Network. These and other partners urged their constituent audiences to participate in the census to help ensure that they would receive critical resources, funding, and political representation in Congress in the months and years to come.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND TRUST

The Census Bureau understood, as the 2020 count approached, that data privacy and security would be a major concern for the population at large. We recognized that numerous data breaches in the retail, corporate, technology, and financial sectors in recent years, as well as personal experiences with scams or phishing incidents, could make people wary of responding online. The Census Bureau uses highly secure systems with infrastructure designed to defend against and contain cyberthreats. Nonetheless, we realized that messaging intended to assuage this concern would be important because, with the 2020 Census, we would—for the first time—be broadly encouraging online completion of the questionnaire.

Further, in light of a steady decline in public trust in the federal government since 2001 (Pew Research Center, 2019a), we understood that respondents might not feel confident that their data would be kept private and secure and would not be used nefariously or shared with other federal government agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security or the Internal Revenue Service.

Based on 2018 research conducted by the Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies, as well as the results of the 2019 Census Test, the Census Bureau knew that unauthorized immigrants or people who were otherwise without legal permanent resident status would be most concerned about the privacy of their data (Brown et al., 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). While the citizenship status question would not be included on the census form, residual confusion or fear about the census—and how census data can be used—could prevent households from responding. Especially given heightened racial tensions and friction between law enforcement agencies and some audience groups, we recognized potential challenges in fostering support for the count.

To ease public concerns about how census data would be used, the Census Bureau designed many elements of the 2020 Census ICC to emphasize the privacy and security of all data collected. The Census Bureau is bound by law, and specifically by Title 13 of the United States Code, to keep respondents' information confidential. Accordingly, the Census Bureau cannot

release any identifiable information about respondents or their households, and private data is protected using strict policies and statistical safeguards. Social media posts, digital media and paid search ads, partner materials, dedicated pages on the 2020 Census website, and other campaign elements conveyed this information to respondents using audience- and geography-based targeting, where possible.

We also took steps to reassure the public about the trustworthiness of the Census Bureau. To this end, we aimed to ensure that any 2020 Census-related information that circulated through open online forums and platforms was factual. In 2019, well before the 2020 count began, the Census Bureau established its Trust & Safety Team. The team was formed to monitor digital and social media channels for misinformation and disinformation; to coordinate with partners and stakeholders; and to address any identified rumors, misinformation, and disinformation through corrective messaging and other tactics.

The work of the Trust & Safety Team dovetailed with 2020 Census communications campaign messaging. All Census Bureau communications sought to build trust and solidify audiences' perceptions of the Census Bureau as a reputable, nonpartisan agency with interests in understanding communities across the country through unbiased data collection and analysis.

CHANGES TO COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN TIMING, DECISIONS, AND EXECUTION

Although the Census Bureau identified and mitigated many challenges in advance of the 2020 Census, the challenges that arose during enumeration had significant impacts on the campaign.

In addition to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which were unlike any we had experienced before, uncertainty was introduced by federal government decisions about questions on the census form and the timeline for enumeration. Further, as COVID-19 took hold, daily life was disrupted and became unpredictable, especially with widespread stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines in place. More disruptions occurred over the course of the pandemic as public health and other government officials learned more about the virus, often changing local and regional guidance. In this uncertain environment, the Census Bureau needed to consider the best interests of all communities while sustaining enumeration efforts and promoting the count nationwide.

CENSUS BUREAU OPERATIONAL CHANGES AND TIMELINE

Every decennial census—including all aspects of operations—is planned years in advance. For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau sought, as much as possible, to execute operations

according to the 2020 Census Operational Plan, and preparation for both the census and the communications campaign followed established plans in the years and months leading up to 2020. However, the environmental challenges discussed in the previous section, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, required many operational changes in 2020. These operational changes affected temporary workforce hiring efforts, field operations and in-person enumeration, questionnaire assistance, partner activation and mobilization, and communications campaign activities. The Census Bureau began to implement major changes in these and other areas just after the launch of the 2020 Census as the pandemic took hold. We continued to adjust operations, including our approach to the communications campaign, as the count progressed.

February – March 2020. The Census Bureau began to monitor the spread of the coronavirus in early February, heeding the guidance of government and public health authorities. Accordingly, field operations and in-person interviews were suspended nationwide in mid-March 2020. This decision meant adjusting operations and communications related to counting college students and conducting additional outreach to households in remote geographic areas, such as remote Alaska (where early enumeration had already begun), and in Update Leave[7] areas (where hand delivery of questionnaires to households was delayed). The decision also meant working more directly with administrators and service providers of group quarters, such as shelters and soup kitchens; delaying the deployment of Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) teams; and cancelling the early NRFU operation for the 2020 count. Further, the capacity of the Census Bureau's call centers—staffed by representatives—had to be expanded, while conforming to public safety and social distancing guidelines. An additional complexity in staffing these call centers was that the call centers were expected to provide full questionnaire support in 14 languages.[8] In campaign messaging during this period, we stressed the ease, safety, and security of responding to the census from home. Finally, the Census Bureau sent letters to some households in Update Leave and other remote areas to encourage self-response since in-person enumerator visits would be delayed.

April. In April, the Census Bureau announced plans to reactivate field offices in May and June in preparation for safely resuming in-person enumeration efforts. At that time, the Census

[7] In the Update Leave operation, census workers drop off 2020 Census questionnaire packets at the front doors of households in areas that do not receive mail to their homes and in areas affected by natural disasters.

[8] The 14 languages referenced here include English and the 12 non-English core campaign languages identified on Pages 24-25. However, whereas Chinese is counted as *one* language in the bulleted list on Page 24, there are two spoken Chinese languages, Cantonese and Mandarin. These are each counted in the 14 total languages referenced here.

Bureau, anticipating statutory relief from the U.S. Congress of 120 additional days to deliver final apportionment counts, also announced key operational timeline changes. The planned window for field data collection, in-person visits, and self-response—referred to as the census enumeration period—was extended from July 31 to October 31, 2020. The Census Bureau also announced that apportionment counts would be delivered to the president later, by April 30, 2021, instead of by December 31, 2020, as originally planned and as mandated by U.S. Code. Further, the final redistricting data would be delivered to the states by July 31, 2021, instead of by March 30, 2021, as originally scheduled and as mandated by U.S. Code. As these operational determinations were made, the communications campaign ramped up activities and outreach efforts, promoting Census Week (including Census Day, April 1) through virtual media briefings and numerous social and digital media activations.

May. In May, the Census Bureau provided an update, stating that, in coordination with federal, state, and local health officials, it would begin a phased restart of some 2020 Census field operations. This restart included resuming hiring processes for temporary workers and reinstating Update Leave. Throughout May, the communications campaign maintained a heavy paid advertising presence through digital and traditional media and conducted a variety of outreach activities designed to break through the busy media environment to reach audience members who had not yet responded to the census.

June. In June, the Census Bureau issued further updates, noting that the NRFU operation would begin through a soft launch in July; CPEP would resume in-person events, as appropriate; and the communications campaign would continue through the end of data collection efforts in October (with paid media coverage added in 34 more non-English languages). The Census Bureau also announced that the Update Enumerate operation would resume; this operation is typically designated for remote areas of Alaska and Maine and involves census takers visiting households directly to conduct the census in person. The Census Bureau announced that all census workers would be issued personal protective equipment and would follow social distancing protocols, as applicable by region. Finally, we informed the public that postcards and reminder letters would be sent to post office boxes and nonresponding households, respectively, inviting recipients to complete the questionnaire.

July. In July, the NRFU operation started in six designated areas of the country, with others gradually added, leading up to the full-scale launch nationwide in early August. MQA teams set up locations in communities with low self-response rates, helping people in these areas complete the census in open-air public places, such as outside of grocery stores, food banks, laundromats, and libraries. Additional reminder postcards were sent to nonresponding households, urging them to self-respond to minimize the likelihood of being visited by a census taker in person. Also in July, the campaign conducted a series of regional

communication surges to encourage census response at the local level. The Census Bureau also announced plans to launch an email campaign targeting households in low-responding areas. The campaign was deployed in several rounds—continuing through September—to alert recipients that time to complete the census form was running out.

August. In early August, the Census Bureau announced further updates, which included plans to hire more employees and accelerate data collection and processing efforts. At that time, it was projected, based on federal government direction, that the enumeration period would close on September 30—one month earlier than the October 31 date discussed in April. Even with operations expanded, it would be challenging to meet this earlier deadline; however, based on expansions of any magnitude being implemented, it was expected that the Census Bureau would meet the original deadlines of December 31, 2020, for delivery of the apportionment counts to the president and March 31, 2021, for delivery of redistricting data to the states, as stipulated by U.S. Code and as directed by the Secretary of Commerce. We continued to conduct NRFU and to deploy reminder messaging, as planned, through the communications campaign. In August and into September 2020, the Census Bureau sent an additional paper questionnaire to nonresponding households and followed up with them by phone. These tactics, in tandem with increased partnership and MQA support, constituted a concerted push to encourage self-response.

September – Mid-October. In September and early October, mixed determinations by the federal government's executive branch and the courts introduced uncertainty about when the enumeration period would officially close. Instructions from the federal government, as shared with the Census Bureau by the Secretary of Commerce, indicated that enumeration would end on October 5, 2020. However, several major court orders, including orders issued on September 24 and October 1, mandated that enumeration continue through October 31—reverting to the dates proposed in the April plans. A final decision was reached on October 13: Self-response and data collection operations would conclude on October 15, 2020. From September through mid-October, the communications campaign made a final push to encourage self-response and cooperation with enumerators before the count ended. We especially relied on targeted digital, social, and earned media, as well as on 2020 SIS and partnership program outreach, to persuade nonresponding households to participate.

Late October and Onward. The formal communications campaign ended with the close of the enumeration period and the campaign's Reminder phase in October 2020; however, limited ongoing support was provided by the teams that supported the campaign's public and media relations, social and digital media, and 2020 Census website activities. Using the Census Bureau's owned and social media properties, these teams helped facilitate thank you and data dissemination-related communications for the 2020 Census. These teams also helped develop

and share updates about the Census Bureau's progress in processing and publicly releasing census results, as updated timelines were announced.

After October 15, 2020, the Census Bureau went on to analyze and process the collected data, preparing it for delivery to federal and state governments and summarizing top-line results for public release. The operational plans and timing for data processing and dissemination shifted in the months following the end of the count. A final timeline, released in February 2021, indicated that state apportionment population counts would be delivered to the president by April 30, 2021, and that all redistricting data would be delivered to the states by September 30, 2021.

More details about operational impacts and the related adjustments to the communications campaign are discussed throughout this report, including in the program component sections starting on Page 102.

OVERABUNDANCE OF INFORMATION

By March 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the media and news environment was quickly becoming saturated. News media communicated critical information to the public about the virus responsible for the pandemic and featured press briefings and interviews with government and public health officials providing guidance on social distancing, mask wearing, and sheltering in place. In the 24/7 news cycle, ubiquitous modern media forms inundated the public with COVID-19 news. At the same time, political and election coverage ramped up as the 2020 general election approached. In this crowded news environment, it was difficult for other topics, such as the importance of the 2020 Census, to break through.

The Census Bureau's communications experts were acutely aware of this media saturation and recognized the public's limited attention span and processing thresholds. Accordingly, working within the guidelines of the "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform, we adapted some of the campaign's advertisements and produced new ones. We aimed to reach people by using creative assets that felt personal and timely and that demonstrated sensitivity to the various challenges presented by the pandemic. Broadly, the campaign used emotional appeals, inspirational messaging, and cultural nods to make advertisements relatable and to break through the saturated media environment. At the same time, campaign messaging sought to convey facts about the census clearly and objectively, while visually depicting diverse families, communities, and landscapes across the country.

The Census Bureau also adjusted the campaign's media mix to continue to reach people in the busy—and changed—media environment. Repeatedly targeting and reaching media consumers with messages about the 2020 Census was essential to the campaign's success. Even before campaign efforts were increased due to the pandemic and other challenges, the

Census Bureau planned to reach nearly all adults living in the United States an average of 40 times through television, radio, newspaper, and other print ads; social, digital, and other online communications; and out-of-home advertising, such as posters at bus shelters. The campaign continued to rely on these channels once the pandemic took hold but expanded efforts and shifted the media mix to better meet target audiences in their changed daily lives. For instance, we shifted some television advertising inventory from prime-time to daytime slots and increased the frequency of television and radio broadcast commercials, when possible. In addition, we expanded our use of digital media as internet use and consumption of online media grew across the country.

Ultimately, these adjustments to the creative assets and media mix helped the Census Bureau's messaging break through round-the-clock pandemic and political coverage. More information about adjustments to the campaign's paid media can be found starting on Page 118.

SHIFTS IN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Significant changes occurred in the paid media landscape after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the landscape became significantly less predictable than it had been in the pre-pandemic environment, forcing the Census Bureau's communications experts to quickly adjust campaign plans. Because the media plan had been carefully developed over many months before the campaign's launch, making quick decisions on adapting execution—while weighing significant budgetary implications—proved difficult.

The unpredictable environment also challenged the Census Bureau's ability to forecast the availability of media inventory and the ongoing effectiveness of digital and traditional media channels. For example, some media channels, such as sports networks, that had typically attracted large, diverse television audiences before the pandemic, had less reach in the COVID-19 environment—as mass gatherings, including sports events, were canceled. While most major sports leagues eventually resumed play with safety precautions in place, fans were not present. Similarly, while some live awards shows and entertainment features were rescheduled and reconfigured to protect participants, these events were held much later than originally planned. The delays meant that many rescheduled events ultimately took place late in the census enumeration period or after it had concluded, at which time 2020 Census advertising would not have been relevant or effective in driving participation. The cancellations and attendance restrictions also meant changes in viewership, sponsorships, and advertising opportunities in general. Media outlets shifted their broadcast schedules to accommodate previously recorded content and other programming; while they aimed to maintain good ratings and keep paid media opportunities lucrative for advertisers, these aims were difficult to achieve.

As these changes were occurring, the census and the communications campaign were already underway, and it was critical that target audiences continue to receive timely campaign messages. The Census Bureau aimed to effectively reach audiences through the channels they interacted with most. As audience consumption of media channels changed, we had to pivot, adjusting the media mix and moving campaign ads across channels to meet audiences where they were in the moment. Since the Census Bureau had planned to reach large and diverse audiences through advertising during televised games and events, it was critical for the communications team to identify alternate broadcast programs or media channels through which to reach those audiences.

In terms of the campaign's target audiences, large swaths of the population were suddenly in their homes—not at work or at school—for long stretches of the day. The audience at large began to consume media through different channels, such as daytime television, when they previously might have consumed radio or out-of-home advertising during a typical weekday. News consumption rose to an all-time high as people sought to understand and stay updated about the course of the pandemic. Further, in terms of media types, the population was consuming more digital media and more media overall throughout the average day than they did before the pandemic (Weitman & Essling, 2020).

During the pandemic, media consumers also demonstrated increased use of virtual conferencing platforms because of the widespread stay-at-home orders and social distancing policies. As classes, meetings, and social events were adapted to take place virtually, use of digital and social media tools such as Zoom, Facebook Live, and Instagram Live grew considerably. Growth in the use of these platforms and tools by diverse audiences brought more consumers into their digital interfaces, creating expanded opportunities for advertisers. For the Census Bureau, for example, this presented the chance to reach parents and caregivers during the day, using digital ads to encourage use of 2020 SIS program materials for at-home learning. Increased public use of social and digital media overall also provided the opportunity to reach broader, more engaged audiences on social media, video, and conferencing platforms than had been practical in the pre-pandemic environment.

At the same time, as the Census Bureau was facing these challenges, most other advertisers were confronted by the same changes in the media landscape; they, too, were challenged by the same rapidly fluctuating media inventory and pricing. So, while the Census Bureau was adjusting its paid media schedules, channels, and placements, other advertisers were doing so as well. This competition contributed to the already unpredictable atmosphere, forcing the Census Bureau to make quick decisions on shifting current placements of ads and securing new

placements, while still considering campaign research, target audience needs, and paid media best practices.

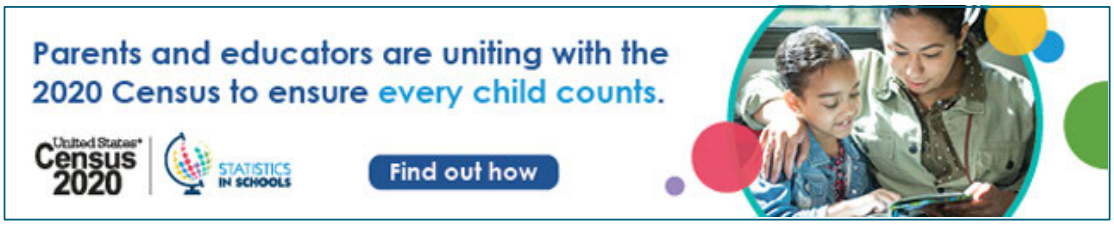


Figure 8: 2020 SIS Program Digital Banner Ad Targeted to Parents and Caregivers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

REDUCED PLANNING CAPACITY

The Census Bureau recognized well in advance of the count that unanticipated challenges would arise during execution of the communications campaign. To prepare for the unknown, we used industry-standard risk, schedule, and other project management techniques to guide campaign planning and execution. As part of our risk monitoring activities, we began using a risk register early in campaign planning, and we implemented mitigation actions to prevent threats from adversely affecting the campaign. We also held multiple weekly meetings to maintain internal alignment across the campaign's various teams, to assess schedule status and progress on key campaign deliverables, and to ensure that the campaign's active risks were being handled appropriately. Finally, the crisis communications team and the Census Bureau's Trust & Safety Team, as introduced on Page 37, established a regular meeting and communications cadence, to ensure preparedness for any challenges that emerged leading up to or during the count. (More detail about crisis communications efforts and the Trust & Safety Team can be found on Page 137.)

Despite these preparations, the unpredictability of the pandemic and related federal government decisions in 2020 presented the Census Bureau with considerable challenges in executing the communications campaign. Limited ability to anticipate the course of the pandemic and related matters—such as whether the spread of COVID-19 would lessen or worsen, how the federal government might adjust key census deadlines, how public health policies and restrictions might change, and the extent to which public media consumption and advertising opportunities would fluctuate—limited our ability to plan for critical media relations and partner outreach, advertising adjustments, and campaign phasing transitions. Given that changes in census operations were based both on the course of the pandemic and on federal government directions, communications about those operations were also subject to change. The communications team aimed to adapt to changing circumstances as quickly as possible,

adjusting the messaging, creative elements, media placements, and the timing of release of campaign materials. However, the team was challenged by limited time and information, as Census Bureau leaders sought to gather details and adjust operational plans based on public health and federal government guidance.

The campaign's public rollout was originally proposed to occur in six formal phases: Strategic Early Education, Awareness, Motivation, Reminder, Thank You, and Data Dissemination. Many communications elements for the first four phases, especially the paid traditional and digital media ads for the Awareness, Motivation, and Reminder phases, were designed before the pandemic. The ads and materials presented messages specific to the designated campaign phase. The COVID-19 pandemic took hold just as the campaign was transitioning from the Awareness phase to the Motivation phase. With hundreds of communication pieces in 13 primary languages, transitioning from one campaign phase to another, even under ordinary circumstances, required considerable time and resources. These transitions also required lock-step alignment to ensure that messaging was uniform across all audiences and channels. Given the suspension of in-person enumeration and other field activities, as well as the extension of the enumeration period, it was especially important that communication pieces provided the public with relevant and up-to-date information. At the same time, the ever-evolving pandemic circumstances and the Census Bureau's resulting operational changes reduced the communications team's capacity to adequately plan for phase transitions. These contingencies presented challenges to the communications team's ability to deploy timely, accurate messaging and updated communication materials that kept pace with changing conditions.

Despite these challenges, the communications team remained nimble and poised to act throughout the count and the campaign. The team was ultimately successful in managing the content transitions brought on by the extended Motivation and Reminder phases. For instance, the Census Bureau quickly planned and launched several communication "surge" efforts during these two phases. The surge efforts comprised a variety of integrated activities that sought to break through the busy media landscape and encourage census response, both within the audience at large and in communities with low self-response rates. More information about campaign phasing changes can be found on Page 49; more information about communication surges can be found starting on Page 92.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Given the depth and involvement of our partner and stakeholder base, it was essential that the Census Bureau provide partners and stakeholders with regular updates about census operations. Partners and stakeholders played a significant role in championing the census among their audiences. In addition, many partners and stakeholders offered use of computers or mobile devices to enable their constituents to complete the census questionnaire. We relied on the support of partners and stakeholders and could not have conducted the 2020 Census without them.

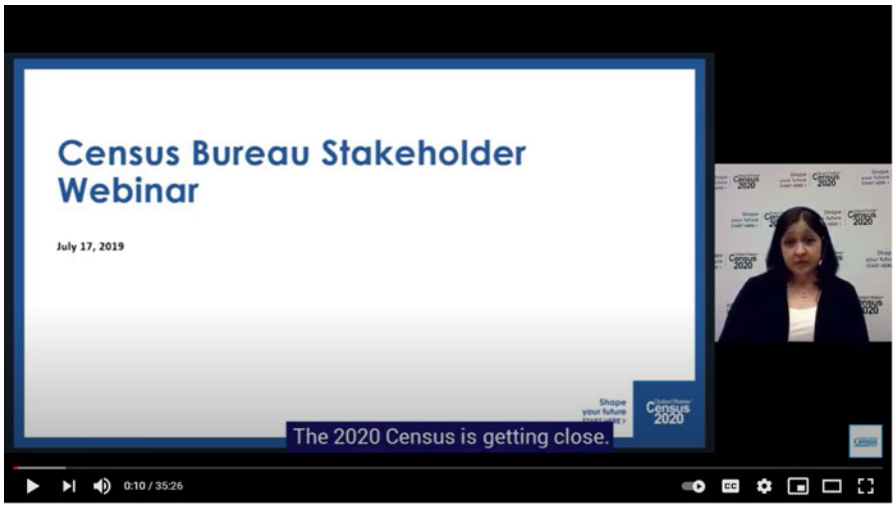


Figure 9: Screenshot of a Large-Scale Stakeholder Webinar Conducted in July 2019

The unpredictability of pandemic conditions and census operations hampered our ability to efficiently provide updates to partners and stakeholders. Because the Census Bureau was operating in a constantly changing operational environment, our updates to these groups were more frequent than usual but were sometimes delayed or revised after release. Partners and stakeholders understood the circumstances in which the census was operating. Nevertheless, these circumstances challenged their ability to engage with constituents through typical channels (such as in-person events), thus impeding their ability to reach constituents with census-related information. The Census Bureau attempted to mitigate confusion that arose from unclear or conflicting messages; however, we recognize that there may have been cases in which we could not respond quickly enough with the most up-to-date information. We greatly appreciate the outreach support that partners and stakeholders provided; we have thanked them directly and shared census results with them as the summarized data has become publicly available.

MAINTAINING ALIGNMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH CENSUS OPERATIONS

The Census Bureau prioritized alignment of the communications campaign with decennial census operations to ensure that communications promoted timely and accurate information about the census. Uncertainty created by the pandemic and related operational adjustments during the campaign meant that lock-step alignment, while challenging, was more critical than ever. We adapted communications and outreach across all areas of the campaign to reach all audiences, and we created targeted assets to reflect location- and audience group-specific circumstances.

CHANGES TO CAMPAIGN MESSAGING

As the Census Bureau's communications team received information about operational delays, extensions, and activity changes, the team adjusted campaign strategies and tactics while considering the changing public environment. At the same time, the Census Bureau aimed to align strategic or tactical changes with the "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform and messaging. Given that the platform and its associated messaging had been shown in testing to resonate with the campaign's diverse audiences, and given that various subject matter experts and internal stakeholders had weighed in on and approved the platform in advance of the campaign's launch, it was important that new or revised creative pieces maintain the tone, style, and visual look and feel of the original creative pieces. This approach promoted consistency in the 2020 Census campaign messaging and built trust with audiences through their interactions with the campaign—even as COVID-19 was changing many things about daily life and the census.

Adjusting Messages Based on Census Participation and Campaign Tracking. Coordination between the Census Bureau's communications and operations teams helped facilitate the timely development of new messaging when in-person field operations were suspended. Team coordination also helped the Census Bureau anticipate spikes in phone or web traffic and adjust operational activities or capacity as needed. During peak periods of data collection, especially, we aimed to consistently share campaign messaging and activity updates across departments, with a feedback loop from the Census Questionnaire Assistance and Field Division staffs to the partnership and communications teams. In addition, through collaboration between the communications and operations teams, we conducted the 2020 Census Tracking Survey to measure awareness of, and intent to participate in, the census. The communications team also supported the operations team's development and deployment of the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, which measured household experiences during the pandemic by analyzing its social and economic effects. The results of these surveys helped

us analyze public perceptions of the census and predict and identify response trends as the count took place.

Regular meetings were held to discuss operational changes, review ongoing communication activities, and determine how additional communication efforts could be conducted to support operations. These regular meetings, which occurred daily during peak data collection, formed a key component of our campaign monitoring and optimization efforts. More information about campaign monitoring and optimization efforts, which included the 2020 Census Tracking Survey, can be found on Page 188.

Adjusting Messages Based on Widespread Operational Changes. Maintaining clear, consistent communication and fostering collaboration internally was critical in helping the Census Bureau share clear, consistent messaging with the public. The alignment of communication activities with census operations helped ensure the consistency of the 2020 Census brand as well as consistent application of the creative platform across campaign elements, which were produced in English and 46 non-English languages. (See Page 62 for the list of all 47 languages used in the communications campaign.) Integration also promoted consistency among the 2020 Census website content, the Census Bureau's 59 language guides (which were hosted on the 2020 Census website), and the phone support provided by Census Questionnaire Assistance representatives. This coordination ultimately helped members of all audience groups—but especially those who did not speak English—complete the census questionnaire. As the campaign progressed, and as advertisements and outreach materials were revised—based on the pandemic environment and to encourage response among specific audience groups—the Census Bureau ensured that revisions were made in all languages across the campaign. Even as numerous changes were made, we aimed to maintain clarity, consistency, and accuracy in campaign messaging.

Adjusting Messages Based on Enumeration Method by Population Group. The campaign focused not only on the need to respond to the census but also on how audiences would respond. Research conducted for the 2020 Census, including multiple census tests and the "Extending the Census Environment" mail package design experiment, helped the Census Bureau determine how to invite census respondents, by tract, to participate and helped in understanding how the census mail package design might influence response. (More information about the mail package design experiment can be found on Page 120.) Accordingly, most of the country (representing more than 75% of all housing units) was assigned to the "Internet First" mailing strategy. In the first round of mailings, households in Internet First enumeration areas received letters encouraging them to self-respond online, while indicating that phone and mail-back self-response methods were also viable. Another portion of the population (comprising more than 20% of all housing units) was assigned to the

“Internet Choice” strategy. For this group, the mail package prioritized mail-back response but indicated that phone and online response options were also available. As the pandemic took root, online self-response was heavily encouraged across audiences to reduce the in-person interactions required by the NRFU operation.

Different operational procedures and enumeration methods were used in Puerto Rico; in some remote areas (such as parts of Alaska); in some rural areas (such as parts of Maine); on tribal lands; for those (such as college students) living in group quarters facilities; and for those who lacked a permanent residence, lived in shelters, or stayed in outdoor locations. In general, for populations living in these areas or in these situations, enumeration was conducted through in-person visits, use of the paper form, or both. However, the timing and methods used to count these groups were adjusted considerably due to the pandemic, as summarized on Pages 37-41, and as further described, in relation to enumerating specific population groups, on Pages 50-59. Numerous, distinct communication efforts at the local level—especially through stakeholder and partner outreach, targeted digital advertising, and earned media coverage—reinforced the enumeration processes for these unique population groups while encouraging census participation among them. To ensure that campaign messaging accurately reflected location- and audience-specific enumeration processes, we continually engaged with the operations team and referred to the latest operational updates when developing and adjusting communications campaign elements.

CHANGES TO CAMPAIGN PHASING

At the outset of planning, the campaign’s timeline and formal phases were made to align with census operations. This alignment helped us develop appropriate and relevant messaging and audience calls to action based on the stage of census execution, as discussed on Page 45. The campaign's Awareness, Motivation, and Reminder phases were particularly significant because they were planned to coincide with the launch, growth, and closing of the enumeration period. Therefore, when the pandemic took hold and changes were made to the timing of enumeration activities, the campaign’s Motivation phase was extended and the Reminder phase was delayed to match the new operational schedule. Communications and outreach during these phases helped support NRFU and boost self-response to reduce the workload of the enumerators.

The Census Bureau had originally proposed that the communications campaign include Thank You and Data Dissemination phases to follow the Reminder phase. However, because of the extension of the Motivation phase and the subsequent delay of the Reminder phase—which consumed more time and resources than originally planned—we decided against executing formal Thank You and Data Dissemination campaign phases as part of the ICC contract. Instead, the Census Bureau has used web, organic social media, email, and other permanent

properties to thank respondents, partners, and stakeholders for their involvement in the 2020 Census and to share updates about data processing, population growth, and delivery of the apportionment counts to the president.

CHANGES TO UPDATE LEAVE AND UPDATE ENUMERATE OPERATIONS

When conducting the Update Leave operation for a decennial census, in-field enumerators typically compare address information at physical housing locations to their address lists; verify or correct addresses, as needed; and leave a census questionnaire package at the housing unit. Update Leave is used in areas that do not have or receive mail through city-style addresses; that receive mail at post office boxes; or that were recently affected by natural disasters. Update Leave is also used on AIAN tribal lands. In 2020, this operation sought to enumerate an estimated 6.8 million households.

In the Update Enumerate operation, in-field enumerators typically update address and geographic feature data at physical housing locations. They then enumerate respondents in person. Update Enumerate is used in some remote areas (e.g., in parts of Maine and Alaska), in select tribal areas, and in places where internet and cellphone service are limited. In 2020, this operation sought to enumerate an estimated 6,500 households.

Geographic areas in which Update Leave and Update Enumerate operations are conducted typically contain significant proportions of HTC populations. People living in these areas may be difficult to reach for a variety of reasons, even under usual circumstances. As COVID-19 took hold, the Census Bureau acknowledged that it could be especially challenging to contact and count people in these areas during a pandemic. Accordingly, in support of the 2020 Census, we executed hyperlocal media pitching, deployed digital advertisements in areas with adequate internet connectivity, and developed communication materials for partners to distribute, including half-page handouts, fact sheets, and brochures. While these efforts were planned before the count, we intensified and expanded outreach to audience groups in Update Leave and Update Enumerate areas once the pandemic took hold. Our communications encouraged internet self-response in Update Leave areas, even if households had not yet received paper questionnaires. The campaign materials also supported the Census Bureau's mass mailing of a participation reminder letter (as introduced on Page 38). Finally, among both those in Update Leave and those in Update Enumerate areas, we requested cooperation with enumerators once field operations resumed.

Figure 10: Posters for Partner Use in Encouraging Census Participation Among American Indian and Alaska Native Audiences

As part of the 2020 Census campaign outreach to audience groups in Update Leave and Update Enumerate areas, the Census Bureau conducted a dedicated effort to reach AIAN audiences on tribal lands or reservations. It is important to note that most of the diverse AIAN population does not live on these lands or reservations but that those who do are among groups historically undercounted in the census. The Census Bureau typically works closely with tribal governments to improve the count of this population for all data collection efforts; however, specific efforts were made to address AIAN audiences in Update Leave communities for the 2020 Census. To reach this audience group, we created partner materials, such as handouts and fact sheets, that provided information and emphasized the importance of participating in the census. While dedicated outreach to this audience group was planned ahead of the count, additional efforts were executed because of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the timing of the Update Leave operation was adjusted, the Census Bureau created customizable content, including talking points for interviews, drop-in newsletter articles, email templates, and press kits. AIAN community leaders could then tailor this content

and publish it through earned or owned media. We also held teleconferences with tribal leaders, deployed paid poster advertisements, and updated the 2020 Census website to share resources and enumeration updates with AIAN audiences in Update Leave areas.

Broadly, Census Bureau communications for all audiences in Update Leave areas sent the message that there were multiple ways to respond to the census. Further, communications for audiences in Update Leave and Update Enumerate areas indicated that households that did not or could not self-respond would soon be visited by an enumerator. We emphasized that everyone's participation was important to ensure that communities could be fully counted.

CHANGES TO ENUMERATION OF PUERTO RICO AND THE ISLAND AREAS

The 2020 Census communications campaign was designed to address respondents in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Thus, the Census Bureau considered various audience needs when planning campaign activities and when developing and revising messaging to reach the diverse mass audience—which included people living in Puerto Rico. We also created outreach materials and advertising assets specifically for people living in Puerto Rico. These efforts continued when the pandemic took hold and operational changes were implemented.

While the Island Areas also conducted a census in 2020, they did not take part in the full 2020 Census communications campaign due to several key operational differences. Enumeration of the Island Areas was fully paper-based and led by census takers, and the questionnaire used in the Island Areas was much more extensive than the one used stateside or in Puerto Rico.

Planned Enumeration of the Island Areas. The U.S. Census Bureau directly conducted the census in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. By contrast, in the Island Areas (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), the census was conducted through partnerships with the local government agencies in those areas. As the pandemic took hold, enumeration of the Island Areas was impacted just as it was in the states and in Puerto Rico; however, partners and governments local to the Island Areas managed census operational adjustments and communications outreach independent of the Census Bureau on a region-specific basis.

In line with these operational differences, the Island Areas did not take part in the full 2020 Census communications campaign, although select campaign elements, including several 2020 SIS program activities, were developed for Island Area audiences. To support the Island Areas in conducting their own census communications locally, the Census Bureau developed customizable templates for outreach as well as guidance on use of materials. We made these assets available to local governments for their customization and distribution.

Changes in Enumeration of Puerto Rico. The decennial census questionnaire for the population in Puerto Rico tends to vary slightly from the questionnaire provided stateside. In addition, in 2018, the Census Bureau decided that, due to the devastating impacts of Hurricane Maria in 2017 and the redevelopment that followed, Puerto Rico would be enumerated through Update Leave (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b). The Update Leave operation is used in places where housing units do not receive mail at the physical housing unit and in places where mailing address information cannot be verified (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The Census Bureau determined that conducting this operation in Puerto Rico would help to achieve the most complete count in 2020.

Leading up to, and over the course of, the 2020 count, census operations in Puerto Rico deviated significantly from plans. The island of Puerto Rico experienced a string of earthquakes in January 2020, just before the census and the communications campaign were set to formally begin. The earthquakes came after multiple hurricanes and storms had struck in recent months and years, including Hurricane Maria. The storms had caused severe destruction and loss of life and left the island struggling to rebuild. The January earthquakes were followed by Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020, as the campaign transitioned from the Motivation phase to the Reminder phase and as the NRFU operation took place across the nation, including Puerto Rico.

With the onset of the pandemic, the government of Puerto Rico issued several executive orders in alignment with U.S. federal executive orders, and in March 2020, the Governor of Puerto Rico instituted lockdown orders for the island to help reduce COVID-19 transmission. In keeping with guidance from public health officials in Puerto Rico, the Census Bureau suspended the hand delivery of census invitations and paper forms to households due to health and safety concerns. Some households received a letter by mail in early April, inviting them to respond to the 2020 Census; these letters had been previously planned and included a Census ID to help people respond online or by phone. For many households that did not receive a mailed letter and whose members are typically counted through Update Leave, the Census Bureau was eventually able to drop off census invitations and paper forms in person. The Update Leave operation in Puerto Rico resumed in late May and continued through the summer months.

The enumeration challenges posed by the natural disasters and pandemic, as well as those posed by related stops and starts in communications, meant that census awareness and self-response among those living in Puerto Rico lagged behind expected levels for much of the count. To address these challenges, the communications team worked closely with a Census Bureau task force that included advertising and media experts, field staff, and agency partners local to Puerto Rico. This collaboration enabled us to adapt messaging and outreach tactics appropriately and in alignment with operational and environmental realities.

Figure 11: Reminder Phase Paid Social Media Ad (Left) and Print Ad (Right) for Audiences in Puerto Rico

Changes in Campaign Communications in Puerto Rico. In designing the communications campaign, the Census Bureau had planned for Puerto Rico to receive dedicated Spanish-language creative materials beyond the diverse mass audience communications in English. During the campaign, communication materials in Spanish and English were developed and deployed specifically to convey operational changes to those living in Puerto Rico. We especially relied on paid digital and traditional advertisements, press and partner materials, and website content to relay information and encourage participation. Specific efforts included conducting outreach to inform Puerto Rican media of operational changes; securing interviews with a variety of print, radio, television, and digital media outlets; and revising the extended

Motivation and delayed Reminder phase advertisements for the audience in Puerto Rico to encourage self-response and cooperation with Census Bureau enumerators once field operations resumed.

In addition, the timing of paid media activities was adjusted based on openings and closures related to COVID-19 (and to an earthquake and a tropical storm) to ensure that campaign messaging delivered relevant, accurate information at the appropriate time. For example, the Census Bureau paused Motivation phase advertising—running Awareness phase advertising instead—when the Update Leave operation was suspended and later implemented media budget increases (known as "heavy-ups") to ensure that audiences in Puerto Rico knew it was time to respond to the census. We also aimed to keep people informed about when they might see an enumerator in their neighborhood or at their door and about the safety precautions in place to protect both the public and census takers.

These campaign adjustments and the close collaboration of the Census Bureau with partners, media outlets, and local officials in Puerto Rico helped account for 99.9% of housing units in Puerto Rico by the end of September 2020—a testament to the effectiveness of integrated operations and communications efforts to reach the people of Puerto Rico.

CHANGES IN COUNTING COLLEGE STUDENTS AND GROUP QUARTERS POPULATIONS

For an estimated 250,000 group quarters facilities, including college student housing, military barracks, nursing facilities, correctional facilities, and other group housing communities, Census Bureau staff members typically establish direct contact with facility administrators to ensure that their residents are counted. Accordingly, in February and March 2020, the Census Bureau conducted phone outreach—and in-person visits, as needed—before the temporary suspension of field operations in late March. Known as Group Quarters Advance Contact, this outreach allows the Census Bureau to collect an early estimated count from facility administrators and to discuss the preferred appointment date and method for formal enumeration (whether electronically, by paper form, or through in-person interview).

Given the complexity and nuances of Group Quarters Enumeration, it was critical—both before and during the pandemic—that the Census Bureau provide clear communications to student populations, military communities, and other people living in or operating group homes or facilities. To reach them, we published fact sheets and brochures to explain how group quarters are enumerated, and we created partner handouts and posters about how group quarters residents could make sure they were counted. We coordinated with partners and encouraged them to share information about the census with group quarters facilities and residents.

Many Group Quarters Enumeration processes were delayed because of the pandemic-induced suspension of field operations throughout late March, April, and May 2020. The timing of Group Quarters Enumeration shifted to July and August, and Late Group Quarters Enumeration—which allows for stakeholder identification and enumeration of group quarters that may have been missed during the earlier time frame—shifted from July to September and October. These changes caused confusion about where and when group quarters residents would be counted. Therefore, it was critical that the Census Bureau maintain contact with facility administrators, not only to inform them of these operational and timing changes, but also to ensure that group quarters residents were not missed or double-counted. By maintaining open lines of communication with group quarters facilities, we aimed to reduce confusion and misinformation about the updated enumeration plans.

The Census Bureau encouraged group quarters facility administrators to communicate directly with their residents about the 2020 Census. We advised administrators of nursing facilities, military bases, correctional facilities, and other group housing communities to let residents know that they would be included in their facility's total count. Many group quarters administrators submitted—either online or by mail—a list of data for each person at their facilities. We asked that they include all individuals who stayed at their facilities on Census Day (April 1) 2020. For administrators who selected an in-person response method, the Census Bureau conducted in-person interviews from early July through early September 2020; the count of their facilities took place on an agreed-on date within that window. Further, the Census Bureau asked administrators of college and university housing to publicize that students should be counted where they would have been on April 1, 2020, had there been no pandemic. This was important because many college students had moved out of on-campus housing due to COVID-19 but otherwise would have been counted as living there on April 1.

When operational changes were implemented in response to COVID-19, social and digital communications played an especially important role in reaching college students. The Census Bureau connected with college students by deploying targeted paid social and digital media ads; partnering with influencers who promoted census participation through their social media accounts; launching a video called "What College Students Need to Know to Be Counted in the Right Place"; and sponsoring the podcast "Commencement: Speeches for the Class of 2020," as produced by iHeartRadio. We also conducted media relations efforts to generate earned media coverage in college and community newspapers. The messaging in these materials addressed both students living on campus and those living off campus in college towns to help make sure university communities were counted.

In addition, 2020 Census partners continued to conduct outreach to their constituents, which included residents and administrators of education institutions, military barracks, and other group quarters. Partners shared updated enumeration information, revised fact sheets, and other materials through email, social media, and other channels. These partner efforts were helpful in complementing the Census Bureau's direct contact with group quarters facilities.

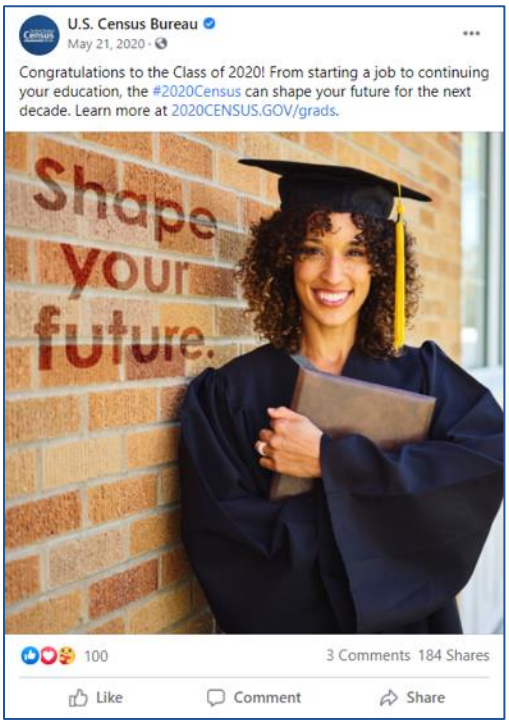


Figure 12: Organic Social Media Post Targeted to College Students and Recent Graduates

CHANGES IN SERVICE-BASED, NON-SHELTERED OUTDOOR, AND TRANSITORY LOCATION ENUMERATION

In a decennial census, the Service-Based Enumeration (SBE) and the Targeted Non-Sheltered Outdoor Locations (TNSOL) enumeration operations count individuals who may not have a permanent address and who may be experiencing homelessness. To conduct SBE, the Census Bureau works with administrators of, and providers at, emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens, and mobile food van locations to count people receiving services. Typically, these providers and the Census Bureau will jointly determine the enumeration period for the locations. The enumeration period usually consists of three consecutive days. On a designated day during that period, Census Bureau representatives visit each shelter and service location and hold in-person interviews with every individual who is served or staying at the location on

the date of the visit. Alternatively, administrators of shelters can choose to submit to the Census Bureau a paper listing of response data for each person served or staying at the facility on a designated reference date, which usually falls within the agreed-on enumeration period. TNSOL enumeration is typically conducted during the same enumeration period as SBE. To conduct TNSOL enumeration, Census Bureau teams visit tent encampments, transit stations, and other outdoor locations where people are known to sleep. Census takers use paper questionnaires to collect respondents' information as requested on the census form.

For the 2020 Census, the SBE and TNSOL enumeration operations were planned to begin in February 2020 with early outreach to shelter administrators and service providers, in alignment with the Group Quarters Advance Contact operation. All SBE and TNSOL in-person interviews were planned to take place from March 30 through April 1, 2020. However, due to the onset of COVID-19, these enumeration processes were delayed. Census Bureau representatives worked with service providers to conduct paper listing-based enumeration to the greatest extent possible. We also consulted with major stakeholders from 67 local and national organizations to understand the organizations' needs and to determine an optimal date to conduct SBE interviews in person. Following these discussions, the Census Bureau conducted in-person SBE and TNSOL enumeration from September 22 through September 24, 2020, with pandemic safety measures in place.

You count, no matter where you live.

Every 10 years, the United States counts everyone who lives in the country. Your participation in the 2020 Census will help communities like yours get the funding they need to provide housing and food assistance and other vital services.

Responding is important.

The 2020 Census will influence funding for community services for the next 10 years. Data from the census helps determine where over $675 billion is spent each year in states and communities. That includes money for things like:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Community centers
- Libraries
- Housing assistance
- Medicare
- Employment resources

There are many ways to respond.

Beginning in mid-March 2020, you can respond to the census. Many libraries and community centers will have public computers available for you to respond online at 2020CENSUS.GOV. You can also respond by phone. Census takers will work with shelters, meal centers, group homes, and other places where you may receive services to make sure everyone is counted, including babies and young children. If you or your children are staying with a relative or friend, make sure they include you on their census response form.

Responding is safe.

Your personal information is kept confidential by law. Your responses can only be used to produce statistics. They cannot be used for law enforcement purposes or to determine your personal eligibility for government benefits.

For more information, visit:
2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future
START HERE >

United States Census 2020

D-DP-HL-EN-024

Figure 13: Fact Sheet About Counting the Homeless Population

While similar to SBE and TNSOL enumeration, Enumeration at Transitory Locations (ETL) is a distinct operation that typically counts those who live in recreational vehicle parks, campgrounds, marinas, or other temporary housing and who pay to do so. ETL is typically conducted through in-person interviews. Originally scheduled to take place from April to May 2020, this operation was delayed due to COVID-19; instead, the count of transitory locations was conducted in September 2020.

In communicating pandemic-related operational updates to population groups that are typically counted through SBE, TNSOL enumeration, or ETL, the Census Bureau stayed in close contact with service providers, stakeholders, and advocates who work with service providers to ensure that they had the most up-to-date information. We also released press materials and published website content to get the word out. Finally, we developed messaging and materials, including fact sheets and a video, for partners and stakeholders to use in providing enumeration information directly to constituents who might be counted through these operations.

AUDIENCE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADJUSTED COMMUNICATIONS OUTREACH

Beyond creating communication materials to address changes in particular enumeration operations, the Census Bureau adjusted its overarching communications campaign strategy. All audiences would be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was important that our approach and messaging use the appropriate language and tone for—and reflect the concerns of—these 2020 audiences. While most pandemic protocols were issued at the state or regional level, and could vary, government officials and public health authorities across the country generally agreed that wearing a mask, physical distancing in public spaces, and avoiding large gatherings helped stop the spread of the virus. At the same time, it was critical that people in all audience groups participate in the census. Across all communication tactics executed from March 2020 through the end of the campaign, the Census Bureau aimed to balance these priorities in messaging for the public.

Diverse Mass Audience. For the diverse mass audience, which included all those who consume English-language media, regardless of race or ethnicity, the Census Bureau adjusted the communications outreach strategy to deliver a series of surge efforts. Given the lengthened Motivation and Reminder phases of the campaign, it was important that we reach audiences in novel ways when they might be tiring of the original creative pieces (or when the original creative pieces were no longer timely or appropriate, given changing pandemic conditions). The surge efforts were, in essence, mini-campaigns within the 2020 Census communications campaign at large. Included were the April/May breakthrough surge, the extended Motivation

phase regional surges in July, and the delayed Reminder phase surge in August and September. These surges included a mix of paid traditional and digital media, as well as news stories pitched to journalists, media relations and organic social media efforts, partner outreach, website content development, and 2020 SIS activities.

Campaign materials and activities intended for the diverse mass audience aimed to reflect the diversity of the country's population while emphasizing the importance of census response in all communities, no matter how different these were from one another. This aim was true of all materials developed and used before the pandemic, as well as those developed once COVID-19 had set in. Campaign surge efforts emphasized that census participation was more important than ever, because the results of the census would affect community funding and planning for emergency services, health care, local government, education, and small businesses. Messaging in campaign surge materials also promoted the ease of self-response, the safety and security of respondents' data, and the pandemic protocols in place to protect the public and enumerators.

In planning these efforts, the Census Bureau acknowledged that the pandemic had changed much of the U.S. population's day-to-day lives, but especially their daily interactions and media consumption behaviors. We therefore aimed to use communication channels that met members of the public where they were in the new course of their daily lives. For example, we developed pizza box top flyers for a paid integration with national and regional pizza chains. We also increased our digital and search advertising presence, given the widespread increased use of technology, and we targeted parents and families with ads that encouraged use of the SIS program resources at home, given school closures. These are just a few examples of our adaptation of the campaign to better reach the diverse mass audience. Details on these efforts are presented in the program component sections of this report, beginning on Page 102.

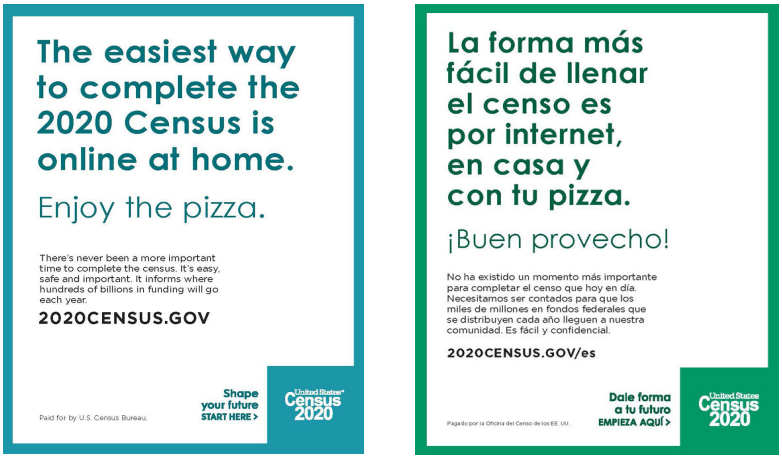


Figure 14: Pizza Box Top Flyers in English and Spanish

Multicultural and Non-English-Speaking Audience Groups. Over the course of the campaign, the Census Bureau paid close attention to response rates by geography, language, audience group (as introduced on Page 23), and designated audience segment. This data was important in helping us determine how communication materials needed to be adjusted—for instance, by a change in messaging, visuals, geographic targeting, or another tactical aspect.

With the onset of the pandemic, as well as other operational changes and challenges, we recognized that it might be harder to collect census responses from multicultural and non-English-speaking audience groups. Our multicultural audience and communications experts worked collaboratively to reach all these audience groups, but particularly those with low self-response rates. We expanded the reach of our campaign by implementing advertisements in 34 more languages than we had originally planned to include in paid media support. In May 2020, as part of the April/May breakthrough surge, we added digital and search advertising in 12 languages beyond the 13 (originally planned) core campaign languages. Then, in August, as part of the delayed Reminder phase surge, we launched paid newspaper advertising in 21 additional languages and radio advertising in one additional language—for a total of 47 languages represented in various campaign ads and assets. The 47 languages are listed in Table 1. Expanding the number of languages covered in our paid media campaign meant we could reach small, but significant, subgroups within the diverse non-English-speaking audience. More information about how languages were selected for the campaign can be found in the "Reaching an Increasingly Diverse Audience" subsection starting on Page 22.

We also developed discrete sets of activities and outreach efforts to address the needs of different audience groups and to encourage census response among them. Some of these efforts were conducted in conjunction with the communication surge efforts. Others took place as needed throughout the campaign. Examples of outreach to specific audience groups include the development of a social media toolkit and activation of influencers to reach Black/African American audiences, the creation of English-language Hispanic audience ads to reach the younger members of multigenerational families, and the broadcast of a "Hawaii for Census" concert program for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander audiences. These are just a few examples reflecting our commitment, throughout the campaign, to reaching and improving response rates among diverse audience groups. More details on these efforts are presented in the program component sections of this report, which begin on Page 102.

Table 1: Languages for the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign

47 Total Campaign Languages*						
English	**Polish**	Bengali	Greek	Italian	Punjabi	Thai
Spanish	**Arabic**	Bulgarian	Gujarati	Khmer	Romanian	Turkish
Chinese (Simplified and Traditional; Mandarin and Cantonese)	**Haitian Creole**	Croatian	Hebrew	Lao	Serbian	Ukrainian
Vietnamese	**French (Sub-Saharan African)**	Czech	Hindi	Lithuanian	Slovak	Urdu
Korean	**Portuguese**	Dutch	Hmong	Malayalam	Somali	Yiddish
Tagalog	**Japanese**	Farsi	Hungarian	Navajo	Tamil	
Russian	Armenian	German	Indonesian	Nepali	Telugu	

** Note: Languages listed in bold font above (in the two leftmost columns) comprised the 13 core campaign languages for the 2020 Census communications campaign. After English, these core campaign languages are listed in descending order based on each language's associated number of limited-English-speaking households in the country. Campaign support for languages listed alphabetically in plain font (starting at the bottom of the second column and running through the rightmost column) was added over the course of the communications campaign.*

Hard-To-Count Audience Groups. Although many non-English-speaking audience groups are considered HTC, there are also many English-speaking HTC audience groups that are similarly diverse and complex. Therefore, as the Census Bureau monitored and analyzed self-response response rates for its multicultural and non-English-speaking audience groups, it also paid close attention to self-response rates for HTC groups in the diverse mass audience. In the 2020 Census, groups within the diverse mass audience at risk of being HTC included young and mobile populations, rural populations, young children, large or complex households, and college students. (For more information about how HTC groups are defined, see Page 26).

To better understand the geographic concentrations, media consumption habits, and potential participation barriers for people in all HTC groups, we analyzed census self-response rates by campaign audience segment. The Census Bureau conducted extensive research, including the 2020 CBAMS, and developed statistical models that predicted the likelihood of various population groups' responding to the census. The campaign audience segmentation process that followed produced eight segments, or groupings, within the audience at large. These segments shared demographic and geographic traits and had a similar likelihood of census response. Based on this analysis, we determined that HTC audiences were commonly found in the Rural Delta and Urban Enclaves, Student and Military Communities, Multicultural Mosaic, and Sparse Spaces segments. (More detail about all eight audience segments and the segmentation process can be found on Page 77.) We prioritized outreach to the HTC groups in those four segments especially, by delivering 2020 Census campaign messages to them through the communication channels with which they regularly interacted.

For instance, the Census Bureau coordinated with its partners to foster census engagement among these groups through email, social media, and other direct outreach. Partners serve as trusted voices for people in HTC audience groups, and they helped us convey the importance of participating in the census—especially during a pandemic. We created materials for partners to use in reaching specific groups that are often HTC, such as rural audiences, faith-based communities, and multigenerational households. In addition, we executed an integrated set of activities to improve the count of young children; these activities included a national (pre-pandemic) in-person event, targeted Facebook and Pinterest advertising, a public service announcement for radio and television, and worksheets and other materials specifically created for children ages 2 to 5. (For more information about this integrated effort, see Page 169.) We also held media briefings and conducted highly targeted, hyperlocal story pitching to media outlets to increase awareness of the census in communities containing high concentrations of HTC audience groups. These are just a few examples of our use of campaign integration across multiple program component areas to reinforce key messaging about the census and to

encourage participation among those who may be the hardest to count. More details on these efforts are presented in the program component sections of this report, starting on Page 102.

Figure 15: Assets From the Black/African American Audience Social Media Toolkit for Partner Use During the Reminder Phase

PLANNING AND EXECUTING THE 2020 CAMPAIGN

PHASED COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

As introduced on Page 45, the 2020 Census ICC followed a phased approach in the coordination and timing of all communication activities, even as pandemic circumstances and operational plans evolved. While there were many changes related to the timing and elements of all campaign phases, the Census Bureau followed its planned sequence of phases, aligning campaign messaging with the key focus of each phase. We aimed, throughout the campaign, to deliver the right message, to the right audience, at the right time, and through the right channel. The communications campaign included a precursory Strategic Campaign Planning period and the formal Strategic Early Education, Awareness, Motivation, and Reminder phases, which are discussed in detail on the following pages. Figure 16 shows the timing and duration of the planning period and each formal campaign phase. Note that two additional phases proposed during campaign planning—the Thank You and Data Dissemination phases—were not executed as part of the ICC contract; those two phases are also briefly discussed in this section.

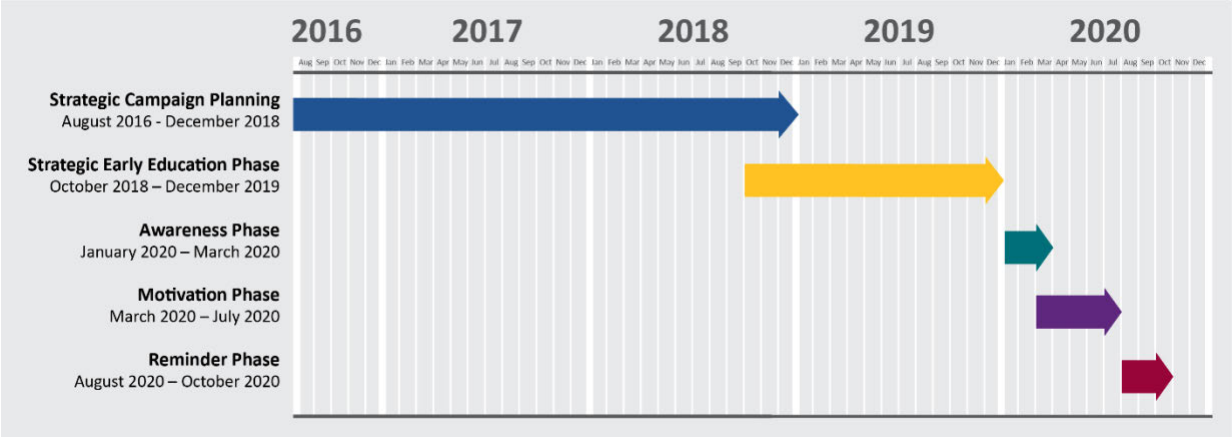


Figure 16: Final Phased Approach for the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign

Campaign Strategic Planning Period (August 2016 – December 2018). The Census Bureau formalized the ICC contract with its 2020 Census communications contractor team in 2016, laying the early foundation and identifying basic requirements for the communications campaign. We reviewed lessons learned from the 2010 Census communications campaign; explored data from recent American Community Surveys and census tests; and analyzed

demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic trends to identify benchmarks for the 2020 Census campaign. Campaign component plans and scopes of work were also developed during the strategic planning period. In addition, foundational campaign research was conducted through the 2020 CBAMS (for more information on the 2020 CBAMS, see Page 74). Internal Census Bureau planning during this period helped establish the role that individual campaign components, such as the SIS and partnership programs, would play in the formal campaign.

Strategic Early Education Phase (October 2018 – December 2019). A key aim of the Strategic Early Education phase was to develop a base of understanding among all audiences about the Census Bureau and the upcoming 2020 Census. The importance of developing this understanding was a lesson learned from the 2010 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Throughout 2019, the Census Bureau worked to build public trust by educating audiences about the decennial count and the importance of participating in the 2020 Census. Outreach efforts helped engage partners, stakeholders, and trusted voices to strengthen the reach of Census Bureau messaging among HTC audiences. These audiences include people who face challenges in responding to the census online, such as those who lack internet access, have limited digital literacy, or are otherwise uncomfortable using the internet to respond. They also include individuals who have concerns about privacy, are distrustful of the government, or are recent immigrants with limited understanding of the census.

Census Bureau programs that performed outreach to connect with audiences that required early education included NPP, CPEP, and the SIS program. NPP, for example, provided support during this phase by coordinating webinars with constituents of established partners and by distributing 2020 Census informational materials at community events. The Census Bureau's regional offices also bolstered early engagement through local awareness-raising efforts about the upcoming census.

Early recruitment outreach and the hiring of temporary employees was another focus during this phase. While the objectives of recruitment communications differed from those of the broader 2020 Census campaign, recruitment outreach offered an opportunity to support early education efforts. Through distribution of marketing materials and promotion of census jobs at the local level, the Census Bureau established early communication channels and fostered relationships with HTC audiences and the partners that represent them. We also tapped into our base of temporary employees at this time to conduct address canvassing, a field operation that allowed us to refine the address list of households nationwide for delivery of census invitations in 2020. For more information about field recruitment outreach and communications, see Page 178.

Other tactics executed during the Strategic Early Education phase included hosting educational events, such as the "Shape Your Future: A Census Experience" exhibit at the National

Constitution Center's Constitution Day event; posting organic social media content on Facebook and Instagram; and conducting outreach to teachers and administrators through the 2020 SIS program.

In December 2019, the Census Bureau also launched paid advertising and other campaign efforts to reach audience groups in remote areas of Alaska. Rolled out before the rest of the campaign, these targeted communications informed audience groups that early enumeration would begin in January 2020 in their remote Alaskan communities.

Awareness Phase (January 2020 – March 2020). In the Awareness phase, the campaign communicated to the country, including Puerto Rico, that the 2020 Census was coming and that it was important to participate. The campaign also communicated to audience groups in remote areas of Alaska that early enumeration was taking place; for these groups, paid advertisements and other materials encouraged individuals to respond as soon as they received their census form.

As the Awareness phase started in January 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases was beginning to increase internationally. However, the coronavirus had not fully taken hold in the United States, and the COVID-19 outbreak was not considered a pandemic until mid-March. Throughout the Awareness phase, the Census Bureau monitored COVID-19 closely and stayed in contact with public health and other government officials but proceeded with enumeration—and the communications campaign—as originally planned.

In mid-January, the Census Bureau formally launched national paid advertising to communicate with the public about the 2020 Census. We held an in-person campaign launch event that showcased 14 interactive, museum-style exhibits featuring advertising assets and other materials. The event also included an information session about the communications campaign for members of Congress and a news conference to preview Motivation phase campaign ads and other outreach materials.

With the launch of the campaign, paid ads educated diverse audiences about the census while emphasizing the relevance, urgency, and safety of participation. In addition, significant outreach through social media engagement; public relations efforts, such as media tours; hosted events, such as the Census Bureau's Counting Young Children National Event in February 2020; and email marketing helped ensure that key messages were heard by all audience groups, setting the stage to drive census response. We aimed to make sure all communications were relevant to our target audiences and to reinforce credibility in our messaging.

The Census Bureau continued to promote the campaign's tagline, "Shape your future. Start here." It was critical that people understand the purpose of the census, its value to their

community, and how to participate. Research indicated that the campaign's success depended on its ability to help people understand specific ways in which the census would benefit their community. The campaign also needed to convey that participation was safe.

Engaging with those most likely to respond to the census and encouraging others to participate were crucial during this phase, especially in March, when the internet self-response tool became available for questionnaire completion. Activating champions for census participation at the local level was helpful in boosting self-response overall.

Because enumeration started earlier in some areas (e.g., remote areas of Alaska and group quarters facilities, such as college campuses) than in the rest of the country, awareness building and outreach activities in these areas preceded those efforts in other locations. Community partner engagement, social media activities, and public relations efforts that started during the Strategic Early Education phase remained active throughout the Awareness phase and subsequent campaign phases.

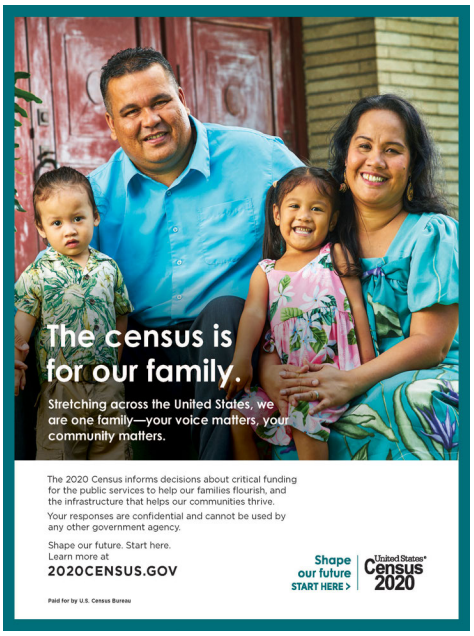


Figure 17: Print Ads Targeted to the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Audience (Left) and the Filipino Audience (Right) for the Awareness Phase

Motivation Phase (March 2020 – July 2020). During the Motivation phase, the campaign prompted individuals to complete the census questionnaire and to encourage participation among their friends, families, and communities. As this phase began, in mid-March, COVID-19 had fully taken hold across the country and represented a broad threat to public health. The

Census Bureau responded by canceling all in-person campaign events, temporarily suspending field operations, and otherwise limiting in-person interactions with members of the public and between employees. The Motivation phase was originally planned to end in May. However, it was clear by late March that the pandemic would continue to impact enumeration in the months to come, and, by April, we prepared for the Motivation phase to continue past May. In June, the Census Bureau officially extended the campaign's Motivation phase through July due to suspended field operations and data collection delays.

To launch the Motivation phase and to mark the beginning of the 2020 Census self-response period, the Census Bureau held a virtual, daylong kickoff event in mid-March. The day included a news briefing, 2020 Census partner activities, social and digital media activations, digital out-of-home advertising displays, and other engagement efforts. Enumeration for most of the country began at that time, and households started to receive mailings from the Census Bureau. Because immediate self-response was the goal, our outreach focused on promoting a sense of urgency in completing the questionnaire. The campaign aimed to help people understand how to complete the questionnaire, where to find more information and resources, and what communications to expect from the Census Bureau and its partners. Audiences that were hesitant to participate seemed to benefit from messaging that reinforced how easy it was to complete the census using a computer or smartphone. It was important that our messages reminded audiences that were less likely to participate (such as those in the Multicultural Mosaic or the Rural Delta and Urban Enclaves audience segments) that participating in the census was safe and important.

Activities conducted during this phase included 2020 Census Day outreach and social media support, press briefings for multicultural media outlets and their target audiences, concentrated paid media efforts, "SIS Week: Everyone Counts," and the 2020 Census Response Rate Challenge (which employed social media, media relations, partnership outreach, and toolkit distribution to encourage state and local governments to promote census response in their communities). Through all channels, the campaign continued to reinforce three key concepts introduced during the Awareness phase: safety, urgency, and the benefits of census participation.

Figure 18: Digital Ad in Arabic for the Motivation Phase

Given the extension of the Motivation phase, we incorporated two major communication surge efforts (as mentioned in the "Diverse Mass Audience" subsection on Page 59). The April/May breakthrough surge, which launched on the heels of a successful Census Week, included many innovative digital media activations and noted the cancellation of in-person events due to COVID-19. The goal of this surge was to "break through" the crowded media environment, which was busier than ever given near-constant reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. We aimed to find creative ways to reach our audiences with relevant and accurate messaging, especially given that daily life and media consumption habits had changed drastically for many people. The April/May breakthrough surge included numerous communication efforts, such as the placement of digital out-of-home ads near essential businesses. These efforts were made possible by an increase in the campaign's paid media budget, which the Census Bureau authorized to help reach target audiences at a time when people were displaced, distracted, or otherwise difficult to reach because of the pandemic. We also engaged new and existing health and wellness-focused partners, and we activated social media influencers to use 2020 Census-branded content and invite followers to "pledge" to complete the census.

The second communication surge during this phase was the extended Motivation phase surge. Activities associated with this effort took place in July and were rolled out in a series of locally targeted tactics in the six census regions (Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York City, and Philadelphia). Development of region-specific and cross-region videos was one of many tactics that supported this surge. We collected content from individuals who represented various communities, organizations, local governments, and academic institutions, and who were trusted voices in their regions. These "trusted voices" recorded short clips of themselves speaking about why the census mattered to them and their region. The videos were then published on Census Bureau social media, web, and other properties. The videos were also shared with local outlets throughout the regions to help generate earned media coverage. In addition, the 2020 Census website featured tailored landing-page art depicting cityscapes of or landmarks from each census region.

The extended Motivation phase surge also included a paid sponsorship with the internet-based show "Wonderama." Through this arrangement, the show produced a series of Friday night concerts called the "2020 Census Friday Night House Parties" in each of the six census regions. The webcast concerts featured noteworthy performing artists and public figures and were immensely popular, garnering more than 2.4 million unique video streams.

The communication surges were successful in building on the integrated activities that were originally planned for the Motivation phase; the surges also boosted public awareness of the census, and they helped contribute to increased self-response rates. Some tactics that proved successful during the extended Motivation phase surge were repeated in the campaign's

Reminder phase. Information about other tactics conducted as part of these surges is presented in the program component sections of this report, which start on Page 102.

Reminder Phase (August 2020 – October 2020). At this point in the campaign, most households that planned to participate in the census had self-responded, and the Census Bureau aimed to make sure households that had not yet participated were counted. In the Reminder phase, audiences were reminded that the census was taking place and there was still time to self-respond. Through multiple channels and touch points, audiences were strongly encouraged to respond if they had not done so already. It was particularly important, given the extended 2020 Census response period, that the public understand that enumeration would soon be coming to a close.

The Reminder phase was originally planned to run from May to July 2020. Thus, the phase was delayed and also slightly longer than anticipated. We aimed in this phase to keep the public's attention on the census to achieve the highest national response rate possible before the count ended.

Figure 19: Print Ad in Chinese (Simplified Characters) for the Reminder Phase

Campaign materials deployed during the Reminder phase emphasized that households that had not responded might be visited by a Census Bureau employee to help them complete the questionnaire. This phase in the communications campaign aligned with the Census Bureau's

NRFU operation, in which Census Bureau representatives conducted in-person enumeration through door-to-door canvassing. Reminder messaging offered people a final chance to complete their questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail; doing so would reduce the likelihood of an enumerator's knocking on their door. Messaging also encouraged cooperation if an enumerator did come to their home, noting the COVID-19 safety protocols the Census Bureau had implemented to keep respondents and enumerators safe.

Activities conducted in this phase included continued support for partners through local engagement and material distribution, media relations outreach to generate additional coverage, and virtual engagement through the Census Bureau's social media platforms. Digital and traditional paid media were also used during this period. The Census Bureau focused on reaching and encouraging participation in those states and media markets with the lowest self-response rates.

The delayed Reminder phase incorporated one final communication surge effort, which took place in August and September 2020. The delayed Reminder phase surge was meant to align closely with the NRFU operation when it was most active nationwide. The Census Bureau's communications team referred to response rates and enumeration rates by state to develop the delayed Reminder phase surge plan. The surge plan largely built on and expanded the activities already planned for the Reminder phase; however, several key efforts were added. For example, we executed an integrated Asian Week of Action, which incorporated paid and earned media, partner outreach, virtual events, and other elements to boost self-response rates among Asian audiences. Asian Week of Action events and materials were conducted and produced, respectively, in multiple languages. We also tailored the 2020Census.gov home page to show auto-targeted, state-specific visuals and language to site visitors, and we sent reminder emails to households in low-responding neighborhoods to encourage questionnaire completion.

The delayed Reminder phase presented a vital opportunity to build trust and credibility with our audiences. Activating local influencers and trusted voices during this phase helped people understand the personal relevance of their participation. Continued education also helped minimize apathy and reduce the number of households requiring an enumerator's visit.

Thank You Phase. While a Thank You phase was proposed in original campaign planning, this phase was not executed as part of the formal communications campaign due to large-scale operational changes and the extended enumeration period of the 2020 Census. However, the Census Bureau acknowledges that the count could not have happened without support from respondents, partners, and stakeholders nationwide. We have expressed thanks to these groups broadly and through targeted communications. Further, we have widely socialized the public release of topline census results. We are using Census Bureau web, social media, email, and other permanent properties to foster ongoing engagement with the audience at large.

Data Dissemination Phase. As with the Thank You phase, a Data Dissemination phase was proposed in original campaign planning but was not executed as part of the formal communications campaign. However, the Census Bureau is broadly publicizing the availability of the 2020 Census results and is promoting use of the data to shape the future of communities across the country. We are also disseminating data and relevant materials directly to partners and stakeholders who have indicated interest in specific datasets. Finally, we are continuing to use our web, social media, email, and other permanent properties to encourage audiences to reference the data and interact with the Census Bureau beyond the 2020 Census.

RESEARCH, TRACKING, AND TARGETING

The 2020 Census research activities included the 2020 CBAMS as well as the development of response propensity models, audience mindset profiles, and audience segment profiles. In designing this research, the Census Bureau aimed to produce tangible findings that could be acted on throughout the campaign. Research results helped us understand the nuances of our audiences—especially those characterized as HTC—and helped us tailor campaign messaging by audience group to motivate self-response.

The Census Bureau also deepened its understanding of the campaign's audiences by conducting the 2020 Census Tracking Survey and the Household Pulse Survey (both introduced on Pages 47-48) over the course of the campaign. With these surveys, we collected data on a rolling basis, which helped us identify trends in public attitudes about, awareness of, and intent to participate in the census over time. Ultimately, the insights drawn from these survey responses helped us evaluate the impact of the communications campaign as it was unfolding.

The sophistication of modern data analytics and media technology benefited the 2020 Census and its communications campaign significantly. In preparing for and executing the communications campaign, we were able to use advanced targeting tactics to deliver paid media at the designated market area (DMA), the ZIP Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA), and even the census "block group" levels. (Census block groups are geographic units that are smaller than census tracts.)

During campaign execution, we frequently referred to research and tracking survey data to ensure that our communication tactics aligned with data-driven strategy. This was especially important as we made significant changes to the campaign, such as launching the communication surge efforts. Despite impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other unexpected challenges, the Census Bureau was able to adapt the campaign while maintaining its integrity and adherence to the established "Shape your future. Start here." platform.

RESEARCH FOR THE 2020 CENSUS CAMPAIGN

Research conducted well before the campaign rolled out was critical to the campaign's eventual success. Our goal for the 2020 Census research was to develop insights that would enable us to deliver relevant, targeted communications—informed by relevant demographic, language-related, and cultural factors—to our audiences through the appropriate channels. Each of the following elements contributed insights to our understanding of the campaign's audience at large, enabling us to meet our goal.

2020 CENSUS BARRIERS, ATTITUDES, AND MOTIVATORS STUDY

The 2020 CBAMS included a quantitative component (a survey) and a qualitative component (focus groups). The study helped the Census Bureau understand the barriers, attitudes, and motivators related to census participation across a wide variety of audience groups.

2020 CBAMS Survey. Conducted in 2018, the 2020 CBAMS survey was administered by mail and internet to a sample of households across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Approximately 17,500 people responded to the survey, which was offered in English and Spanish. Responses were used to compare barriers, attitudes, knowledge levels, and motivators related to census participation across demographic characteristics, including race, sex, education, and country of birth. The results helped us understand the attitudes and knowledge gaps that the 2020 Census campaign needed to address for each audience segment.

2020 CBAMS Focus Groups. Also conducted in 2018, the focus groups enabled us to hear from people who did not speak English or Spanish; had low literacy levels in those languages; or were otherwise unlikely, unwilling, or unable to respond to the survey. Participants were from minority demographic groups and other audiences at risk of low response, and they varied in age, sex, language, race, ethnicity, and technology and media usage.

Forty-two focus groups took place in 14 locations across the country, spanning rural and urban areas. Among those recruited were members of HTC racial and ethnic minority groups, including AIAN, NHPI, and MENA groups. Members of these groups often spoke languages other than English or Spanish and were traditionally hard to reach and survey. In considering this information, the Census Bureau knew it would be difficult to collect adequate survey responses that fully represented the diversity within each of these audience groups. Further, these audience groups had among the lowest predicted likelihoods of responding to the census. Accordingly, the Census Bureau engaged members of these HTC racial and ethnic minority groups in focus groups that were conducted in their primary languages and held in their communities. This enabled us to collect sufficient data to draw statistical inferences about these groups. We then developed useful insights to shape the messaging used to reach and resonate with these groups through the communications campaign.

Full reports on the execution of the 2020 CBAMS and its findings are available at census.gov.

RESPONSE MODELS FOR THE 2020 CENSUS

Drawing on data from previous decennial censuses, the American Community Survey, and other sources, the Census Bureau's data scientists created predictive models for the 2020 Census. Specifically, the Census Bureau used low response scores (LRS) based on self-response to the 2010 Census to measure how little self-response a census tract was likely to have (Erdman & Bates, 2014). We then developed tract-level predicted self-response scores (PSRS). In contrast to the LRS, which predicted the proportion of households that *would not* self-respond, the PSRS predicted the proportion that *would* self-respond.

We then created internet proportion of self-response (IPSR) scores by factoring into the PSRS the two census contact strategies (Internet First and Internet Choice, as defined on Pages 48-49). The IPSR scores predicted the proportion of self-response that would occur online. As campaign planning progressed, the Census Bureau updated these models, incorporating additional data sources. As a last step, we created timing benchmarks that captured the timing of responses in previous Census Bureau data collections. Details about the development and use of the response models, including the LRS, PSRS, and IPSR scores, can be found in the 2020 Census Predictive Models and Audience Segmentation Report on census.gov.

The PSRS and timing benchmarks supported media planning and campaign optimization. Tract-level scores were aggregated to help the campaign monitoring and optimization team understand census response and timing predictions for larger geographic areas, such as at the DMA level. Insights garnered from analyzing these aggregates helped to guide media buying and targeting decisions. Further, the team analyzed the actual rates of census data collection relative to predicted self-response scores and response timing benchmarks. The Census Bureau then used this information to identify areas of potential concern and adjust the communications approach accordingly.

2020 CENSUS CAMPAIGN AUDIENCE MINDSETS

As an output of the 2020 CBAMS process and an input to the audience segmentation process, the Census Bureau developed mindsets: underlying patterns in knowledge, attitudes, barriers, and motivators shared by groups of 2020 CBAMS survey respondents. We ran statistical applications to identify groups of individuals with shared attitudes. We used two algorithms to sort respondents into possible mindset groupings based on their survey responses. We then identified three viable sets of mindset groupings, known as candidate mindset solutions. From these candidate solutions, we selected the most viable solution for the campaign. Within that chosen solution, we found six mindsets:

- The **Eager Engagers** mindset was composed of the most civically engaged people and those with the highest level of knowledge about the census. This group also contained the highest percentage of people who intended to respond to the census.
- The **Fence Sitters** mindset was the largest group, making up 32% of the population. People with this mindset did not have major concerns about responding to the census.
- Individuals with a **Confidentiality Minded** mindset were the most concerned that their answers to census questions would be used against them, but they believed their answers would matter.
- People with a **Head Nodders** mindset were the most likely to respond "yes" to all the knowledge questions on the 2020 CBAMS survey, revealing significant knowledge gaps in specific areas.
- The **Wary Skeptics** mindset was characterized by skepticism of the government and apathy about being counted in the census. Individuals with this mindset were reluctant to participate in the census.
- Individuals identified as having a **Disconnected Doubters** mindset did not use or did not have access to the internet, had above-average levels of apathy toward the census, and were the least likely to respond.

The Census Bureau divided the communications campaign's audience at large into these mindset groups to better understand their varying perspectives and to tailor our 2020 Census messaging to each group accordingly. We considered the trends and traits associated with each mindset group when developing the campaign's advertisements and other outreach materials. The Census Bureau created a variety of campaign assets to resonate with our target audience groups, with the objective of reducing apathy and assuaging their concerns about the census while encouraging them to respond through motivating messages and relevant visuals.

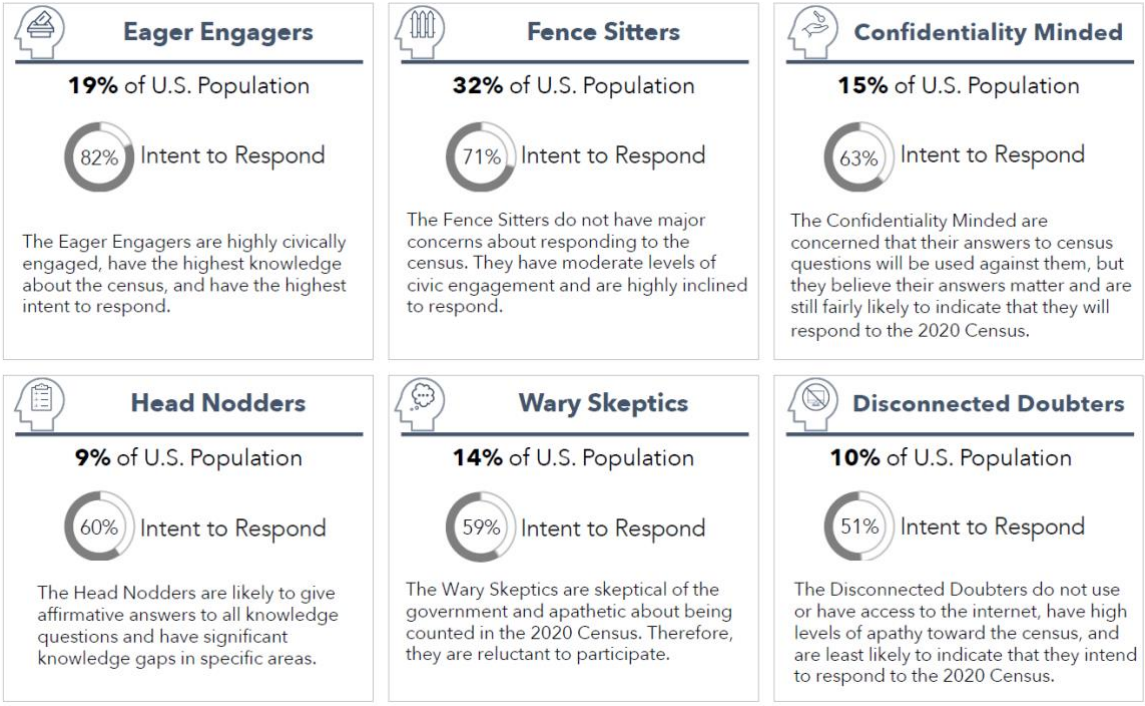


Figure 20: Chart Describing the U.S. Population's Six Mindsets Held With Respect to the 2020 Census

2020 CENSUS CAMPAIGN AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

After identifying the population's six prevailing mindsets, the Census Bureau worked to identify campaign audience segments, or subgroups, in the population (as introduced on Page 23). While the campaign's mindsets reflected the six groups of shared attitudes about, and behaviors related to, the census for the audience at large, the segments represented a different set of eight groups within the audience at large that shared demographic traits, geographic distributions, and predicted likelihood of census response. We identified the prevailing mindsets in each segment as part of our segment analysis; however, mindset data was just one of several components of each segment's profile, as detailed later in this section.

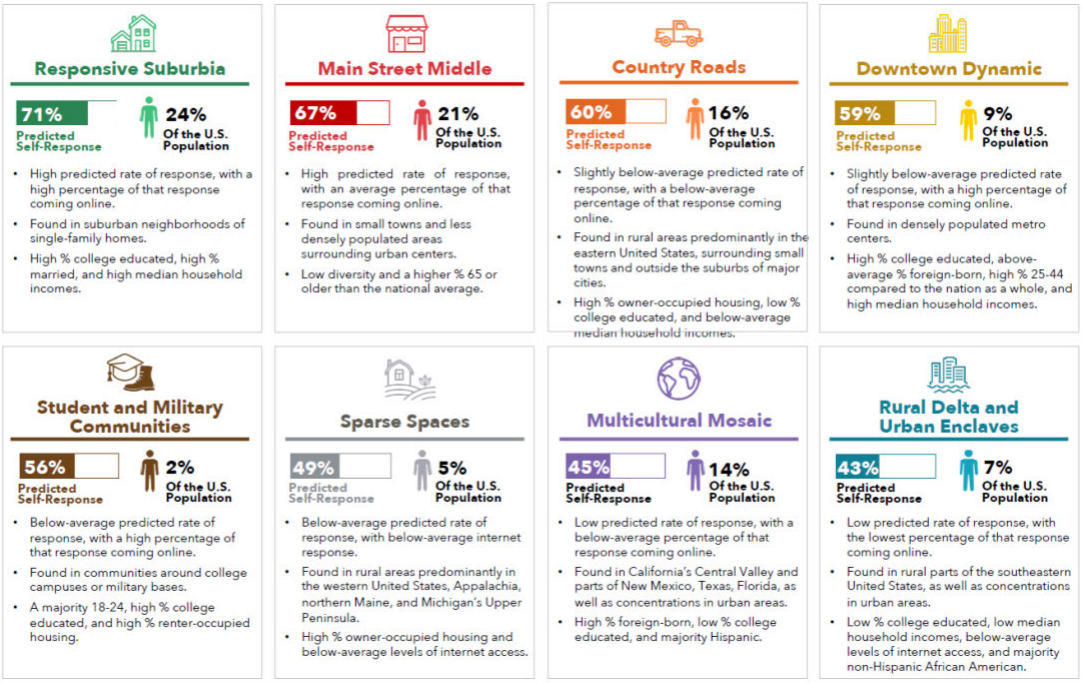


Figure 21: Chart Describing the U.S. Population's Eight Audience Segments for the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Campaign

We identified the campaign audience segments by applying response modeling data at the census tract level. In executing the audience segmentation process, we used two algorithms—the same ones used to develop the mindsets—to group census tracts by their projected response rates and key demographic characteristics. This produced a pool of many audience segmentation solutions. Each solution was composed of audience segments, and each segment had unique characteristics that distinguished it from all other segments.

We selected three candidate solutions from the pool and reviewed the segments associated with each candidate, enabling us to understand how each solution presented a different way of grouping members of the audience at large. We applied the mindset profiles and media consumption data to the census tracts each candidate solution contained. This process revealed the distribution of mindsets and highlighted demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, race, age, and level of educational attainment, shared by audience groupings in each segment.

After reviewing the predicted response rates, underlying demographics, media usage, and mindset information for the three candidates, the Census Bureau selected a single solution as its approach to segmenting the 2020 Census campaign's audience at large. The chosen

solution contained eight audience segments. All members of the campaign's target audience could then be profiled as belonging to one of these eight segments[9]:

- **Responsive Suburbia** was predicted to have the highest rate of self-response overall and by internet. This segment was composed primarily of suburban neighborhoods of single-family homes.
- **Main Street Middle** was predicted to have a higher-than-average rate of self-response overall and by internet. This segment contained small towns and less densely populated neighborhoods surrounding urban centers.
- **Country Roads** was predicted to have an average self-response rate overall, with a below-average proportion of self-responses online. This segment included rural areas located mainly in the eastern United States, as well as small towns and areas outside the suburbs of major cities.
- **Downtown Dynamic** was predicted to have a slightly below-average self-response rate, with a high rate of self-response online. This segment included densely populated metropolitan centers.
- **Student and Military Communities** was predicted to have a slightly below-average self-response rate, with a high rate of self-response online. This segment included college campuses and military bases, and the towns surrounding them. Only 2% of the population lived in the Student and Military Communities segment.
- **Sparse Spaces** was predicted to have a below-average self-response rate, with a below-average percentage of self-responses online. It was composed mainly of rural areas in the western United States, Appalachia, northern Maine, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.
- **Multicultural Mosaic** was predicted to have a below-average self-response rate, with a below-average percentage of self-responses online. This segment had the highest

[9] As stated, there were eight audience segments, and the geographic dispersion of these segments is color-coded on the map in Figure 22. However, it is important to note that one additional grouping of census tracts was identified but excluded from the segmentation process. This grouping is represented in pink on the map and is labeled "No ACS Mailout." Because households in pink-shaded areas did not receive or participate in the American Community Survey (ACS), and because ACS data was a key input to the segmentation process, the Census Bureau was unable to assign tracts located in these areas to an audience segment for the 2020 Census communications campaign.

proportion of people born outside the United States and the highest proportion of non-English-speaking households. Most people in this segment were Hispanic.

- **Rural Delta and Urban Enclaves** was predicted to have the lowest self-response rate of all segments, with the lowest proportion of self-responses online. Most of this segment was non-Hispanic Black/African American.

We developed profiles to describe the geographic distribution pattern and distinct demographic, mindset, self-response propensity, and media consumption characteristics of each segment. The Census Bureau's media experts used the segment profiles to inform media planning and messaging decisions, enabling the campaign to reach all audience groups. The profiles and in-depth descriptions of all segments can be found on census.gov.

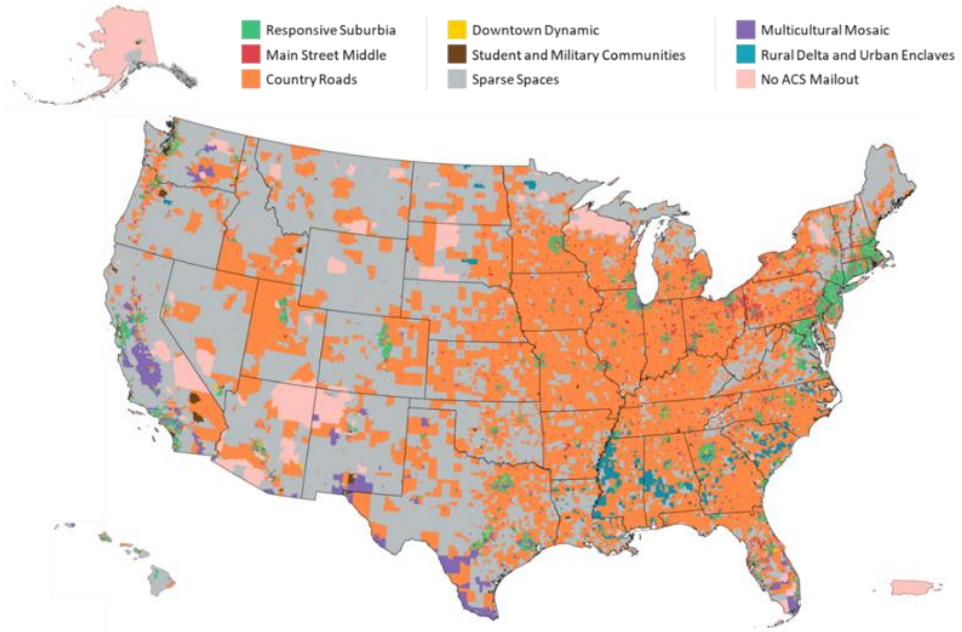


Figure 22: National Map Showing Audience Segments by Census Tract

TRACKING PUBLIC ATTITUDES THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Beyond assessing audience groups' mindsets and likelihood of responding through pre-campaign research, the Census Bureau was able to track audience perceptions of the census as it was taking place. The 2020 Census Tracking Survey was fielded monthly from September through December 2019 and daily beginning in January 2020. It was administered in English and Spanish, and the participant group was broadly diverse with respect to age, race, sex, level of educational attainment, and internet connectivity level.

The tracking survey was fielded separately in two distinct formats: a probability sample telephone survey that collected 1,400 total weekly responses and a nonprobability sample web survey that collected 2,100 total weekly responses. In both formats, the survey asked participants about their awareness of and intent to participate in the census. Survey questions changed frequently during the course of fielding to measure various dimensions of respondent attitudes and perceptions about the census. We added, removed, and adjusted the survey questions throughout the response period and communications campaign, asking about respondents' concerns about privacy and data safety as well as their willingness to work with a census taker in the COVID-19 environment. The phone survey concluded fielding in late June 2020, and the web survey concluded fielding in mid-September 2020.

The insights developed from the tracking survey responses helped guide message development and media targeting throughout the campaign, but especially during the Motivation and Reminder phases when large-scale campaign changes were made. With this data, we could identify trends in perceptions, attitudes, and concerns that our audience at large or specific population groups held about the census, COVID-19 pandemic conditions, or related topics. We could then change the messaging in social media and digital ads, for example, to better resonate with and encourage participation among multicultural audiences. We could also use the data to help direct our paid media targeting and budget allocation. For example, we shifted available media funds from high-response geographies to low-response ones that contained audiences that could benefit from increased exposure to 2020 Census messaging. As census response rates changed, and as public attitudes and perceptions changed, we adjusted our communications approach accordingly.

For more details about the 2020 Census Tracking Survey and its role in campaign monitoring and optimization, see Page 186.

TARGETING MEDIA EXECUTION THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The 2020 Census campaign used data-driven targeting in many of its media tactics, including delivering digital ads to a variety of multicultural and non-English-speaking audiences and delivering broadcast and radio ads to households in rural areas. Advances in technology since 2010 enabled the 2020 Census campaign to take advantage of sophisticated systems for media buying and performance analysis and especially sophisticated targeting capabilities for social and digital media targeting. To take full advantage of these capabilities, the Census Bureau's communication strategy called for highly targeted paid advertising, which enabled prioritization of the audience groups and geographic areas that were least likely to respond and that most needed outreach. As response rates and other circumstances changed during the campaign, the advanced media buying and targeting systems gave us the flexibility to adjust and narrow our media targets as needed.

The Census Bureau's research, including the 2020 CBAMS, segmentation, and modeled response data, was an essential input to the communications targeting process. We aggregated tract-level segment data to produce response totals at various geographic levels, including by DMA, county, congressional district, school district, and ZCTA. Because most paid media activities were deployed at the DMA or ZCTA level, those aggregates were especially important; other campaign efforts, such as partnership and SIS program outreach, relied on the same data to better understand and reach their target audiences—many of which were characterized as HTC.

A sophisticated type of precise media targeting was used during the delayed Reminder phase surge: The Census Bureau sent three waves of emails directly to all households in census block groups with low self-response rates to encourage their participation in the census. A block group is a geographic unit that is smaller than a DMA, ZCTA, and even a census tract. Thus, targeting at the highly granular block group level presented an opportunity to reach specific swaths of households that were most likely to go uncounted in the census and to remind them that census participation would benefit their immediate communities. The Census Bureau had never targeted communications about the decennial census at a granular level affording such precision; through the block group targeting effort, the Census Bureau reached the email inboxes of more than 48 million recipients—many of them in HTC audience groups—and generated more than 400,000 visits to the 2020 Census website. This targeted email series proved successful in driving significant numbers of potential respondents to the internet census questionnaire at a low cost, serving as an example for future media and communications outreach efforts.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION

The creative platform served as the foundation for creative development of the 2020 Census communications campaign. The Census Bureau created the platform and its inspiring tagline—"Shape your future. Start here."—to highlight the ability of individuals to influence the future of their roads, schools, health care, and communities by participating in the 2020 Census. The platform was underpinned by research and data, and it was shaped by insights from diverse communications experts who represented the campaign's audience groups. It is important to note that 2020 Census campaign marketing materials and assets in support of field recruitment efforts, and some materials for partners and stakeholders, were needed in 2018 and early 2019 before the campaign platform had been finalized. These assets were developed with general Census Bureau messaging and design guidelines in mind. However, all other 2020 Census campaign creative elements—including paid advertisements, PSA assets for broadcast, web and social media content, most partner and promotional materials, and other communication pieces—were built on and benefited from the "Shape your future. Start here." platform. After the platform became available, some of the materials developed before the platform were

revised for ongoing use. Revisions helped to align those assets with the rest of the campaign's materials, promoting continuity of 2020 Census branding.

As the key creative idea that underpinned all communication activities and assets, the creative platform comprised the tagline, color palette, style, and messaging guidelines for the 2020 Census branding. The platform was designed to be relevant to diverse audiences and flexible for use across the course of the campaign, especially given the campaign's depth and duration. Further, the platform was crafted to be adaptable for use in various languages, outreach activities, and formats. More than 1,000 advertisements and many more outreach materials were developed for the campaign. To ensure cumulative impact, it was essential that audiences perceive these individual communication pieces as part of a single, omnichannel campaign. Use of the "Shape your future. Start here." platform helped ensure that all pieces aligned with the central fundamental campaign strategy and would resonate with their target audiences.

DEVELOPING THE CAMPAIGN

Creation of the platform and the subsequent production of ads and other materials were critical to ensuring that messages about the 2020 Census were heard across the country. However, previous steps in the development process were just as valuable. Research and data analysis, strategy formulation, insight gathering from audience experts, and collaboration across the Census Bureau's communications team significantly shaped the development of the campaign's creative platform and materials.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The creative development process was thorough and data-driven, prioritizing the needs of the campaign's audience groups. The Census Bureau involved a diverse group of creative and multicultural firms in the process and continually engaged stakeholders in collaboration. The key components of the creative development process were:

- **Creative Insights.** We organized and reviewed findings from research-based inputs (including findings from the 2020 CBAMS).
- **Overarching Creative Brief.** We developed the brief to serve as a foundation for the central campaign idea and all creative "executions" (creative elements or products).
- **Platform Workshop.** We participated in a collaborative workshop to brainstorm the development of creative platform concepts.
- **Platform Testing.** We tested three creative platform concepts, using quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

- **Platform Review and Selection.** We reviewed candidate concepts, selected the "Shape your future. Start here." concept, and defined that platform's overarching creative themes.
- **Creative Execution Testing and Deployment.** We developed original creative executions in alignment with the chosen platform. From ad families—or thematically related sets of ads—qualified through testing, we created and deployed a range of final ad executions for television, radio, magazines, newspapers, digital, and out-of-home paid media. We also used elements of the ad executions to develop public service announcements for radio and television, content for social media, the 2020 Census website, partnership and SIS program materials, and other areas of the campaign.

The platform testing and selection as well as the testing of creative executions are discussed in further detail in the following section.

PLATFORM AND CREATIVE EXECUTION TESTING

The Census Bureau started creating the platform in October 2018, when we held a workshop to develop platform concepts. The creative development team, which included strategists, media planners, creative directors, and multicultural audience and communication experts, formulated potential platforms, expressing campaign concepts and themes through words, pictures, taglines, and other ad-like objects (ad-lobs). After Census Bureau review of these concepts, the platforms were fleshed out in several formats, including sample TV scripts, out-of-home media, mobile ads, and website landing pages. Reviewers selected three platforms from the eight options presented, and these selected platforms proceeded to Quick Idea Platform Testing (QIPT).

The Census Bureau conducted QIPT for one week in November 2018. The purpose was to select the single strongest platform from the three options presented, based on direct feedback from members of the campaign's target audiences. During testing, we showed ad-lobs to participants and explored how the audiences perceived the creative platforms and whether each platform was relevant, motivating, and compelling. It was important for the Census Bureau to discern whether its target audiences would be driven to respond to the 2020 Census if presented with an advertising campaign in each platform's general theme.

Quantitative and Qualitative Testing of Creative Platforms. The testing plan balanced the desire to get efficient feedback across numerous audience groups with the limitations of various techniques for reaching different audience segments. The Census Bureau used a multimethod testing approach to determine which of the three proposed creative platforms would most effectively motivate target audiences. To ensure robust feedback from diverse mass audiences (which included the English-speaking "general population" audience group),

people with characteristics typical of HTC populations (referred to as "low response" in testing), and multicultural audiences, we used the following three methods:

- Online quantitative testing (with a sample size of 2,000).
- Focus groups (18 in total, held across nine states).
- Community representative reviews (CRRs; 10 one-on-one interviews with representatives who were immersed in the culture and conduct of a target audience group and could articulate the community's issues in a complete and contextual way).

Testing was designed to reach as many audiences as possible through the online survey. Focus groups and CRR sessions were layered into the testing for select audiences that could not be effectively reached by online testing. The proposed creative platforms were tested using only one of the three methodologies per unique audience, as outlined in Table 2. All platform testing—including the online testing, focus groups, and CRRs—was conducted in English.

The Census Bureau's multicultural partner agencies recommended either focus groups or CRRs to reach audiences whose diverse perspectives could not fully be accounted for through online testing. For Black/African American audiences, the Census Bureau's use of CRRs with community members enabled testing of creative platforms across a diverse group representing multiple countries of origin, including the United States. In planning CRRs for this group, the Census Bureau reflected on experience from fielding previous research, such as the 2020 CBAMS, and considered the very limited fielding window for QIPT. We determined that it would be difficult to achieve full representation of the Black/African American community's diversity of perspectives on the platform concepts through online testing or focus groups. We proceeded, then, to conduct CRRs. The aim of the CRRs was to elicit feedback from Black/African American community members who could represent the totality of perspectives encompassed in the broad and complex Black/African American experience as a whole. The Black/African American community representatives we consulted with included Afro-Hispanic individuals and Black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean as well as U.S. native-born African American individuals who represented different geographic locations, demographic characteristics, socioeconomic circumstances, levels of educational attainment, and cultural backgrounds. The Black/African American audience, in testing, was also considered, along with various other audience groups, as part of the general population group, from which feedback was collected through online quantitative testing.

Table 2: Online Quick Idea Platform Testing With Quantitative Testing, Focus Group, and Community Representative Review Methodologies

QIPT Audiences	Online Quantitative Testing	In-Person Focus Groups	Community Representative Reviews
General population	X		
Low response	X		
American Indian and Alaska Native		X	
Asian (including, but not limited to, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Asian Indian)		X	
Hispanic, U.S. mainland (including a mix of origins)		X	
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander		X	
People living in rural counties		X	
Black/African American			X
People living in Puerto Rico			X

CRRs for people living in Puerto Rico enabled the Census Bureau to reach those living in areas where internet penetration was particularly low (according to the 2016 American Community Survey) and where opt-in research panels would not have provided adequate coverage. Use of CRRs for this audience was also important because condensed testing and campaign planning timelines precluded translating materials into Spanish to hold focus groups.

Creative Platform Selection. QIPT indicated that all audiences could relate to ad-lobs representing the "Shape your future. Start here." platform. This platform performed well in both quantitative and qualitative testing, and audiences interpreted its messaging and tone as positive and forward-looking. Test participants saw "Shape your future. Start here." as both informative and personable, and they felt the platform was speaking to them through its messaging and tone.

In December 2018, the Census Bureau approved "Shape your future. Start here." Selection of this platform signaled to the creative development team that they could begin building out the ad-lobs, adding color, imagery, animation, music, voice-over, and other creative elements as called for by the medium.

In-Platform Creative Testing. Following platform selection, the creative development team built out creative "originals." Originals were representative creative pieces for topically linked ads. These pieces were intended for specific audiences within the campaign. Writing, design, and strategy directors on the creative development team worked to craft TV and video

animatics, audio recordings (suggestive of radio commercials), static ads (representative of magazine, newspaper, and out-of-home advertising), and paid online and social ads (such as display banner and social media advertising). Originals served as parent creative pieces, which would be built out into larger families of similar advertisements centered on the same key theme or concept. Census Bureau reviewers provided input to the creative development team on the originals throughout the asset creation process. Once the creative development team made final revisions and secured approval from Census Bureau reviewers, the creative originals were ready for campaign testing.

Campaign testing was conducted on creative original materials that were in concept or early-stage formats, allowing time for course correction when needed. The goal of campaign testing was to evaluate the originals and the stories they told.

Like QIPT, campaign testing was conducted using a multimethod approach. This approach included:

- Online qualitative sessions (with a sample size of 188).
- Focus groups (122 in total).
- CRRs (34 in total).

These three methodologies were chosen because they were the most effective means of reaching a broad range of audiences in testing. The research effort was designed to ensure that each creative original was tested in at least two focus groups or the equivalent with online qualitative activity sessions.

Table 3: Campaign Testing With Online Qualitative, Focus Group, and Community Representative Review Methodologies

Audience	Online Qualitative Sessions	In-Person Focus Groups	Community Representative Reviews
Diverse Mass – General Population (English)			
Rural	X	X	
Households with young children	X	X	
English-dominant Latino	X	X	
Black/African American (online)	X		
Lesbian, gay, and bisexual	X		
Young and mobile	X		
Middle Eastern and North African	X	X	
South Asian	X		
Other Non-English Languages			
Arabic-reliant or preferred speakers		X	X
Polish-reliant or preferred speakers		X	X
Russian-reliant or preferred speakers		X	X
American Indian and Alaska Native			
American Indian		X	
Alaska Native		X	
Asian			
Chinese-reliant or preferred speakers (Mandarin and Cantonese)		X	
Japanese-reliant or preferred speakers		X	X
Korean-reliant or preferred speakers		X	
Tagalog-reliant or preferred speakers (Filipino)		X	
Vietnamese-reliant or preferred speakers		X	
Undocumented Asian			X
Black/African American, Haitian Creole, Sub-Saharan African, and Undocumented African/Caribbean			
Low-income/low-education Black/African American		X	
Haitian Creole-reliant or preferred		X	X
Sub-Saharan African (French)		X	
Undocumented African/Caribbean			X
Afro-Caribbean			X

Audience	Online Qualitative Sessions	In-Person Focus Groups	Community Representative Reviews
Latino, Brazilian, and Puerto Rican			
Spanish, U.S. mainland (including a mix of countries of origin)		X	X
Spanish, Puerto Rico (island residents, not those living within continental United States)		X	
Portuguese-reliant or preferred speakers (Brazilian)		X	X
Undocumented Latino			X
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander			
Residents of U.S. mainland		X	
Residents of Hawaii		X	

Notes:
(1) Black/African American online testing participants were not required to meet HTC criteria, so the Black/African American online audience was not the same as the Black/African American audience in focus groups, which were made up of participants who met HTC criteria.

(2) The lesbian, gay, and bisexual audience was limited to sexual orientation categories because, consistent with other Census Bureau surveys and forms, the gender identity screening question was a binary option (i.e., male/female) and thus did not measure non-cisgender identities.

As shown in Table 3, online qualitative sessions were used to reach the diverse mass audience, which represented a wide range of demographic criteria, as well as English-reliant audiences of interest. The diverse mass audience includes the following groups:

- General population.
- Rural households.
- Households with young children.
- English-dominant Latino individuals.
- Black/African American individuals.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.
- Young and mobile individuals.
- Middle Eastern and North African individuals.
- South Asian individuals.

Oversamples were used to ensure representation of smaller subgroups that received diverse mass audience messaging as part of the 2020 campaign.

Focus groups and CRRs were used to reach audiences that could not be effectively reached through online testing. Focus groups were conducted in 13 languages, including English, with individuals demonstrating two or more HTC traits. In the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss and evaluate campaign concepts and messaging.

Audiences covered through community representative review include those with fewer than four focus groups or the equivalent of two focus groups' worth of participants in online qualitative sessions. CRRs were conducted in English with in-language materials reviewed by bilingual community representatives. This method used direct one-on-one conversations with community representatives who could speak on behalf of identified audiences about how creative originals would resonate with their respective audience's cultural perspectives, motivations, and concerns.

Research results from campaign testing were collected, analyzed, and summarized. The results were presented to Census Bureau reviewers in June 2019. Researchers and strategists highlighted the strengths of certain creative executions and identified trends in testing results. They also provided actionable insights and suggested directions to take in refining the creative originals as final creative executions were produced.

Feedback From Internal and External Census Bureau Stakeholders. Following campaign testing, the Census Bureau provided direction to the creative development team. The creative development team then worked to refine and finalize the creative executions, which were the versions to be broadcast, published, and otherwise released through communication channels.

Given internal and external stakeholders' importance to conducting a successful census, the Census Bureau involved these stakeholders at decision points throughout the creation of the communications campaign, but especially during creative development. Stakeholders provided valuable insights that were incorporated into revisions of creative executions. We kept stakeholders informed of creative development milestones and ultimately involved them in the approval of final creative executions.

EXECUTING AND REFINING THE CAMPAIGN

The creative platform was made to be adaptable, which enabled the campaign to communicate with diverse audiences and through a range of advertising and outreach tactics—while still reinforcing the "Shape your future. Start here." key theme. The adaptability of the platform allowed for customization of communication materials. These materials were provided to state and local governments, Complete Count Committees, partners, and stakeholders and could be tailored by these groups for their own outreach efforts.

Many organizations were willing to distribute materials promoting the census but did not necessarily have the resources to produce them. By providing organizations with customizable, templated resources, the Census Bureau enhanced the reach of campaign communications to

diverse audience groups—many of them HTC. Championing the census and encouraging participation in their communities, these organizations distributed the customized materials on social media; via email; on their websites; and in print formats, by mail or as leave-behinds in their physical locations.

The adaptability of the creative platform was also crucial to the Census Bureau's ability to meet the challenges that arose in 2020. During campaign execution, it became clear that we needed to adjust campaign materials to better reflect enumeration plans, as well as the changing public environment. The flexibility of the creative platform enabled us to revise existing materials and produce new ones while the campaign was underway. For example, we released new families of ads, including the "Recovery" and "First Responders" ads (released in April 2020), to emphasize the benefits of census participation in the face of a pandemic. The visual style, tone, and color palette of the new materials remained consistent with those prescribed by the creative platform. By following the platform's creative guidelines, we could quickly develop and deploy new communication materials, knowing they would be consistent with the rest of the campaign.

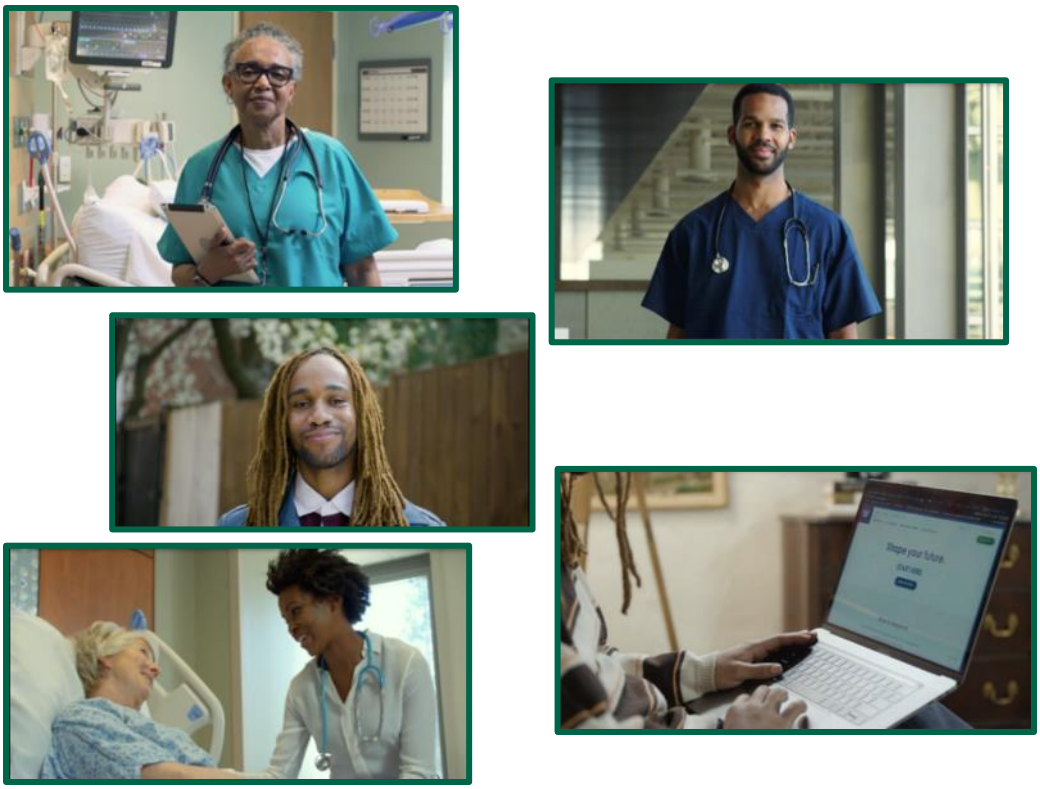


Figure 23: Photo Stills From the Motivation Phase "Recovery" TV Commercial Intended for Black/African American Audiences

CREATIVE ADJUSTMENTS

As campaign ads and elements were deployed, the Census Bureau conducted daily monitoring of all advertisements, measuring the ads' performance on a range of factors. We analyzed earned and social media discussions about the ads, identifying themes and trends among them. We also analyzed audience interactions with the campaign's social and digital media ads, examining engagement metrics such as impressions, views, shares, clicks, comments, or reactions (such as likes). The Census Bureau considered the channels through which the campaign's audience groups responded to the ads, as well as the valence—or degree of positive or negative sentiment—of those responses. The engagement metrics indicated how audience groups encountered campaign communications. These metrics also identified which ads, visuals, and messages drove audience actions, such as ad clicks and shares.

Further, the Census Bureau's daily campaign monitoring included analysis of audience response rates and census awareness data (as collected by the 2020 Census Tracking Survey), which highlighted trends in public participation in and perceptions of the census.

Collectively, the ad performance data, census response rates, and census awareness data helped provide insights into the reach and resonance of advertisements and other campaign elements. These insights prompted critical increases in the paid media budget and expansion of advertising activities early in the campaign. In addition, the insights guided the Census Bureau in identifying and adjusting ads that would benefit from a revised headline, a different visual, or a more direct call to action. Adjusting advertisements—one of many optimization techniques used throughout the campaign—helped improve the campaign's efficiency and strengthen its overall impact, helping us to better connect with audience groups.

COMMUNICATION SURGE EFFORTS

It was especially important that we adjust our creative approach once the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. The Census Bureau aimed to show sensitivity to the impacts of the virus and to emphasize that census participation was important to ensuring that communities would receive adequate funding, resources, and government representation in the months and years to come. Accordingly, we revised some existing ads and created new ones that illustrated the importance of first responders, inspired hope and recovery, and reflected public health precautions implemented by the Census Bureau to ensure that everyone could be counted safely.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, related operational challenges, and concerns about low census self-response rates (especially among HTC audience groups), we planned and launched several large campaignwide optimizations that took shape in three communication surge efforts to encourage census participation by members of the audience at large. The surge

efforts were designed to enhance the campaign's "surround sound" effect in which target audience groups would have multiple touch points with the communications campaign through a variety of advertising and outreach tactics. The communication surges were implemented during the campaign's Motivation and Reminder phases at times when it was critical to raise awareness of the census and boost response rates. It was also important that activities and tactics break through busy news cycles and the saturated media environment, reaching the audience at large and individual low-response audience groups.

April/May Breakthrough Surge. The April/May breakthrough surge, introduced on Page 59, sought to build on the audience engagement and campaign momentum generated during Census Week in early April. The April/May breakthrough surge was designed to increase lagging public awareness about the census by breaking through the busy media environment, in which conversation and reporting about COVID-19 was near-constant. At this time, the pandemic had taken root nationwide and the presidential primary elections were also attracting significant public attention.

In planning the range of activities executed across the campaign, the Census Bureau considered that much of the population was suddenly more often at home, whether working, helping children with at-home learning, spending time with family members, or consuming digital and social media. During the widespread lockdowns, many people left their homes only to visit essential businesses, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and takeout restaurants. Internet use and consumption of digital and social media, specifically, increased significantly with people spending so much time at home (Openvault, 2020; Koeze & Popper, 2020). Accordingly, the April/May breakthrough surge sought to create 2020 Census communication touch points with people in these physical and digital environments. For instance, the Census Bureau purchased additional digital out-of-home media placements near grocery and convenience stores, pharmacies, and similar establishments. The Census Bureau also implemented a series of local paid media heavy-ups and expanded the campaign's use of traditional and digital media through several novel and highly targeted executions. For example, we created 2020 Census-branded flyers in English and Spanish to be attached to pizza box tops. Through a media placement and integration with national and local pizza chains, these flyers were delivered to households in markets with lower-than-expected self-response rates. The flyer's headline read, "The easiest way to complete the 2020 Census is online at home. Enjoy the pizza."

We developed a suite of multi-audience, multichannel "campaign pivot" advertising materials whose tone addressed the changed public environment. The materials were designed to show sensitivity to all those affected by COVID-19, while reinforcing the relevance of the census and fostering public engagement with the count. Ads emphasized the ease and safety of

responding online and conveyed the importance of census participation, even in a pandemic period marked by concern and uncertainty. The pivot creative assets were developed for the diverse mass audience as well as for multicultural and niche audience groups, with a particular focus on reaching HTC audiences. The assets were produced for TV, radio, print, out-of-home, and digital advertising formats.

Finally, as part of the April/May breakthrough surge, we developed and deployed messaging and paid digital ads—alongside other campaign efforts—to reach audience groups in Update Leave areas where field enumeration was paused and where, understandably, self-response rates were lagging. Ads were targeted to Hispanic audiences, AIAN audiences, and those living in Puerto Rico—populations that were heavily represented in Update Leave areas. The messaging encouraged audience members to look for their mailed reminder letter and Census ID to complete the 2020 Census online, especially if a paper questionnaire had not yet been delivered to their household.

Figure 24: Print Ad Targeted to Households in Update Leave Areas for the Motivation Phase

While creative development was tightly integrated with media planning and buying throughout the campaign, this was especially true during the communication surges, when large efforts

were quickly moving from conception to in-market implementation. More information about paid media heavy-ups and placements for the April/May breakthrough surge can be found on Page 70.

Extended Motivation Phase Surge. The extended Motivation phase surge, as described on Page 70, encompassed a series of regional, weeklong activations. In July 2020, the activations rolled out across multiple communication channels: We aimed to surround the public with census messaging and to generate a wave of self-response like the one produced by Census Week in early April 2020. We also aimed to make the 2020 Census feel personal and relevant to our target audiences on a local level. The Census Bureau used a rolling format to deploy one weeklong communication surge to each of the six census regions over a five-week span. These surges involved region-specific outreach, and all communication tactics were developed in coordination with the Census Bureau's office staffs in the Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York City, and Philadelphia census regions.

The creative materials for the regional surges built on previous Motivation phase messaging and helped localize that messaging at the city and community levels. The Census Bureau produced assets in English and Spanish for TV, radio, social and digital video, digital banners, and print channels. Videos were a key asset for the extended Motivation phase surge. We created a total of 22 videos, including 13 videos for audiences nationwide and nine region-specific videos. The Census Bureau communications team worked with the regional office staffs to determine the focus for each region-specific video. The region-specific videos could focus on a particular audience, such as Black/African American or migrant farmworker groups; a particular city, such as Houston or New York City; or the region at large, from a diverse mass targeting perspective. For the video content, we invited those who serve as trusted voices, regional influencers, and other community members to submit video clips of themselves speaking about the personal and community importance of the census. The clips were woven together to produce 30-second montage videos, as well as a range of videos cut to shorter lengths for use in social and digital media. While paid media continued to run throughout the extended Motivation phase surge, the videos were largely promoted by and supported through (nonpaid) owned media, such as the Census Bureau's website and social media channels, and through earned media coverage. Local and hyperlocal media and partnership outreach helped ensure that the videos reached small audience groups and neighborhoods—especially those considered HTC—throughout each census region.

Following the regional communication surges, census self-response rates in each region showed substantial growth. Since increases in the rate of self-response had tapered off considerably following Census Week in April 2020, the increases noted after the extended

Motivation phase surge were significant. The increased self-response rates also reduced the number of households that would be visited by enumerators for nonresponse followup.

Figure 25: Photo Stills From the New York City Community Influencer Video for the Extended Motivation Phase Surge

Delayed Reminder Phase Surge. The delayed Reminder phase surge, introduced on Page 72, was designed to create one last surge of self-response before the count ended. Given several shifts in the end date for enumeration, it was important that communication materials drive potential respondents to complete the questionnaire—preferably by self-responding—as soon as possible. The Census Bureau aimed to ensure that all households were counted and to reduce in-person enumeration, as part of NRFU, as much as possible.

The delayed Reminder phase surge amplified the messaging of the campaign's Reminder phase and communicated that the NRFU operation was in progress and would be conducted safely. Many assets deployed to support the delayed Reminder phase surge had been developed before the onset of the pandemic but were revised to show sensitivity to the

changed environment. For example, materials across the campaign—but especially creative assets running on paid media—were changed to show enumerators wearing masks and practicing physical distancing when going door to door and conducting the count. Visuals depicting social events and group gatherings were also removed.

Other assets deployed as part of the delayed Reminder phase surge were newly planned and created while the campaign was in progress. These new assets supported the final census participation push while emphasizing the Census Bureau's health protocols to ensure a safe NRFU operation in the pandemic environment. Radio, print, out-of-home, and digital ads were created for audience groups in Puerto Rico to convey the importance of census participation to their communities. These ads also urged cooperation with census takers visiting the homes of those who had not yet responded.

The creative pieces deployed for the delayed Reminder phase surge through paid media were heavily supported by partnership and SIS program outreach, public and media relations, and social media. In addition, during this surge, the 2020 Census website's content was frequently updated as operational changes were made, and we sent three waves of targeted emails to households in low-response census block groups.

KEY MESSAGES AND CAMPAIGN LANGUAGES

As presented through the "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform, the key theme conveyed throughout the campaign was that respondents had the power to influence the future of their communities—large or small—through census participation. The Census Bureau crafted the platform to make this theme relevant to diverse members of all campaign audiences, who had a variety of needs and interests for their communities.

The theme, which framed the census as an opportunity, was bolstered by supporting messages that approached census participation from multiple perspectives, emphasizing the ease, safety, and benefits of responding. For example, the supporting message "It has never been easier to complete the census form from home online, by phone, or by mail" was used in ads and other materials throughout the campaign to emphasize how easy it was to self-respond.

The Census Bureau also deployed supporting messages that conveyed information about the timing and status of enumeration efforts and that helped assuage public concerns about the safety and security of participation. When the paid campaign kicked off in mid-January 2020, before the COVID-19 outbreak had reached pandemic proportions, communications raised awareness of the census and focused on answering questions the public might have. We conveyed the purpose and benefits of the census, how to participate, and the importance of counting everyone in the home. We also stressed that the public would soon be contacted by

the Census Bureau, whether by mail (for most) or in person (for some), and that the internet self-response option would also soon be available.

As the campaign progressed into spring 2020, and as COVID-19 became more widespread, the campaign's messaging became more urgent and invited the public to respond right away. While messaging aimed to drive response throughout the campaign—and while we planned for communications to urge participation even before the pandemic set in—responding right away was the focus of campaign messaging by March, when self-response became available. From March through June 2020, most creative and outreach materials invited people in all audience groups to self-respond by completing the census questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail. Messaging emphasized the ease, safety, and security of census participation while prioritizing online response. At the same time, we emphasized that response by mail was also viable; we sought to reassure the public that the postal service was reliable, though there were ultimately some mail delays due to the pandemic and to mail system changes implemented by the federal government. Further, among audience groups for which self-response was not available or preferred, we communicated the message that in-person enumeration operations were being adapted to help protect the public and Census Bureau employees in the COVID-19 environment. The Census Bureau understood that members of the public were changing their daily routines, caring for loved ones, and consuming significant amounts of news as they sought to manage the pandemic's impact on their lives. We impressed upon our audiences that while taking steps to address the pandemic was important, it was also critical that households complete the census. We stressed that participation would ensure that their communities would receive funding and representation in the federal government to address future public health, emergency preparedness, economic, and education issues, among others.

As the count and the campaign moved into July and August, communication materials reiterated that community services, infrastructure, and growth plans relied on an accurate census count. The Census Bureau localized outreach and engaged regional influencers to deliver these messages—especially through video and earned media. As a result, we were able to reach HTC audience groups with communications that would resonate deeply with them, building on previous advertising efforts to illustrate the relevance of the census to respondents' immediate neighborhoods. At this time, we urged the public not to delay and to self-respond to the census right away. By late August and early September, we began to emphasize that time to complete the questionnaire was running out. In addition, we communicated the message that census takers from our audiences' communities would soon be visiting households that had not yet responded, and we requested the public's cooperation if they were visited by an enumerator.

As the campaign and the count approached their final weeks, in September and early October 2020, our messaging consisted of one last urgent call to participate in the decennial census before time ran out. Campaign communications urged people to self-respond or to work with the census taker who would be coming to their door. We emphasized that field staff members were working hard to conduct household visits and would soon complete NRFU to honor the enumeration deadline. Finally, campaign communications conveyed that the Census Bureau was keeping a close eye on data quality as enumerators collected responses in person, reflecting the Census Bureau's ongoing commitment to getting a complete and accurate count and upholding respondents' privacy.

Figure 26: Digital Ad in Korean for the Reminder Phase

Although the precise wording of these messages varied slightly by language, the general messaging themes were consistent across all languages used by the campaign. At the campaign's outset, the 13 languages used across advertisements and other materials were English, Spanish, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional; Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Haitian Creole, Russian, Polish, Arabic, Portuguese, and French (Sub-Saharan African). These languages were selected based on research results, input from advisory committees and subject matter experts, and data from the 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates, as discussed on Pages 22-29. However, when paid media efforts were expanded in June and August 2020, as noted on Pages 59-61, the Census Bureau incorporated 34 additional languages. We then launched paid search, digital programmatic, newspaper, or radio ads in each of these 34 languages. These expansions enabled us to directly reach and connect with an even larger range of non-English-speaking audience groups. We estimate that more than 99% of the country's population received communications about the 2020 Census through campaign advertising and outreach efforts.

COURSE OF CAMPAIGN OPTIMIZATIONS

Beyond planning for adaptation of messaging and flexible application of the creative platform during the campaign, the Census Bureau planned to implement optimizations. As previously discussed, we recognized that the campaign would need to be adjusted during execution, given its breadth, duration, and diverse audience. To prepare for this, we created an optimization playbook to plan a range of strategic and tactical responses to scenarios that might arise during campaign execution. As the campaign progressed, we referred to the playbook and to census response and tracking survey data, among other sources, to evaluate the campaign's health and identify potential areas of concern. All members of the communications team were prepared to adjust their respective areas of the campaign, whether related to media placements, the 2020 Census website, the partnership or SIS program, creative assets, or public and media relations.

Adjusting the campaign's creative assets played a key role in campaign optimization. The Census Bureau relied on the creative platform, audience research, and insights from multicultural audience experts to determine how to change creative assets, when needed, to maximize their impact. Revising creative assets included swapping out one call to action for another, changing the color of an icon or graphic, or entirely revising the message and visual to evoke a different feeling. Some creative assets, such as social and digital media materials, were designed to be revised easily, while others, such as television and radio commercials, required more time and resources to change.

Changes to campaign assets were necessitated by changes in the public environment and in media opportunities and availability. Both types of changes occurred following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and were addressed by the Census Bureau's communications team during the campaign's extended Motivation and delayed Reminder phases. For example, after the onset of the pandemic, it was no longer appropriate to depict large social gatherings or students sitting together in a classroom; policies implemented by many local governments across the country had placed restrictions on these otherwise routine interactions. As a result, the Census Bureau replaced visuals of groups with simple graphics or images of health care providers and first responders at work. In addition, with many people suddenly at home during the day instead of at work or school, their media consumption increased (Weitman & Essling, 2020). Brands therefore began to compete for paid digital and daytime television advertising space. As advertisers—including the Census Bureau—competed for public attention, the predictability of media inventory availability and pricing significantly diminished. In response to this changed landscape, we adjusted the sizes, formats, and placements of some creative assets running in paid media to ensure that our messages about the 2020 Census continued to effectively reach our target audiences.

In addition to responding to external and environmental factors, campaign optimizations were implemented based on the performance of individual creative assets. These performance-based optimizations were anticipated and were expected to be routine throughout the campaign. The Census Bureau's advanced analytics technology provided us with insights on the success of the campaign's advertising headlines, calls to action, visual elements, and audience targeting. We could then implement creative changes or adjust ads' dedicated spend, media placement, audience targeting, location targeting, or delivery timing. The goal of these changes was to improve performance, which could be gauged through the quantity and quality of audience engagements with the ads. Of course, as the optimizations were made, we analyzed materials across the campaign to ensure that our changes were appropriate, maintained consistency with other elements, and continued to work toward the overarching goal of driving census response.

For more details about the Census Bureau's campaign monitoring and optimization efforts, see Page 186.

IPC PROGRAM COMPONENT EXECUTION

The 2020 Census communications campaign involved numerous coordinated activities. As described in previous sections, these campaign elements and outreach efforts were driven by research and data, as well as by communications industry best practices and insights from audience experts. The integrated activities and tactics discussed in this section were key to the success of the 2020 Census campaign. Coordination among these activities and tactics was crucial in the face of environmental and operational changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The components of our campaign were:

- Stakeholder relations.
- The 2020 Census Partnership Program.
- Paid advertising and media.
- Public relations, media relations, and events.
- Crisis communications.
- Website development and digital activities.
- Social media.
- The 2020 Statistics in Schools (SIS) program.
- Integrated communication efforts to improve the count of young children.
- Field recruitment advertising and communications.
- Campaign monitoring and optimization activities.

In the following subsections, we summarize the activities executed in each area of the campaign. We also note whether these activities adhered to or departed from original campaign plans laid out in the Integrated Communications Plan (Versions 2.0 and 1.0). We discuss planning changes, tactical pivots, and outcomes of activity execution for each campaign area, as relevant.

STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Stakeholders were invaluable to the success of the 2020 Census and the communications campaign. Stakeholders broadly include state, tribal, and local governments; national nonpartisan and nonprofit organizations; community-based organizations; and Census Bureau advisory committees. Stakeholders are typically members of, or situated within, the communities they represent, and they understand the challenges, concerns, cultural nuances, and language preferences of those population groups. Stakeholders directly informed the campaign by sharing insights with and offering recommendations to the Census Bureau about their communities. Taking stakeholder insights into account helped us develop outreach materials that resonated with the groups the stakeholders represented. During the enumeration period, many stakeholders were champions for the census, encouraging participation among their constituents. Stakeholders also provided strategic input to the Census Bureau as it made decisions about operational and communication changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relationship between the Census Bureau and stakeholders is very collaborative. The Census Bureau routinely conducts stakeholder outreach and aims to make census data accessible and usable for stakeholder needs. Having used census data to advance government, nonprofit, community, and business initiatives, stakeholders are well positioned to champion the value of an accurate count. Throughout the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau maintained open lines of communication with stakeholders, ensuring that they were equipped with information and resources to help them participate in and promote the count. Even after the count, we remain dedicated to engaging with and responding to stakeholders who are invested in census results.

STAKEHOLDER ROLES AND ENGAGEMENT

The 2020 Census was relevant to a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including entities that represent diverse constituencies, such as populations with specific cultural backgrounds or those in specific geographic areas (e.g., rural, suburban, urban). Some stakeholders were also Census Bureau partners for the 2020 Census; partnerships were established through the Census Bureau's partnership program, which is discussed in detail on Page 108.

Examples of stakeholders include:

- Federal oversight bodies, such as the U.S. Congress, the Office of Inspector General, and the Government Accountability Office.

- Members of the National Advisory Committee, Census Scientific Advisory Committee, State Data Center program, and Census Information Centers.
- Intergovernmental associations.
- Faith-based organizations.
- Businesses and chambers of commerce.
- Tribal, state, county, and local governments.
- Academic institutions.
- Civic engagement organizations.
- Community organizations.
- Education and youth and child advocacy groups.
- Philanthropic groups.
- Members of the media.

Leading up to the count, the Census Bureau conducted outreach about the 2020 Census to stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels. We engaged them through direct contact and relationship building, committee meetings, public briefings, webinars, and other events. For example, in addition to our routine webinars, we hosted a large-scale webinar in July 2019 to formally brief census stakeholders about the communications campaign. During this webinar, we shared operational updates, key 2020 Census dates, planned campaign tactics, and suggestions on how stakeholders could get involved. We also created resources for stakeholders, such as toolkits for congressional officials, state and local governments, and federal government agencies. These materials were accessible from the Census Bureau's website. We understood that stakeholders would have various levels of interest in the census and in engaging with the Census Bureau. They would also have different levels of capacity and resources to dedicate to activities supporting the census. We did not impose expectations on stakeholders, but we were appreciative of any stakeholder efforts to promote the census among their constituents and communities. Stakeholders also provided insights to help the Census Bureau execute 2020 Census operations and the communications campaign. These insights were key to understanding the campaign's target audiences and to making decisions about how best to reach and count them.

During enumeration, and especially as the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges arose, the Census Bureau continued to interact with stakeholders, both directly and through public channels. Stakeholders were encouraged to stay apprised of announcements through the Census Bureau's website, press releases, social media, and email blasts. In addition,

stakeholders participated in and provided feedback through virtual advisory committee meetings and similar forums as the Census Bureau implemented operational changes. While these interactions would have happened even without the pandemic, there were more frequent and formal briefings due to the operational challenges induced by COVID-19. The Census Bureau conducted outreach to city and state governments and appeared in meetings with the U.S. Congress, presenting updates on the count and the campaign. In addition, we communicated with the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee, the Census Scientific Advisory Committee, the Funders Census Initiative (a working group of the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation), the Census Counts campaign, and other stakeholder groups throughout the unpredictable days of the pandemic. Collectively, these advisory bodies and other stakeholders immersed in HTC communities provided key insights about the effects of COVID-19 on HTC communities and how, given the challenging pandemic conditions, the Census Bureau could best reach and encourage members of those communities to complete the census. As pandemic conditions and operational plans shifted, stakeholders continued to raise awareness and communicate changes about the census to their constituent communities.

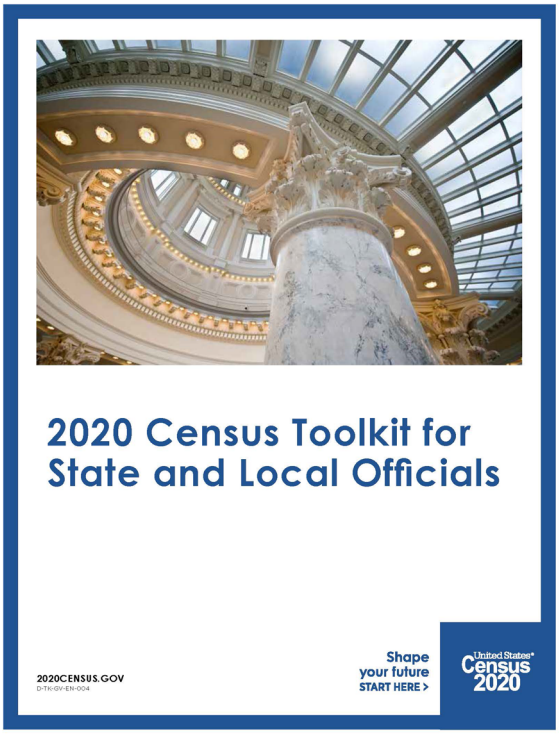


Figure 27: Toolkits for Members of U.S. Congress and State and Local Officials

Because stakeholder relations and partnership program activities overlapped in some areas, such as in engagement strategies and distribution of materials for specific audience groups,

the Census Bureau practiced an inclusive approach. We aimed to provide useful information to any organization or entity interested in supporting the census. This approach was facilitated by the Census Bureau's regional office teams and the Community Partnership and Engagement Program, which, as part of the partnership program, helped promote the 2020 Census and engage communities in the census at the local level. Collectively, we coordinated local and national partnership outreach with stakeholder engagement activities, as relevant. We communicated frequently and used clear, consistent messaging across all materials and resources, which streamlined our efforts. Ultimately, our collaboration helped empower stakeholders and partners to raise awareness about the census in their communities.

STAKEHOLDER ACTIVITIES

The Census Bureau's stakeholders conducted activities independently to creatively promote census participation. To get them started, the Census Bureau communicated the availability of fact sheets and other materials on Census.gov and 2020Census.gov for stakeholders seeking information about how to promote the census. Although we do not typically track or record all community engagement efforts conducted by stakeholders, there were several noteworthy activities executed by stakeholders in support of the 2020 Census. For example, stakeholders conducted webinars and events (both virtual and in-person events, as appropriate) to share information about the census with their own partners, member organizations, communities, and constituent bases. Stakeholders also encouraged census participation among audiences through the creation and deployment of videos and creative content, email newsletters, and social media campaigns. Further, during the enumeration period, the Census Bureau shared a Q&A guide about how stakeholders could make electronic devices available to the public to help facilitate response to the 2020 Census. Accordingly, stakeholders set up internet self-response stations with these devices at events or in public locations such as community centers, places of worship, and schools.

The Census Bureau engaged stakeholders in integrated, audience-specific outreach efforts during the communications campaign. For example, in April and May 2020, the Census Bureau communicated with stakeholders within AIAN audience groups through virtual briefings. We convened a series of region-by-region tribal briefings and teleconferences among stakeholders, and members of the partnership program encouraged AIAN media outlets and partners to participate in these events. The briefings featured discussions with the Census Bureau's Regional Office Directors and tribal specialists, who shared general updates on the Update Leave operation. The Census Bureau also developed promotional items, posters, and print materials for distribution to AIAN partners.

In May and June 2020, the Census Bureau consulted with stakeholders from 67 local and national organizations to discuss execution and communication adjustments for SBE and

TNSOL enumeration operations. These operations respectively visit service-based locations, such as emergency and transitional shelters, and targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations, such as encampments, to enumerate people who may not have a permanent address and who may be experiencing homelessness. Like other enumeration operations, these were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Census Bureau met with stakeholders to understand their organizations' needs and to determine the optimal date to conduct SBE and TNSOL enumeration. We then updated the 2020 Census website and distributed communication materials to stakeholders and partners with updated information about counting these individuals.

As the enumeration period progressed, stakeholders were particularly interested in population groups with low self-response rates and in how those groups differed from those that had already responded. Understanding these differences helped stakeholders conduct targeted outreach to their constituents, with the support of Census Bureau-developed materials and resources. Many groups with low response rates had been considered HTC at the launch of the campaign, and stakeholders were passionate about ensuring that the audiences they represented were counted. The Census Bureau and its stakeholders often shared comparative insights about the common characteristics of people within an audience subgroup who had and had not responded to the census. For example, we analyzed trends in participation among Hispanic individuals who said they had not completed the census versus Hispanic individuals who said they had completed it. Given the diversity of the Hispanic audience, this deep analysis helped the Census Bureau identify Hispanic audience subgroups that needed encouragement, along with their geographic locations and the types of messages that could best persuade them to participate. As stakeholders continued to promote census participation among their audiences, the Census Bureau also conducted outreach through the communications campaign, using optimizations to tweak messaging strategies and implement activities.

The collaboration between the Census Bureau and its stakeholders helped direct a steady stream of communications to the audience at large, but especially to the subgroups that were hardest to count. Stakeholders played an essential role in improving the count among their constituents, especially given the many challenges those stakeholders faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our relationships with stakeholders are ongoing, and we will continue to consult with them as census data becomes available for analysis and use.

2020 CENSUS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Census Bureau relied on a diverse array of partners to help achieve a complete and accurate count in 2020. Partners conducted outreach on behalf of the Census Bureau and the 2020 Census, and this outreach was critical to encouraging census participation among people in all communities. Strong partnerships were especially essential in reaching HTC audiences from a variety of cultures, ethnicities, living situations, and life circumstances. This focus was particularly relevant given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Census Bureau engaged HTC audiences by enlisting national and community-based organizations and other partners that work hand in hand with these communities and that have gained their trust. Partners played a key role in reaching potential respondents and conveying to them that the census is relevant to their lives—and that the Census Bureau is committed to ensuring data privacy and security in collecting census responses. The Census Bureau encouraged partners to emphasize in their outreach that census data shapes planning and funding for health care, emergency services, education, and community economic growth—all of which were highly relevant during the pandemic.

Based on our partners' insights and our experience in previous censuses, we approached partner engagement with flexibility, providing partners with a range of involvement opportunities. This approach enabled partners to participate on their terms, with their needs and capabilities considered, while enabling us to reach diverse audience groups nationwide.

INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM EFFORTS

We knew that partners would have varying levels of interest, capabilities, and timing requirements for working with us to promote the census. Partners also operate on different scales. To engage partners within a scope that was comfortable for them, the Census Bureau deployed partnership outreach efforts through the following Census Bureau teams:

- **National Partnership Program.** NPP engaged with major national corporations, nonprofits, associations, and government entities across the country to encourage their audiences—especially HTC communities—to respond to the 2020 Census. In addition, NPP collaborated with the Community Partnership and Engagement Program. Through this coordination, NPP helped connect the chapters or affiliates of national organizations with CPEP representatives at the local level. NPP also sought out trusted voices to leverage partnership opportunities and supported partners' communication activities, such as virtual events or local census participation surges.

- **Community Partnership and Engagement Program.** CPEP staff members worked from field offices throughout the United States and its territories, as well as virtually after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 1,500 CPEP partnership specialists know their audiences well and were well positioned to engage with local and regional partners. While all partnership program staff members referenced and distributed materials in various languages and for various audience groups, the CPEP staff, especially, distributed tailored pieces to engage community members at the local level. CPEP staff also worked with NPP representatives to leverage and localize national partnership opportunities.
- **Census Open Innovation Labs.** COIL supported NPP and CPEP in engaging high-impact potential partners and encouraging them to creatively promote census participation. COIL hosted events in which organizations in the digital media, education, and community and social activism spheres brainstormed ways to improve self-response rates. These organizations implemented the resulting ideas to promote partnerships among members of their networks.

Integration among NPP, CPEP, and COIL was instrumental in incorporating a wide variety of partners into the communications campaign and, by extension, in reaching diverse audience members across the country, including in Puerto Rico. Partnership efforts supported the campaign's paid and nonpaid owned media efforts while also targeting HTC audience groups that might not otherwise have engaged with the Census Bureau through those media forms.

The breadth of our partnership program approach ensured that partners' requests for access to census data, training materials, and subject matter experts were fulfilled. It also facilitated opportunities for partners to update the Census Bureau and peer organizations on their activities and to receive acknowledgment for their outreach efforts. As partners supported the Census Bureau, the Census Bureau sought to support partners, not only in their outreach needs, but also in their organizational advancement and overall community impact.

Throughout the communications campaign, NPP, CPEP, and COIL liaised with the operations and communications teams at Census Bureau headquarters as well as with Census Bureau field office teams. This ensured internal alignment and consistency of messaging directed to partners as operational changes were implemented due to COVID-19. While each of the Census Bureau teams was valuable to the partnership program's work, CPEP had an especially great impact during the COVID-19 pandemic. As different regions of the country experienced different rates of infection and received different public health guidelines, it was important that communications about the census reflect the situation on the ground in each community. The program's localized approach meant that CPEP staff members were attuned to regional needs, concerns, and challenges—both overall and in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, CPEP teams across the country were able to advise community partners on messaging and outreach strategies that would resonate with constituents at the local level.

Table 4: Sample of National Partnership Program Partner Portfolios by Audience Group

Race or Ethnicity						
Black/African American	U.S. Hispanic (stateside)	Asian American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	Middle Eastern and North African	Those living in Puerto Rico

Nonrace and Nonethnic Characteristics					
Households with young children	LGBTQ+ people	Members of the military/veterans	Renters	People living in rural areas	People with disabilities
People experiencing homelessness	Young and mobile people				

Specific Interests or Affiliations					
State Complete Count Commissions and Complete Count Committees	Faith-based organizations	Government-affiliated organizations (including federal government organizations, consultants, and embassies)	Organizations that cater to technology and innovation consumers	Organizations rooted in civic engagement or volunteerism	Organizations that conduct business-to-business transactions

Note: While the table above lists many HTC populations and audience groups, it is not exhaustive. Partners whose work focused on races or ethnicities, nonrace and nonethnic demographic characteristics, or interests and affiliations not listed above received equal consideration for partnership efforts with the Census Bureau.

PARTNER OUTREACH STRATEGY

To structure partnership outreach efforts, the Census Bureau developed audience-focused frameworks. One framework was created for each audience group, or "partner portfolio." A sample of these partner portfolios is provided in Table 4. The frameworks were informed by predicted self-response data, stakeholder recommendations, and assessments of federal and national organizations' reach and impact. We used the strategic frameworks to:

- Create statistics sheets for specific audience groups.
- Develop day-in-the-life analyses indicating how various audience groups engaged with partners.
- Articulate the strategies for outreach to specific audience groups and the relationships that exist within those groups.
- Formulate specific directions on how to mobilize partners that regularly interacted with specific audience groups.
- Identify organizations for partnership outreach.

Through the combined efforts of NPP, CPEP, and COIL, the Census Bureau consulted the audience frameworks and considered the types of partners that could likely reach each audience group. We also interviewed community stakeholders who had expertise in various professional fields and deep ties to specific audience groups. Findings from these interviews guided partner outreach, helping the Census Bureau identify the messages that would resonate with audience groups as well as the activities that would interest and be feasible for potential partners.

We then approached partners that spanned the private, public, and nonprofit sectors and that represented diverse communities and populations. By suggesting a variety of public outreach activities with a range of resource requirements, the Census Bureau made it easy for partners to identify and execute the engagement option that best suited them. In addition to providing suggestions, the Census Bureau encouraged partners to propose their own outreach ideas, which led to unique and audience-tailored engagements. Partners were enthusiastic about having the opportunity to promote census participation among their constituent audiences. Further, many partners in HTC communities, especially, were eager to share with the Census Bureau what they were hearing from constituents about fears, challenges, and barriers related to census completion. This information helped the Census Bureau to better address the campaign's target audiences, but particularly HTC groups, and guided development of talking points to assuage concerns and mitigate misinformation and disinformation at the local level.

Even as the pandemic took hold, the Census Bureau's partnership programs continued to conduct outreach to potential and existing partners, just as partners continued to engage with their constituents. In this new environment, some partners' ability to promote the 2020 Census was challenged by reduced resources and capacity. Partners also faced challenges in connecting with constituents during the pandemic, although social and digital media platforms proved successful for conducting outreach. The Census Bureau always appreciates the support of its partners, but this support was especially appreciated during the pandemic, which presented many challenges and restrictions.

ADJUSTING PARTNERSHIP OUTREACH CHANNELS

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the Census Bureau's partnership program continued to conduct outreach to partners about the census, using the audience portfolios. However, adjustments to the partner outreach strategy and messaging—as well as more frequent outreach—were also needed to ensure that partner efforts continued to be relevant and successful in the pandemic environment.

Partnership Program Outreach Pivots. Although some in-person events were held before the onset of the pandemic—both to engage partners and to reach their constituent audiences—most events scheduled to occur during the enumeration period were canceled. Virtual and digital channels had been part of our original outreach plans, but once the pandemic took root, these channels became the primary means of engagement and partner activation. Channels included:

- Virtual events, webinars, and other activations.
- Distribution of toolkits for specific audience groups, as identified through the partner portfolios.
- Information dissemination to umbrella and trade organizations that represented numerous national organizations.
- The Partners page of the 2020 Census website.
- Social media outreach conducted through Census Bureau accounts.
- News releases, media tours, and earned media coverage.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital distribution became the primary method for sharing materials and resources with potential and established partners. The Census Bureau relied on its digital properties, especially the 2020 Census website and direct email contact, to share materials. Materials such as fact sheets, brochures, posters, social media toolkits, and graphics were publicly available for download on the 2020 Census website for partner and

general audience use. For 2020 Census promotional items that could not be distributed digitally—such as pens, water bottles, drawstring backpacks, tote bags, and chip clips—the Census Bureau shipped the items to partners for their own outreach, as resources allowed. Further, in light of the pandemic, we sent promotional items to partners for inclusion in meal kits and care packages to be distributed in communities that were significantly affected by COVID-19.

The Census Bureau also revised existing partnership materials and produced additional materials to reflect the new circumstances created by the pandemic. For instance, we created and distributed to partners a half-page flyer that encouraged self-response among rural audiences, especially in areas where door-to-door enumeration was significantly delayed.

Public Outreach Pivots. We encouraged our partners to pivot in their own outreach channels as well. Partners shared 2020 Census materials and information with their constituents through their websites, social media accounts, group email lists, and SMS/text message platforms. These channels were an especially useful means of communicating about the 2020 Census since social and digital media consumption had increased significantly across the campaign's audience at large during the pandemic. Examples of Census Bureau partners' pivoting in their outreach include the following:

- Emgage, a nonprofit organization focused on Muslim American communities, led virtual talks about the census on Facebook.
- The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation held virtual town halls.
- The Afterschool Alliance conducted check-in calls to encourage census participation since school closures had halted in-person information-sharing about the census.
- The U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute distributed materials about the 2020 Census at food distribution centers, including food banks and schools in neighborhoods with large Hispanic populations.

The Census Bureau aimed to support all partners and their outreach to the public about the 2020 Census. During the pandemic—as requested and as we were able—we helped partners adapt their partnership commitments and constituent engagement plans. Especially in the COVID-19 environment, which has been marked by increased public anxiety and a busy media landscape, partners were critical in helping us reach HTC audience groups and communicate the benefits of the census.

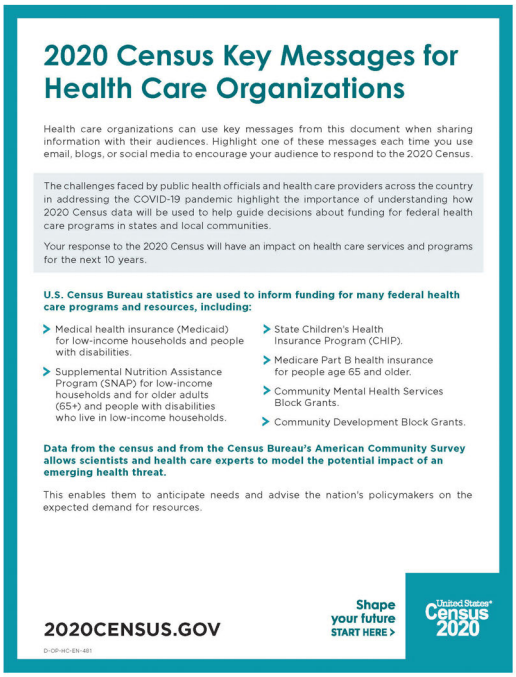
ADJUSTING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Beyond adjusting channels for outreach to partners and the public, the partnership program conducted additional outreach to potential partners. The program also offered additional

support to established partners, especially those conducting outreach in areas, and to audience groups, with low self-response rates.

Communication Surges. The Census Bureau's partnership program participated in the campaignwide communication surges while continuing to build relationships with partners and advising them on constituent outreach. As part of these surges, we launched additional activities that supported and were integrated with other campaign areas.

As part of the April/May breakthrough surge, the Census Bureau conducted concerted, localized outreach to partners and other organizations in communities that were hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnership specialists visited and distributed materials and promotional items to food banks, for example. The Census Bureau aimed to share information with these organizations and their constituents about the benefits of census participation, including funding and resources for food assistance programs, health care, disaster response, and other community services. We also contacted and aimed to build partnerships with health and wellness-related companies and organizations (such as online pharmacies and care providers) as well as with digital conferencing technology providers. Engaging partners in these niches was especially relevant given society's collective dependence on health, wellness, and technology services during the COVID-19 pandemic.



2020 Census Key Messages for Health Care Organizations

Health care organizations can use key messages from this document when sharing information with their audiences. Highlight one of these messages each time you use email, blogs, or social media to encourage your audience to respond to the 2020 Census.

The challenges faced by public health officials and health care providers across the country in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the importance of understanding how 2020 Census data will be used to help guide decisions about funding for federal health care programs in states and local communities.

Your response to the 2020 Census will have an impact on health care services and programs for the next 10 years.

U.S. Census Bureau statistics are used to inform funding for many federal health care programs and resources, including:

- Medical health insurance (Medicaid) for low-income households and people with disabilities.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for low-income households and for older adults (65+) and people with disabilities who live in low-income households.
- State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Medicare Part B health insurance for people age 65 and older.
- Community Mental Health Services Block Grants.
- Community Development Block Grants.

Data from the census and from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey allows scientists and health care experts to model the potential impact of an emerging health threat.

This enables them to anticipate needs and advise the nation's policymakers on the expected demand for resources.

2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020

D-OP-HC-EN-481

Help your community stay healthy.

Responses to the 2020 Census inform how over $675 billion is distributed to communities nationwide each year, meaning more hospitals and clinics in places that need them most.

For more information, visit:

2020CENSUS.GOV

Shape your future START HERE >

United States Census 2020

Figure 28: 2020 Census Talking Points and Poster for Health Care Organizations

We revised existing materials and created new ones for partners to use in communicating with their constituents about the role and benefits of the census. For example, we developed talking points for health care organizations to use in promoting census participation among their patrons and partners. The one-pager that highlighted these talking points was incorporated into an existing toolkit of resources for organizations interested in producing PSAs for their constituent audiences.

When the Census Bureau conducted regional communication surges during the extended Motivation phase surge, the partnership program held meetings with each census region to understand its needs and provide tailored support, as capacity allowed. During one such meeting, we learned that yard signs would be useful for promoting the census in small communities where response was low. We then coordinated with a fulfillment team to produce 2020 Census yard signs, which were distributed by CPEP staff members in targeted rural locations. Also during the extended Motivation phase surge, NPP supported the unique paid partnership between the Census Bureau and the internet-based show "Wonderama." The show produced a series of six Friday night concerts to support the communication surge in each census region. The concerts took place in July and August and were called the "2020 Census Friday Night House Parties." The house parties were webcast on YouTube, Facebook, Facebook Live, Periscope, Twitch, and Instagram, and on the "Wonderama" website. The virtual aspect of the concerts was particularly successful given widespread stay-at-home orders and the cancellation of live events due to the pandemic. NPP coordinated with the census regions to help plan the concerts, determine the performers and presenters, and generate earned and social media coverage.

During the extended Motivation phase and the delayed Reminder phase surges, the partnership program also supported several action events for specific audiences, including the Faith Communities Census Weekend of Action, the Rural Week of Action, and the Asian Week of Action. We contacted partners, inviting them to participate in and promote these events among their constituents. In addition, many partners and stakeholders held their own digital weeks of action, using their organizations' social and digital media properties to emphasize the benefits of the 2020 Census among their constituent audiences—many of which were considered HTC. As these events took place, the Census Bureau issued final requests to all 2020 Census partners, encouraging them to make their last appeals to constituents to participate in the count before the enumeration period closed.

Audience-Specific Events. The Census Bureau's NPP and CPEP teams both contributed to the execution of audience-specific events, including the Faith Communities Census Weekend of Action, the Rural Week of Action, and the Asian Week of Action.

The Faith Communities Census Weekend of Action took place in local houses of worship in communities across the country in late July 2020. For this event, NPP conducted outreach to faith-based leaders, inviting them to participate in the coordinated opportunity to show support for the census. In addition, the Census Bureau provided materials for faith-based leaders to use in encouraging their congregants to complete the census questionnaire, and it recommended use of social media to promote further engagement. We also added a 2020 Census promotional video to a YouTube playlist for the weekend's events. This video, created by trusted voices from faith communities as part of the regional communication surges, received more than 220,000 total views.

Figure 29: Photo Stills From Videos in English and Spanish Featuring Rev. Gabriel Salguero of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, a 2020 Census Partner

The Rural Week of Action, led by CPEP, was held in early August 2020. In this coordinated effort, CPEP conducted hyperlocal grassroots outreach throughout the country, reaching out to neighborhood and hometown contacts as well as local television and radio stations to promote census participation among rural populations. The Census Bureau also incorporated a video for

rural communities into its Rural Week of Action outreach. This video had been produced for the regional communication surges.

The Asian Week of Action was held in late August 2020. This was a large-scale effort that included paid, earned, and social media components as well as partner outreach and events. The Asian Week of Action was a final push to encourage participation among English-speaking Asian individuals as well as speakers of Chinese, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. To support this event, the partnership program team held a kickoff meeting for local and national partners and provided talking points, creative materials, and sample social media assets to use in promoting both the week of action and the census.

The Census Bureau also supported unique partner needs for specific events, such as the Houston Rodeo in March 2020 and the 2020 Commitment March and Virtual March on Washington in August. To raise awareness of the census among these large events' attendees—many of whom belonged to the campaign's HTC target audience groups—the partnership program provided partners with 2020 Census-branded promotional items and resources.

Collectively, these events reached a variety of audiences, but especially those audiences in the partnership program's portfolios that were considered HTC. Establishing touch points with these audiences through local events, trusted voices, familiar community organizations, and other partner outreach was key to establishing the 2020 Census as safe and reputable. When members of the portfolio audiences could trust in the census and the Census Bureau, they could also understand the benefits of census participation, and often they were more likely to respond.

PAID ADVERTISING AND MEDIA

Paid advertising and media played a crucial role in the 2020 Census communications campaign, raising awareness of the census and driving self-response through online and traditional modes. The more than $350 million paid media campaign enabled the Census Bureau to share more than 1,000 advertisements with audience groups across the country, helping convey the importance of the census. For the paid media campaign, we used traditional, nontraditional, and digital media channels to create a "surround sound" effect, meaning we aimed to reach members of the campaign's target audiences with 2020 Census messaging through multiple media forms and campaign touch points. The campaign's traditional media channels consisted of television, radio, out-of-home, and print media. Nontraditional media channels were paid on-demand video platform advertising, social media influencer activations, and podcast sponsorship. Finally, the digital media channels used by the campaign included programmatic and search advertising, paid social media, and home page takeovers. All decisions about use of paid media channels, placements, and timing were data-driven and informed by communications industry best practices and subject matter expertise.

Our paid media and advertising strategy for the 2020 Census aimed to address the needs of distinct regions and audience groups, as well as changing technologies. In developing this strategy, we built on models and processes from the 2010 Census campaign, with a focus on effectiveness, visibility, efficiency, and continual optimization. To be effective, we used a diverse mix of channels across campaign phases to increase awareness on a mass scale. To stay visible, we used frequent and multichannel audience advertising. Increasing efficiency meant balancing broad-reaching communications with targeted reach, aiming to motivate and educate our audiences at the right place and time. Finally, continual optimization required adapting campaign elements based on census response rates and audience impact. This focused strategy helped us deliver more than 39 billion total paid media impressions—both nationally and in all 210 local U.S. media markets—for the diverse mass audience alone. In addition, across all audiences, the campaign reached 99.99% of the population at the height of the campaign, reaching each person 323.2 times, on average, during the Motivation phase.

DEVELOPING THE PAID MEDIA PLAN

Given the size and scope of the 2020 Census paid media campaign, which spanned approximately nine months and involved an investment of more than $350 million, it was critical that the Census Bureau establish a detailed paid media plan. This plan was developed months in advance of the count, enabling the Census Bureau to solidify its approach to

executing and optimizing all paid media and advertising for the campaign. In creating the plan, we consulted campaign research, considering the audience segments and audience media consumption by channel. We also considered other campaign elements and processes that would be integrated with the execution of the paid media campaign.

The media plan prioritized efficiency and effectiveness to ensure that the campaign's paid advertising—through its many traditional, nontraditional, and digital channels—would reach all target audiences, helping maximize impact and drive census response. The plan also served as a guide by specifying the campaign's key channels and their functions, identifying the balance of national and local media, indicating how each audience group would be addressed, allocating the paid media budget, and describing how any necessary changes would be made during campaign execution.

Adaptability of the Paid Media Plan. The media plan was designed to be flexible in its execution. Given the media campaign's breadth and depth, the Census Bureau knew that media placements, channel availability, run dates, costs, and budget allocation would be subject to change. We anticipated that the campaign's execution would differ slightly from the plan because of normal variability in the media markets. We also knew that trends in the performance of the campaign's creative assets would emerge as the campaign and the count progressed, and we planned to optimize the campaign accordingly.

The media plan's flexibility proved especially valuable after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the pandemic environment, our audiences' daily routines and media consumption habits changed, as stay-at-home orders were implemented. For instance, consumption of social and digital media, and of daytime television and news, increased significantly in spring 2020 (Koeze & Popper, 2020; Sullivan & Molay, 2020). In response to these changes, the Census Bureau adjusted the campaign's media allocation to reach audiences, while continuing to encourage self-response. Specifically, we reallocated digital advertising to focus on low-response ZIP codes and developed paid search ads in multiple languages that addressed various 2020 Census rumors or environmental challenges, including the pandemic. Because we had built adaptability into the original plan, we were better able to optimize the campaign.

Planning for Campaign Optimization. Before the campaign launched, the Census Bureau acknowledged that the ability to reallocate paid media spending and refine creative assets and campaign messages during execution would be critical to the campaign's performance. We therefore integrated our media buying and reporting with campaign monitoring and optimization systems. These systems used sophisticated technology and advanced tracking mechanisms to provide detailed metrics on media performance. Deriving and reviewing such analytics improved our understanding of the campaign audiences' media interactions, perceptions of 2020 Census advertising, and general inclinations to respond to the census.

With this knowledge, the Census Bureau could optimize the campaign—adjusting the media mix, shifting creative assets to different channels or formats, revising or replacing creative assets, or otherwise adjusting media execution based on specific performance indicators. It is important to note, however, that some paid media elements were easier to adjust than others. While most paid social and digital advertisements could be stopped, started, swapped, or otherwise revised with relative ease, it was more challenging, and required significantly more lead time, to make such changes for traditional media, such as television, radio, print, and out-of-home placements. It was particularly challenging to make changes to advertising associated with live events, but especially to sponsorships, which were typically planned well in advance and incorporated 2020 Census branding. These differences meant that we often identified media optimization opportunities that we were unable to pursue due to time and resource constraints.

The integration of the Census Bureau's media and campaign optimization systems proved essential to the success of the communications campaign. This integration—and our planning for adaptability in the campaign's execution—meant that when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, we were able to adjust our media approach to continue reaching the campaign's audience groups. Given widespread stay-at-home orders and significant changes in the media landscape, the audience at large was consuming media on different channels, at different times, and through different devices than they had been before the pandemic set in.

The Census Bureau's ability to stay top of mind among campaign audiences was key. The pandemic had taken hold just as the census self-response period began, and if 2020 Census messaging no longer reached target audiences as it had initially, response rates could have been negatively affected. In reviewing campaign optimization opportunities—and after analyzing the changed media environment and media consumption data across the general population—we decided to reduce the campaign's use of traditional media (such as radio and some out-of-home advertising). We then invested more in digital media to maximize the reach and frequency of our messaging. As we adopted a larger digital media presence, the need to optimize digital media placements grew. In most cases, we were able to alter digital placements quickly, and we continually optimized the campaign's creative assets for best performance across various ad platforms.

Data From Digital Media and Mail Package Design Tests. The Census Bureau conducted some paid activities before the 2020 launch of the media campaign, including a small paid social media pilot program that ran in designated markets in late 2019. The pilot program included several 2020 Census campaigns that targeted select HTC audience groups and tested messages about the safety and privacy of census data. Through the pilot program, the Census Bureau gained early insights into the performance of specific media formats and messages and

into audience engagement. The Census Bureau also tested campaign optimization systems. Using a limited digital media budget, we ran 2020 Census creative assets to test the data integrations between paid media platforms and our campaign management platform tool. This test included social, programmatic, search, and site-direct paid digital media.

In addition, we conducted a test called "Extending the Census Environment," which examined the potential effects of mail package design on census response. Within a limited scope, this test explored opportunities to integrate visual elements of the communications campaign into the mail package design. The test outcomes were theoretical and very focused, given the small scope of the experiment. Nonetheless, the results were meaningful, and they were considered during the media planning and content development process for the 2020 Census campaign.

Balancing National and Local Advertising To Maximize Impact. To ensure that the Census Bureau reached diverse audiences across the United States, the media plan included a mix of focused paid advertising at the local and hyperlocal levels, supported by a base of national advertising. National media could be purchased well in advance of the campaign through "upfront" negotiation and agreement processes, allowing the Census Bureau to benefit from cost efficiencies. Further, national media was an efficient means of blanketing the country with 2020 Census messaging, helping reach and encourage response among the diverse mass and multicultural audiences. At the same time, local and hyperlocal media played a significant role in the campaign, as they could be targeted at the DMA, community, or other more granular levels. Through local media, the Census Bureau was able to reach diverse audiences, including non-English-speaking audiences, audiences in rural and remote locations, and other HTC audience groups that might not have been reached through national media. Targeted local and hyperlocal advertising was critical in building audience awareness of the census in areas that demonstrated low self-response rates once the campaign and the count were underway.

The Census Bureau took a measured approach in determining the appropriate balance of national and local advertising. The budget allocations for national and local (and hyperlocal) media were informed by campaign research, the predictive response models, and the audience segment profiles. When developing the media budget allocations, we also implemented recommendations from multicultural communications experts, considered the plans proposed in vendor responses to our request for proposals, and reviewed the strategic goals for each campaign phase. Overall media planning and budget allocation were optimized throughout the campaign based on response trends that emerged as the count progressed.

Using Paid Media To Drive Self-Response. The 2020 Census represented the first time an online response option was offered to the population at large, so it was especially important that the paid media campaign encourage internet self-response. Paid digital media—including site-direct and programmatic display, search, and paid social media ads—was especially

valuable to the campaign, as it linked potential respondents directly from campaign ads to the 2020 Census website. Site visitors could easily access the internet self-response tool from the site's home page. Further, traditional media, with its scale and reach, was useful in broadly capturing public attention and increasing awareness of the census. By showing or telling audiences how to participate in the census, the creative assets deployed in traditional media, such as television, radio, out-of-home materials, and print, urged people to go online and complete the census form right away. Finally, nontraditional media elements, which included paid advertising through on-demand video streaming platforms, podcast sponsorship, and activation of social media influencers, complemented the digital and traditional media efforts, helping reach campaign audience groups through unique and targeted channels. The Census Bureau aimed to reach each audience group with an efficient mix of traditional, nontraditional, and digital advertising that was likely to drive self-response.

ADJUSTING PAID MEDIA USE DURING CAMPAIGN EXECUTION

The Census Bureau planned for regular changes in the creative assets deployed through paid media channels. These changes were scheduled to take place at the start of each campaign phase, since the creative assets emphasized different messaging and contained different calls to action depending on the phase. We also planned to make routine optimization adjustments to enhance paid media performance, such as optimizing our digital ads to generate more clicks or changing the daypart during which our television or radio commercials would run. For some media buys, creative assets within a given channel and designated for a specific target audience were rotated automatically, driven by ad platform technology. Further, we shifted digital media ads to deliver the best-performing creative assets, thereby increasing the campaign's efficiency and minimizing its spend on lower-performing ads. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated numerous adjustments to the campaign's creative assets and the paid media plans. These changes included both manual adjustments and modifications to automatic rotations and other automated changes.

Adjusting the Creative Assets. As discussed on Pages 32-35 and on Pages 92-97, creative assets were revised during the campaign to emphasize the safety measures the Census Bureau had implemented to protect the public and Census Bureau staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised creative assets stressed that the count would go on, that census participation was critical, and that respondents could complete the census safely and quickly from their homes. We also communicated the message that if households did not self-respond or needed help responding, census takers would come to their door to help them respond. Most media channels could make updates to creative assets within hours or days of receiving instructions from the Census Bureau's media team. However, when making decisions about creative adjustments, the media team considered that it was easier to adjust digital media

assets than it was to change assets for traditional media, given the longer lead time and higher costs typically associated with traditional placements.

Figure 30: Diverse Mass Audience Digital Banner Ads for the Reminder Phase that Emphasize Safe Census Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Adjusting Paid Media Plans and Channel Use. Paid media plans underwent considerable adjustments over the course of the 2020 Census communications campaign, but especially from March 2020 forward because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One key shift was the cancellation of live events, including in-person concerts and cultural festivals as well as televised live sports, awards shows, and other entertainment. Most events in which the Census Bureau had planned to participate through paid partnerships or media sponsorships were canceled or transitioned to virtual forums, which significantly reduced or eliminated key advertising opportunities that had been expected to reach many audience groups. Event cancellations especially affected outreach to audiences that were considered HTC, such as non-English-speaking groups. We reallocated those portions of the media budget to other channels, such as traditional print and paid digital and social media, to help reach those

audience groups. While we were generally successful in shifting media budgets and channels, these changes represented a significant deviation from the original media plan, forcing us to make decisions quickly as we aimed, still, to deliver the most efficient and effective media mix.

In addition to triggering event cancellations, the pandemic caused a change in people's patterns of media consumption and an increase in advertising competition—especially in traditional media spaces. The Census Bureau recognized that more people were spending time at home and using digital technologies to work, complete schoolwork, or stay connected with friends and family. Based on these changes, we shifted a large portion of our resources to digital advertising. The communications team determined that advertising on digital media would efficiently maximize self-response, especially while people were using various connected devices at home. We also revised and expanded our paid influencer strategy, which involved activating social media influencers and trusted voices by inviting them to talk about the 2020 Census in their social media posts, videos, blog posts, and quotes in earned media coverage. The influencers selected to support the communications campaign were people who had demonstrated expertise in certain topics or who carried social and cultural clout in certain communities. These influencers used their social media and other online platforms to amplify messaging about the 2020 Census and to convey the importance of participating. Similarly, the trusted voices we invited to participate in the campaign were seen as knowledgeable and trustworthy thought leaders in their communities and among their constituents. Building our paid influencer strategy enabled us to better capitalize on online conversations and reach a larger audience—but specifically HTC populations. Influencers helped build trust in the Census Bureau among their dedicated followers, many of whom were members of the campaign's HTC target audience groups.

Despite this shift to paid social and digital media, traditional media continued to play an important role in the campaign. The Census Bureau increased its budget for traditional media to help keep the campaign's message top of mind in the crowded media environment, but it adjusted tactics as the campaign progressed. For example, we reduced use of some out-of-home media types, such as highway billboards, based on data showing that consumers were spending less time traveling, commuting to and from work, and leaving home for nonessential activities. At the same time, we increased use of digital out-of-home media in transit shelters and other locations near essential businesses, including grocery stores and pharmacies, as part of the April/May breakthrough communication surge efforts. (A summary of the communication surge efforts can be found beginning on Page 92.)

As census operational plans evolved, the paid media campaign was extended. We adapted media plans throughout the spring and summer to align with operational and campaignwide phasing shifts, extending many of our paid media placements through the end of September

2020. Although enumeration ended in mid-October, we continued search advertising activities through December 2020, linking members of the public to information on the Census Bureau's website that discussed when response data would be available and how census data would be used.

Figure 31: "The 2020 Census Explained By Puppies and Kittens" Video, as Created in Paid Partnership With BuzzFeed and Promoted on Instagram for Census Day 2020

Role of Paid Media in Communication Surges. Many of the Census Bureau's adjustments to the paid media plan were executed as part of the campaignwide communication surges, which were conducted to boost lagging self-response rates and to engage communities with the census. Paid media played a key role in the surges, helping 2020 Census campaign messaging break through the crowded media landscape and enabling us to creatively reach audiences and urge them to participate in the census—despite the pandemic.

Paid media was central to the April/May breakthrough surge, which built on the increased campaign momentum and public recognition gained during Census Week. For Census Week, we had implemented significant paid media heavy-ups for diverse mass, Hispanic, and Black/African American audiences. We had also deployed a new full-page newspaper ad (titled "There Is One Thing We Can All Do Together") and executed robust paid digital media efforts, creating a "roadblock" with 2020 Census advertisements appearing in multiple places on high-traffic websites, including those of The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, and BET. The success of these activities paved the way for the Census Bureau to execute a series of

heavy-ups for the April/May breakthrough surge. These surge heavy-ups were executed across all paid media, starting in March and continuing throughout April and May 2020. Through these efforts, we aimed to reach households that had not yet responded to the census and that seemed to be difficult to reach in the pandemic environment. Campaign optimization data informed how local paid media budgets were deployed during the surge. The data also aided the Census Bureau in making decisions about increasing media weights based on the media markets' audience makeup and local self-response rates. Following through on its initial COVID-19-related changes, the campaign maintained a focus on digital media, with additional budget resources allocated to paid social media advertising on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Unique paid media events were also executed as part of the April/May breakthrough surge. The Census Bureau established a paid partnership with RADIO.COM to host a "Concerts That Count" livestream concert series, featuring artists such as Meghan Trainor, Brandy, and Dierks Bentley. In addition, we expanded our paid influencer strategy—using tools like BuzzFeed's proprietary influencer marketing tool—to reach diverse mass, Black/African American, and Hispanic audiences more broadly through digital media and videos. Finally, we increased paid search advertising budgets to keep pace with search-engine user demand for information about the census. As part of this heavy-up, we expanded the number of languages covered by paid search advertising, deploying new search ads in 12 additional languages to broaden the campaign's audience reach. (Details about the languages added during the campaign can be found on Pages 61-62.) All these efforts were designed to reach members of the campaign's target audiences at home, given the widespread shelter-in-place orders in effect because of the pandemic.

During the extended Motivation phase surge, in July, the Census Bureau narrowed the focus of the communications campaign. We adapted media use to target households and communities that had not yet responded to the census but that might be motivated to self-respond by the extended and extensive messaging of the campaign. We especially aimed to reach audience members who were harder to reach—or to persuade to participate—because of the pandemic. During the extended Motivation phase surge, the creative team also developed videos featuring trusted voices to use on owned channels and in earned media coverage for regional communication surges. Simultaneously, the media team committed additional funds to placing new paid digital media and local print, radio, and television assets. As part of this expansion, the Census Bureau secured placements with new vendors and niche publications. We built out campaign assets in 47 total languages (as noted on Pages 61-62), aiming to reach small audience subgroups and to encourage them to complete the questionnaire. We engaged every DMA in the country, prioritizing DMAs with low self-response rates and high uncounted

population rates, to reach as many people as possible through the media channels most familiar to them.

Finally, to complement the campaign's final communication surge (in the delayed Reminder phase), the Census Bureau deployed advertisements through paid media in one last push for self-response. The ads for this effort encouraged cooperation with the enumerators conducting the NRFU operation and emphasized that the time for completing the census questionnaire was almost over. The creative assets depicted census takers wearing masks and adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols. In this last communication surge, diverse mass digital display and paid social media placements were adjusted to concentrate more ad impressions in the states with the lowest total enumeration levels. In addition, we reduced the media weights in areas with high self-response rates relative to expectations. Throughout this surge, the Census Bureau adjusted messaging and advertising across all paid media channels to take into account ever-changing geographic trends in self-response and total NRFU enumeration.

IMPLEMENTING GRANULAR TARGETING FOR EMAIL

During the extended Motivation and delayed Reminder phase surges, the Census Bureau planned and executed a highly targeted email campaign. The campaign informed households in low-responding block groups that NRFU was taking place. The emails encouraged recipients to complete the census questionnaire before a census taker visited their home. This email campaign represented the Census Bureau's most granular targeting effort of the 2020 communications campaign, with emails aimed at all households within specific swaths of census block groups that demonstrated low self-response rates. By using such granular targeting efforts, we were able to reach audience groups that were especially difficult to reach or to enumerate because of the pandemic and its impacts on daily life.

Three waves of emails were deployed in batches by census region in July and August 2020. As the batches were sent, the Census Bureau used A/B testing, which compares a control version ("A") of a creative asset with a variant ("B") to identify the most effective email subject lines, calls to action, and design features. Analysis of ongoing test results was then used to guide email design decisions, with the aim of increasing engagement rates with each send. More than 48.3 million emails were delivered, and more than 4.6 million unique emails were opened, which led to more than 280,000 unique clicks on the link to the internet self-response tool. The cumulative 9.6% email open rate and the 70.3% conversion rate of visits to the 2020 Census website directing to the self-response tool—which were considered high per industry standards and Census Bureau expectations—were a testament to the campaign's effectiveness in reaching nonresponding and HTC households. They also demonstrated a strong return on investment for the block group-targeted efforts—a tactic that the Census Bureau had not

previously used to promote census participation—and set a precedent for targeting that future communication efforts can follow.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND CROSS-CAMPAIGN INTEGRATION

The paid media component of the 2020 Census communications campaign was highly visible and highly subject to market competition with other advertisers. When planning for the campaign, the Census Bureau had been aware of the challenges such visibility and competition presented. For example, given that a very competitive presidential election would take place in 2020—and that this would occur against a highly charged political backdrop—we considered the impact that political advertising could have on the marketplace. Based on historical and industry knowledge, we anticipated that political advertising would likely have the greatest effect on local broadcast pricing and inventory. Accordingly, we secured media placements, including upfront buys (as introduced on Page 121) and sponsorships, very early in the process to take advantage of cost savings and inventory selection.

We were also attentive to ever-evolving trends in media consumption when planning and, later, when executing the paid media campaign. We built flexibility into our paid media approach and recognized early that adaptability would be key to the success of the campaign. We also established collaborative processes and points of integration between the paid media component of the communications campaign and other areas of the campaign, such as organic social media, public and media relations, and the 2020 Census website. As a result, we were able to smoothly and efficiently adjust paid media activities when we encountered the COVID-19 pandemic and its many environmental impacts.

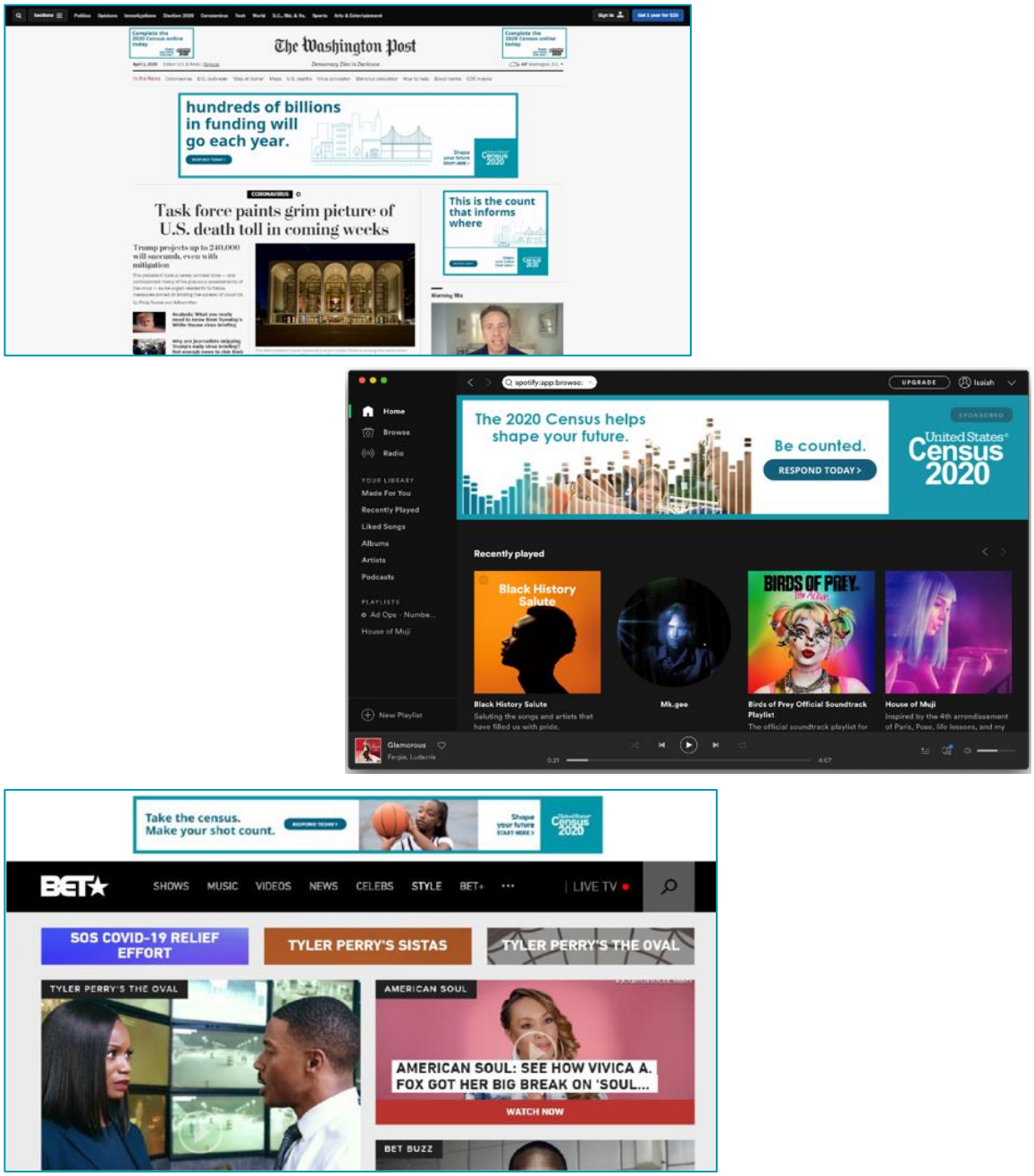


Figure 32: Screenshots of Digital Ads for The Washington Post, Spotify, and BET on Census Day 2020

PUBLIC RELATIONS, MEDIA RELATIONS, AND EVENTS

Public and media relations activities were fundamental to the Census Bureau's ability to share important information about the 2020 Census with members of the media, stakeholders, partners, and the communications campaign's audience at large. These efforts were especially crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and census operations were adapted to ensure that the count could be conducted safely.

Public and media relations efforts addressed common questions about the census, including questions about data security and privacy, the importance of the census, the ways in which census data would be used, and how the pandemic affected the census count. The Census Bureau was also encouraging people to apply for 2020 Census jobs and providing information to the public about how to respond to the census questionnaire, including how to self-respond online. The Census Bureau's communications team developed editorials, advertorials, data-driven stories, talking points, press kits, fact sheets, videos, and other content to relay this information. The Census Bureau also executed six national events, which had approximately 3,000 attendees and resulted in numerous broadcast, online, and print stories in media outlets.

Public relations efforts worked in tandem with media relations activities, which built relationships between the Census Bureau and media outlets and aimed to secure earned media coverage of, and inform the public about, the count. As part of our media relations efforts during the 2020 Census campaign, we prepared spokespeople for media interviews through 17 training sessions, conducted 43 multicultural audience media briefings, and held 31 television and radio tours in English and Spanish. We pitched tens of thousands of outlets across diverse mass and multicultural audience groups, resulting in thousands of stories in broadcast, online, and print publications nationwide. In placing these stories, we sought to reach our audiences through the media channels, formats, and publications that they were most familiar with and that they most often consumed.

Our public and media relations activities were closely intertwined with crisis communication efforts, enabling us to quickly develop public statements and to relay the latest census operations updates as COVID-19 pandemic circumstances changed. Throughout the campaign, we tracked mentions of the 2020 Census in print and online news articles, as well as in television and radio segments, through around-the-clock media monitoring. We also consulted

social media listening reports and the daily 2020 Census Tracking Survey data to understand public perceptions of the census. By taking a proactive approach and staying informed about 2020 Census media coverage and related conversations, we were well positioned to help shape the narrative and respond appropriately when crises or concerns arose.

APPROACH TO PUBLIC AND MEDIA RELATIONS

In the 2020 media environment, which was crowded with communications on major issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the presidential election, social unrest, and natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes in Puerto Rico and wildfires in California), capturing the public's attention was a challenge for the campaign. To break through these headlines, 2020 Census media pitches, editorial content, and other messaging had to be compelling, direct, and authentic—with a clear call to action. Our approach was creative, flexible, and adaptable to reach our target audiences, but it was especially focused on those populations considered HTC, such as households with young children, multicultural communities, renters, and young and mobile groups. We aimed to connect with audiences that were less familiar with, or more skeptical of, the census and that required more information before responding. To create story angles that connected the census to issues our audiences cared about, we engaged with target audiences' trusted media sources and influencers.

Cross-Team Integration. The success of our public and media relations efforts depended on integration and alignment among several Census Bureau teams. For instance, it was imperative that our messages be consistent as we shared them across various channels, such as the 2020 Census website, organic social media, email newsletters, news releases, and media pitches and briefings. This was especially true after the onset of the pandemic, when decisions and changes affecting enumeration operations were frequent. The Census Bureau's Communications Directorate, Decennial Census Management Division, and Field Division teams collaborated to determine the approach to messaging and outreach.

In addition to the need for integration, public and media relations activities required a tailored approach. Through internal coordination, we determined how to adjust our tactics and messages according to the target audiences, identifying the most relevant information and potential opportunities for audience action. We also worked with the crisis communications team and the Trust & Safety Team to stay informed about misinformation and disinformation or other public concerns that might need to be addressed through a public relations or crisis communications response.

The Role of Media Monitoring. The Census Bureau used industry-recognized tools to track earned media coverage of the 2020 Census in English and multiple non-English languages. These tools provided in-depth metrics, helping us recognize trends in media coverage and

understand the 2020 Census-related topics that were most salient among our audiences. The resulting insights enabled the Census Bureau to evaluate the impact of the communications campaign and determine whether its key messages were breaking through. We could then adjust our media pitching strategy, as needed, and flag cases of misinformation and disinformation in the coverage. Daily media monitoring—in conjunction with reputational threat monitoring and social media listening—was also essential in helping us understand regional media markets throughout the country and identify media targets to add to our pitch lists.

As the campaign progressed and the census became more widely discussed, media monitoring efforts helped ensure that all coverage was tracked. In addition, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and the Census Bureau implemented operational adjustments, campaign monitoring enabled the communications team to assess how audiences were reacting to census coverage and census-related conversations in the ever-changing environment. This information guided our approach to messaging and outreach—both for public and media relations and in other areas across the campaign.

ADAPTING MESSAGING AND OUTREACH PLANS

Because of the numerous changes to 2020 Census operations, the Census Bureau altered its outreach plans and messaging significantly during execution of the communications campaign, as previously discussed throughout this report. Notably, we canceled all in-person events after February 2020 and shifted our focus to media relations efforts. To promote census participation widely and maximize self-response, we shared updated information with media outlets and the public in the campaign's core 13 languages. We also supported outreach to partners and stakeholders by creating customized content and materials for direct distribution, including fact sheets, toolkits, and stories.

Adapting Events in the Pandemic Environment. Before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the Census Bureau had executed six of its 12 planned national events. These included a 2019 Census Day media briefing and Q&A session, a 2019 Constitution Day media briefing and children's celebration, and the 2020 Census Advertising and Outreach Campaign Launch event in January 2020. In February 2020, through public and media relations activities, we also supported the Interfaith Summit, led by NPP, and the Counting Young Children National Event, led by the Improving the Count of Young Children Integrated Communications Team. When the Census Bureau halted in-person events due to the pandemic, we revised our events strategy, transitioning the 2020 Census Day in-person event to a virtual national and regional media blitz. In addition, we canceled the remaining planned events and shifted efforts to focus more heavily on media relations.

Media Outreach and Placements. In focusing on media relations activities, the Census Bureau aimed to communicate real-time happenings and drive participation in media briefings and virtual events. Most of our outreach was conducted by phone, email, or web conferencing to avoid in-person contact. We drove press contacts and general audience traffic to the 2020 Census website to promote online response. On the website and in our outreach, we highlighted efforts by 2020 Census partners to reach communities in new ways. By promoting this compelling content, we created a hook for media outlets to use in sharing stories about the census.

Figure 33: America Counts Story on Census.gov Focused on Partner Engagement With the 2020 Census Communications Campaign During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Our outreach activities included proactive pitching and relationship building, TV and radio media tours in English and Spanish, and media-generating press events (many of them virtual, on web conference or livestream platforms). The Census Bureau conducted pitching in support of field operations (e.g., for address canvassing in 2019 and nonresponse followup in 2020) as

well as audience-specific outreach (e.g., for young and mobile and rural and remote audience groups). In addition, we worked to generate earned media coverage of culture- and community-specific causes or events (e.g., disaster relief funding or cultural celebrations, such as the National Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, and African American History Month). We also supported the campaignwide communication surges, especially through local and hyperlocal media pitching during the extended Motivation phase regional surges.

Our target audiences encountered 2020 Census messaging throughout the country—whether they read it in any of hundreds of papers and media outlets, such as The New York Times, Politico, The Arizona Republic, MadameNoire, Telemundo, and the Chicago Tribune; saw it during a NASCAR race and on local television; heard it during a commencement speech on iHeartRadio and "The Steve Harvey Morning Show"; or saw it on social media platforms when shared by neighbors, friends, families, partners, celebrities, and influencers. Influencers—consisting of credentialed media influencers and trusted voices or community influencers—were especially valuable in helping establish the credibility of census messaging. Influencers also helped to convey the value of the census in different multicultural communities and among HTC populations.

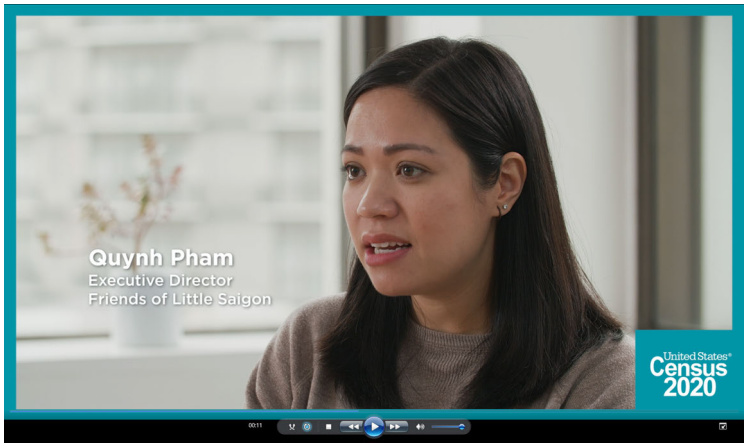


Figure 34: Quynh Pham, a Trusted Voice in the Vietnamese Community, as Featured in a Static Social Media Asset and a Photo Still From Video

Adjusted Timing and Content of Messaging. For the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau developed a slate of seven key messages and customized them by audience and by campaign phase. In general, the messages emphasized that responding to the census was easy, safe, and important, and that participating could shape the future of every community. Each of the messages was supported by talking points, which could be used as needed, depending on the

circumstances and the intended audience. We interviewed community representatives to validate the effectiveness of customized messages for audiences from different cultures. Feedback from representative reviews also helped us shape and refine the messaging for each audience. The messages were then incorporated into media materials, editorial stories and articles, toolkits, templates, videos, one-pagers, presentations, and other 2020 Census resources.

Key messages and talking points were developed in English, and the messages and many of the talking points were translated into the campaign's 12 primary non-English languages. All messaging materials were available through the Census Bureau's internal communication resource hub. The hub contained a regularly updated editorial calendar with messages of the week and other timely materials, including templates, toolkits, media training videos, and drop-in articles. Members of the Census Bureau's headquarters and regional office staffs used these materials in their media and partnership outreach to promote the census.

Throughout the campaign, we adapted the messages based on changes to the campaign's phasing, operational changes, increased public discourse about racial injustice, stakeholder concerns, and ongoing litigation (about inclusion of the citizenship question and related scheduling changes). We adapted existing talking points and created new ones, addressing specific aspects of the 2020 Census operations, such as the Update Leave and NRFU operations, counting college students, and the role and timing of the communications campaign.

Most significantly, the Census Bureau reworked campaign messaging in March 2020 because of concerns that the pandemic would affect response rates. We aimed to inform the public of updates on census operations and to stress that resources for health care, disaster response, and emergency services would be shaped by census results. We added key messages to emphasize the safety of self-response and the importance of continuing to conduct the count, as well as to assure our audiences that census takers would adhere to public health guidelines when conducting the NRFU operation. When necessary, we revised existing assets and created additional communication content to depict people responding to the census from their homes and to emphasize the self-response option. This content was deployed as part of the extended Motivation phase. Assets included motivation-focused pocket guides, "Explaining the Census" videos, and materials that detailed how to count college students who were living at home due to the pandemic. Because NRFU enumeration had been delayed until July 2020, it was important that our audiences continue to receive messaging that motivated them to self-respond.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

The success of public and media relations for the 2020 Census relied on internal cross-campaign collaboration to ensure strategic alignment and consistency of messaging. Another essential element was the support of external entities, including stakeholders, partners, media contacts, trusted voices, and members of our target audiences, who shared census messaging with their networks.

The Census Bureau created numerous materials and sets of talking points in multiple languages that addressed a variety of census-related topics, and external entities and individuals played a key role in extending the reach of this critical information. For example, early in the census response period, we noticed a lag in response among AIAN audience groups. A considerable portion of these audience groups were households on tribal lands that are enumerated through the Update Leave operation (or through NRFU if they could not be reached initially). Given the delay in in-field enumeration, it was critical that the Census Bureau establish direct contact with tribal leaders and AIAN stakeholders to encourage census participation, either by self-response or through active engagement with Census Bureau enumerators. Accordingly, we created tailored resources, such as customizable drop-in articles and public service announcement scripts that could be used and disseminated by local tribal leaders. We also held a virtual series of regional media briefings to inform AIAN audiences about census operations and the risks of an undercount on tribal reservations if people did not respond. With the help of AIAN audience stakeholders and partners, our messages were carried directly to members of the AIAN audience by trusted voices within their communities.

Similarly, we activated influencers as part of media outreach, particularly during the extended Motivation and delayed Reminder phases, to engage Asian, Black/African American, and Hispanic audiences. In each of the 43 multicultural audience media briefings convened, those who serve as influencers and trusted voices in their communities joined Census Bureau spokespeople to educate the media on the importance of the census. Briefings occurred in person at events such as the 2019 National Association of Black Journalists Convention and the 2019 Excellence in Journalism Conference, as well as in virtual formats as necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, influencers were activated to host live events on their own social media accounts about topics related to the 2020 Census. These are just a few examples of the value that such individuals brought to the 2020 Census communications campaign.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The Census Bureau began 2020 Census crisis communication management efforts in 2017. The role of crisis communications in the campaign was to anticipate potential threats and respond appropriately when challenging situations emerged. An emphasis on preparedness was important in helping us anticipate and plan for unforeseen events, issues, and disruptions that could hinder our ability to obtain a complete and accurate count. The Census Bureau defines a crisis as a situation that significantly threatens the health and safety of Census Bureau employees or public confidence in the security of Census Bureau data, interferes with the Census Bureau's ability to carry out operations effectively, or damages the Census Bureau's reputation. We sought to quickly manage and mitigate any issues before they escalated to crises. Coordination among multiple Census Bureau teams was key to clearly and effectively delivering important messages when a rapid response was needed. This was especially true in our response to COVID-19 and in planning subsequent pivots in campaign activities and communications.

APPROACH TO CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

As noted above, the Census Bureau's crisis communications team began convening and conducting its work in 2017. The team structured its crisis communications approach to incorporate existing Census Bureau policies and procedures as well as new tools and processes that would be integrated with the communications campaign. This comprehensive approach ensured that all team members were appropriately involved and that the Census Bureau could proactively monitor and manage any potential issues, whether those were internal or in the public sphere. While we could not anticipate every concern that could arise during the count and the campaign, we developed critical tools and conducted numerous preparedness activities in advance.

Role of Crisis Communications. The crisis communications team was responsible for identifying and monitoring emerging issues through traditional, social, and digital media sources. To ensure that monitoring efforts were thorough and that any potential threats were identified, the crisis communications team coordinated closely with the Census Bureau's Trust & Safety Team. This Trust & Safety Team was composed of social and digital media experts. To protect the 2020 Census from the impacts of misinformation and disinformation, the Trust & Safety Team collaborated externally across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, engaging with representatives from partner and stakeholder organizations and from technology and

social media platforms. Potential threats identified by these integrated monitoring efforts could stem from issues related to data privacy and protections, digital and physical security, fraud, natural disasters, or public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in spring 2020.

The monitoring and tracking efforts helped to mitigate issues that could disrupt census operations; to develop strategies, messages, timing guidelines, and distribution channels for communicating effectively about such issues; to respond promptly to crises; to speak clearly with one voice during periods of rapid change; to correct and minimize dissemination of misinformation and disinformation; and to protect the Census Bureau, its employees, and the 2020 Census itself. To meet these goals, we developed the 2020 Census Crisis Communications Plan, which contained tools, procedures, and processes to ensure that we were prepared to respond to a crisis. The plan included a framework for determining the severity of a crisis and for deciding whether action was warranted. It also contained playbooks for potential crisis scenarios that could directly affect the 2020 Census if they occurred. When the pandemic took hold, we quickly developed an additional playbook for COVID-19 that was added to the crisis communications plan and served as a guide throughout the rest of the campaign.

The role of the crisis communications team was especially important in 2020 for two reasons. First, the Census Bureau had never used an internet self-response tool for widespread census participation. The internet self-response tool was developed, tested, and implemented using technology with sophisticated data encryption and security functions. Data submitted through the tool would be safe, secure, and private—and it would not be shared with any individuals, organizations, or other government agencies. Nevertheless, in the years and months leading up to the census, it was critical that we identify possible risks to such online self-response, as well as actions to take if those risks (or other threats) materialized. The crisis communications team remained proactive, attentive, and poised to respond throughout the campaign.

Second, the development of the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to census operations and communications. Given widespread concern about COVID-19 and related issues, it was critical to address key questions about how census operations would continue to take place. The crisis communications team worked with the census operations team to develop public statements about how the Census Bureau was monitoring the pandemic and protecting the health and safety of the public and census employees. The crisis communications team anticipated COVID-19-related questions that the census operations team might receive, developed talking points to respond to those questions, and shared best practices on communicating effectively during a public health crisis. In addition, the crisis communications team offered counsel on, and crafted media analyses of, national stakeholder comments on operational updates. The team helped develop responses to those comments, as

necessary. As the Census Bureau learned more details about COVID-19, the crisis communications team updated the 2020 Census Crisis Communications Plan and executed its prescribed actions accordingly, while acknowledging that the changing pandemic environment could, at any point, unexpectedly affect operational plans.

Cross-Team Integration. The success of crisis communications relied on close integration with other elements of the communications campaign, including public and media relations, social media, and content on the 2020 Census website. The crisis communications team also coordinated with the Trust & Safety Team, census operations, and other Census Bureau teams to mitigate and manage risks related to the 2020 Census.

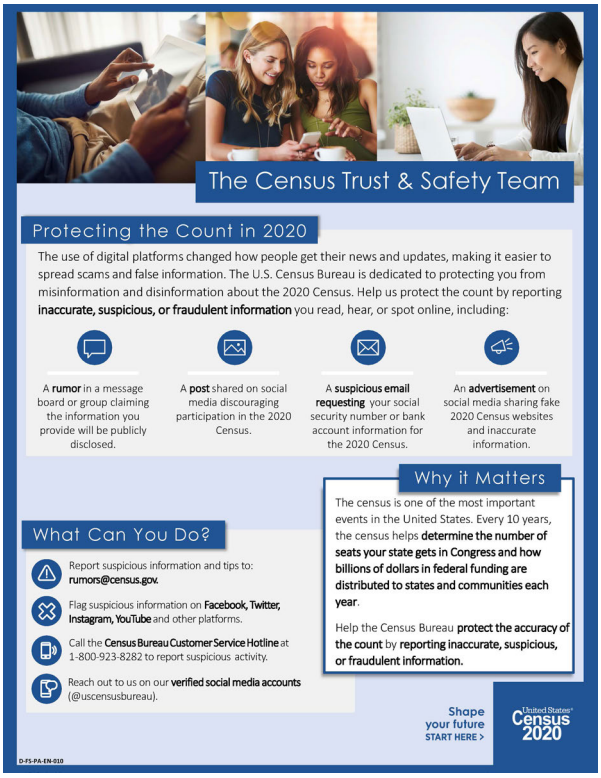


Figure 35: One-Pager About the Census Trust & Safety Team

Specifically, the Trust & Safety Team worked to minimize risks to census operations, census workers, and the Census Bureau's reputation. To accomplish this, the Trust & Safety Team conducted social listening activities and sought to mitigate the impacts of misinformation, disinformation, and fraudulent information. By collaboratively conducting comprehensive monitoring with the Trusty & Safety Team, the crisis communications team aimed to instill confidence in the census and the Census Bureau among members of the public. It was important to the Census Bureau that members of the public be able to respond to the 2020

Census with confidence, knowing their data was safe and secure. If audiences did not have the facts, people might have hesitated to respond, affecting the accuracy of census results and limiting benefits to communities over the long term.

ACTIVITIES AND CROSS-CAMPAIGN INTEGRATIONS

The crisis communications team primarily executed planning and mitigation activities. In terms of planning activities, the Census Bureau held internal crisis communication training sessions, in which it reviewed best practices and provided an overview of the crisis communications plan. The Census Bureau also held a series of crisis drills and tabletop exercises, which were based on realistic scenarios designed to test crisis readiness and assess the Census Bureau's approach to managing the communications aspect of a crisis. After the drills, we evaluated our strengths in crisis communication response tactics and execution, identified opportunities for improvement, recommended action items, and determined potential next steps. Both the training sessions and the drills enhanced our preparedness to respond to crisis situations and aided us in finalizing the 2020 Census Crisis Communications Plan.

A major part of our mitigation activities, as previously discussed, was delegitimizing misinformation and disinformation. Propagated across multiple channels, misinformation and disinformation promoted narratives that could reduce public trust in the Census Bureau or depress response rates through fear and intimidation. Such content often consisted of memes, social posts, misleading photos or videos, manipulation of search engine results, and fabricated content packaged to look like official information. The crisis communications team and the Trust & Safety Team worked to identify, evaluate, escalate, and respond to threats in the period leading up to and during 2020 Census operations. These teams also collaborated across the communications campaign to support the web team's development of anti-misinformation content on the 2020 Census website. The "Fighting 2020 Census Rumors" page included a Q&A section titled "Setting the Record Straight" and a "Checking the Facts" section with links to Census Bureau news releases that dispelled rumors and corrected false allegations about the Census Bureau's systems and employee activities. The page also shared a Census Bureau email address to which members of the public could submit questions or content that seemed confusing or otherwise in conflict with official Census Bureau information.

Further, the Census Bureau's threat monitoring activities, which included media monitoring and social listening, enabled the crisis communications team to identify discussion threads, social content, news materials, and other material that could pose a risk to public perceptions of the 2020 Census and the Census Bureau. By managing such potentially risky content as it was posted or published, the Census Bureau reduced the content's ability to gain public momentum—and continued to promote the public's confidence in the legitimacy and safety of the census. By working closely with the public and media relations, social media, website

development, and campaign monitoring and optimization teams across the campaign, the crisis communications team helped ensure the legitimacy of the Census Bureau's communications throughout the campaign.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT AND DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

The 2020 Census website, 2020Census.gov, was an essential element of the communications campaign and served multiple functions. The website informed members of our audiences about the count, encouraged engagement with the communications campaign, and linked to the internet self-response tool. The site also shared materials with partners for use among various audiences, and it provided families and educators with SIS program resources. Finally, the site appealed to job seekers and former Census Bureau temporary employees, detailing job opportunities and information by location. The website employed the consistent look, feel, style, and tone established in the 2020 Census communications campaign's "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform.

The Census Bureau understood that the 2020 Census website would be visited by many members of our diverse target audiences, including non-English-speakers, from a range of devices. In designing 2020Census.gov, we considered the various needs of our audience at large. Accordingly, we launched a fully bilingual website in English and Spanish. Then, as the count and the campaign progressed, we implemented changes to the site's structure and content to improve the user experience and better engage with our audience. Ultimately, all site development decisions and optimizations made during the count and the campaign were aimed at driving visitors to complete the questionnaire online.

THE WEBSITE'S ROLE IN THE COUNT

In planning for enumeration operations and communication channels for the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau recognized that there had been significant advances in technology since the last decennial count, in 2010. The power of digital platforms and marketing tools to engage audiences had grown exponentially. In addition, online tools and forms had become increasingly prevalent, enhanced by advances in data security and privacy protections. We knew that a significant portion of our audience at large would have internet connectivity and could be reached about the census online, whether on a desktop computer, tablet, or mobile device. We also understood that use of mobile devices had grown considerably since the last decennial census, with smartphone penetration in the United States increasing from 20.2% in 2010 to more than 69% in 2018 (O'Dea, 2020).

Reflecting these new realities, the 2020 Census would be the first decennial census in which internet self-response was broadly available to the population. The 2020 Census website linked to the internet self-response form, and all traditional, digital, and social media materials increased awareness of this new response option, while driving traffic to the website. Thus, the

website not only served as a central hub for information about the census and how to participate but also directly linked visitors to the form itself.

Communicating Critical Information. The 2020 Census website shared critical information about the count with stakeholders, partners, job seekers, and members of the public. The website explained the purpose and benefits of the census and indicated that respondents could submit a completed questionnaire online, by mail, or by phone. The website also provided answers to commonly asked questions and elaborated on the Census Bureau's data protection and privacy work, which kept respondents' data safe. Further, the site contained information for job seekers and previous temporary Census Bureau employees about opportunities to help conduct the 2020 count; more information about field recruitment marketing and communications can be found starting on Page 178.

Beyond sharing fundamental information about the census, along with countless resources and materials for various audience groups, the 2020 Census website played a key role in sharing the latest news about census operations. This was especially true after the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, as the environment in which the count was taking place was changing rapidly. Publishing frequent site updates enabled us to keep audiences informed about the opening of the internet self-response tool, delays in field enumeration, extensions of the enumeration deadline, the availability of new downloadable materials, and safety precautions implemented to protect respondents and Census Bureau employees.

The 2020 Census website also served as a valuable resource for promoting accurate information and dispelling rumors, misinformation, and disinformation about the census. As noted on Page 140, the site included a rumor control page that corrected common misconceptions about the census, especially those related to the pandemic. The rumor control page included links to other pages on the 2020 Census site and to external sites where visitors could get factual information to correct census misconceptions. Further, the page included an email address to which members of the public could submit questions or report rumors for the Census Bureau to review. The Census Bureau reached out to media outlets to request corrections to any erroneous coverage. Rumor-related information and external website links on the 2020 Census site were updated regularly, as media corrections or statements were issued.

Cross-Campaign Integration. The 2020 Census website relied on content inputs from across the campaign, as well as close cross-campaign integration, especially with public and media relations, digital and social media, campaign optimization, field recruitment, the SIS program, and the partnership program. For example, given the importance of partners to the census and the breadth of the partnership program, the Census Bureau developed multiple webpages that detailed partnership opportunities, highlighted partner efforts in various communities, and

shared hundreds of outreach materials for partners to use. The 2020 Census website made it easy for partners and members of the public to sort and search for materials by type and language. Further, we included a social hub containing digital assets that enabled partners and other community leaders to share 2020 Census-branded content on their own social media channels.

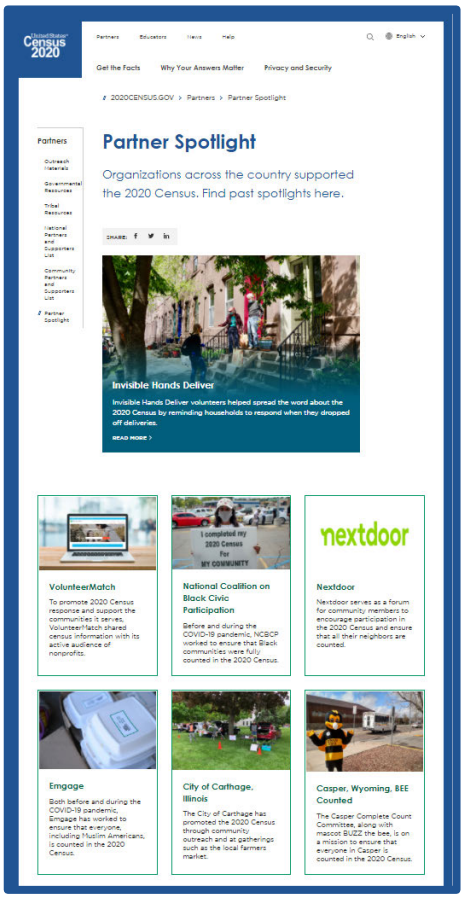


Figure 36: Partner Spotlight Page on the 2020 Census Website

The website hosted an online newsroom and press kits for media outlets, and the site development team worked with the public and media relations team to ensure that content published on the site was accurate and up to date. The public and media relations and crisis communications teams, in tandem with the Census Bureau's Trust & Safety Team, were also critical in helping manage the "Fighting 2020 Census Rumors" page on the site. As teams identified concerns and potential threats in monitoring activities, the site development team collaborated with the appropriate teams to address them, as needed, through website updates, direct outreach, and social media content moderation.

Finally, the site played a key role in social media as well as paid digital and search advertising. Creative assets deployed across the internet through search, site-direct, and programmatic ads, as well as assets posted on the Census Bureau's social media accounts, linked to the 2020 Census website. Given the significant traffic the site received, it was important to continually verify and streamline all information it contained. It was also important that the website present information with authority, while maintaining the creative platform's look and feel and its resonance with the Census Bureau's audiences. As creative assets were revised to better reflect the pandemic environment, visual adjustments were also made to the site to maintain consistency across the campaign.

Promoting a Complete and Accurate Count. Another critical aspect of the 2020 Census website was its emphasis on encouraging participation to achieve a full and accurate count. While the website was objective in providing facts about the census, it also served a promotional function in encouraging campaign engagement and questionnaire completion—especially through use of the internet self-response tool. Given delays in field enumeration and stay-at-home orders and other restrictions in communities across the country, the Census Bureau aimed to maximize self-response. Increasing self-response was the most efficient use of taxpayer funds, reducing the number of in-person visits enumerators had to make during NRFU. Especially given the major uncertainties about the spread and severity of COVID-19, the Census Bureau pushed all audience groups to self-respond online if possible. The website emphasized that online self-response was safe and easy, which we hoped would encourage audiences to participate when visiting the site.

Meeting Audience Needs. To meet the needs of our diverse audience groups, we developed the full 2020 Census website in English and Spanish, with single landing pages in 58 non-English languages. By creating content in numerous languages, we aimed to engage with as much of the population as possible. The landing pages served as in-language entry points to the census questionnaire and enabled users to locate in-language help through the Census Questionnaire Assistance center. The landing pages and other audience-specific site content—such as content for group quarters residents and for transient populations and those experiencing homelessness—helped drive response. These pages and content types also enabled users to find more information, access publicly available data, and share content with their personal networks.

In addition, the internet self-response tool was designed with user needs and technology consumption behaviors in mind. To accommodate access through different devices, the site and the self-response tool were developed in a responsive format, giving people the opportunity to learn more about or complete the census online through a desktop computer, tablet, or mobile device.

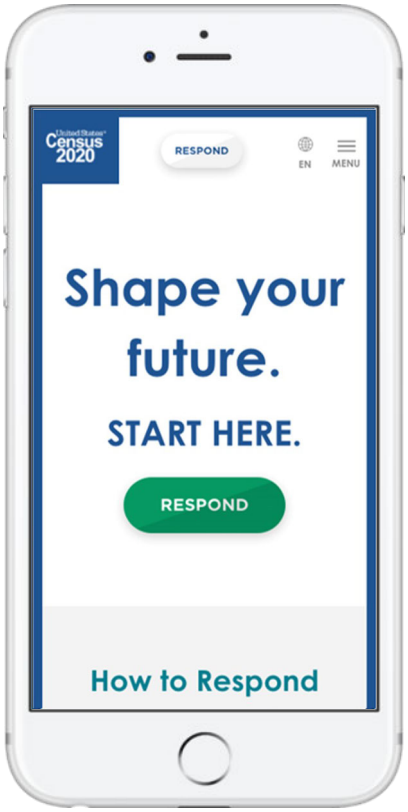


Figure 37: Rendering of the 2020 Census Website as Shown on and Optimized for a Mobile Phone

PHASED APPROACH AND TIMING OF SITE DEVELOPMENT

The 2020 Census website was created through a phased approach. The discovery phase—the first in the process—began in September 2018 and involved critical planning activities. During this phase, the Census Bureau discussed and determined site requirements and specifications to meet the needs of diverse audiences. The site was then launched in iterative stages as the campaign unfolded.

Each site iteration correlated with an important milestone in the communications campaign. The Phase 1 site iteration launched on April 1, 2019, one year before Census Day (April 1, 2020). The Phase 2 iteration launched in tandem with the debut of the advertising campaign in January 2020. The Phase 3 iteration launched in March 2020 with the opening of the internet self-response tool. The timing of the phased site launches was critical to ensuring smooth census operations and to meeting critical milestones. For each milestone and with each iteration, we added and refined the site's content. We also sought to produce more buzz about the 2020 Census and to encourage online self-response. In each of the three site iterations (all

launched successfully and on time), we were able to share the latest updates, which was especially important given the environmental changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic and federal government decisions about Census Bureau operations. Although the pandemic did not change the timing of the phased launches, we made small, frequent content updates between launches to ensure that our audiences were adequately informed about census operations.

Another milestone was the migration of the 2020 Census website to a cloud-based hosting platform. This occurred in late August 2019. Along with this migration, the Census Bureau launched the Spanish-language site, released new SIS program materials and partner resources, published pages with census facts and answers to frequently asked questions, and improved the site's mobile optimization. Although the migration—which involved transferring all Phase 1 site content from the old hosting platform to the new cloud-based platform—required significant time and troubleshooting to complete, it allowed for enhanced website security and more traffic. These enhancements were critical in helping the Census Bureau prepare for the Phase 2 site launch. The increased site capacity was important because 101 million visitors landed on the 2020 Census website throughout the enumeration period, and approximately 49 million clicked through to the internet self-response tool. On March 23, 2020, the site had more than 6 million users, far exceeding our expectations for site traffic. By migrating the site, we were able to accommodate this high volume of visitors.

On October 15, 2020, the enumeration period ended, and the website no longer featured the census questionnaire. For this post-census period, retrospective content, with narrative text and engaging visuals, was launched on the site. This content told the story of the census process and informed the public about data processing efforts as the Census Bureau worked toward the public release of summary data.

SITE FUNCTIONALITY AND PERFORMANCE

As a form of owned media, the 2020 Census website allowed the Census Bureau to control the site's content, when and how it would be updated, how it would appear, and how its performance would be measured. We made changes to the site, as needed, to update content, improve ease of navigation, better direct visitors to the questionnaire, and enhance the overall user experience. In implementing a variety of optimizations throughout the campaign, we consulted numerous data points and ensured that, in making any site changes, we maintained alignment with operational plans and all other elements of the communications campaign.

Site Updates and Optimizations. During the campaign, we made changes to the site based on news updates as well as performance insights and observed user behaviors. Content updates were often driven by phase transitions and other sweeping changes across the campaign (for instance, the execution of communication surges, as introduced on Page 59).

The Census Bureau also implemented content updates based on significant events, such as the identification of COVID-19 as a major public health concern and 2020 Census operational adjustments.

In addition, a variety of site optimizations were made based on performance metrics and daily observation of user behaviors. We analyzed the amount of time visitors spent on each page, as well as the search terms they used and their clicks within the website, to determine the information visitors were seeking in coming to the site. Outside of the site itself, we reviewed organic search results and paid search advertisements to understand how people were navigating to the site from Google and other search engines. We also examined digital and paid social media to identify inbound clicks from traffic sources such as organic and shared social media posts or digital ads. In addition, we reviewed social listening and media monitoring information to understand the online environment in which the 2020 Census website lived. Finally, we analyzed self-response rates and the 2020 Census Tracking Survey data to gain insight into the audience groups that had responded, the groups that had not responded, and the tactics we might use to encourage the latter to respond online. With these reference points in mind, we adjusted site colors, calls to action, visuals, and other site attributes to increase engagement with the 2020 Census website and, ultimately, to promote online self-response.

Personalization Efforts and Site Testing. One example of an optimization to the 2020 Census website was the implementation of personalization tactics. The website's home page was personalized through geotargeted imagery as well as region-specific references and calls to action. These personalization and geotargeting capabilities proved especially beneficial during the campaign's extended Motivation phase surge, in which we conducted regionally targeted communication surges.

Once the personalization tactics were implemented, our site management system would serve personalized versions of the site's home page, as available, to visitors based on their geographic area. As the personalization tactics were developed, the Census Bureau conducted testing to assess the likely impact of those tactics on target audiences. Specifically, we used A/B/n testing, which compared a control version ("A") of a page on the 2020 Census website with several (or "n" number of) different ("B") page variants. Performance was evaluated based on engagement metrics, and this assessment was used to determine the optimal text, color, and visuals for the personalized landing pages. These personalization efforts helped engage visitors on the site and promoted response at the local level. Further, the personalization efforts were integrated with surge activities across the campaign, which helped facilitate digital paid media opportunities and enhance the appeal and performance of many digital advertisements.

More generally, and throughout the communications campaign, the Census Bureau conducted multiple tests to improve conversion rates, which reflect the percentage of direct clicks from the 2020 Census website to the internet self-response tool. We examined conversion rates nationally (considering all geographic regions together) and conducted deeper analysis of areas in which self-response was lower than the national rate. Results from these tests provided additional insight into the types of site pages that were most effective, the messages that best resonated with audiences, the site elements that prompted visitors to act, and the audiences that did or did not complete the questionnaire when visiting the site. We could then appropriately tailor the website—whether by adding personalized landing pages, tweaking call-to-action buttons, simplifying site navigation, or making other changes—to best promote online self-response.

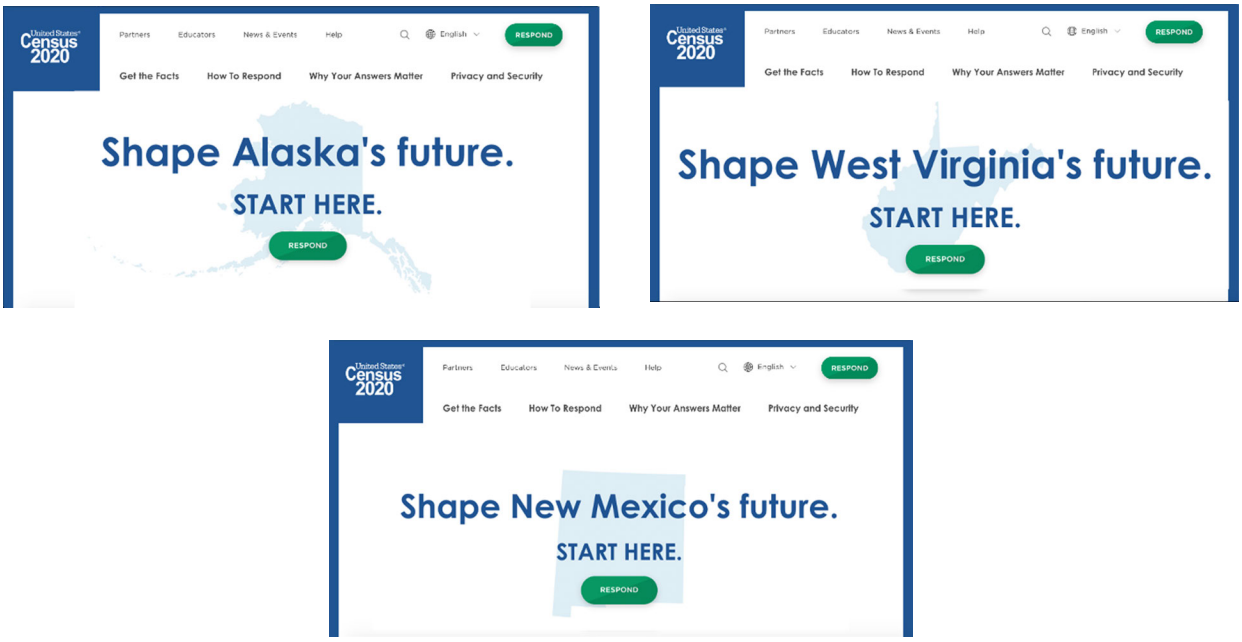


Figure 38: Examples of the 2020Census.gov Home Page, Personalized by State Through User Geotargeting

Site Integration With Other Campaign Assets. As previously noted, the 2020 Census website was not only a hub for information but also the destination for all linked social media, digital media, and search advertising. The Census Bureau did not link to the internet self-response tool directly from campaign assets. Instead, by linking assets to the 2020 Census website, we provided visitors with important information about the census, explained the available response modes, and emphasized the legitimacy of the Census Bureau. Site visitors could then choose to complete the questionnaire online. While some stakeholder and partner communications did direct their constituents to the internet self-response tool, the Census

Bureau consistently directed audiences to the 2020 Census website in campaign materials, providing one more opportunity—beyond the ad or asset that shared the link—to educate audiences and disseminate valuable information before they completed the questionnaire.

In designing the 2020 Census website, the Census Bureau considered a variety of possible journeys that a user might take to land on and navigate through the site. We recognized that visitors might access the site by clicking on an ad, a post, or another creative asset. It was essential that, after the user's click, our site maintain the user's interest, foster deeper engagement with the campaign, and succeed in encouraging the user to complete the questionnaire. Accordingly, we designed the site with a tone and stylistic look and feel similar to that of the campaign's creative assets. This helped to create synergy across the campaign.

One final key consideration during development of the 2020 Census website was the role and functionality of digital paid media. We aimed to establish and maintain proper tracking measures—including placement of pixel trackers on digital ads—to ensure that we could track and better drive traffic to the website. Systems integrations with paid media, especially, helped us identify and implement optimizations on the site and enabled us to strengthen the connection between paid media assets and the website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media played a key role in encouraging the 2020 Census campaign's audiences to act. Informative content and creative engagement strategies moved people to start conversations, share content, and complete the questionnaire online. In planning the campaign's use of social media, we considered its role in facilitating real-time customer service, its ability to deliver messages quickly and at the right time, its function in generating earned media coverage, and its ability to support digital and on-the-ground events. In these multiple roles, social media proved especially valuable after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, because more people were staying at home and using social and digital technology at high rates (Koeze & Popper, 2020). Social media posts helped answer common questions and increase census participation. This was beneficial since the pandemic limited in-person opportunities for people to talk with Census Bureau employees or partners speaking on behalf of the 2020 Census communications campaign.

Our social media approach included content dissemination (occurring daily or multiple times per day at the height of the campaign) through organic social media posting and sharing; collaboration with social media influencers; the implementation of customer service chatbots; and the use of livestream technology. Social media tactics and content were closely integrated with public and media relations, digital paid media, the 2020 Census website, and campaign optimization activities. The Census Bureau also produced social media content that promoted SIS program resources and partnership program materials and participation opportunities. Ultimately, use of social media helped us build and sustain public engagement in the 2020 Census, while educating and motivating members of the public to self-respond.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Census Bureau's social media strategy was designed to target audiences through owned (nonpaid) social media, which included hosted content and interactive tactics conducted through the Census Bureau's owned social media accounts. Our strategy also included a customer care component and social media events to help create a comprehensive experience. Key to the success of our social media activities was an overarching strategy that tied together all aspects of content: the timing, thematic variety, and channel adaptations. We also needed to consider the environment—both the online and "real-world" scenarios—in which we were deploying the content as news events unfolded. Even when social media assets or tactics had to be changed, our plans provided guidance for quickly adapting content or strategy.

Social Media Planning. The Census Bureau developed strategic social media plans that defined how content would be created, released, and monitored throughout the campaign. To execute our social media tactics, we created and deployed content based on monthly content calendars. The calendars included content themes, goals for each post, and sample creative layouts for each asset. When content was designed based on the monthly calendar, the posts and other assets aligned with the messaging and imagery prescribed for the designated phase of the communications campaign.

Broadly Reaching Diverse Audiences. When formulating the 2020 Census social media strategy, we recognized that the audiences we needed to target were diverse. We therefore pushed out 2020 Census messaging across multiple channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, which helped us reach different audience groups. We also posted content on Pinterest to promote the 2020 SIS program and the count of young children in the census. Given widespread internet connectivity nationwide, we knew that social media content had to achieve broad appeal. Organic social media posts pushed out by the Census Bureau accounts, unlike paid social media, could not be targeted to specific geographies or audience groups. Accordingly, organic social media posts were designed to engage as many of our audience members as possible. These posts often promoted census self-response, delivered census operational updates, and shared information about Census Bureau programs and resources. In addition, organic posts advertised Census Bureau job openings and shared interesting facts about the census and uses of census data.

Paid social media could be deployed to specific population groups; therefore, the creative assets deployed through paid social media placements were tailored, varying by language, imagery, and calls to action.

Flexible Approach to a Dynamic Medium. Social media content and strategies were driven by advance planning and preselected themes, but we kept our approach flexible, given shifting events and the dynamic nature of the medium. This approach let us quickly adjust content plans and assets, as needed. As the Census Bureau released new statements about the impacts of COVID-19 on the census and about related operational adjustments, social media content was revised or added. It was important that the Census Bureau share the latest information on its social media accounts at the same time that those updates were posted on the 2020 Census website and disseminated through public and media relations channels.

Especially when we needed to change plans, we consulted the social media playbook. The playbook described the intended look and feel of all social media content and included templates organized by theme and by content type. The templates included specifications, requirements, and best practices by channel. Use of the playbook ensured organization of the large volume of social assets and promoted consistency in the look and feel of all content.

Because the playbook contained approved content and established guidelines, it helped guide decision making and dictate content development and posting processes during the campaign. This enabled the Census Bureau to focus on providing partners and stakeholders with social media resources and on implementing optimizations during the campaign.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Social media efforts for the communications campaign included content creation for all owned (nonpaid) social media and paid social media efforts. In addition, we developed a robust customer care program, created content for third parties (such as partners), and monitored online conversations through social listening activities.

Content Development and Execution. For owned social media, we created content for the Census Bureau's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn channels, and we supported our audiences' interactions with social media through customer care activities, social media monitoring, and hosting of social media events. For paid social media, we created assets and provided content support, coordinating with the paid media and the campaign monitoring and optimization teams to ensure consistency of creative assets, alignment of messaging priorities, and cohesive branding across the campaign.

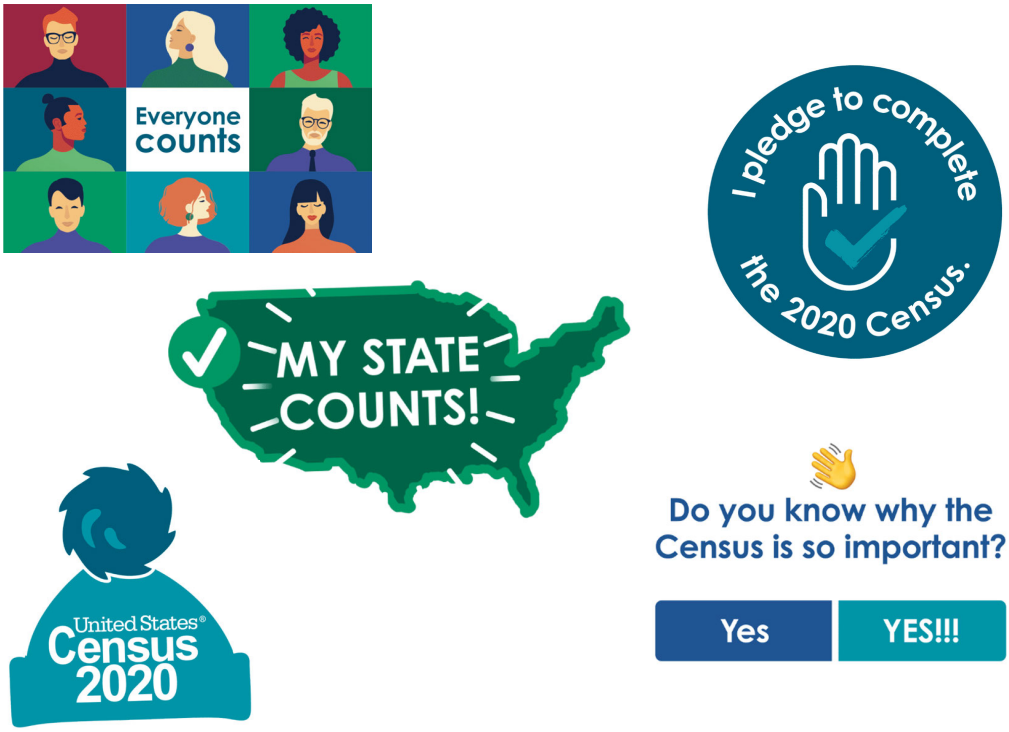


Figure 39: Shareable 2020 Census Stickers Created for Public Use on Social Media

In developing the social media content, the Census Bureau consulted campaign research results, social media strategy plans, and the social media playbook. We also drew from our content development strategy, which focused on key messaging areas: emphasizing benefits of census participation, filling knowledge gaps about the census, describing what to expect when responding to the census, and addressing concerns about the security and confidentiality of response data. Then we built the social media copy and creative assets into monthly content calendars, which incorporated a variety of topics related to those messaging areas. Finally, we scheduled the posts, using our social media management tool, which automated the process of posting content on our accounts on a set schedule.

Throughout the campaign, there were situations in which the Census Bureau had to adjust the timing of scheduled posts, revise planned creative assets, or release alternate content based on rapid response or campaign optimization needs. Our adaptable and iterative approach to developing social media content enabled us to make necessary changes quickly, continuing to drive the campaign forward.

Adapting Executions in Coordination With Campaign Changes. As the count and the communications campaign progressed, and as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, creative assets and messaging needed to be changed across the campaign. Social media content was adjusted to update audiences on census operations and encourage self-response—noting that it was a safe and easy way to participate in the census in the pandemic environment. We revised messaging to emphasize that critical care and emergency services were important programs affected by the census. We also eliminated visuals that depicted gatherings of people, instead incorporating visuals of people at home, maintaining physical distance, and wearing masks. In addition, we used social media to share information about counting college students—many of whom were living at home when they would usually have been on a college campus—as well as about where people displaced by the pandemic should be counted.

We also implemented a revised influencer strategy through the paid media campaign. As part of this influencer strategy, we increased our engagement efforts and focused on engaging with celebrity content, as many celebrities became strong advocates for the census on social media. Another tactic that emerged from the influencer strategy was the creation of regional social media toolkits, which supported the regional communication surges during the extended Motivation phase surge. These toolkits included city- and state-specific assets and tailored language emphasizing the importance of the 2020 Census to each region. Partners, influencers, and advocates used the toolkits to share content that would resonate with their cities.

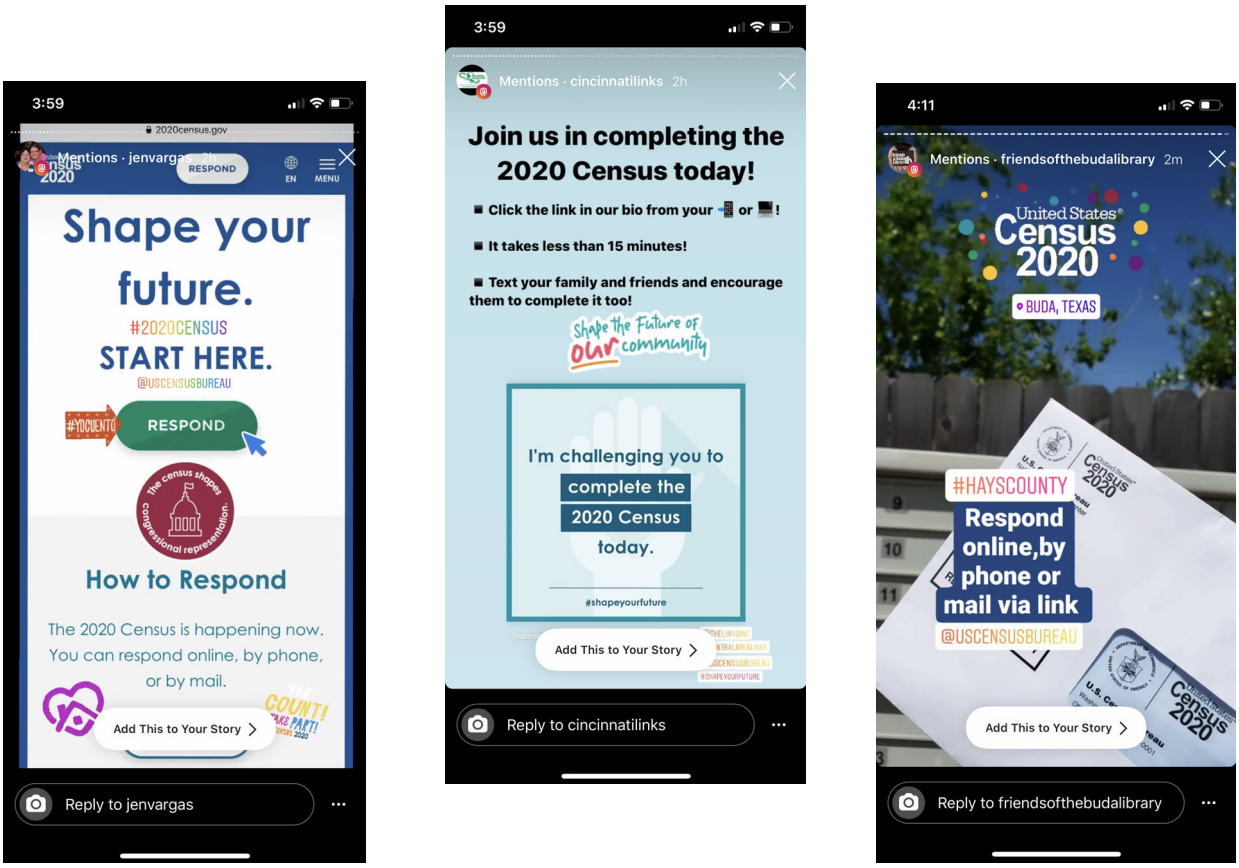


Figure 40: Public User Instagram Stories on Census Day 2020

Measuring Performance and Implementing Optimizations. The Census Bureau measured the performance of social media assets directly through the social media platforms, as well as through our social media management tool. These measurements enabled us to examine how audiences were interacting with, sharing, or otherwise reacting to the social media content. In addition, we analyzed digital paid media metrics, tracking survey results, and data reflecting audience visits to and interactions with the 2020 Census website. Collectively, these sources provided us with insights into our target audiences' perceptions of the census as well as the success of our social and digital media in motivating audiences to participate. The Census Bureau used these insights to develop new social media assets and revise existing messaging and creative elements. This applied both to organic social media content—in which we rewrote post copy, calls to action, and visuals—and to paid social media content—in which we updated messaging and creative elements as well as audience targeting and optimization tactics.

We optimized our paid social media ads to expand our follower base and to encourage audiences to click or comment on, share, or interact with (through likes or similar reactions) the 2020 Census branded creative assets. We could also directly encourage audiences to engage with organic social media posts through the posts' caption copy. These optimizations were conducted through the social media platforms and through our published content. Other optimizations were also implemented in coordination with the rest of the communications campaign and as advised by the campaign monitoring and optimization team. Success was measured by comparing the assets' performance against key performance indicators established in our social media measurement strategy.

SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING AND CROSS-CAMPAIGN INTEGRATION

Beyond developing and posting social media content, our social media efforts included social media moderation and monitoring (also referred to as social listening). Similar monitoring activities were integrated into other areas of the communications campaign, including traditional media monitoring, through public and media relations; threat monitoring, through crisis communications; and other monitoring, through campaign optimization efforts.

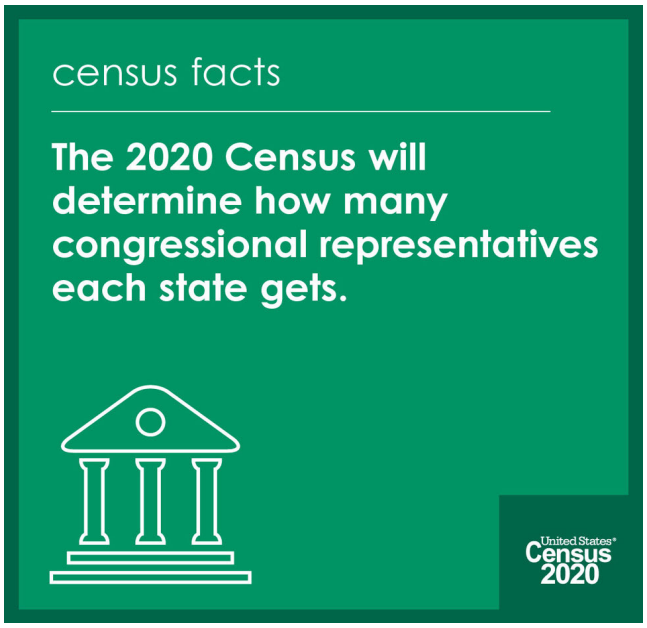
Social Media Monitoring and Moderation. Social media monitoring was conducted through the Census Bureau's social media management platform. Monitoring efforts helped identify high-level trends in keywords and themes in all 13 languages in which the internet self-response tool was available. The identified trends, in turn, helped us understand the narratives that were shaping conversation about the 2020 Census and the Census Bureau. We also noted the links and types of content, including news articles, that people were sharing. Social listening focused on the content shared and the conversations on social media, and listening activities were closely coordinated with traditional media monitoring, crisis monitoring, and reputational threat monitoring efforts. Reputation threat monitoring, specifically, was conducted by the Trust & Safety Team, which reviewed inflammatory comments on social media, including profanity and threats. These types of comments were hidden by moderators or reported to the social media platform on which the comments appeared. In rare instances, users were banned from posting on Census Bureau social media channels.

Moderating our organic and paid social media posts in English and Spanish enabled two-way conversation. Moderation was used to answer questions, correct misconceptions, remove comments that were vulgar or abusive, and identify content that needed escalation. In answering social media users' questions, the Census Bureau followed its social media moderation plan and referenced an approved response library.

Social media moderation was part of our broader customer care strategy, which also involved use of social media chatbots to respond to questions about the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau, and 2020 Census jobs, as well as live agent support. The bots functioned in English and Spanish and also provided resources to partners, shared social media content, and identified and answered frequently asked questions. To support social media moderation, a team of live agents reviewed 2020 Census-related content and responded with preapproved or customized responses, depending on the nature of the question, comment, or other posted material. This critical customer care operation—the first of its kind used by the Census Bureau in a decennial census campaign—provided critical support and information to the public, especially in the pandemic environment when people were conducting many of their daily activities online.

Cross-Campaign Integration. One noteworthy integration of social media efforts with the 2020 Census website was the development and launch of "The Pledge," which encouraged individuals to pledge to complete the 2020 Census and challenge their friends, family, and community to do the same. The Pledge, along with other customizable social media assets, was featured on the "Spread the Word" page on the 2020 Census website. The Pledge was adjusted according to the phase of the campaign, with changes made in its call to action and to accompanying assets that individuals could share on their social media accounts.

Broadly, the Pledge illustrated how essential it was that social media efforts were conducted in alignment with other campaign activities. Integration between social media, public and media relations, crisis communications, and the 2020 Census website helped maintain clarity and consistency of messaging across earned and owned channels. The alignment of social media with areas across the campaign was especially important in sharing updates about enumeration and Census Bureau operations. In general, organic and paid social media directed individuals to the 2020 Census website, where visitors were encouraged to click a prominent button labeled "Respond" that linked to the internet self-response tool. In addition, links to the Census Bureau's social media channels were included in email blasts and on the 2020 Census website, helping increase engagement with the communications campaign across multiple digital platforms.



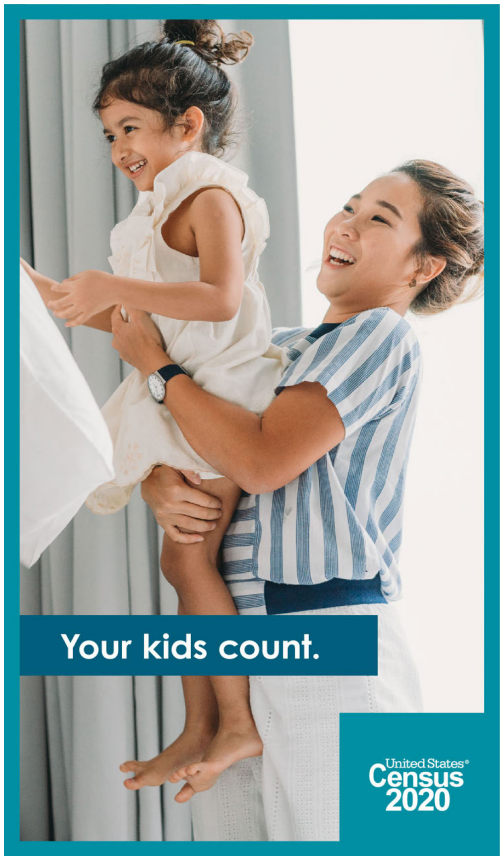


Figure 41: Photo Still From Video and Shareable Social Media Assets To Support "The Pledge"

2020 STATISTICS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The Statistics in Schools program played a significant role in getting the message out to schools nationwide that a complete 2020 Census count was important for students, schools, and families. As a perennial program featuring a 2020 Census component, SIS uses census data to create activities, materials, and resources that enhance learning across a variety of subjects. For the 2020 Census component—known as the 2020 SIS program—the Census Bureau focused on developing activities, materials, and resources that highlighted the importance of the decennial census and the resulting data it provides. To spread the word about the 2020 SIS program, we partnered with as many schools and educational organizations as possible across the country, including in Puerto Rico and the Island Areas. Through the program, we especially aimed to reach audience groups and schools in HTC communities where children were at risk of going uncounted in the census. We distributed a variety of materials, such as maps and worksheets, as well as promotional items, such as branded notebooks, pencils, and erasers, to educators and other education-based stakeholders for use in classrooms across the country. Our program efforts also included partnership development and engagement, digital marketing, events, and media outreach.

The 2020 SIS program was a unique element of the 2020 Census communications campaign in that it provided a wide variety of learning resources and activities to engage students of all ages—but especially school-age children—while all other components of the campaign were targeted to adults (people over age 18). The 2020 SIS program was intended for use by teachers and administrators in classrooms throughout the 2019-2020 school year. Despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, and the closure of many school buildings as a result, the program continued to play an important role in raising awareness of the 2020 Census through the very end of the communications campaign in fall 2020.

ROLE OF 2020 SIS PROGRAM

The 2020 SIS program was designed to reach families and encourage census response in historically HTC communities especially. Through SIS, the Census Bureau aimed to educate students—and through the students, the adults in their households—about the importance of completing the 2020 Census. The goal of the 2020 SIS program was to increase awareness of and response to the census by engaging teachers, students, and the adults in students' lives in conversations about the census and its benefits in communities.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 meant that the SIS program had to pivot in its outreach approach—in large part, because most school buildings were closed and students were learning from home or as part of a virtual classroom experience. To adapt to this changed environment, we shifted our focus from in-classroom activities to materials and resources that could be used at home. These materials and resources were free, and they could be accessed and downloaded from the SIS program page on the Census Bureau's website at census.gov/schools. Despite this shift in approach, the intent and goals of the program remained the same.

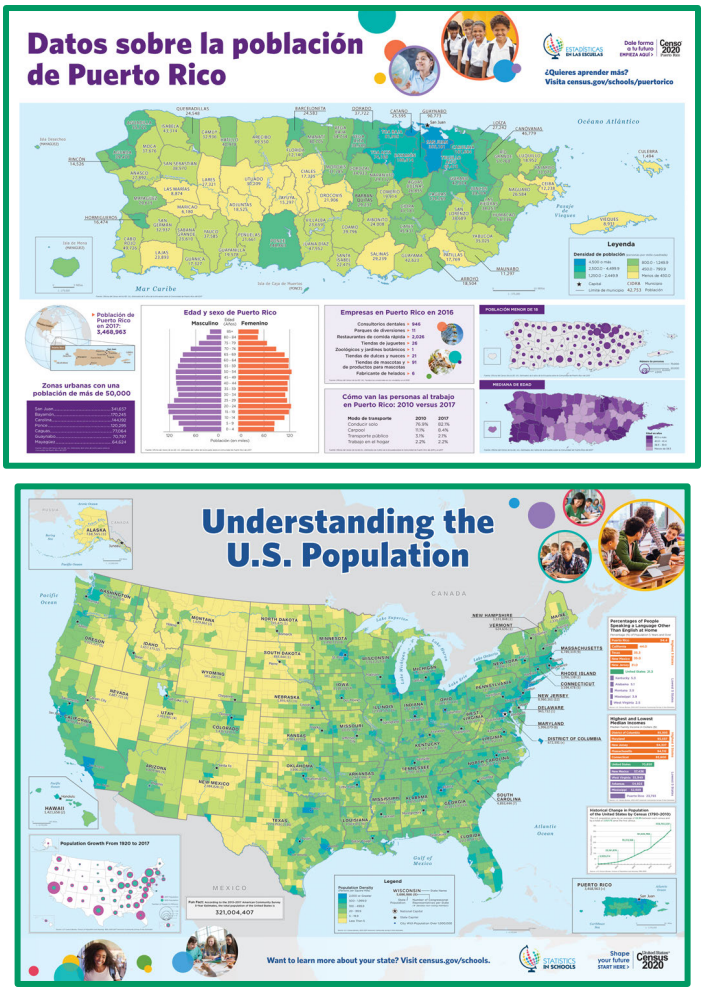


Figure 42: 2020 SIS Program Maps for Audiences in Puerto Rico for Grades K-8 and Stateside for Grades 9-12

Reaching Families and Caregivers Through SIS Program Materials. The Census Bureau has long understood the power of working with schools and educators, who are viewed as trusted

voices and pillars of the community. We also know that children can be instrumental in delivering messages about the importance of the census to the adults living with them. Thus, the 2020 SIS program not only sought to develop and present activities and materials that were appealing to students but also created these activities and materials with families, teachers, and education stakeholders in mind. Collectively, these audience groups helped increase the visibility of and engagement with the SIS program and the 2020 Census.

Since SIS was founded as a program created by teachers, for use by teachers, the Census Bureau invited teachers to contribute to and develop the 2020 SIS program's materials and resources. The Census Bureau recruited and hired a diverse group of approximately 30 educators from across the United States, Puerto Rico, and each Island Area to help create all SIS activities for the 2020 Census. By drawing on the insights and expertise of these teachers, we ensured that the SIS materials would be substantive and relevant, incorporating a variety of subject areas while still emphasizing statistical learning and the benefits of the census. Teacher input was also beneficial in confirming that materials would resonate with students at the given age or grade level. After development, in August 2019, the 2020 SIS program materials were shared with teachers and administrators across the country for classroom use during the 2019-2020 school year.

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the 2020 SIS program shifted from targeting primarily educators—through administrator kits containing information about the program, available resources, and steps for getting involved—to targeting more outreach to parents, caregivers, and families. In promoting use of SIS materials at home, we made valuable at-home learning resources available to families as we raised awareness about the 2020 Census and encouraged participation in the count.

Developing Statistical Literacy and Learning. The 2020 SIS program materials and activities were intended to cover a range of subject areas, including history, math, geography, sociology, and English. Depending on the student's age or grade level, activities included counting, coloring, reading, writing, critical thinking, data analysis, and computation. Materials were designated for grade levels or ranges and created for specific geographical regions, including U.S. stateside, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. Generally, resources were specified as being for pre-kindergarten (pre-K), kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8), and high school (9-12) students. Additional 2020 SIS program activities and materials were made available specifically for English-language-learning K-12 students and adult learners for whom English was a second language. Pre-K lessons were available in English and Spanish. (It is important to note that, while the perennial SIS program typically offers a variety of materials for school-age children and young adults, pre-K materials were an expanded offering of the 2020 SIS program, reinforcing the Census Bureau's commitment to reaching households with young children.)

Collectively, the 2020 SIS program materials, which included worksheets, videos, maps, a story and activity book, and an "Everyone Counts!" song, varied in their content and format. The materials were designed to engage a diverse range of students by using different teaching methods and connecting with students of different learning styles. Ultimately, all materials and activities aimed to build understanding of the census and its impact.

ADAPTING 2020 SIS ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH

The Census Bureau aimed to be thoroughly inclusive in creating the 2020 SIS program learning materials. We designed all learning and outreach activities to reflect our genuine commitment to engaging people in the 2020 count and the communications campaign in meaningful ways. It was especially important that the 2020 SIS program continue to demonstrate these principles following the onset of COVID-19, when we could no longer host in-person events for students and families or meet educators and administrators at national conferences.

While virtual formats had been used for some SIS activities and events before the pandemic, the Census Bureau turned fully to using online channels in March 2020. We used online channels to connect with students, families, educators, administrators, SIS program partners, and the teachers who composed the 2020 SIS Ambassador Program. In particular, the SIS program webpage, organic and paid social media, and paid digital ads informed parents and caregivers about the 2020 SIS program's free resources for at-home learning. Since states and communities nationwide were enforcing stay-at-home orders to curb virus transmission, and since many schools were unable to conduct remote learning, the Census Bureau aimed to encourage students and families to continue their education using SIS program resources.

Materials Development and Distribution. To continue executing the 2020 SIS program during the pandemic, we adapted our approach to focus on two primary objectives. The first objective was to reach out to parents and caregivers to provide information about SIS resources that could be used with the children in their home. The second objective was to deploy messaging to teachers that highlighted the availability of the online SIS materials and encouraged them to share the materials when communicating with students and families.

To support these objectives, we developed four new parent and caregiver toolkits, tailored for the pre-K, elementary school, middle school, and high school levels. The toolkits offered advice on how to find and use SIS resources for at-home learning and highlighted the importance of responding to the 2020 Census. We also created new digital marketing assets, including banner ads, static social media ads, and emails. The new creative assets featured updated messaging and imagery that reflected school building closures and the at-home learning environment. Ads were targeted to parents and caregivers, encouraging them to visit the SIS program page on the Census Bureau's website to learn more about SIS and to access free activities and

materials. Finally, we shifted our earned media outreach to focus on parenting publications, including national mainstream outlets, trade publications, and blogs. The Census Bureau conducted an interview tour across numerous parenting podcasts, pitched the SIS program as a story idea to a variety of family- and parenting-focused reporters and bloggers, and disseminated news releases aimed at reaching parents and caregivers.

Figure 43: 2020 SIS Program Email and Cover Page of Resource Toolkit About Summer Learning

The 2020 SIS program page on the Census Bureau's website served as the primary means for all audience groups to access SIS program resources and materials. However, educators, SIS program partners, and teacher ambassadors from the 2020 SIS Ambassador Program also played an important role in sharing SIS information with their schools, constituent groups, and professional networks. We provided educators, partners, and program ambassadors with digital copies of SIS program resources, such as toolkits and worksheets, as well as sample talking points to make outreach to their communities easy, especially in a virtual format. Many 2020 SIS program supporters promoted SIS and the benefits of a complete count through their respective organizations' social media accounts, newsletters, or email blasts.

Virtual and Digital Activities. The Census Bureau conducted several events, as planned, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included the "Everyone Counts!" Fall

Festival—the 2020 SIS program's national kickoff event—in Memphis in October 2019. While the kickoff event was held in person, we also executed a planned series of virtual events to celebrate SIS Week: Everyone Counts!—which took place March 2-6, 2020.

Throughout SIS Week, schools across the United States, including in Puerto Rico and the Island Areas, participated in activities that were based on daily themes drawn from the 2020 SIS materials and aimed at promoting the count of every child in the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau leveraged partnerships, earned media support, and digital marketing to promote SIS Week participation. We aimed to generate buzz before the self-response period began in mid-March. One of the highlights of the week was an innovative virtual field trip called "Mission: Census." This video enabled students to virtually explore Census Bureau headquarters, and students learned about the Census Bureau's geography and data work from agency experts, including Director Steven Dillingham. Following their virtual tour, students tested their knowledge with an interactive quiz show, and a Twitter chat accompanying the video provided a live forum for interaction and conversation throughout.

SIS Week: Everyone Counts! had been planned as a virtual event before the COVID-19 pandemic. The interest and engagement generated by the week's online activities encouraged the SIS program to roll out more virtual activities. For instance, the success of Mission: Census led to the creation of a bonus edition—an adapted version of the field trip video for elementary school students.

Figure 44: Social Media Assets Promoting the 2020 Census SIS Week: Everyone Counts!

Figure 45: Photo Still From the "Mission: Census" Virtual Field Trip Video During SIS Week

Targeted Local and Regional Outreach. The 2020 SIS program conducted frequent outreach to teachers, administrators, and education stakeholders across the country. Through these efforts, the Census Bureau aimed to reach all audience groups, though we considered that these grassroots outreach efforts could be particularly effective in reaching audiences in HTC areas. From research and experience, we knew that HTC audiences could be difficult to engage through paid or earned media; previous enumeration efforts had shown that HTC audiences, especially, could best be reached by advocates from trusted education-based or other partner organizations in the community. Thus, to reach all audiences, including HTC groups, we adopted a targeted approach in conducting outreach to those stakeholders who were best positioned to promote SIS in schools. This approach enabled us to personalize communication, establish the credibility of the census, and capture interest in the 2020 SIS program at the local and regional levels.

As part of this approach, in fall 2019, we sent administrator kits to principals and superintendents at all schools nationwide. In these kits, the Census Bureau provided an overview of the available 2020 SIS program materials and encouraged administrators to adopt SIS in their schools. Emphasizing that a complete count helps provide federal funding for schools, we also asked that administrators promote the census among students and their families.

We also coordinated with Census Bureau regional offices, providing support and materials for distribution at the local level. As the communications campaign executed its extended Motivation phase surge, the SIS program took part in the regional communication surges. We

created and shared a summer resource toolkit with the six census regional offices. The toolkit contained a variety of summer learning activities in English (at the pre-K and elementary, middle, and high school levels) and Spanish (at the pre-K level only). Parents and caregivers were encouraged to use the activities with the children in their homes while school was not in session. In addition, we examined historical data as well as 2020 Census self-response data to develop a list of 10 school districts per census region that were shown to be at high risk for an undercount. We shared each list of districts with its representative census regional office for staff members to conduct direct community outreach.

2020 SIS PROGRAM EVOLUTION AND IMPACTS

While the 2020 SIS program was scheduled to run only through the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the program continued to support the communications campaign, helping to drive census response through the end of enumeration in October 2020. The SIS program adapted to the changed circumstances of the pandemic and to its operational effects on the census, adjusting messaging and expanding outreach accordingly. These changes are exemplified by the 2020 SIS program's development of additional resources and involvement in the campaignwide communication surges.

Building Awareness of the Census. The 2020 SIS program was valuable to the Census Bureau's ongoing efforts to promote the 2020 Census both directly and indirectly, especially as the stay-at-home orders continued through the summer and early fall of 2020. By providing helpful, tangible materials and tools to students and educators, the SIS program created a clear pathway for reaching parents and caregivers. This enabled us to communicate with parents and caregivers about the benefits of census completion as well as the value of encouraging others in the community to participate.

Another important element of the 2020 SIS program was the 2020 SIS Ambassador Program, which helped to spread the word about SIS offerings among teachers and administrators. Through this program, the Census Bureau recruited a diverse group of 142 teachers from 47 states and territories to increase the reach of the 2020 SIS program. Teachers trust other teachers to recommend teaching materials. As trusted voices among their peers, ambassadors lent authenticity, credibility, and relatability to the SIS program. The ambassadors conducted social media, earned media, and network outreach to promote the 2020 SIS program. The ambassadors also held informational sessions about the program with their colleagues and used SIS materials and activities in their classrooms. In return, ambassadors had the opportunity to build relationships with Census Bureau experts, received exclusive SIS content and promotional items to use and distribute in their classrooms, and were presented with a digital badge and certificate recognizing their designation as an SIS ambassador.

Even as the 2020 SIS program evolved and many schools were no longer conducting in-person learning, SIS program ambassadors and many other teachers and administrators continued to share SIS materials with professional contacts and with families and students directly. In this way, the Census Bureau helped students continue their education when classes were limited or suspended, while continuing to grow awareness of SIS and the 2020 Census.

Success With Social, Digital, and Other Media. Social and digital media in all forms—including organic and paid social, paid digital, and earned media—were significant to the Census Bureau's ability to successfully engage target audiences in the 2020 SIS program. Through integrations with multiple areas of the communications campaign, we developed and published organic social media posts promoting the 2020 SIS program on the Census Bureau's social media accounts, including on Facebook and Pinterest. Throughout the communications campaign, SIS social media content garnered more than 5.4 million audience impressions. In addition, the Census Bureau created and deployed a variety of paid advertising assets—including keyword search ads, social media ads, digital banner ads, and sponsored content—that drove significant traffic to the SIS program page on the Census Bureau's website. Paid advertisements also helped increase the SIS email subscriber list. Finally, Census Bureau media relations pitching helped draw public attention to the 2020 SIS program and the census through mentions in national mainstream and trade publications and on national and local television and radio stations. Media tours—which provided interview opportunities on satellite media, radio, and podcast shows—and op-ed placements also helped garner coverage of specific events and topics related to families and parenting, education, and the SIS program.

This multichannel approach, employing a diverse mix of paid, earned, and owned media, amplified SIS and 2020 Census messages and reached teachers and parents where they were. Collectively, the ads served and the coverage earned across these numerous channels promoted the range of substantive resources and appealing activities available to enhance student learning—both before the pandemic set in and after it had taken hold. Furthermore, the adaptability of the program and our communication strategy enabled us to enhance and extend our social and digital media efforts beyond original plans.

For example, paid keyword search ads in English and Spanish were implemented in search engines and optimized throughout the campaign. The ads incorporated SIS-specific keyword terms that were frequently searched on the Census Bureau's website, as well as more general terms that people were searching across the internet to locate educational resources. The ads also highlighted that SIS materials were free, came from a reliable source (the Census Bureau), and were available for use—in many subjects and all grade levels—for teachers in the classroom and for parents and caregivers who were helping children learn from home during the pandemic. As the communications campaign was extended, we continued to add and

revise keyword search ads to capture the most relevant and interested traffic, as informed by the ads' performance and SIS webpage metrics. The SIS program benefited from strong and sustained audience engagement in the communications campaign and the 2020 Census as a result of the adaptability of keyword search ads and other social and digital media assets.

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE COUNT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

The count of young children across all audience groups was a key priority for the Census Bureau in conducting the 2020 Census. In planning for the 2020 count, we analyzed the results of previous data collections and identified that children under the age of 5 have historically been undercounted. In the 2010 Census, for example, the net estimated undercount (after eliminating duplication) for children under the age of 5 was 4.6%, or almost 1 million young children. This undercount was the largest of any age group in the 2010 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Our analysis also indicated that some young children not counted in the 2010 Census resided in households that had submitted a census form—an indication that children were left out because of confusion about whether they should be included (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). These trends signaled that the 2020 Census communications campaign would need to educate and persuade every household with young children to respond to the census and to include all children in their household in their response.

To ensure that young children would be included in the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau established the Improving the Count of Young Children Integrated Communications Team (Young Children Communications Team), which included communications experts, 2020 Census operations and project leaders, members of the Census Bureau's 2020 Census Undercount of Young Children Task Force, and subject matter experts on households with young children. The Young Children Communications Team developed and executed an integrated set of cross-component-area activities, including digital marketing, partnership development and engagement, public and media relations efforts, and distribution of promotional and collateral materials. These coordinated efforts addressed one of the integrated communications campaign's key challenges and projected the campaignwide message that the country's youngest children must be counted.

APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT COUNTING YOUNG CHILDREN

While the Census Bureau noted numerous HTC population groups for the 2020 Census, as discussed beginning on Page 26, the undercount of young children had been pervasive across all audience groups in recent years. Because the undercount of young children is such a complex issue, the Young Children Communications Team aimed to address multiple factors that contribute to this issue when creating and executing the communications strategy. This strategy focused on educating and seeking to build trust with parents, caregivers, and householders living with young children. We emphasized to these audience groups the

importance and benefits of including young children in responses to the 2020 Census, stressing that all data submitted to the Census Bureau is kept private and secure.

Historical Data and Trends. In reviewing data from previous censuses, the Census Bureau identified that the undercount of young children had increased since the 1960 Census, despite a decrease in the census undercount for other age groups (Konicki, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The undercount of young children is thought to be caused by a combination of factors. According to research (O'Hare et al., 2019), children from birth through age 4 are most at risk of going uncounted if they live in households that demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics:

- They are not the biological or adopted children of the householder.
- They are Hispanic or members of a racial minority.
- They live in a complex household, which is a household that is neither a nuclear family nor a single-parent family[10].
- They live in a renter-occupied, multiunit structure.
- They live in a two-person household or a household of six or more people.
- They are less than 1 year old, particularly 3 months old or younger.
- They live in a household with limited English proficiency.

Other factors have also been shown to influence the undercount of young children, including the stability of the household, caps on the household size (as established by some senior citizen dwellings and public housing programs), geography, language limitations, and low or unreliable internet access (O'Hare et al., 2019).

Given that census response influences the allocation of federal funding for public programs, an undercount of young children prevents those programs and services from receiving the funds they need. This funding deficit affects food assistance programs, Head Start, child care services, housing support organizations, public schools, early intervention services for children with

[10] Single-person households are also considered non-complex households, however, the single-person household designation does not apply to young children, who are unable to live on their own.

special needs, children's health insurance programs, and other entities that provide services or support to children and families.

Further, many children at risk for being undercounted rely on federally funded programs to help set them up for success. The 2020 Census provided a critical opportunity to get an accurate count. To take advantage of this opportunity, we aimed to launch a broad, multichannel communications plan to improve the count of young children, ensuring that they could be supported during their formative early years in the decade to come.

Integrated, Cross-Campaign Approach. The efforts to improve the count of young children were coordinated across multiple areas of the Census Bureau and the 2020 Census communications campaign. Many outreach activities were led by and conducted in coordination with the 2020 SIS program and NPP, amplifying our message to count young children to families, caregivers, and householders—especially those with multiple children in the home. Components such as social and digital media (both organic and paid), traditional media (through the broadcast of PSAs), partnership engagement, and public and media relations outreach were also critical in promoting the count of young children. Coordination with these different areas created continuity across the communications campaign and branding, while strengthening the collective impact of our message to count all young children.

In planning communications to improve the count of young children, the Young Children Communications Team drew on insights from internal working group efforts, data from numerous Census Bureau reports on the subject, and inputs from external subject matter experts. Such collaboration and a broad, informed approach helped ensure that communication tactics intended to reach families and caregivers aligned with our data-driven strategy.

Data-Driven Strategy and Messaging. To help us reach audience groups that could improve the count in 2020, it was important that our communication strategy, messaging, and tactics build on data from previous counts showing a trend of an undercount of young children, as well as other research. The Census Bureau established the young children communication strategy to emphasize that, while children ages 5 to 19 have typically been counted in previous decennial censuses, children ages 0 to 4—including babies—have been left out. Next, we developed messaging that stressed the importance of counting young children while also providing instructions on how to count them in the 2020 Census, especially in situations where children split time between homes or were not the biological children of the person completing the questionnaire. Using the communication strategy as a guide, we then developed a variety of English- and Spanish-language assets that incorporated the established messaging. We planned and executed targeted outreach efforts to parents and caregivers with young children in their homes; we also targeted partner organizations and other key trusted

voices that could reach those target audience groups. Our outreach involved widely sharing and distributing the assets, which included fact sheets, promotional items, pre-K SIS program activities, videos, PSAs, and other resources. Finally, as enumeration took place, we closely followed and analyzed response rates in areas designated as at-risk for an undercount of young children, and we used this data to direct our ongoing outreach efforts.

If you have children in your home, make sure they are counted in the right place.

Young children experience new adventures each day, and little ones need all of the support they can get during these early years.

- Count children in the home where they live and sleep most of the time, even if their parents don't live there.
- If a child's time is divided between more than one home, count them where they stay most often. If their time is evenly divided, or you don't know where they stay most often, count them where they are staying on Census Day—April 1, 2020.
- If a child's family (or guardian) is moving during March or April 2020, count them at the address where they are living on April 1, 2020.
- Count children in your home if they don't have a permanent place to live and are staying in your home on April 1, 2020, even if they are only staying with you temporarily.
- Count newborn babies at the home where they will live and sleep most of the time, even if they are still in the hospital on April 1, 2020.

Start shaping their future by going to 2020CENSUS.GOV.

Shape your future
START HERE >

United States Census 2020

Dale forma al futuro de nuestros niños. Empieza con el Censo del 2020.

¿Qué es el censo y cuándo se lleva a cabo?
Cada 10 años, se pide a todas las personas que viven en los Estados Unidos que realicen una tarea constitucional simple, pero muy importante: responder al censo. El Censo del 2020 es un formulario que hace algunas preguntas básicas como la edad, el sexo y la cantidad de personas que viven o se quedan en su hogar, incluyendo niños pequeños y bebés recién nacidos. El próximo censo decenal comienza en marzo del 2020 y responder es fácil, seguro e importante.

¿Por qué es importante contar a los niños pequeños?
Con frecuencia, se olvida incluir en el censo a los bebés recién nacidos y a los niños pequeños. El Censo del 2020 ayuda a determinar qué areas reunen los requisitos para recibir los recursos críticos que los niños y las familias necesitan durante los próximos 10 años. Básicamente, ¡toda la niñez! Entre los ejemplos de los recursos que pueden ser impactados están la asistencia alimentaria, Head Start, guarderías, apoyo para la vivienda, escuelas públicas, servicios de intervención temprana para niños con necesidades especiales, seguro de salud para niños y más. Saber cuántos niños hay y dónde viven es esencial para recibir estos servicios y programas. Por eso es tan importante contar a todos los niños, incluso a los bebés recién nacidos.

Para más información, visita 2020CENSUS.GOV/ES

Dale forma a tu futuro
EMPIEZA AQUÍ >

United States Census 2020

Figure 46: Fact Sheets in English and Spanish About Counting Young Children in the 2020 Census

TACTICS AND ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Numerous outreach efforts were conducted by the Young Children Communications Team and across the 2020 Census communications campaign to improve the count of young children. The tactics were designed to raise awareness of the historic undercount, to help audiences understand the impact of an undercount in their communities, and to motivate parents and caregivers to count all children living in their home when completing the census. Young children-related communication tactics included the creation of print and promotional materials, the development of pre-K videos, and the execution of a partnership strategy focused on organizations that support families with young children. The Young Children Communications Team also planned and held a Counting Young Children National Event—a family-centered event that included speakers and a brief news conference. While we executed tactics and developed assets that specifically supported the count of young children, we also

broadly integrated themes related to counting young children into other assets across the 2020 Census communications campaign. We considered that the undercount of young children occurs among, and consequently impacts, audience groups across various geographic areas and racial and ethnic characteristics. We worked to incorporate visuals and messaging about counting young children into advertising and paid media, public and media relations, partnership, social media, and other campaign efforts.

Print, Direct Mail, and Promotional Items. The Census Bureau developed a diverse array of print and promotional items for the young children communications efforts. These items included informational materials, such as a fact sheet and a flyer, produced in both English and Spanish. The fact sheet targeted heads of household and other adults living with young children, and it explained how to count all the children in the home and why it was important to do so. The flyer targeted partners and stakeholders and, in FAQ format, explained the undercount of young children, its impacts, and the steps they could take to help ensure that all children would be counted in the 2020 Census. Another printed item was an information card targeting the families of infants in neonatal intensive care units. The card emphasized the importance of counting everyone in the census—even newborn babies still in the hospital.

In addition, we developed a direct mail piece emphasizing the importance and benefits of counting "everyone under your roof," including young children, in the 2020 Census. We sent the direct mail piece to approximately 14.6 million households in areas across the country that were characterized as at high risk of undercounting young children. Direct mail was a particularly effective method for reaching parents, caregivers, and householders with young children in the home because it delivered messaging into potential respondents' homes. In addition, research suggested that many households in our target audience for this messaging were likely to receive limited direct mail, and therefore, were more inclined to open direct mail pieces they received (United States Postal Service, 2017).

We also worked to obtain promotional items for families and caregivers of young children. Items included baby hats, burp cloths, plastic food bowls, and reusable snack pouches with 2020 Census branding. The Census Bureau made the items available to participants at the Counting Young Children National Event and to partners to distribute to their constituents.

Dedicated Webpage. Within the 2020 Census website, the Census Bureau developed a Counting Young Children page to provide information about and resources related to counting young children in the census. The page shared research, campaign materials, such as fact sheets, and links to blog posts, articles, and press releases. The page also included information about events, such as the Counting Young Children National Event.

Pre-K Webisode Series and Singalong Videos. The 2020 SIS program team collaborated with the communications campaign's creative team to produce five videos for pre-K audiences. The videos were designed to resonate with young children while emphasizing the importance of the 2020 Census—and of counting everybody, but especially children—to parents or guardians. The videos complemented other 2020 SIS pre-K materials, such as a pre-K story and activity book. Three 2-minute videos formed a webisode series that used an animated story to introduce basic 2020 Census-related concepts to children ages 2 to 5. Two other videos—one in English and one in Spanish—brought the pre-K "Everyone Counts!" song to life in a fun, animated visual format that showed lyrics and encouraged children to sing along.

Partnership Strategy. A robust partnership strategy was critical to spreading the word about the efforts to improve the count of young children. Partners distributed materials and promotional items to their constituents. They also served as trusted voices, directly conveying to constituents the importance of counting everyone in the home—but especially young children—when responding to the census. The Census Bureau recruited numerous national and digital organizations, as well as state departments of education, to serve as partners. Several partners, including the National Head Start Association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Federation of Pediatric Organizations, the Partnership for America's Children, and the Administration for Children and Families, supported our efforts by publishing blog posts, sending email newsletters, posting on their social media accounts, and hosting webinars about counting young children. We reviewed externally developed materials and provided content-sharing suggestions to partners to help ensure consistency of messaging.

Counting Young Children National Event. Held in February 2020 in Cleveland at the Great Lakes Science Center, the Counting Young Children National Event aimed to raise awareness of the importance of counting young children while promoting learning and engagement in the 2020 Census. The family-centered event and news conference featured speeches by representatives from key partner organizations, such as Sesame Workshop and the Federation of Pediatric Organizations. It also featured speeches from Census Bureau leaders, including Director Steven Dillingham and the chief of the Public Information Office, Michael C. Cook, Sr. More than 500 people and 23 partners attended the event.

Young Children PSA Distribution. The Census Bureau executed a targeted outreach effort that involved creating and distributing an English- and Spanish-language PSA in video and radio formats. This PSA reinforced the importance of counting young children in the census. In August and September 2020, as the communications campaign's delayed Reminder phase activities were executed, we conducted two waves of targeted outreach and PSA distribution. The first wave focused on national and local media outlets across the country, and the second

focused on a smaller set of media markets that contained large numbers of HTC households at risk of undercounting young children. Collectively, the PSAs garnered more than 13 million impressions on radio and TV stations across the country. It is also important to note that other PSAs developed by our partners and PSAs developed in other areas of the 2020 Census communications campaign, such as through coordinated efforts by the creative and 2020 SIS program teams, incorporated themes about counting young children.

Figure 47: Screenshot of a 2020 Census Video PSA Shown at the Counting Young Children National Event, as Created and Presented by Sesame Workshop

IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED EFFORTS

The integrated efforts to improve the count of young children were instrumental in raising awareness of the 2020 Census and explaining why even the youngest children must be included in the count. Coordination across a range of communication channels and tactics amplified the Census Bureau's message that, to halt the growing trend of an undercount of young children, households must participate in the census and include young children in their homes when completing the questionnaire. Our integrated efforts achieved a wide reach, as observed in direct audience interaction with creative assets and demonstrated by the breadth of our earned media coverage. Further, social and digital media data analyzed at the close of the communications campaign showed substantial engagement with the campaign and numerous downloads of young-children-focused resources and SIS program pre-K activities from the Census Bureau's website.

Media Relations and Outreach Results. Media relations efforts to improve the count of young children included development of national and local news releases and deployment to

media outlets across the country. The Census Bureau also created a customizable news release that partners, stakeholders, and local leaders could use to spread the word about counting young children in their communities. News releases shared key information about the historical undercount, urged inclusion of young children in the 2020 Census, and promoted the 2020 SIS program's pre-K activities and materials for children under age 5. To maximize the reach of news releases, we published them on the Census Bureau's website, disseminated them using a public relations contact database, and distributed them directly to reporters and bloggers.

We followed up on news release distribution with focused pitching efforts, conducting phone and email outreach to mainstream news outlets, trade publications, bloggers, TV and radio producers, and other relevant reporters. By contacting media outlets directly—especially when promoting the Counting Young Children National Event and the use of the young children-focused broadcast PSAs on TV and radio stations—the Census Bureau could share helpful talking points and secure coverage urging the count of young children. Specifically, the Counting Young Children National Event was covered or mentioned in 68 print, online, and broadcast stories, and information about the event was posted on eight community calendars, blogs, and websites.

Social and Digital Media Engagement. The Census Bureau developed customizable social media cards, which consisted of pre-approved images, text, and templates, to support partners in their social and digital outreach about counting young children. In addition, we launched keyword search ads, digital banner ads and sponsored content, and social media ads on Facebook and Pinterest to promote broad engagement in the count of young children and in the 2020 SIS program's pre-K component. Organic social media content was also published on the Census Bureau's social media accounts. Ads and assets aimed both to build general interest in the SIS program's pre-K materials for young children and to share specific information about counting young children in the census.

Further, the Census Bureau used social and digital media to create buzz about the Counting Young Children National Event. The Census Bureau shared content from and about the event on all four of its owned social media channels. Content included information about counting young children in the 2020 Census and links to resources for parents and caregivers on the Counting Young Children and 2020 SIS program webpages. Organic posts published during the event featured photos and highlights, and a wrap-up post invited people to follow the Census Bureau and sign up for the SIS program email list to stay engaged with efforts to count young children. Outreach across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn resulted in more than 122,000 impressions and 1,700 engagements.

Even after the pandemic took hold, social and digital media remained highly effective in building and sustaining audience interest in the count of young children and in encouraging the use of the 2020 SIS program's pre-K materials and activities for children under age 5.

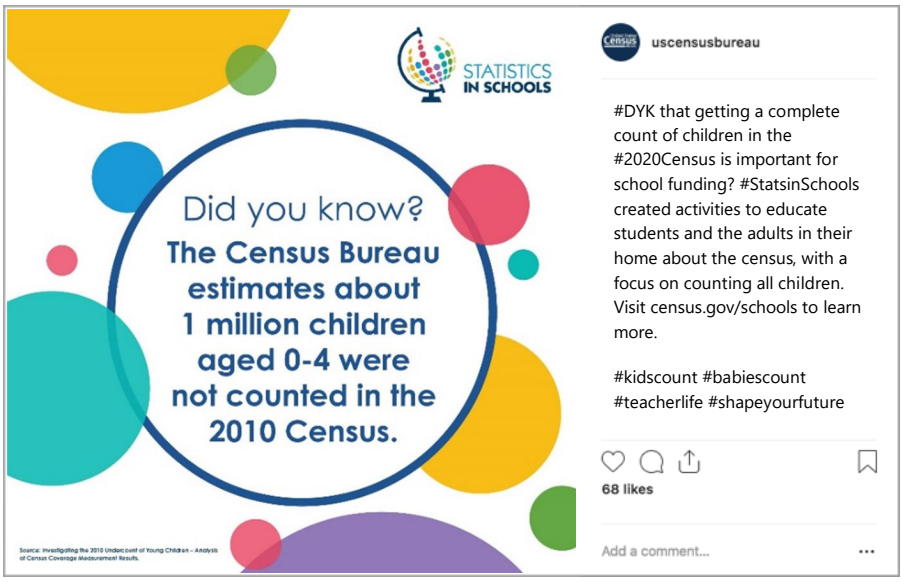


Figure 48: 2020 SIS Program Social Media Posts About Counting Young Children

FIELD RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Census enumeration is as complex a process to carry out as it is important in determining resource availability for communities nationwide. Although the 2020 Census provided for online self-response and prioritized this method, we recognized that a significant number of temporary staff members would be required to help conduct the count through field, office, and outreach operations. Accordingly, we developed and disseminated resources and advertising materials to promote hiring for the 2020 Census.

The goal of field recruitment activities was to recruit the number of 2020 Census employees needed, in the right locations, at the lowest reasonable cost. To achieve this, we reached out to former Census Bureau employees, particularly those who had previously served as census takers. We also capitalized on trends in social and digital media—including paid media—to maximize public awareness of census job opportunities. To strengthen messaging and maintain the consistency of the 2020 Census brand, we created recruitment marketing materials, aligning and integrating those with the overall 2020 Census communications campaign.

Although recruiting and maintaining such a large base of temporary employees was challenging for the Census Bureau, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic, hiring efforts were successful. We hired a nationwide team of outreach, office, and field staff members, and we enumerated 99.9% of the country by the federal deadline of October 15, 2020.

ROLE OF RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING

2020 Census hiring efforts and corresponding communication activities took place in two phases. Early Operations Recruiting (Phase 1) took place well before the 2020 count, starting in September 2018 and running through June 2019. Later, as the Census Bureau prepared for and conducted field enumeration, Peak Operations Recruiting (Phase 2) took place, extending from August 2019 through October 2020.[11] In November 2019, a national digital paid media plan

[11] Peak Operations Recruiting (Phase 2) was originally planned to end in February 2020 but was extended and did not end until October 2020 because of the pandemic.

was added to supplement Phase 2 outreach efforts. Paid advertising was then executed from December 2019 through August 2020 to help close gaps in recruiting.

Extending the Hiring Period. Given the onset of COVID-19 and the resulting operational delays in spring 2020, the Census Bureau faced challenges in maintaining its base of temporary employees to conduct a complete count. There were many uncertainties about virus transmission, symptoms, and treatment, especially in the early months of the pandemic. In addition, with stay-at-home orders in place in many states and communities, people's day-to-day plans and availability changed. The job market faced volatility, too, as demand shifted to favor essential work, companies made layoffs, and the economy contracted.

Further, suspension of and subsequent delays in field operations in mid-March 2020 meant that many temporary employees hired for enumeration operations could not work or receive pay in the original time period. And, given evolving pandemic conditions, the Census Bureau did not know when employees could resume work. Beyond conducting a full and accurate count, the Census Bureau's priority during the 2020 Census was to protect the public and all census employees. The Census Bureau recognized that once field operations resumed, some workers might not return to work or start at all, given health and safety concerns.

In May 2020, the Census Bureau, following public health guidelines, released its plan to start executing field operations. All Census Bureau employees would practice safety precautions, such as wearing a mask and maintaining physical distance, when conducting the count. Update Leave and Update Enumerate operations planned for March, April, and May 2020 were shifted to start in May and end in June. The NRFU operation planned for May, June, and July was to start in July and run through October. These field activities required large numbers of census employees to ensure thorough community coverage and engagement.

As a result of these shifts in timing, hiring efforts—originally planned to be completed by the campaign's Motivation phase in March 2020—continued much later into the campaign. The Census Bureau continued recruitment activities through the end of the delayed Reminder phase in October. In addition, job postings for the 2020 Census remained available throughout the campaign—even during the suspension of field activities—to ensure that there would be enough employees to support a full and accurate count.

Sustained Recruitment Communications. The importance of recruitment marketing materials and communications cannot be overstated. The Census Bureau aimed to hire 150,000 and 804,000 temporary employees in recruitment Phases 1 and 2, respectively. A range of materials, including trifold brochures, partner toolkits, posters and ads for digital media, newspaper classifieds, and radio announcements, helped inform people in communities nationwide about various temporary Census Bureau job opportunities. By releasing recruitment assets in phases

aligned with the hiring pushes, we were able to generate interest early and continue to promote job opportunities through the end of the communications campaign. Assets were revised throughout the hiring period, especially once the campaign's "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform was finalized, during Phase 2. Some ads and materials produced during Phase 1 were also updated to reflect the campaign's overall look and feel.

Given the environmental and operational uncertainties the pandemic created, it was important that we continue to promote available job openings throughout 2020, even as the count was taking place. The Census Bureau recognized that it could be difficult to reach many households—especially those already considered HTC. In addition, although an online self-response option was available for the 2020 Census, enumerators and other field staff members would continue to play an important role in ensuring that the population was fully counted. Strong and sustained hiring efforts were critical.

The breadth of the Census Bureau's recruitment communication materials, especially the revised Phase 1 and new Phase 2 assets, helped messages about temporary census jobs break through the coverage of tumultuous news events to reach a variety of audience groups, encouraging them to apply. Although marketing efforts spanned many months across both recruiting phases, we were able to sustain public attention; appealing visuals and simple but effective calls to action continued to draw applicants to the 2020 Census jobs webpage throughout the recruitment period.

Representing Diverse Hiring in Recruitment Materials. To draw a diverse pool of applicants and fill positions throughout the country, the Census Bureau took a hyperlocal approach to recruitment, especially in traditionally HTC communities. We recognized that many of the temporary employees hired for the 2020 Census would be needed to conduct door-to-door enumeration, especially in places where self-response rates were low, where people might be hesitant to participate, or where audience groups primarily spoke languages other than English. By tapping into regional office staffs and CPEP representatives, we were able to directly distribute recruitment communication materials in communities, even at the neighborhood level. We aimed to hire and place workers in the communities where they lived and where they could serve as trusted voices, encouraging census participation among neighbors in their preferred language. Not only would this help ensure diversity in our hiring, but it could improve response rates as well, helping to ensure that communities nationwide could benefit from census participation.

In addition to recruiting at the community and neighborhood levels, it was critical that all recruitment communications and advertising assets reflect diversity in the census takers and field employees featured. This meant diversity in geography as well as in the age, sex, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of people shown in the ads. While the calls to action and

other information included in some ads and resources were designed to appeal to a broad, diverse mass audience, others were tailored to specific audience groups by language. All Phase 1 assets—along with the 2020 Census jobs webpage—were developed in English and Spanish. Phase 2 assets were developed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, and Arabic. It is important to note that English materials were created for the broad, diverse mass audience—with the intention of reaching Black/African American groups within this audience—as well as for English-speaking AIAN audience groups. In addition, Spanish-language materials were created for audience groups in the states and Puerto Rico, respectively. The availability of materials in different languages and, in some cases, for specific audience groups of language speakers helped extend the reach of the Census Bureau's messaging about 2020 Census temporary job opportunities.

Figure 49: Recruitment Poster and Newspaper Classified Job Ad in Russian

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS AND WEBSITE

Promotional materials, advertisements, and informational resources were created to serve several functions in recruiting candidates to fill 2020 Census jobs. They informed potential applicants about census jobs, requirements, and the application process. They also encouraged people to apply for available jobs and supported field recruiters, field office staff members, and partnership specialists throughout the recruitment process.

Recruitment Materials and Advertising Assets. Since some recruitment details differed by region, some aspects of the recruitment materials were created to be customizable. Targeted information (e.g., pay rates, regional office address information, graphics) could be adjusted by regional office representatives or Census Bureau partners. Assets produced in Phase 1, Phase 2, or both phases included collateral, such as trifold brochures, business cards, fact sheets, 4-inch-by-6-inch "pub" flyers, pocket folders, a partner information kit, and an introductory letter; signage, such as posters, banners, and yard signs; digital materials, such as email message templates, text message copy, social media post copy and assets, social ads, and digital ads; and advertising assets, such as radio ads, live-action videos for TV or social media, and newspaper classified ads.

Beyond the 2020 Census jobs page, most recruitment materials and advertising assets were not revised to directly address the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in May 2020, we did update our recruitment videos to reflect the Census Bureau's new public health protocols for census takers and the public. We created animated videos in English and Spanish that portrayed census takers visiting houses while wearing masks and maintaining safe physical distance from the respondents. In sharing these new videos with prospective employee audiences, we reinforced our commitment to prioritizing the health and safety of the public and of Census Bureau employees while conducting the critical decennial count.

Recruitment Information and Jobs Website. The recruitment website at 2020Census.gov/jobs was launched in Phase 1, and it was available in English and Spanish. As the cornerstone of our field recruitment efforts, the jobs site contained up-to-date information on job availability and office locations by region, pay rates by location, and the application steps and associated timeline. A clickable national map helped site users access this information. The site also included an FAQ page as well as a candidate portal for submitting and accessing job applications.

We continued to enhance the website in Phase 2 based on stakeholder input and usability testing. Updates included improvements to navigation, layout and design, site search, and search engine optimization, as well as to pages featuring pay and location information, including the clickable national map.

Across both phases, the site's interactivity allowed users to tailor the map view and quickly identify information that was most local and relevant to them. Site visitors could also use the website and the map feature to learn about openings and closures of local field offices due to the pandemic. In addition, the site's editability allowed the Census Bureau to revise the site as needed to share the latest news on hiring capacity and the application review process. This editability was especially important when the pandemic took hold and job applicants as well as newly hired employees sought answers and directions related to census operational changes.

PAID MEDIA AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

While the Census Bureau's use of recruitment marketing materials and the jobs website, along with concerted recruitment outreach efforts, helped to attract applicants, it was essential that hiring goals be met to ensure there would be enough workers to conduct the 2020 count. In late 2019, to increase employee recruitment in geographic areas where hiring projections had not been met, the Census Bureau added a first wave of paid media to its recruitment communications plan. A large temporary employee base became especially important in early 2020 as the pandemic brought about timing changes in census operations, delays in enumerator deployment, and staffing fluctuations due to public health concerns. Accordingly, we launched a second wave of paid media in July 2020 to support a final recruitment push as the NRFU operation rolled out nationwide.

Use of digital ads was an effective paid media tactic as the ads could be launched rapidly. Ads could also be audience-targeted with precision to drive potential applicants to the 2020 Census jobs page. Paid media activities complemented organic social media and sharing efforts as well as direct recruitment outreach by Census Bureau recruiters, field office staff members, and CPEP representatives. As the Census Bureau conducted these outreach efforts, 2020 Census partners and stakeholders shared recruitment resources and promotional materials with their constituents as well.

Digital Paid Media Planning and Execution. The Census Bureau launched its recruitment-focused paid media plan in December 2019. We first used paid search ads, later expanding our execution to include digital display, paid social media, and job board ads. As the recruitment campaign proceeded, advertising assets in all media placements were optimized to maximize the number of job applications submitted.

To assess paid media performance, the Census Bureau analyzed social, digital, and search ad analytics and the 2020 Census jobs page metrics alongside recruitment data, which included the number of applications started and completed in the applicant portal. Analyzing search ad performance metrics helped us identify commonly searched terms. In addition, we examined the paid search ads, as well as display, social, and job board ads, that generated the most clicks to the 2020 Census jobs webpage and adjusted ad serving strategies accordingly.

From our designated paid media budget, we allocated resources to the creative assets and paid media channels that performed best in driving applications, and we geotargeted ads to audiences in locations with the greatest recruitment need. Finally, we optimized the jobs webpage to engage visitors and direct them to relevant information based on search terms and ad interactions.

The digital media campaign integrated elements of the broader 2020 Census communications

campaign, including development of creative content (with use of the "Shape your future. Start here." creative platform), media planning and buying, social media and website development, and campaign optimization. The social and digital media channels selected and optimized throughout the recruitment campaign—including online job boards, email platforms, and social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Nextdoor—represented a highly innovative media mix for recruitment of temporary Census Bureau employees. The paid media for census jobs recruitment ultimately delivered more than 280 million ad impressions through October 2020. These impressions converted to more than 5.1 million clicks to the jobs page and more than 1.6 million clicks to start an application. Ultimately, the Census Bureau considered the paid media efforts successful in driving application submissions and producing a viable candidate pool from which to fill the open 2020 Census positions.

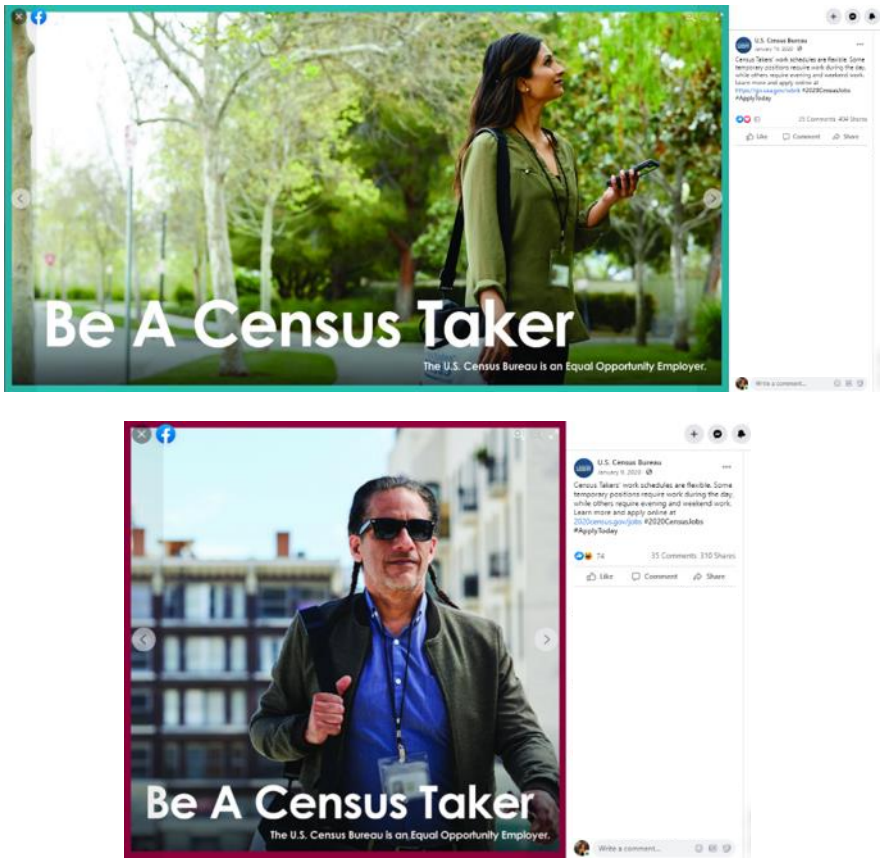


Figure 50: Recruitment-Focused Social Media Content Posted by U.S. Census Bureau on Facebook

Cross-Campaign Integration. Integration with other areas of the communications campaign was especially important for recruitment marketing because recruitment began in 2018 and lasted through the end of the count in October 2020—a lengthy hiring period that called for

sustained communications about field recruitment and messaging about job opportunities. The recruitment team worked with the creative development team to synchronize look, feel, and messaging across all campaign assets. The recruitment team also liaised with the partnership program, coordinating with CPEP representatives to distribute printed recruitment materials and resources directly to partners and community groups at the local level. Census Bureau partners were encouraged to pass along materials to their constituents and to promote job availability through their own social media and communication channels. The Census Bureau advertised 2020 Census hiring efforts and job opportunities through the permanent Census.gov site as well as the decennial-specific 2020Census.gov site. In addition, we published organic posts on our social media accounts and sent email blasts to our subscriber base. Building awareness of 2020 Census jobs was critical to successful recruitment and hiring efforts, as well as to our overall campaign communications efforts to encourage census participation.

CAMPAIGN MONITORING AND OPTIMIZATION ACTIVITIES

The Census Bureau conducted monitoring and optimization efforts to ensure that the 2020 Census communications campaign was operating efficiently and effectively. Efficiency meant that communications were reaching the most appropriate audiences at the lowest cost. Effectiveness meant that all communication and outreach activities were integrated, reflected the latest operational plans, and were optimized to promote census response. In monitoring the campaign, the Census Bureau observed audience interactions with social and digital communications assets and reviewed available reach and frequency data for traditional media placements. We also analyzed self-response data and trends in audience perceptions of and participation in the 2020 Census. To optimize the campaign, we then acted on the information gathered in our monitoring efforts. We used the data collected, analysis conducted, and insights contributed by subject matter experts to inform critical decisions that affected all areas of the campaign as it progressed. All monitoring and optimization activities built on the campaign's early research, planning, and testing efforts. Specifically, we analyzed and applied the predictive models, audience segments, and campaign platform and creative testing results at optimization decision points throughout the campaign. We continually evaluated the effectiveness and efficiency of the campaign—as well as our adjustments to the campaign—as the campaign progressed.

As noted in previous sections, the communications campaign encountered unprecedented challenges during enumeration, including a contentious election cycle, nationwide protests, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances necessitated campaign adjustments to help the 2020 Census break through the noise and motivate response. As a result of campaign monitoring and optimization activities, the Census Bureau responded to more than 200 issues and executed more than 120 concerted optimization efforts across communication channels. Campaign data and analysis guided these interventions and led to significant paid media spending beyond the original plan. Despite the challenging environment, this data-driven approach—and the interventions resulting from it—helped the Census Bureau achieve a self-response rate of 67.0%, exceeding both its 2020 self-response goal (66.6%) and its final 2010 self-response rate (66.5%).

MANAGING AND MONITORING THE CAMPAIGN

The Census Bureau recognized that campaign monitoring and optimization activities would uncover critical challenges and opportunities for the 2020 Census communications campaign. To form a broad leadership body that would provide input on these activities, we convened

staff members who represented the communications, field and decennial operations, partnership program, and other teams. The campaign monitoring and optimization team then executed activities as discussed with this leadership body. The team held regular meetings throughout the campaign—and daily, at the height of enumeration—to analyze the campaign's performance and to ensure alignment between operations and campaign messaging and tactics. The campaign monitoring and optimization team was highly attuned to the operational and campaign impacts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and by other challenges that arose throughout the 2020 count. Accordingly, the team consulted various data points and tracked emerging issues and risks to the campaign, using a sophisticated campaign management platform to streamline these inputs. Data sources included census response rates, media metrics and ad performance data, results of the 2020 Census Tracking Survey, and outputs from social listening and media monitoring activities. These sources helped the Census Bureau understand the potential impact of communications efforts on census response. The sources also highlighted response trends across audience groups and geographies, helping us identify areas of concern and allocate resources efficiently.

Campaign Management Platform and Tools. The Census Bureau used a robust monitoring and optimization system, known as the campaign management platform, to analyze data inputs. Through integrations with various external sources, the platform collected and displayed census self-response data and media performance metrics, along with other key datasets. Numerous dashboards and visual display options enabled us to identify patterns in census response, especially by audience group and geography. Through use of the platform and analysis of the aggregated data, the Census Bureau was able to infer the impact of communication tactics on self-response and adjust tactics accordingly.

Self-Response Rates. Daily and cumulative self-response data was a key input to campaign monitoring and optimization activities. This daily data could be broken out by response mode (internet, paper, and phone) and analyzed at various geographic levels. We compared response data across geographies and audiences using several metrics. These metrics described the actual response data relative to the expectations established using the 2020 predicted self-response score (introduced on Page 75). The Census Bureau conducted these data comparisons for each day of the campaign and, cumulatively, at the end of the self-response period. We also examined actual 2020 response rates alongside the final 2010 Census self-response rate to gauge enumeration progress and the potential impact of communications in promoting self-response. The campaign monitoring and optimization team drew key insights from the raw self-response data as well as from the comparative metrics. As a result, we could identify geographies that were ahead of or behind expectations, understand the factors contributing to these variances, and make informed decisions about the use of campaign resources.

2020 Census Tracking Survey. As introduced and described on Pages 47-48, the 2020 Census Tracking Survey provided critical inputs for campaign monitoring and optimization activities, giving the Census Bureau insights into public perspectives on and perceptions of the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census Tracking Survey was conducted by phone and online. We designed the telephone survey to be nationally representative and probability based, whereas the web survey was nonprobability based and was built using quotas to help ensure adequate sampling of Spanish-speaking respondents. The tracking survey monitored public attitudes toward the 2020 Census prior to and throughout the self-response period. Survey questions asked about respondents' awareness of the 2020 Census and whether they would be willing to interact with a census taker in the COVID-19 environment. The Census Bureau designed the tracking survey to be flexible in structure. This flexibility enabled us to periodically adjust survey questions to ask about timely topics, such as awareness of the proposed citizenship question, sensitivity toward COVID-19 safety measures, concern about data privacy, and likelihood of including young children when responding to the census.

The tracking survey was valuable in measuring public awareness of and willingness to respond to the census. For example, at the beginning of February 2020, the Census Bureau saw that public awareness, as indicated by the tracking survey, had grown slowly since the start of the campaign. Awareness at this stage in 2020 was lower than awareness levels in 2010 at the same date and same phase of the campaign, and the gap was continuing to grow. Based in part on these findings, we executed a range of activities in March to boost awareness and promote response as the campaign's Motivation phase began. These activities included expansion of traditional and digital paid media as well as additional partnership and email outreach efforts. By April 2020, awareness levels had increased substantially and were in line with those from 2010.

ADJUSTING CAMPAIGN EXECUTION TO ALIGN WITH CENSUS OPERATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immense effect on the environment of the count and the campaign, necessitating substantial changes in census operations and communications. The Census Bureau adjusted many operational plans to protect the public and employees. Operational adjustments included the suspension of field operations, including Update Leave and Group Quarters Enumeration; reduced Census Questionnaire Assistance call center capacity; delays in the NRFU operation; and extension of the count to October 2020. The campaign monitoring and optimization team worked across all areas of the campaign—integrating activities wherever possible—to adjust messaging, materials, and outreach accordingly.

Revised Messaging and Outreach in Update Leave Areas. With the suspension of field operations in March 2020, delivery of census forms to households in Update Leave areas was delayed. However, these areas were covered by paid media, and households were likely to encounter ads that urged timely completion of the census questionnaire. The Census Bureau identified this discrepancy as a situation that could cause confusion among potential census respondents. This was concerning because many communities counted through Update Leave are in rural or remote areas that have historically been hard to count and were, at that point in the 2020 campaign, beginning to show lagging self-response levels. We aimed to ensure that all members of Update Leave communities would be counted in 2020 and that they would not be discouraged from responding by the communication discrepancy. Accordingly, we deployed updated messaging that clarified census completion instructions to households in Update Leave areas, and we targeted digital and earned media outreach to the communities. We also developed print materials and distributed them through local partner outreach, where possible.

Revised Messaging and Outreach to College Students. In March 2020, many colleges and universities closed due to the pandemic, and students left their campuses and student housing to live with family or friends. Given that on-campus students would have been counted by their schools and, therefore, would not have been targeted by the communications campaign's paid media, this created public confusion about how students should be counted in the census. In response, we modified messaging for college students across communication channels—including on the 2020 Census website, through earned media press kits, in paid search ads, and through higher education partnerships—to ensure that students understood that they should be counted where they would have been living on April 1, even if they were temporarily staying elsewhere.

Revised Messaging and Outreach to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico faced a unique set of circumstances related to 2020 Census operations and communications. As discussed on Page 52, Puerto Rico was enumerated through the Update Leave operation, which required census takers to locate and visit all households across the island. Conducting this operation was especially challenging because Hurricane Maria, along with other storms and earthquakes in recent years, had destroyed many homes, forced some families to relocate, and prompted hard-hit communities to rebuild. With so many changes to Puerto Rico's land and infrastructure since the last decennial census, and since many households lacked a physical address, census operations required coordinated, on-the-ground efforts by enumerators. Further, with resources and infrastructure strained on the island, it was essential that all households in Puerto Rico be counted to ensure that resource distribution and redevelopment efforts could be adequately supported in the coming years.

With the onset of COVID-19, Puerto Rico was subject to stay-at-home orders beginning in March 2020, and Census Bureau field operations were also suspended. The Census Bureau resumed the Update Leave operation in late May. However, Puerto Rico's self-response rate was only 8.8% at the end of May, and its response rate growth was much slower than the U.S. national rate overall.

Accordingly, the Census Bureau convened a task force to adjust the communication strategy. We aimed to ensure that messaging to Puerto Rico was accurate, aligned with operations, and reflected local conditions. Our communications plan included paid media, public and media relations, partnerships, and social media. We launched PSA-like creative assets on digital media, and we deployed clear calls to self-respond when households received Update Leave-provided questionnaires. We also pitched key media outlets, secured interviews, and relied on Census Bureau employees in Puerto Rico to encourage response. Materials were developed and distributed to Puerto Rico partners, and media personalities emphasized that census takers were conducting the count safely. In addition, Puerto Rico-based visitors to the 2020 Census website were directed to a customized page about the island's Update Leave operation.

Figure 51: Partner Handout and Reminder Phase Print Ad for Audiences in Puerto Rico

In alignment with the extended Motivation phase surge, we increased paid media spending in Puerto Rico during July and August 2020 across TV, radio, newspaper, and digital media. We also delivered emails to 117,000 people in Puerto Rico in a targeted email effort (as described on Page 127) to encourage self-response in low-response areas. Encouragingly, Puerto Rico experienced the highest self-response rate growth of all states or territories during this period. Puerto Rico's total enumeration continued to rise as NRFU took place, and Puerto Rico surpassed many states to achieve a 99.9% total enumeration rate by the end of September.

Extended Motivation Phase Communication Surge. As the self-response phase extended into July 2020, we implemented regional activities across channels to generate another wave of self-response. This surge—and concurrent Census Bureau outreach efforts—contributed to a resurgence of self-response around the country, especially among audiences, and in geographic areas, of concern.

Delayed Reminder Phase Communication Surge. As the NRFU operation progressed in August 2020, the Census Bureau began referencing state-level total enumeration rates to focus final campaign efforts on low-performing states. Based on these state-level total enumeration rates, along with national and tract-level self-response data, we selected the media markets and audience groups that could most benefit from receiving additional information about the census. We targeted paid digital and radio advertising as well as earned media and partnership efforts to reach these markets and audience groups. Response rate growth increased considerably during this delayed Reminder phase outreach.

ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGN PIVOTS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

Given the broad disruptions caused by the pandemic, the Census Bureau was forced to reassess communications plans and timelines across all areas of the campaign. While more details about these activities are noted in other program component areas in this report, key campaignwide adjustments involving the campaign monitoring and optimization team included the following.

COVID-19 Creative Pivot. As the pandemic took hold, the Census Bureau developed adaptable, multi-audience, and multichannel messaging to emphasize the relevance of the census in the changing environment. Specifically, we launched a new commercial titled "Recovery" that spoke to challenges the public was facing and how the 2020 Census could help get the country back on its feet. This advertising was in market by Census Day, April 1, 2020, with diverse mass audience assets in TV and radio formats. From the diverse mass assets, we developed adaptations for multicultural audiences, which went live in May.

Reprogramming Lost Media Inventory. In early March, the campaign began to lose booked media inventory due to cancellation of televised live events. Specifically, the campaign lost

inventory due to postponement of NBA, MLB, MLS, NHL, and NASCAR events and cancellation of the remaining 2020 NCAA athletic events. The challenges posed by the loss of inventory and the need to reprogram lost media placements were made more complex by the timing of the pandemic taking hold: The COVID-19 pandemic set in as the first quarter (Q1) shifted to the second quarter (Q2) of the media buying year, which meant there were limited opportunities to reprogram Q1 inventory within the same quarter. The Census Bureau worked to turn as many Q1 losses into "make-goods" (i.e., adjustments or credits) and to redistribute lost funds from Q1 to other media channels that had Q2 advertising opportunities available. We were able to reinvest all lost inventory in the 2020 campaign. In most cases, these reinvestments kept funds within the same set of media channels as included in original plans (e.g., transitioning ESPN inventory to ABC News).

Census Week. To boost awareness and capitalize on public attention surrounding Census Day, we executed an ambitious plan that included additional media spending for diverse mass, Hispanic, and Black/African American audiences; additional activities for the SIS program; and novel partnership activations. Census Day saw the largest single-day increase in self-response rates throughout the campaign. Traffic to 2020census.gov and awareness of the campaign also peaked following Census Week.

April/May Breakthrough Communication Surge. To break through the especially crowded media landscape and news cycles after the outbreak of COVID-19, the Census Bureau developed a coordinated approach to increase the volume of 2020 Census messaging. The success of Census Week provided momentum for breakthrough ideas—beyond original plans—to be executed in April and May. These ideas included home-delivery pizza box top ads, digital out-of-home ads, and virtual concerts. Monitoring of self-response rates helped us identify priority areas for additional paid media and other outreach. By the end of the surge, self-response rates had risen from 45.7% in early April to 60.4% at the end of May.

ADJUSTMENTS IN OUTREACH TO CAMPAIGN AUDIENCES

A key priority of the 2020 Census campaign was to reach and resonate with diverse audience groups. Throughout the campaign, we optimized communications for audience groups that had lower-than-expected or below-average self-response rates. Some interventions were tailored to specific audiences, while others were part of larger cross-audience activations.

American Indian and Alaska Native. Because the AIAN audience has historically been hard to count and hard to reach with census communications, the Census Bureau closely monitored response within AIAN communities—and was prepared to adjust communications—from the beginning of the 2020 Census. Because of underlying disparities in health, social, and economic factors, AIAN communities were affected by COVID-19 at a disproportionately higher rate compared with the country as a whole. Outbreaks among AIAN communities delayed Update

Leave in many tribal areas. To communicate operational changes and address low response among the AIAN audience, we adjusted paid media and outreach across the campaign. Specifically, the partnership team contacted AIAN tribal leaders to better understand the census communication needs in their communities, and we collected self-recorded content, such as videos, from those leaders to share with AIAN audience-specific partners for dissemination through social media. In their submitted content, the tribal leaders identified the direct value of census participation to AIAN communities and encouraged them to self-respond. We also convened a series of regional tribal briefings involving AIAN media outlets and partners and developed promotional items and print materials for inclusion in "Census-in-a-Box" kits that were distributed to AIAN partners. Further, for populations in Update Leave enumeration areas, we deployed digital media and radio assets that indicated that a participation reminder letter had been sent to households in those areas. New creative assets focused on safety, featured a socially distanced powwow, and urged people to work with census takers.

In conjunction with the April/May breakthrough surge, the Census Bureau held a virtual AIAN 2020 Census tribal listening session and distributed news releases on restarting Update Leave questionnaire delivery. The virtual event was attended by more than 200 participants and garnered media coverage. In September, in conjunction with the delayed Reminder phase, we supported the Los Angeles and Denver regional offices in media pitching to various tribal areas.

Although AIAN self-response was consistently lower than the national response during the campaign, there were notable gains in the campaign's later months. AIAN response increased significantly when the Census Bureau began receiving paper responses from AIAN tribal lands in June. The AIAN audience also saw the largest gain during the extended Motivation phase surge compared with other audience groups.

Asian American. While the Asian American audience was not one that required heavy campaign optimization measures, the Census Bureau adjusted some communications to motivate Asian American communities to respond. We hosted a 2020 Census Asian Week of Action in August as a cross-campaign push to drive self-response among Asian individuals. The week consisted of media placements, paid content integration opportunities, partner activities, and influencer engagements that emphasized that this was Asian communities' last chance to participate in the census for 10 years. The event targeted HTC Asian individuals from various language groups (Chinese, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and others) as well as English-speaking Asian individuals. During the week of action, media engagement efforts delivered more than 26 million impressions from 304 media outlets across channels, and more than 350,000 branded sticky ads promoting the 2020 Census were produced and affixed to Asian-language newspapers. Partnership efforts engaged 127 partners, who launched social media activities, on-the-ground and virtual events, and phone and text banking. By the end of

the communications campaign, the Asian American audience was one of the highest performing groups.

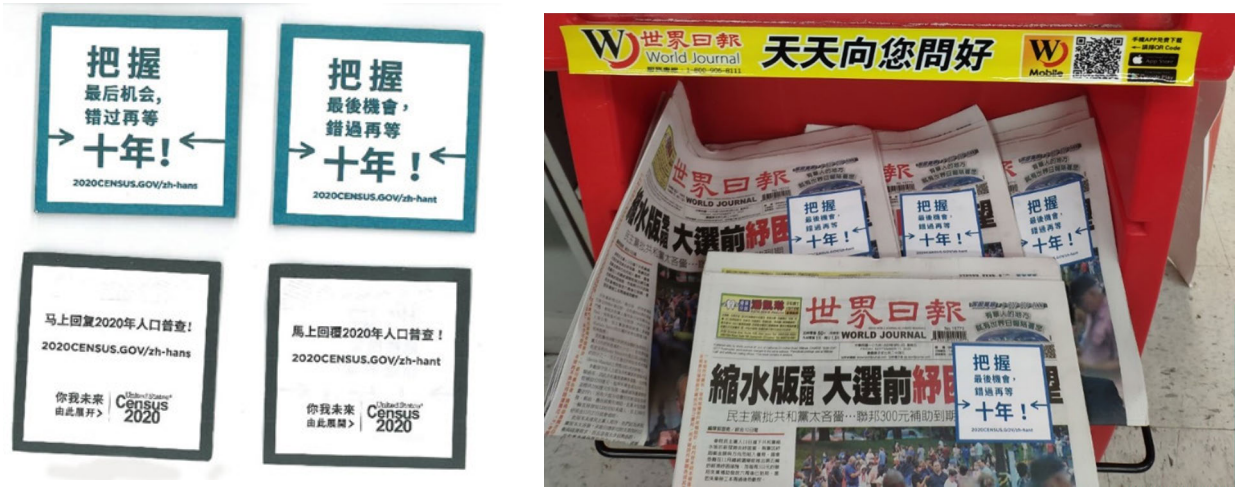


Figure 52: Sticky Ad Designs in Chinese (Simplified and Traditional Characters) and Final Ads (Traditional Characters) Affixed to World Journal Daily Newspapers To Support the 2020 Census Asian Week of Action

Black/African American. The Census Bureau closely monitored Black/African American audience response rates, as COVID-19 disproportionately affected Black/African American communities. Because low self-response was a concern for this audience throughout the campaign, the Census Bureau enacted numerous tactics to engage the audience. We consulted with Black/African American cultural experts on appropriate actions, given the widespread national protests and cultural conversations directly involving and affecting this audience group. We adjusted communications—for instance, increasing paid media support and reassessing campaign messaging—to motivate Black/African American response. In July, the Census Bureau convened Black/African American media briefings in the Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia, New York, and Los Angeles regions. We also deployed a social media toolkit for partners to use and share content with Black/African American audiences. Further, the Census Bureau updated its social media influencer strategy, activating influencers from the BET network. We also partnered with the NAACP and the National Action Network to support the August 2020 “March on Washington” event, which featured census PSAs and included

distribution of 2020 Census promotional items. The final Black/African American self-response rate was well above the expected response.

Figure 53: Reminder Phase Print Ad for Haitian Creole Audiences

Hispanic. During the 2020 Census campaign, the Census Bureau observed self-response rates that were low overall and lower than expected in areas with a heavily concentrated Hispanic population. Campaign research indicated that the federal government's proposed inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census form—and subsequent rumors about its inclusion and use—had likely raised concern for this audience that could reduce Hispanic individuals' likelihood to respond. Accordingly, we deployed communication tactics and paid media heavy-ups to reach this audience. These efforts included developing additional materials for Hispanic audiences in English to supplement materials created in Spanish.

As we deployed additional tactics, materials, and heavy-ups, we considered both the large response rate gap in rural Hispanic areas and the large uncounted Hispanic population in urban areas. In March 2020, the Census Bureau allocated additional funds to advertising for the Hispanic audience. In April and May, we further prioritized DMAs for Hispanic media after examining self-response rates, the uncounted Hispanic population, and the size of the Spanish-

speaking population in relation to the overall Hispanic population. Further, we conducted Hispanic audience-focused radio and satellite media tours in English and Spanish. At the same time, the partnership program worked with Hispanic organizations, advocacy groups, and companies to raise awareness among HTC communities where response was low. Hispanic audience response increased during the extended Motivation phase surge, and the final self-response rate was well above expectations.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. With the onset of COVID-19, several culturally significant NHPI events at which the Census Bureau would have promoted the count were canceled. NHPI self-response growth slowed. While the NHPI audience is primarily in Hawaii, there are also small concentrations in the mainland United States. We therefore adjusted communications in Hawaii and stateside, using television, print placements in popular Hawaiian newspapers, and earned media outreach, to encourage self-response. Refining digital ad serving allowed for precise targeting to focus on areas with high NHPI audience concentrations and low response.

We also reallocated funds for event promotion and sponsorship to radio and TV broadcast media. In addition, the 2020 Census for Hawaii virtual concert event incorporated influencers and trusted voices from the NHPI community, combining their uplifting words and performances into an hourlong television program. The program was broadcast across television, radio, and digital platforms from April 28 through May 2, and it was supported by digital advertising and social media promotion. These campaign adjustments produced meaningful results for NHPI audience engagement and self-response rates. The final NHPI response rate was above expectations.

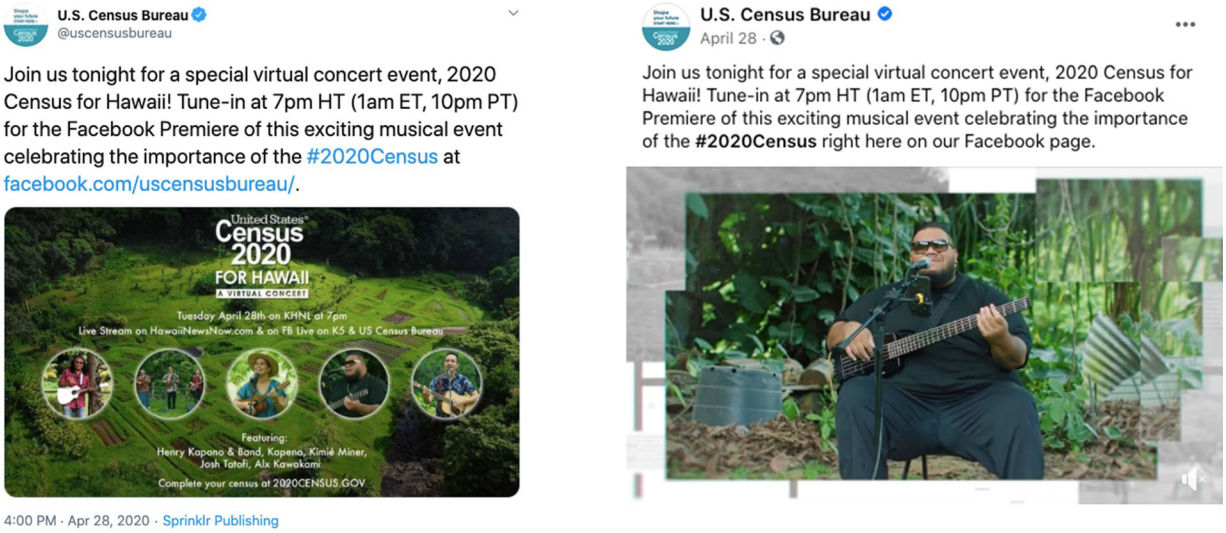


Figure 54: Twitter and Facebook Organic Social Media Posts Promoting the 2020 Census for Hawaii Virtual Concert

APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

AIAN: American Indian and Alaska Native (census audience group)

BAA: Black/African American (census audience group)

CBAMS: Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study

COIL: Census Open Innovation Labs

COVID-19: the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus

CPEP: Community Partnership and Engagement Program

CRR: community representative review

DMA: designated market area

ETL: Enumeration at Transitory Locations

FAQ: frequently asked questions

HTC: hard-to-count

ICC: Integrated Communications Campaign

IPC: Integrated Partnership and Communications (program)

IPSR: internet proportion of self-response (score)

LRS: low response score

MENA: Middle Eastern and North African (census audience group)

MQA: Mobile Questionnaire Assistance

NHPI: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (census audience group)

NPP: National Partnership Program

NRFU: Nonresponse Followup

PSA: public service announcement

PSRS: predicted self-response score

QIPT: Quick Idea Platform Testing

SBE: Service-Based Enumeration

SIS: Statistics in Schools (program)

TNSOL: Targeted Non-Sheltered Outdoor Locations (enumeration)

ZCTA: ZIP Code Tabulation Area

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