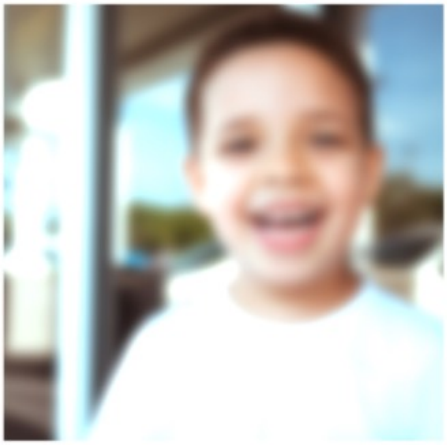

EVALUATING THE CALIFORNIA COMPLETE COUNT CENSUS 2020 CAMPAIGN: **A NARRATIVE REPORT**

Submitted by LPC Consulting Associates, Inc.

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Cover Photo Source:
California Complete Count Census 2020 Campaign September 2020 Social Media Partner Toolkit

I. CAMPAIGN INTRODUCTION

California is home to 12 percent of the nation's population yet accounts for more than 20 percent of the people living in the nation's hardest-to-count areas, according to the United States Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau). California's unique diversity, large population distributed across both urban and rural areas, and sheer geographic size present significant barriers to achieving a complete and accurate count. The state's population is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before, with about 18 percent of Californians speaking English "less than very well," according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. Because the 2020 Census online form was offered in only twelve non-English languages, which did not correspond with the top spoken language in California, and a paper questionnaire only in English and Spanish, many Californians may not have been able to access a census questionnaire or written guidance in a language they could understand. In order to earn the confidence of California's most vulnerable populations, it was critical during the 2020 Census that media and trusted messengers communicate with them in their primary language and in accessible formats.

An accurate count of the California population in each decennial census is essential to receive its equitable share of federal funds and political representation, through reapportionment and redistricting. It plays a vital role in many areas of public life, including important investments in health, education, housing, social services, highways, and schools. Without a complete count in the 2020 Census, the State faced a potential loss of congressional seats and billions of dollars in much-needed federal funding. An undercount of California in 1990 cost an estimated $2 billion in federal funding. The potential loss of representation and critically needed funding could have long-term impacts; only with a complete count does California receive the share of funding the State deserves with appropriate representation at the federal, state, and local government levels.

The high stakes and formidable challenges made this California Complete Count Census 2020 Campaign (Campaign) the most important to date. The 2020 Census brought an unprecedented level of new challenges to all states, beyond the California-specific hurdles discussed above. For the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau sought to collect data from households through an online form. While the implementation of digital forms sought to reduce costs and increase participation, its immediate impact is still unknown as of this writing, and it may have substantially changed how many households responded to the census. In addition, conditions such as the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a contentious political climate, ongoing mistrust and distrust of government, and rising concerns about privacy may have discouraged people to open their doors, or use computers, to participate. Federal immigration policy, as well as the months-long controversy over adding a citizenship question to the census, may have

deterred households with mixed documentation status, recent immigrants, and undocumented immigrants from participating.

In 2017, to prepare for the unique challenges of the 2020 Census, California leaders and advocates reflected on lessons learned from previous statewide census efforts and launched the development of a high-impact strategy to efficiently raise public awareness about the 2020 Census. Subsequently, the State established the California Complete Count – Census 2020 Office (Census Office) and invested a significant sum for the Campaign.

The Campaign was designed to educate, motivate, and activate Californians to respond to the 2020 Census. It relied heavily on grassroots messaging and outreach to those least likely to fill out the census form. One element of the Campaign was the Language and Communication Access Plan (LACAP), which the Census Office developed to ensure that language and communication access was linguistically and culturally relevant and sensitive and provided equal and meaningful access for California's vulnerable populations.

The Census Office contracted with outreach partners, including community leaders and organizations, local government, and ethnic media, who all served as trusted messengers in their communities to deliver impactful words and offer safe places to share information and trusted messages. The State integrated consideration of hardest-to-count communities' needs throughout the Campaign's strategy at both the statewide and regional levels. The Campaign first educated, then motivated, and during the census response period, activated Californians to fill out their census form.

The Census Office's mission was to ensure that Californians get their fair share of resources and representation by encouraging the full participation of all Californians in the 2020 Census. This report focuses on the experience of the Census Office and partner organizations who worked to achieve the most complete count possible, presenting an evaluation of four outreach and communications strategies:

Outreach & Communication Strategies

1. Partnering with community-based organizations, local governments, and other trusted messengers; leveraging and coordinating those partnerships for outreach.
2. Messaging and communication that is linguistically and culturally relevant and sensitive.
3. Employing technology, data, and analytics to inform resource allocation and connect Census Office staff and partners with each other and with the data needed for decision-making.
4. Conducting outreach and messaging through systems and structures designed to support accountability and transparency, including contracts with oversight, tracked spending, operations, and outcomes.

The following sections describe the evaluation data and methodology and findings related to each research/thematic question presented in Section II. The report concludes with a discussion of lessons learned, which can inform planning for the 2030 Census.

II. EVALUATION DATA & METHODOLOGY

The Census Office opted to engage with LPC Consulting Associates, Inc. (LPC) to conduct a summative evaluation[1] of the Campaign and produce a comprehensive narrative report telling the story of the Campaign for external audiences. In close consultation with the Census Office, the LPC evaluation team developed 10 research, or thematic, questions, which are woven throughout this report and shown in Table 1.

Table 1 | Evaluation Research/Thematic Questions

Question 1	What did vendors and partners in this campaign do individually and collectively, describing a wide range of tactics and strategies for outreach to optimize participation in the count?
Question 2	Throughout the Campaign, what "momentous moments" (e.g., local/regional events, agency adjustments, community experiences) and "contextual challenges" (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau directives, natural or public health disasters, social justice protests) occurred that required decision-making and adjustments or pivots in planned strategies/activities?
Question 3	What were the intended and unintended results of adjustments to or pivots away from partner strategic and implementation plans? What new or emerging hardest-to-count population patterns were identified, and what insights were gained about the rich diversity of California's population?
Question 4	How did different partners utilize the statewide database (i.e., SwORD), and how could it be more useful?
Question 5	What strategies and tactics were associated with the most complete counts in hardest-to-count communities?
Question 6	What combination of strategies and tactics were subjectively perceived by partners to be the most effective and/or which strategies and tactics objectively yielded the best outcomes?
Question 7	Which communities or population segments ultimately refused to complete the census, despite partners' best efforts, and why?
Question 8	What impact did the work of external partners (e.g., marketing and/or phone banking vendors) have on outreach and communications efforts in communities?
Question 9	How did partners track their level of effort, monitor milestones, and progress toward saturation of a hardest-to-count population or place? To what extent was statewide data collection augmented by local tools and/or processes?
Question 10	What shared lessons learned can be carried forward in planning for the 2030 Census?

[1] A summative evaluation is an evaluation of an intervention or program in its later stages or after it has been completed to (a) assess its impact; (b) identify the factors that affected its performance; (c) assess the sustainability of its results, and (d) draw lessons that may inform other interventions. Source: *Glossary of Evaluation Terms*, Planning and Performance Management Unit Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (2009) https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnado820.pdf

Data Sources

This evaluation of the Campaign includes four main primary data sources:

An **online survey** conducted with Campaign-contracted outreach partners. A total of 86 partners completed the mixed-methods survey, including both qualitative open-ended and quantitative scale questions. Survey responses were de-identified, but respondents had the option to volunteer for a follow-up interview (described below). More detail about the survey respondents is presented in Appendix A.

Exploratory analyses of Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) mapping portal data, reflecting the two largest sources of data: (1) the 2020 Census Self-Response Rate data (collected from households who completed the form online, the mailed questionnaire, or by phone) from the U.S. Census Bureau and (2) the universe of all activities reported through Census Political Data Inc. (Census PDI), Amplify, and the Self-Service Reporting Portal.

The LPC team worked closely with the Census Office operations team to understand the SwORD system and delineate the various data sources within SwORD. With the operations team's seemingly infinite patience and support, the LPC team engaged in exploratory analyses of the SwORD data, guided by findings from the Partners' Online Survey. While the LPC team's initial plan was to analyze types of activities described by partners in the survey, data quality issues discussed in Section VII limited possible detailed analyses. In some cases, SwORD did not contain relevant data to answer the evaluation's queries, and in other cases, the data in SwORD was not robust or detailed enough to provide conclusive answers to the queries. In short, the self-reported activity data entered into SwORD may not accurately reflect the totality of Campaign activities. Therefore, to avoid underreporting activities, the LPC team adapted the analyses to the data available and focused their findings in this report on a sample of activities entered by partners in the SwORD Self-Service Reporting Portal that included a narrative description. Illustrations from this sample of narrative descriptions in SwORD are presented in this report as examples of activities, not a comprehensive accounting of all Campaign activities.

In-depth interviews conducted with Campaign contracted outreach partners, Census Office staff, and vendors contracted by the Census Office. A total of 16 partners, five (5) representatives from vendor organizations, and 12 Census Office staff participated in interviews. Additionally, seven (7) Census Office staff provided written responses, for a total of 40 respondents. More detail regarding the methodology and interviewees is presented in Appendix B.

Final report narratives submitted to the Census Office by contracted partners as a contract deliverable. LPC reviewed the report narratives to identify context and provide details to complement interview responses.

These four data sources combine to present a comprehensive story of the Campaign conducted by the Census Office and through partnerships with local governments, Tribal Governments, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and media to educate, motivate, and activate the hardest-to-count populations to complete the census questionnaire or online form. While each survey respondent and interviewee had their own unique experience with the 2020

Census, the following sections present patterns and themes reported across respondents and data sources. Therefore, this report does not include "counts" of respondents, but rather presents "summarized and reconstructed responses in a way that captures the important concepts within the dataset(s)."[2] The LPC evaluation team also reviewed selected internal and publicly available Campaign documents. Additional context and background have been added, where needed and in consultation with the Census Office, to illustrate the conditions under which the Campaign tactics were carried out by the Census Office staff, partners, and vendors.

This evaluation report focuses on partner feedback, reflections, and interpretations of the Campaign, along with activity descriptions from a sample of SwORD data. It seeks to reflect the voices of Campaign participants to "tell the story" of the Campaign from their perspective. The Census Office is publishing several other end-of-Campaign reports in Spring 2021 that speak to operations, how residents received Campaign messaging, as well as statutorily required reports.

This evaluation report's sections are organized around the 10 "thematic questions" presented on page 3 that guide the overall evaluation, as indicated in each section. Direct quotes from survey responses and interviewees are indicated by quotation marks or indented block quotations. To elicit honest and authentic responses, LPC researchers de-identified responses as much as possible, and individual respondents are not identified within the narrative.

This evaluation report presents positive sentiments and reveals challenges experienced across the Campaign. Despite the many challenges, overall, survey respondents and interviewees were positive about the 2020 Census, relaying a deep sense of pride and satisfaction in their efforts to reach Californians least likely to respond in the hardest-to-count tracts. Overall, the tone of this evaluation reflects the spirit of one interviewee's comment that "it was amazing to see the passion of the individuals in the Census Office and in the partnering organizations that were truly committed to this endeavor."

Crafted by the California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit as a California-focused metric, the California Hard-to-Count Index (CA-HTC Index) was modeled on the U.S. Census Bureau's hardest-to-count score of past censuses, incorporating additional local sources of population data. The CA-HTC Index was based on 14 demographic, housing, and socioeconomic variables correlated with an area being difficult to enumerate. Census tracts with higher CA-HTC Indexes predicted where enumeration would likely face significant hurdles, while tracts with lower indexes would likely be less difficult to count. The index allowed the Census Office to focus on neighborhoods where the U.S. Census Bureau would be more likely to miss people.

[2] For more about thematic analysis, see: Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963909

The State used data derived from the CA-HTC Index as a key factor guiding the allocation of outreach funding. Partners used this data to inform the development and implementation of their plans.

Geographically, the Census Office created 10 regions[3] based on capacity and capabilities of potential contracted outreach partners.

The State's regional funding structure allocated funds within the regions to counties and to a single, lead Administrative Community-Based Organization. The Census Office designated a funding level for each of the 10 regions based on their CA-HTC Index profile, reflecting the population residing there, with minimum funding thresholds for small-population counties.

The regional outreach strategy leveraged community-based networks and local governments that knew their regions and the unique communities within them. In addition, these partners coordinated with schools, as well as statewide and sector-based, community-based organizations, to conduct outreach to vulnerable populations likely to be missed in the census count. Local coordination was supported through Local Complete Count Committees to incorporate contracted and non-contracted census partners.

[3] The California Complete Count Office grouped California's 58 counties into 10 regions. https://census.ca.gov/regions/

III. WORKING TOGETHER FOR A COMPLETE COUNT

The Census Office assembled a dynamic and robust infrastructure of community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, counties, cities, Tribal Governments, and grassroots organizations, as well as educational institutions and sector-focused entities that worked together for a more complete count. Through collective and coordinated action, these partners were able to strengthen and deepen their impact across California.

The Census Office contracted with community-based organizations representing one or more of the identified 15 vulnerable populations to conduct focused statewide outreach to those groups. These organizations played a unique and important role in supplementing the work conducted by regional and local community-based organizations in educating, motivating, and activating people who were least likely to respond to the census questionnaire or online form. Statewide partners increased awareness and knowledge of the 2020 Census and worked with the Census Office to ensure that all outreach, messaging, and publicity were culturally relevant and sensitive, and linguistically appropriate.

> What did vendors and partners in this campaign do individually and collectively, describing a wide range of tactics and strategies for outreach to optimize participation in the count?

Regionally, the Campaign spread into the grassroots level throughout the state, organizing around the 10 census regions established by the Census Office for coordination. Across each region, outreach efforts focused on vulnerable populations and leveraged existing networks, relationships, and infrastructure to communicate with sectors such as health care, education, business, and faith-based organizations to complement the regional emphasis on reaching the hardest-to-count tracts.

With Tribal Governments, which have been historically the most undercounted groups of any population in the census, the State made its largest commitment to date toward the goal of increasing tribal participation in the census. To address the unique challenges of outreach to American Indians and Alaska Natives and Tribal Governments, the Census Office made funding available to all 110 federally recognized tribes to support outreach activities through funding agreements. In addition, two Statewide Community-Based Organizations, the California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC) and the California Native Vote Project (CNVP), were contracted to help support those efforts. The Census Office also contracted with NUNA Consulting Group, LLC to reach the goals of heightening visibility, developing culturally appropriate and effective materials, and building trust between the Tribes, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the State. This specific media strategy addressed each tribal geographic area and focused on tribal newsletters, radio, and other tribal media advertising and branded materials.

Within different sectors, the Census Office communicated with each sector to leverage their existing infrastructure, relationships, and communication channels. Within the Education sector, the Campaign focused on reaching vulnerable populations among K-12 students and their families, as well as college students at two- and four-year colleges. Partnerships with County Offices of Education and higher education institutions focused on students and families that fell into the identified hardest-to-count demographic areas. Within other sectors, the Campaign expanded

outreach for a comprehensive statewide strategy by engaging with the health, faith-based, labor, and business sectors to promote the census among their constituents.

The Campaign also included state agency partnerships to develop a comprehensive outreach program tailored for each participating state agency. To be most effective, outreach efforts tied into existing activities already conducted by each agency as they provided programs and services to California's communities. Agencies served as advocates for a complete count within their service recipients, and their employees, too.

In addition, the California state legislature, congressional delegation, and local government elected offices were key partners in the complete count effort as they were able to use their platforms to enhance outreach as advocates for a complete count. California's constitutional officers also participated in the statewide outreach effort. Elected officials' district-level presence and area knowledge, combined with their established means of reaching constituents, amplified Census Office resources and maximized community impact.

The Census Office gathered this diverse and energetic constellation of partners to maximize and combine their talents, resources, networks, and passions together to amplify the complete count message in order to educate, motivate, and activate their constituencies to complete the census questionnaire or online form.

Local Complete Count Committees encouraged by the U.S. Census Bureau created a diverse and robust local infrastructure for partnership.

The California Complete Count Committee (Committee) was established to serve as an advisory body to the statewide complete count effort, increase awareness about the 2020 Census amongst hardest-to-count populations, and to encourage all Californians to fill out their census questionnaire or online form. The Committee brought together leaders from business, non-profit, academic, labor, local government, and other areas to share their individual and collective knowledge, expertise, and influence. Through quarterly meetings that started in 2018, the Committee kept abreast of 2020 Census and state Campaign developments through updates from the Census Office and U.S. Census Bureau representatives. The Committee also reviewed and approved reports of its activities and advisory recommendations biannually to the Governor's Office.

Locally, similar advisory bodies were encouraged by the U.S. Census Bureau and were established by each county serving as a State-contracted partner, per the terms of the contract. Local Complete Count Committees convened sometimes hundreds of volunteers from various sectors of government, non-profit, business, and faith-based communities. Building a collective, multi-sector leadership infrastructure is challenging, but the Local Complete Count Committees provided a space for local representation across a variety of communities, sectors, and hardest-to-count populations. A robust Local Complete Count Committee established early in the Campaign

provided an expansive network able to adapt quickly as the landscape for census outreach changed dramatically.

A sample of partners who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described Local Complete Count Committee activities varying from efforts to recruit local committee members to attending meetings. Many regions also convened committees focusing on priority populations or distinct locations, such as the Orange County Cambodian Complete Count Committee in Region 9, the Filipino Complete Count Committee of Los Angeles in Region 8, and the Carpenteria Complete Count Committee in Region 5, to name a few.

The Administrative Community-Based Organization structure allowed regional organizations to tap into already established networks and expand into new networks to engage partners within each of the 10 regions, and across the state.

Administrative Community-Based Organizations were large, community-based organizations with the organizational capacity and experience to manage subcontractors and organize a robust outreach campaign throughout an entire region. The Census Office selected Administrative Community-Based Organizations for each region through a competitive request for proposal process.[4] Administrative Community- Based Organizations were encouraged to subcontract or partner with local community-based organizations who were trusted messengers, with their own networks and relationships to reach vulnerable populations. The Local Complete Count Committee structure set the stage for the Administrative Community-Based Organizations to activate their networks:

> I was so thankful [the] relationships were built with [the] partners in advance because I think we would have been eaten alive. I think there was a level of grace from our partners, like we are going to let you fail with grace. I am really appreciative of our partners. They kinda rolled with us, but that was because of the relationship we were able to build in the last year and a half.

The stakeholders who participated in outreach often represented a variety of communities, sectors, and hardest-to-count populations. As one interviewee shared, "leading a multi-faceted and diverse collection of stakeholders can be daunting, especially when stakeholders have conflicting priorities and diverse needs." In at least one region, the challenge of co-creating and collaborating across diverse counties was increased by some counties within the region opting out of conducting contracted outreach work as part of the Campaign.

It is important to note that the Administrative Community-Based Organization structure and role varied across regions. However, from their unique position within each of the 10 regions, the Administrative Community-Based Organizations could intentionally create an infrastructure to reflect diverse allies, including government partners, philanthropic partners, and community/non-profit partners, as well as provide staff/backbone support for outreach activities. As the funded partner, an Administrative Community-Based Organization was often "able to pivot more easily with the funding, [which] worked out really well. They worked with the [subcontractors] and were

[4] While the RFP process was competitive, the Census Office was exempt from competitive bidding requirements pursuant to California Public Contract Code Section 19150, to accommodate the time-sensitive and limited duration campaign.

instrumental in being trusted partners." While most Administrative Community-Based Organization partners focused efforts within their respective regions, they also collaborated with each other, sharing information and best practices during regional calls and partner meetings coordinated by the Census Office.

Across all 10 regions, the sample of organizers who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described collaborating via many regional partners calls coordinated by the Census Office, sending flyers or email blasts to keep partners updated, attending task force meetings, hosting collaborative tables, working groups and information tables, and presenting to community groups, including the Tribal Council in Region 1, the Health Improvement Partnership Santa Cruz County in Region 5, the Kern County Veterans Collaborative in Region 6, and the Unaccompanied Minors Collaborative in Region 8.

Partners and each partner's network of organizations were selected because of their extensive knowledge and partnerships already established within their communities. A campaign of this size and across an expansive geography required partnerships across multiple fields, sectors, and regions, all coming together working towards the shared statewide goal to ensure an accurate and complete count of Californians in the 2020 Census, with a special emphasis on the hardest-to-count Californians. The Census Office established a statewide structure emphasizing partnership and sharing across the Campaign at multiple levels, including regular regional and statewide calls to share information and best practices. As one interviewee shared, the calls were "extremely helpful…to commiserate and get a sense of how we were all pivoting."

> I think [relationships are] what made us able to complete in such a chaotic time. You have strategies in-person and then have to pivot from that and get people that are low broadband; you have to be creative in the ways you access that. So, we utilized preexisting relationships, relationships the census helped ignite and highlight.

Despite the periodic limitations on in-person collaboration due to COVID-19 for a portion of the Campaign, many regions created historically broad coalitions as a result of the Campaign. In addition to funded partners, unfunded partners also joined coalitions in an effort to improve their communities. For example, the funded partner cohort in Region 9 expanded into the "Orange County Census Community Table,[5] a group of 450 unique members…some [of whom] did receive funding…but a lot didn't." Funded and unfunded partners shared ideas and best practices among themselves, and with Census Office staff. This communication worked two ways, with Census Office staff sharing within and across regions:

> Communication activities led by the statewide [Census Office] team were easily accessed [via] the various tools and spaces created. We also used outreach calls, when we had opportunity/agenda time, to provide these details. The Communications Team also used the regional calls to provide updates and learn about on-the-ground activities. These smaller regional calls were helpful to understand how partners were working together.

[5] The OC Census Community Table serves as a hub to facilitate cross-sector coordination among community organizations, foundations, government, service providers, businesses, and others to achieve a complete and accurate 2020 Census count for Orange County. https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=64bf6661e9e5f0d175937ea54&id=b5706549f4

The Census Office offered internal trainings, such as Social Media Best Practices and Virtual Live Best Practices in 2020, as well as coordinated regular statewide calls and one-on-one meetings with Regional Program Managers.[6] In addition, the Census Office organized and facilitated Peer Learning Lab presentations open to the public and broadcasted on Facebook[7] to augment the regional communication and coordination that was occurring. As one respondent shared, "the most obvious unintended consequence was that, with [the Executive Order to stay at home], partners were almost forced to collaborate and communicate more effectively because of some of the restrictions of online outreach work. The collaboration worked because communication and commitment were standards."

While Administrative Community-Based Organizations had a competitive request for proposal process, counties were invited in November 2018 to become contracted partners with the State for 2020 Census outreach work. Counties have the administrative and accountability structures to meet requirements for State funding, and they have relationships with vulnerable populations through their on-the-ground activities, such as provision of health services, social services, and libraries. Early in 2018, with financial incentives offered by the State, many California counties (as well as cities) participated in the U.S. Census Bureau's process of updating its national database of addresses, reviewing, and sending address list updates to the federal government through the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation. This important update phase helped ensure that more houses received 2020 Census mailings and other U.S. Census Bureau outreach resources.

Similar to the Administrative Community-Based Organizations, each county structured its census work a little bit differently. For example, in one county, the census was coordinated by the county's Planning Department, and in another, it was by a county's Department of Health and Human Services. Across California, each of the 58 counties is its own "micro-world…each with their own unique perspective." In at least one region, the Census Office Regional Program Manager worked to bring experienced and knowledgeable county staff together around shared issues, like the "coach of an all-star team…to make sure we all understood the plays." In another region, all of the county leads assembled themselves within the census structure to "get on the same page." Another interviewee shared that county representatives within their region created a collective identity, and that they "met, talked, shared, commiserated, celebrated. We did all the things a team does." While this collegiality amongst county representatives and with Administrative Community-Based Organizations did not occur in every region, through intentional action, largely through regional calls, some counties were able to act together while retaining their autonomy; "function[ing] as a region [while] knowing each county had their own agenda."

[6] The Census Office created Regional Program Manager (RPM), Regional Program Associate (RPA), Northern, Central, and Southern California Lead RPM positions to collaborate and coordinate with hardest-to-count communities within regions and sectors. This regional management structure was core to the outreach team's ability to establish and coordinate local relationships and effectively manage contracts. Source: The California Census Outreach Team. https://census.ca.gov/outreach/

[7] Census Office Events. https://census.ca.gov/events/

Collaborating within a statewide and national bureaucracy, under time constraints, required patience and diplomacy.

The Campaign was designed to supplement and complement the work of the U.S. Census Bureau, which was responsible for the actual enumeration and related data management and processing. The U.S. Census Bureau also operated its own extensive outreach campaign. Thus, the State's commitment to a campaign of this magnitude required operating within a multi-layered bureaucracy that was sometimes challenging. Because the Campaign existed in support of the U.S. Census Bureau enumeration operations, the Census Office itself was limited in the response options available to the many of the mandates and decisions made at the federal level.

Census Office staff and partners navigated multiple layers of administration and hierarchy to communicate and secure approvals or decisions. While some decisions about local activities were driven by local or regional data and community knowledge, there were some cases where the Census Office made the final decision, and partners did not have the "ultimate say" in what happened on the ground during the Campaign. For example, some media buys were dictated by availability (e.g., billboards or ad space) and other constraints, including alignment with U.S. Census Bureau media buys or statewide contractual commitments made months in advance, rather than prioritizing alignment with local activities or local partner preference. In other cases, decisions that affected 150 partners had to be decisively made, without the luxury of a collaborative or participatory process. While this situational "top-down" decision-making may have created tension among some partners, Census Office Staff, and vendors, trust and relationships built during the Campaign served to help smooth some of the friction and frustration.

While there was some coordination between the Census Office, partners, and the U.S. Census Bureau, closer coordination and alignment of enumeration operations and outreach efforts may have increased the success of the complete count effort. U.S. Census Bureau partnership specialists positions assigned to regions in California were not fully staffed as of Fall 2019 and faced retention challenges. Key regional U.S. Census Bureau leadership regularly coordinated with the Census Office, yet the Census Office was not considered an official U.S. Census Bureau partner. In addition, some local partners (e.g., education partners, partners working with disability communities, and/or people experiencing homeless.) also directly collaborated with U.S. Census Bureau staff in enumeration activities. Unfortunately, in some cases the on-the-ground coordination between local partners and U.S. Census Bureau resulted in missed opportunities and limited engagement. For example, enumerating people experiencing homelessness is challenging, even in non-pandemic times:

> One thing we kept telling the [U.S. Census Bureau] staff is you cannot just go to a soup kitchen during mealtime. They're going to get there, grab a meal, and go. So, you are going to send people for a longer period of time or figure out a way to count people more quickly. One of the hard things about the population we were focused on is that there's almost just one chance to do it right. …[There] wasn't as much room for adjusting and changing course. It was like, we have to get it right the first time.

Partners working with homeless service providers, who were acutely busy during a pandemic, had to figure out how to communicate what outreach needed to happen at the right time and in the

right way, while taking as little of service agency staff time as possible. One example of this was connecting with people experiencing homelessness at parks and outdoor gatherings, when they occurred. This type of timing, finesse, and flexibility was very challenging given the narrow window of time for the Group Quarter Service-Based Enumeration conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau at shelters and soup kitchens. Communications started out well between local partners and the U.S. Census Bureau, including collaborative problem solving. However, some partners reported having a harder time reaching U.S. Census Bureau staff just as the enumeration period approached. Counties and partners were excluded from assisting in the three-day enumeration period. In response, "in the four days…following U.S. Census Bureau enumeration at end of September [and when] the count ended, [subcontracted community-based organizations] were sending people out to try to get people to self-respond that might have been missed."

Working together towards a common goal often comes with challenges, and the element of time added additional frustrations to the Campaign in two respects. First, timeline changes announced by the U.S. Census Bureau required frequent and rapid responses by the Census Office, partners, vendors, and stakeholders. Stay at home orders announced just weeks before the Campaign's official kickoff on Census Day[8] disrupted everyone's plans, and ongoing changes to the end of enumeration kept everyone guessing. Some partners were not able to extend their outreach work under the revised timeline due to capacity and resource limitations, while others continued for the full duration of the enumeration period.

The second timing challenge related to when external vendors joined the Campaign. In some cases, contracts were not executed until late in the education and outreach phases, which limited the progress that funded partners could make in the vendors' absence. For example, some partners expected that a statewide communications firm would play a "comprehensive role inclusive of targeted messaging for hardest-to-count, large statewide media buys which leveraged federal media buys, and targeted micro-media approaches to be tailored to reach hardest-to-count communities." However, as partners waited for the communications contract to be executed, they also waited to engage local media partners on their own and subsequently were "left to scramble to fill the gap" when the vendors' scopes of work were finalized. Messaging, overall, was one of the more challenging components of the Campaign, as described in Section VI.

Across the Campaign, partners coordinated activities, including trainings, collateral development, ethnic and social media outreach, and public events and forums. Most worked through their network of organizations to deploy trusted messengers into hardest-to-count neighborhoods. As described in the next section, these partners faced many extraordinary and compounding challenges during the 2020 Census, which required courage, flexibility, and creativity.

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[8] Census Day (April 1, 2020) was the day that determines who is counted in the 2020 Census and where they are counted. Source: *Census Day is Here - Make it Count!* https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/census-day.html

IV. FACING UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

As alluded to previously, across all survey respondents and interviewees, the COVID-19 pandemic clearly had the most significant impact on planned Campaign activities. In addition, California-specific COVID-19 related Executive Orders to stay at home in March and April 2020 resulted in additional challenges for the Campaign. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was just one of many contextual challenges that partners faced in 2020:

> Without a doubt, the largest hindrance to our operations was the impact of COVID-19 and the resulting [stay at home order] measures. Many of our events, including our kick-off event, had to be canceled. Our Complete Count Committee meetings were moved to a virtual platform, which meant that those that lacked access to broadband could not participate in the same way or capacity, and it also meant that many of our partners had to stop their Census outreach activities so they could focus on maintaining their organization's own operations in order to stay viable through COVID. Sadly, COVID-19 was not the only factor that impacted operations throughout the region. We also had to counter fear-based misinformation about the census and changing [federal] timelines that led to confusion and additional time spent on sharing accurate information. For example, throughout the entire campaign, our Promotora network had to continue educating their clients that the citizenship question was not included on the census [questionnaire or online form] and helped to quash fears about how the information from the census would not be used against individuals. Then, when the timelines were shifted at the end of the census campaign, we heard from our community-based organization partners that people had thought the census was already over, and they missed their opportunity to participate. Our partners instead had to spend time explaining what led to this confusion and share the correct deadline to participate.

Partners shared how local, statewide, and national politics increased challenges in conducting outreach. For example, social justice movements against anti-Black racism highlighted historic and systemic traumas among many Black or African American Californians, amplifying mistrust and distrust in government institutions. Anti-immigrant messages threatening a citizenship question, anti-Asian racism, and xenophobic COVID-19 rhetoric challenged partners to combat misinformation and support their communities as trusted messengers. Despite the ongoing challenges to keep attention on the census for an extended period of time, most partners were able to make the most of virtual platforms and media outlets to keep census messaging in the public view. Some partners integrated messaging around the pandemic and social justice with the importance of the census, and the constantly changing timelines and announcements by the U.S. Census Bureau also kept the media's attention.

Throughout the Campaign, what "momentous moments" (e.g., local & regional events, agency adjustments, community experiences) and "contextual challenges" (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau directives, natural or public health disasters, social justice protests) occurred that required decision-making and adjustments or pivots in planned strategies & activities?

Unfortunately, as the Campaign extended through the summer and fall of 2020, partner staff capacity became increasingly limited. Thus, constant pivots were more difficult to execute due to the limited availability of staff, who were already stretched thin addressing the impacts of the pandemic in both their personal lives and in their communities. Many organizations across the State had no choice but to lay off staff as a result of economic hardships due to COVID-19.

Partners knew that outreach in hardest-to-count communities would require the coordinated efforts of trusted messengers. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and related stay at home orders intensified the difficulty of reaching hardest-to-count communities. Some in-person activities designed to connect with hard-to-reach Californians, such as tribal elders, rural residents, or people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, at community events were impossible to translate to a virtual platform. In addition, many people relocated in 2020, such as college students sent home from campus, residents – and sometimes even whole communities - displaced due to wildfires, and people experiencing homelessness avoiding shelters due to fear of COVID-19, thwarting efforts to reach people where they lived. The same fear of COVID-19 was challenging to enumerators during the Nonresponse Followup Strategy, when some Californians were reluctant to open their doors to strangers. The inability to meet in person also challenged engaging with older adults, who may have had limited computer proficiency or comfort in sharing information using the online census portal, as well as with LGBTQ+ Californians, who "lost access to safe spaces they relied upon to connect with each other and access vital resources and information" when COVID-19 hit, and agencies closed. The cancellation of tribal community events, such as pow wows, Big Times, and Elder gatherings posed a significant challenge for engaging tribal communities in census outreach.

The key factors in responding to changing situations were creativity and flexibility.

Not surprisingly, many of the most impactful outreach activities were initiated, adjusted, or revised - sometimes on the fly - in response to emergent "momentous moments" and "contextual challenges" that occurred during the Campaign. The Census Office had to swiftly understand what partners, the partners' networks of organizations, and vendors could do, and what kind of guidance the Census Office could provide in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. Everyone involved in the Campaign had to make quick decisions, adjust their plans, and pivot their activities, sometimes repeatedly, as new challenges impacted their work:

> …it's not like it was a decision; we had to do it. It wasn't like 'oh we're not going to pivot,' because we had to.

It is probably safe to say that there was not a single facet of the Campaign that did not pivot in some way due to COVID-19. As one interviewee shared, "we were impacted and had to be nimble, but we were able to quickly adjust to create an equally strong – if not stronger – campaign so that we knew we were getting through to people."

Partners completed Strategic Plans by May 2019, describing specific partnerships and methods to leverage resources to encourage community participation in the Census. Strategic Plans addressed the following elements: outreach approach; partnership coordination; resources and infrastructure; training methods; data management; Language and Communication Action Plan; workforce development; budget; timeline of all specific outreach activities; volunteers plan; social media and non-traditional communications methods; and ethnic and hyper-local media plan, when applicable.

What were the intended and unintended results of adjustments to or pivots away from partner strategic and implementation plans? What new or emerging hardest-to-count population patterns were identified, and what insights were gained about the rich diversity of California's population?

Following the approval of their Strategic Plan, partners were required to submit an Implementation Plan in Fall 2019 that built upon the approved Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Implementation Plan was to provide a clear roadmap for outreach, identifying opportunities to bolster outreach, coordinating partners and resources, and achieving goals and desired outcomes in adherence to a timeline. It included anticipated challenges and possible solutions. The Implementation Plan was also designed to serve as a tool for the Regional Program Managers to identify gaps, coordinate efforts, and monitor progress. The initial implementation plans included hundreds of events, Questionnaire Assistance Center (QAC) locations, meetings, forums, training sessions, town halls, and in person canvassing, none of which were possible until after the initial stay at home order in March 2020 was modified on May 4, 2020.

As Campaign partners pivoted in response to the many challenges faced in 2020, their adjustments and changes may not have turned out the way that they hoped, resulting in both intended and unintended consequences. While the switch to digital methods, piloting emerging technology, and reaching out to more people "without the hassle of convening in-person" benefited some census outreach, not all pivots were positive. In some cases, the need to pivot resulted in losing critical time, facing insurmountable digital inequalities, and addressing the lack of basic needs as the priority over census activities. All in-person activities became virtual events or meetings, and online video conferencing became the default communication platform:

> I think there was a lot of good intent in reaching those hardest-to-count, a lot of passion, love for the community. There was just a lot of good intention, and the pandemic just threw it all away. In many immigrant or refugee communities - all of the hardest-to-count require face-to-face, require an education to say why this is important to you and your family.

In response to COVID-19, each organization working on the Campaign, in consultation with the Census Office:

> had to decide what to do to make sure they could still do their work. In general, the organizations had to serve the emergency side of their work first. Regardless of what the organization did at its core, they were now COVID experts. They tried their best to pair COVID with the census. They decided amongst, and for, themselves what to do.

Communication was key during this time at every level of the Campaign. One interviewee shared that their Administrative Community-Based Organization "ensured there was a space for conversation. We started doing virtual town halls once a month. In the beginning, I think we did two, just so there was space for people to ask questions [and talk about] things they could or could not do."

Organizations also had to keep their own staff safe by pivoting their entire operations, such as increased safety and cleaning for services still offered in person and/or equipping staff with laptops, cell phones, and other administrative tools to suddenly work from home. Some county and state staff were transferred to COVID-19 response, limiting the staff available to work on census activities. For some organizations, the focus on keeping staff and clients safe in light of COVID-19 limited the ability of direct service partners to engage in census outreach to certain hardest-to-count communities. While some partners were able to align COVID-19 response with census outreach, others lacked the capacity to take on more. As one interviewee shared, "you can't fight that when they're like, 'we're worried about feeding our community, about the impact of COVID. We're sorry but we really can't take that on." Another interviewee shared:

> COVID especially impacted the hardest-to-count areas, socially, economically, and in disproportionate levels of local COVID cases.[9] A shift from outreach regarding census morphed into providing COVID information, which provided even greater credibility to those census volunteers. Language was also key. Regardless of the organization's function, if the [community-based organization] spoke a community member's language, [they] became the de facto location for COVID information. The community began sending a trusted Spanish-speaking messenger to be able to provide information on COVID: the regulations, assistance with unemployment claims and stimulus checks, rental assistance, housing, and food assistance.

The balancing act between responding to the pandemic, economic downturn, wildfires, and political unrest, along with the impending – and changing – census deadlines required compassion and guidance. As one interviewee described, "as new challenges came our way, we had to pivot to make sure we were not being insensitive to people facing a major health crisis or [being] out of work." Another interviewee emphasized that decisions to pivot were made by the Local Complete Count Committee: "it was easy for us to talk to our neighbors, get feedback about what to do. We talked to the community first then came back with just committee members [and] decided these are the changes we needed to make."

In-person Census events at trusted places established relationships and trust.

At the root of the Campaign was the conviction that trusted messengers and trusted messaging in trusted places would help individuals learn about the 2020 Census and complete the form. Trusted messengers, including contracted partners, are people whom vulnerable populations consider credible and reliable sources of information. Trusted messengers have spent years building

[9] *Parts of L.A. hit hardest by COVID-19 also among those where census response lags 2010*, May 12, 2020. https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/los-angeles-county-census-participation-covid-19

relationships within their communities, earning respect. They understand their community and know what trusted messages will make an impression.

Another key part of California's statewide effort to make completing the census form approachable, easy, and convenient was to provide friendly and trusted locations to receive in-language information and/or gain access to the online form or Census Bureau call center. Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Questionnaire Assistance Kiosks were planned in the communities most at risk of being undercounted. Questionnaire Assistance Centers were intended to provide computers, informational materials, and trained personnel to assist the public interested in completing the 2020 Census questionnaire and answer any questions. Questionnaire Assistance Kiosks had computers and informational materials available for use by the public, but usually without trained personnel on-site to provide in-person assistance or answer questions.

Unfortunately, many planned in-person events, including Questionnaire Assistance Centers, had to be canceled in response to the initial Executive Order to stay at home announced on March 19, 2020 and modified on May 4, 2020. For example, many Tribal Governments closed their borders and offices, not allowing anyone in or out. Small Group Quarters, such as senior centers or skilled nursing facilities, quarantined, and partners had no way to reach residents to see if they had completed the census. Similarly, school closures across the state stymied plans to hold Questionnaire Assistance Centers in trusted places in the heart of neighborhoods in hardest-to-count areas. The cancellation of the Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Questionnaire Assistance Kiosks not only limited the ability to provide information and guidance, but it also eliminated an opportunity to mitigate the lack of access to broadband in many communities.

In response, some partners began passing out flyers or doorhangers to conduct outreach, "not face-to-face contact, but still hitting the pavement." Partners had to remain creative in their approaches over the many months of stay at home orders:

> Not limiting the strategy to any single approach probably had the greatest impact. By using a variety of approaches, it increased the likelihood that each hardest-to-count community could be reached in a way that was accessible to them.

Many contracted partners were fortunate to have conducted trainings, attend large community events, and/or convene partners and stakeholders in trusted places during late 2019/early 2020, prior to COVID-19-related stay at home orders. These gatherings often served as "the catalyst for all the work to follow." Residents in hardest-to-count communities learned about the 2020 Census and met the service providers working in their communities before the shutdown. Schools could provide lessons about the 2020 Census in the classroom and reach parents through school newsletters, banners, and marquees. Many of these in-person events often set the stage for transitioning future events after COVID-19, such as the relocation of outreach activities to places people were still allowed to go under stay at home orders: food distribution locations, testing sites, social services offices, homework pick-ups, grocery stores, etc. Partners were required to make decisions, adjust their plans, or pivot their activities, sometimes repeatedly as new challenges impacted their work. Many self-service reports in SwORD described activities in response to COVID-19, such as the engaging Health Promotoras to phone bank in Region 6, delivering food bags and census information to COVID-19 patients in Region 10, or conducting outreach at testing sites across multiple regions.

When it was safe to do so, some partners conducted in-person outreach while still maintaining COVID-19 safety protocols. Many hardest-to-count communities have low digital literacy or lack of access to broadband and were not effectively reached through online methods. Some partners equipped their staff with personal protective equipment to conduct in-person outreach through community events. Many partners acknowledged that the personal touch was hard to replace, and they developed highly creative ways to safely maintain contact.

Car caravans or parades were a frequent strategy to see people and to be visible moving throughout the community. Partners used advertising, signs, and decorations to spread the word about the census throughout hardest-to-count tracts and across the broader community. A sample of partners who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described activities related to promotion of the car caravans through developing flyers, sharing maps or routes, or distributing event videos via social media. Many car caravan activities aligned with community events, such as a Martin Luther King Day Parade in Region 8, a Black History Parade in Region 6, or the "Mask On, District 5! Safety COVID-19 Car Caravan & Day of Action" in Region 3. In addition to developing marketing materials, some organizations in Region 10 created "packages with Census info, face masks, rulers, highlighters with [invitations] to watch the caravan."

Drive-thru events also provided ways for residents to get out of their house and meet partners, while remaining safely cocooned in their cars. A sample of partners who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described drive-up events including food distribution, such as at the San Andreas Food Bank Drive Thru in Region 4, or the "Tailgate Food Giveaway" in Region 1, which was a drive-thru food box distribution event with Census materials provided. Other drive-thru events included a school backpack drive thru in Region 8, where all backpacks had census response info sheets and a help-a-response kiosk was available. In some cases, the census outreach at drive-thru events was more about advertising, like at Region 10's Drive-Through Food Distribution event, where a retractable census banner was displayed and the city's Census Liaison and Mayor wore census T-Shirts and face coverings.

Partners prioritized safety and community wellness, including distributing health and safety or COVID-19 relief packages, such as tote bags with hand sanitizers and masks, at trusted places where people went for essential services as a way to help keep their communities safe. In many cases, the distribution of health and safety items was in partnership with other agencies already serving the community. Some partners screen printed census logos and messaging on reusable materials, such as face masks or bandanas, which also provided important COVID-19 protection for community members:

> I thought the masks were brilliant. They became walking advertisements, and it was filling a need because the farms weren't even providing that protection.

Within a sample of activities in SwORD that included detailed descriptions, partners described distributing hand sanitizer in Region 2 through health clinics that included bi-lingual census-branded information. Census canvas bags distributed in Region 5 were used to hold cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment for family childcare providers and early childhood centers to give to families. In Region 8, families received postcards and hand sanitizer at 64 different Grab N Go lunch pick-up locations organized by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks across the city.

> [One subcontractor] masked up and went to Vietnamese communities and spoke to the elders. Social distancing, he knew it was safe. … It would just depend on the resources of the organization, what their original plan was.

While respondents pivoted their outreach activities to a safe virtual environment, many also looked for opportunities in venues that were still operating as essential services, especially early on. For example, while direct services were limited, there were opportunities to still connect with people at food distribution sites, health clinic locations, or homework drop-off spots at schools to engage with students and parents. One partner engaged a mobile food truck in outreach activities to address food insecurity in hardest-to-count neighborhoods. Although the field of potential activities was narrowed due to COVID-19, partners were able to home in on those fewer opportunities with greater intensity.

The challenges communities were facing, including the pandemic, wildfires, economic downturn, and social justice protests, provided real and salient talking points for census outreach. One interviewee described asking people:

> How do you think they're going to determine how many vaccines are going to come to this area? Or how much food resources to put here, help for job programs? And to really use what's going on now versus messaging of well maybe they will help us in the future. This is going to help us with school resources, your vaccine, everything you need now.

This respondent, along with others, used current circumstances to educate people about the immediate importance of completing their census form during these brief, in-person contacts. In addition, another interviewee described that the isolation of COVID-19 made people "excited to come to these events to say hello and see a familiar face." Partners were able to have in-person outreach conversations with community members regarding their concerns, which helped make the census real and important:

> The main lesson, the biggest lesson here is face-to-face contact is irreplaceable when you talk about this [hardest-to-count] community.

This comment reinforces another interviewee's reminder that U.S. Census Bureau research indicated that hardest-to-count communities required a very high-touch, in-person approach driven by trusted messengers.[10] For example, a unique outreach effort organized by the Karuk Tribe were

[10] U.S. Census Bureau Responses to National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations 2017 Spring Meeting Recommendations, page 6. https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2017-04/2017-10-16-census-response.pdf

drive-in movie nights showing tribal census videos and distributing collateral to tribal community members:

> We didn't reach everybody, and I think had COVID-19 not transpired, we would've had a higher response rate. So much in person [contact], that's the biggest and best way to reach our hardest-to-count communities.

In addition to drive-thru events coordinated by local or regional partners, one of the safe, socially distanced, paid statewide media tactics was the deployment of mobile digital trucks. The digital trucks "complement[ed] caravans [that] partners were holding, and at food distribution at school sites [by] driving around low self-response tracts…creating [and] promoting local branded messages to complete the form." With in-person outreach severely limited, digital communication strategies were critical to the Campaign's success.

V. DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Digital campaign activities offered an opportunity to reach many Californians at the same time.

What strategies were associated with the most complete counts for the hardest-to-count census tracts?

Survey respondents and interviewees shared that one of the most frequent ways partners pivoted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was to move their activities to a virtual online platform, often Zoom. While SwORD did not collect activity format data (i.e., in-person vs online), a sample of partners who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described virtual, online, or Zoom activities, such as distributing flyers at a local mosque food drive emphasizing the importance of the census and providing a website address and in-language virtual Questionnaire Assistance Center phone numbers in Region 1. Latino providers described distributing Spanish-language electronic newsletters online in Region 2.

Other entries in the SwORD sample described activities with a "digital" component, including digital canvassing in Region 6, geo-fenced digital placement or mailings to households in Region 8, digital billboards or signs in Regions 7, 8, and 9, and paid digital advertising campaigns in every region.

> They say it takes seven touches for a person to respond; the more you could constantly drone it in, the more likely they'd respond.

Moving activities to a virtual space due to COVID-19 often saved money and allowed resources to be allocated to different activities, such as hotlines for languages not supported by the federal or state language access plans (e.g., Hmong), or allowed for larger investments into phone banking than what partners originally planned. Direct texting, phone banking, personal device ad placements, livestreaming events, videos, websites, email blasts, and massive mailing campaigns provided the "same, consistent message out dozens of times at a much lower cost than sending folks out [to go] door-to-door a couple of times." In many communities, advertising on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram channels, as well paying for a geotargeted digital advertising buys (also known as GeoFraming) and digital banner ads, resulted in a high level of engagement. Working with community partners and stakeholders also expanded the number of Californians reached in a single message, including one partner who worked with their local Sheriff's Office to put out a Nixle[11] alert, resulting in their biggest Self-Response Rate jump. Finally, some partners noted that their ethnic media purchases to highlight local leaders and support interviews/call-in shows successfully engaged hardest-to-count communities.

[11] Nixle provides the platform for the delivery of Alerts, Advisories, Community type messages, and local Traffic information from local police departments and community agencies.

Social media activities spread census messages throughout California.

Mass media distribution of Campaign messages provided opportunities to spread the word about the census both widely and deeply, often allowing professional media organizations to precisely track impressions and reach. Traditional outreach techniques augmented social media content, including guiding people – or patching them through directly – to the U.S. Census Bureau telephone number to complete the survey over the phone. Interviewees shared that even though they could not do in-person outreach, such as at barber shops, libraries, or at the California State Fair, they anecdotally knew people were responding to seeing the Campaign through media. Partners could easily follow and shift social media campaigns in response to changing circumstances and needs:

> We created an online toolkit where we provided trainings on how to do door knocking, phone banking, canvassing. We worked with our marketing team to have social media campaigns that could be customizable, templates that folks could use for social media posts, their websites. All of the things we thought would get our partners "stuck," we tried to proactively create those resources for them, so they didn't have to develop those materials. Some counties that we worked in did not have a Local Complete Count Committee; in fact, they opted out of state funding and did not have capacity to do anything. It was really on our funding consortium partners that had community partners to activate the non-profits. Again, all the resources, flyers, translated materials that we could provide - that was really helpful.

Partners creatively leveraged communication mechanisms already in place to spread census messages beyond dedicated census activities. For example, one partner worked with their local water district to include flyers in monthly water bills, some local government and agency employees were encouraged to have the census message at the bottom of their emails, and one organization included census messaging on their hold music to capitalize on a "captive audience" while callers waited. Many school district partners added census messages to school marquees to spread the word as people drove by closed school sites.

Other agencies mass-distributed messages via social media platforms and used social media to reinforce in-person canvassing or printed postcards. For example, producing online videos allowed funded organization to "look at the count of how many people viewed those videos and see thousands of view counts. Door hangers [were also effective] because [they] had the link to [their] videos on there." Paid digital advertising allowed organizations to both spread the message broadly, as well as hyper-target specific communities. Again, paid social media was "very easy to monitor, to say 'based on response rates, we need to shift more dollars in these regions.' That's where we were able to be the most nimble and responsive, was digitally."

Phone banking provided a safe and efficient way to reach many Californians.

In many cases, phone banking was a significant – and efficient – tactic to reach a large number of people safely under COVID-19 restrictions. Some partners had originally planned to conduct phone banking activities and either had to expand or speed up their implementation.

Other partners who had not initially planned to conduct phone banking, pivoted canvassers who planned to be at events into phone and text bankers:

> The biggest [advantage] is that you can attempt to contact a lot more people a lot faster than knocking on doors. Just as an example, if you are making phone calls – it is roughly 100 attempts an hour that one person can do. If you are knocking on doors, you are looking at 40 - a little bit less than half, which obviously affects the actual number you are going to talk to. The second is a logistical operational advantage, you can have people working anywhere, all over the state. If you are canvassing, you have to have people in that community, a physical office, a place to meet and dispatch people. When we're doing everything remotely, phone calls are a lot easier.

For example, the Census Office contracted with Street Level Strategy to conduct a statewide phone banking effort with patch-through to the U.S. Census Bureau, including text messages and outbound calls in several languages, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Mandarin, Hindi, and others. While outbound calls were directed to households highly likely to speak a certain preferred language, anecdotally, the highest warm transfer rate was for Spanish-speaking families. However, this might simply be a data issue of accurately identifying the household's preferred language. As Spanish-speakers represent the majority of persons five years and older who do not speak English "very well" in California (64.7%),[12] a larger number of phone numbers identified as Spanish-speaking households may just be more likely to yield greater success than less prevalent languages.

In addition to statewide phone banking, some partners conducted local phone banking, either using their own internal contact lists or purchasing call lists for their network of partner organizations to use for calls or texts. Other partners used the Census Political Data Inc. (Census PDI) application to conduct phone banking, made available at no cost to partners. However, some partners had very specific challenges related to conducting phone banking and decided not to use phone calls or texts. For example, one tribal partner shared that some members had complained about receiving phone calls from the tribe that were not related specifically to tribal issues. Another interviewee shared that they could not use Census PDI data because it could appear to be political activity, which is not permitted in their organization. Finally, another interviewee shared that, beyond language, they did not know whether the telephone numbers they called were households representing their population of interest (e.g., African Americans, LGBTQ+, Veterans, Seniors).

Some partners and vendors continued phone banking right up until the last day of the self-response operation in an attempt to reach the most people possible:

[12] Census 2020 California Hard-to-Count Fact Sheet – State of California https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/06/California-factsheet.pdf

> Quantity does not always translate into quality, but I think [phone banking] was an opportunity to reach more folks efficiently and cost-effectively.

However, one downside of phone banking is that unlike the ability of a canvasser to see if a property is vacant when they knock on the door, calling bad or disconnected numbers requires additional time. Time spent cleaning and expanding the Census PDI data list prior to 2030 Census outreach will help partners and vendors easily identify valid phone numbers and a households' relevant hardest-to-count characteristics, thereby increasing the efficiency of phone banking.

The shift of most census activities to an online or digital format highlighted and reinforced existing inequalities related to the digital divide.

As one of the most prevalent hardest-to-count characteristics across California, 13.7 percent of households do not have a broadband subscription,[13] and thus were even harder to reach when in-person outreach was restricted. In an effort to address limited internet access and/or potential mistrust and distrust of providing data in the first digital census, many partners initially planned in-person Questionnaire Assistance Centers to educate and support concerned Californians and bridge the digital divide. Unfortunately, in-person assistance was not possible in most cases to help assuage people who were very suspicious of the technology and did not want to input personal information online. One partner innovatively "created [a] multi-generational YouTube video where there is a child talking to her parents and grandparents about completing the census…but then there's that gap in actually being able to complete it online." Another interviewee shared that "in predominantly rural and remote counties, the lack of broadband coverage and the high number of Post Office Box addresses meant that the digital census, as a main method of enumeration, became a challenge, rather than a solution." In one region, a multi-county organization sent "little postcards to all the local Post Office Boxes to say, 'the census is coming, don't forget to do this.'"

While completion of the questionnaire via telephone was an option, some interviewees shared that they anecdotally heard of long hold times, and that telephone communication was not always an option for their community. For example, many Tribes and rural communities are in areas with low or no broadband and limited cell phone coverage. Thus, pivoting to digital outreach efforts was not necessarily always effective in tribal or rural communities:

> Some communities… they do not have internet, and a lot of them don't own a computer. So, they just don't have the resources. A lot of them said, 'I just have a medical phone, and I don't have minutes.' Those communities, we really wish we would have been able to have our Questionnaire Assistance Centers that we were supposed to have. We wish we would have had the funding to get a bus and put laptops in it and bring it to them. The lack of broadband in some of these remote areas where people don't own a computer, or if they did their kids were using it for remote learning. We knew they weren't getting counted, and there wasn't anything we could do.

If the 2030 Census is conducted by internet and phone only, without any paper questionnaire option, a key to successful outreach will be addressing the digital divide. Communication with

[13] Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions. American Community Survey. 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=ACSST1Y2019.S2801&g=0400000US06&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2801&hidePreview=true

hardest-to-count communities will need to include an explanation of data security. One interviewee described some communities expressing a "lack of a willingness or hesitation to engage [with the census] because they thought it was a scam or did not want to give their information to the government."

In addition, more public education regarding the Nonresponse Followup enumeration phase would also ease people's minds. One interviewee shared that people who "live out in the woods" were not happy to receive a visit from the U.S. Census Bureau enumerators. Enumerators approaching people's houses during cannabis harvest season contained significant risk, as cannabis harvesters are protective of their property and extremely suspicious of government visits. Another interviewee described Seniors worried that repeated calls and visits by enumerators were a scam, and other unpleasant enumerator interactions.

Achieving the Campaign's mission required multiple materials, information, and repeated messages by trusted messengers about why the census is important in order to encourage people to complete the online census form. While partners utilized their local knowledge to engage hardest-to-count communities, U.S. Census Bureau activities were not always as closely aligned to local needs. For example, one interviewee shared challenges during the Group Quarters Enumeration, which was organized by the U.S. Census Bureau, or difficulties in ensuring American Sign Language interpretation at events or meetings conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Partners working with disability communities could not determine whether enumerators had received training on how to respond if someone had a disability and needed an accommodation to complete the census questionnaire. At the end of the day, the right messaging, delivered by trusted messengers, was critical to educate, motivate, and activate hardest-to-count community members to complete the census form.

VI. COMPLETE COUNT CENSUS 2020 CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

The Campaign's communications strategy had to cover the entire State, while simultaneously focusing on the unique needs and challenges of each of the 10 regions in light of California's challenging geography and incredible diversity. The communication strategy was informed by community-based participatory research and evidence-based practices and was continuously monitored and adapted in response to market research feedback from hardest-to-count households. The heart of the strategy was a vigorous outreach and public relations media campaign that supported a coordinated effort, in order to result in a complete count among California's vulnerable populations. The campaign was designed to support and amplify statewide and regional efforts on the ground through culturally relevant and sensitive and linguistically competent media with local ethnic media outlets, as well as earned and paid media. The emphasis on local ethnic media and paid in-language media in traditionally hardest-to-count areas reflected recommendations from other state agencies with experience in communicating with historically low census response rate communities. Statewide media efforts supplemented and supported on-the-ground efforts by using paid and earned media. In addition, the communications strategy filled gaps and complemented efforts of both the U.S. Census Bureau and regional partners. Finally, the strategy identified and addressed misinformation, as well as supported rapid response efforts to low-response areas. Monitoring mis- and disinformation was critical because information can rapidly spread, either as incorrect information unintentionally shared by those who do not know it is incorrect or intentionally by the hands of bad actors.

The Campaign's trusted messenger strategy was rooted in the basic understanding that people are most motivated by those they trust most. Trusted messengers, trusted messaging, and trusted places helped individuals learn about the 2020 Census and complete their form. Whether delivered in person, online, over the airwaves, on signs, or on paper, the messaging was developed with the audience in mind. Messaging needed to be in the language the respective audiences were most comfortable with, in a way that was easy to access, and that resonated with them. Thus, marketing and communications were major time and financial investments throughout the Campaign. The Census Office developed messaging and placed advertising across the State and contracted with Mercury LLC, who supported on-the-ground strategies with earned and paid media.

What impact did the work of external partners (e.g., marketing and/or phone banking vendors) have on outreach and communications efforts in communities?

Marketing and message development efforts were informed by qualitative feedback from community members. In addition, the Census Office used feedback and information about regional micro-media plans to inform any gaps that needed to be addressed. The goal of regional micro-media plans was to provide partners with technical assistance and support in media and communications activities to reach the hardest-to-count audiences. Through partner feedback, workshops, and surveys, each region proposed various tactics to be included in their micro-media plan, including additional radio, television, digital geofencing targeting local events, out-of-home

locations, and in-language advertorials. Technical assistance topics included content creation, media planning, evaluating promotional/sponsorship opportunities, media buying, negation, optimization, reporting, translation, public relations, earned media, local speakers' bureau, event media support, etc.[14]

Partners had opportunities to provide feedback about messages in real time, including at monthly regional meetings. During calls, a partner might share that they were having a hard time increasing Self-Response Rate within the Cambodian community, for example, and another partner who knew the community might share about the "need to go simple and use quotes from elders… creating content that spoke to those communities." Community knowledge, combined with objective quantitative data, informed and enhanced Campaign activities and messages. Overall, Campaign tactics were "informed by a combination of SwORD data, Nielsen data, media market industry standards, and…regional partnership data" that could be accessed by marketing vendors. Campaign vendors, SocialQuest and JP Marketing, helped test media assets and messaging before they were deployed, in collaboration with Campaign partners. For example, funded partners provided input on message testing focus group questions and helped coordinate some of the groups. Insights garnered from this research informed ongoing message development regarding awareness of and education about the 2020 Census, and factors that worked to motivate and activate hardest-to-count household participation.

Vendors worked in collaboration with the Census Office to determine what regional paid media was needed, or where there were gaps. The U.S. Census Bureau's Paid Media Buy List[15] also helped inform communications and paid media planning, and social media analytics helped understand what messages resonated with partners. In addition, analytics from the Census Office's Partner Portal website identified which tools and/or collateral partners downloaded most to support their outreach efforts and messaging. As one interviewee shared, "many of the partners would use the creatives done [by the Census Office] and updated and customized [them] for their own usage. As this was the goal, [the Census Office] knew content was being utilized, and therefore helping."

[14] Source: California Complete Count – Census 2020, MicroMedia Key Analytics Final Report, November 30, 2020. [Internal resource]
[15] 2020 Census Paid Media Campaign Schedule, October 30, 2020.
https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2019-12/2020_Census_Paid_Media_Campaign_Buy_List.pdf

The alignment that occurred between outreach (the ground game) and communications (the air game) within the Census Office supported a solid, coordinated, and targeted strategy.

A full rollout of the State's branded "Census for All" Campaign took place in mid-October 2019, including in-language messaging, collateral materials, templates, and toolkits for partners, as well as the launch of the CaliforniaCensus.org website, offered in 14 languages.

As previously described, the Census Office developed a comprehensive phase-by-phase communications strategy detailing how the media vendor Statement of Work (also known as the air game) fit into the State's larger communications plan and complemented outreach efforts (also known as the ground game). Because outreach teams were in direct contact with communities, they understood the concerns on the ground, messaging needs, and what could work or not in terms of shifting and reshaping the message to reflect needs and concerns, and how to successfully engage communities. An aligned communications team creates a connection between the reality on the ground, the evolving needs of the partners, and the messaging. However, this coordination to promote the same goals and regular communication between the teams was not always as smooth as it could have been.

> You need to have a robust infrastructure to execute media and ground outreach, and it has to be integrated. It can't be in siloes. It can't be like, 'well what is comms doing for outreach?' It has to be synergistically together, and robust.

While the Census Office worked together towards a shared goal, intentional and regular communication between the outreach and communications teams could have resulted in a better understanding of the interconnectivity between outreach activities in the 10 regions and media/messaging activities. Increased communication could have helped increase appreciation across the Census Office for the collective efforts to message to the lowest- responding communities.

Compounding the effect of challenges in alignment and connection between outreach and communications, the rapidly changing circumstances that plagued the 2020 Census required repeatedly changing messages and talking points. Communications staff drafted multiple iterations of talking points just trying to stay on top of breaking news, directives, and updates. Through determined and focused effort, the Campaign was able to maintain relevance and prominence, despite an increasingly chaotic environment as the months progressed.

Memorable, simple sound-bite messages motivated, compelled, and inspired Californians to compete the census.

Several partners highlighted the power of simple messages and the Campaign logo. The message themes that most resonated with the community were that the census was: (1) safe and secure; (2) the best way to bring resources to the community; (3) urgent and important; and (4) will support the future of the community and the state. Affirming the central foundation of the Campaign, trusted messages that came from trusted messengers in trusted places were the most powerful,

including locally branded postcards distributed to Post Office Box-holders and messages that emphasized safety, including that information would not be shared with federal, state, or local law enforcement. The following table lists specific messages highlighted by partners as resonating within their organizations and in their communities:

Theme	Message
It's safe and easy to complete the census	– Completing the census is safer at home. – Completing the census online is safe. – The census is nine easy questions. – Three ways to count. – What every parent needs to know.
Link to community resources	– Any message specifically tied to education/young people. – California Students Count. – Completing the census benefits your community. – Country roads don't build themselves. – Funding for important Tribal programs is based, in whole or in part, off of census data. – School funding is impacted by an accurate count. – The economic and social value of participating in the 2020 Census to one's own community. – The loss of political power, redistricting.
Emphasize urgency	– Avoid the knock, take the census. – It's not too late! – The time to help your tribal community is now.
Inspire unity and valuing all Californians	– Be Counted. – California For All. – California Native. – Census for all, plus emphasis on diversity. – Every has a voice that has a right to be heard. – Every town is an important part of the American story. – Everyone Counts. – Everyone deserves to be counted. – I am native and I count. – My Community Counts – Somos Vecinos y Todos Contamos (We are Neighbors and We All Count)

While this is a small sample of the statewide messages that helped educate, motivate, and activate people to complete the census, many partners also created locally or regionally specific messages to reach their hardest-to-count communities. Similarly, population-directed messages worked well. Many partners emphasized that messages that showed pictures of community members were the most successful:

> …campaigns in non-English languages were very effective in engaging immigrant populations, even if the individual spoke English very well. Messages in native languages provided a sense of inclusion. The My Black Counts census messaging seemed to be very effective and was shared widely among our community partners.

The Census Office contracted with vendors to create resources, which, along with materials created by Census Office staff and partners, were shared on the Partner Portal. Resources developed by the Census Office included trainings on how to do door knocking, phone banking, canvassing, flyers, translated materials, and pre-built social media campaigns that could be customizable with templates for social media posts and websites. Several partners underscored the value of the focused monthly Social Media Toolkits provided in the Partner Portal. Emphasizing Census Day 2020 (April 1, 2020) as the day that determines who is counted in the 2020 Census, and where they are counted, was particularly informative for college students and other Californians displaced due to COVID-19 or wildfires.

In addition to specific messages and themes, partners highlighted the power of social media hashtags in the Campaign, such as #2020Census or #BeCounted. In addition to the most commonly mentioned #Census2020 hashtag, other hashtags shared in a sample of SwORD activities with detailed descriptions were location or population-specific, such as #QueerTheCensus, #NativePeopleCount, and #MyBlackCounts. Finally, many specific Campaign activities had their own unique hashtags, such as #ChalkTheCensusAlCo or #MakeItCountMonday.

Messages needed to be population-specific, so some partners developed entire local campaigns to meet their constituents' needs and emerging challenges.

While many census messages worked, there were some messages that "fell flat." In particular, partners found messages that directed people to the California Census (CAcensus.org) website less helpful than if the messages had directed people directly to the U.S. Census Bureau website to complete the online form. In addition, a few of the specific messages were problematic for certain organizations. For example, if an organization is prohibited from being political in any form, any messaging that referenced voting, Congressional representation, or politics could not be used by that partner. In general, the "Representation Matters" message fell flat in several communities that expressed a fear of, or lack of trust in, government. As one partner shared: "for many valid reasons, lots of tribal people do not completely trust the government. As a result, many felt that the government will do whatever they want with census data, regardless of what they say." Among many marginalized communities, messages emphasizing increasing political representation were anecdotally not as convincing as focusing on economic benefits or social factors related to completing the census form.

Some partners felt that the statewide communications materials were "too generic" or were not distinct enough to help people easily identify that the materials were about the census. Messaging deemed too general, too vague, not relating to their targeted audience, or not visually reflecting the community were often revised based on community feedback. Generic messaging like "Make sure your household is counted" were identified as less impactful in harder-to-reach communities. In some cases, the word "household" was confusing, such as for college students and others in the Group Quarters Enumeration. Finally, messages that were deemed as harsh, critical, intimidating, or guilt-inducing, such as "Clinics that are closer than the next county" or "Do the Census, it's your constitutional duty," were mentioned as ineffective.

At the end of the day, the more specific and tailored the messaging, the better. Interestingly, messages mentioned as particularly meaningful for some partners (e.g., "Census data is safe" and "Avoid the knock, take the census") were mentioned by others as falling flat in their communities. For example:

> Posts noting to take the census before you get a "knock on your door" sent an intimidating message to multiple audiences - during a pandemic - as well as for those who, as a general rule, are not comfortable answering their door to strangers.

Many partners adapted the Campaign messages to reflect culturally or ethnically relevant and sensitive concepts and to reflect real-time/current challenges. In some cases, the adaptations were minor, such as changing the phrase "be counted" to "get counted" because the organization preferred to activate folks to take action and "get" is more active than "be." In other cases, word and image changes were more significant to resolve misleading translation.

Translating and modifying messages required local partners' time and resources if statewide partners were not able to modify materials for local use. Translation for meaning was particularly important: when "native local speakers worked on the translation, the nuances of the community were included in the efforts so that the community could easily personalize the message and relate to it." Across all 10 regions, the sample of organizers who added detailed descriptions to their activity reports in SwORD described translating Campaign materials, referencing one of the priority languages in the LACAP: Spanish, Chinese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Filipino, Korean, Armenian, Farsi, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Punjabi, or Khmer. In addition, partners translated materials into other languages and dialects, including Hmong, Ukrainian, Hindi, Iu Mien, Mixtec, and Dari. Micro-media plans were described as "helpful" and "well received," but for the most part, local resources and gatekeepers were the best way to engage with non-English speaking populations and to translate and create messages and materials because "the statewide contractors could not effectively reach our market." Despite challenges with some statewide vendors, several partners described working with population-specific statewide partners for translation and media resources. Descriptions included translated materials, monolingual events, and language-specific outreach, such as Region 9 engaging "paid digital phone bankers calling Vietnamese, licensed cosmetologists in Orange County to share a brief description of why the census is important, and ask if they've completed theirs yet, in both English and Vietnamese."

Many partners shared in the online evaluation survey that they felt they had more flexibility than statewide marketing vendors had in their ability to develop highly creative local campaigns, such as musical PSAs and working with artists to create census murals and graphics. Art-related activities

described in SwORD included integrating graphics developed by youth, chalk art contests in several regions, including Region 8, community-friendly infographics, or music videos for the radio specifically directed at the Punjabi community in Region 6. Overall, survey respondents shared that they had sufficient resources to create materials that worked for their communities, either through translating or adapting themselves or by obtaining resources from the national *Census Counts* campaign or *Native People Count* California campaign. Despite the local resources required to translate, adapt, and develop materials that resonated with communities, over three-quarters of survey respondents (79%) said that adapting materials was somewhat (20%), slightly (9%), or not at all (50%) challenging.

Over three-quarters (79%) of survey respondents said that adapting materials to resonate with communities was somewhat, slightly, or not at all challenging.

Despite partners' efforts to reach hardest-to-count communities, some partners met unanticipated resistance or reduced responses from areas of higher anti-government sentiment. While many partners were prepared to meet resistance from people who did not want to be counted or identified due to fear of government institutions, in some cases that messaging did not address all types of opposition. For example, some resistance focused on not wanting a government at all. While many messages referred to the importance of being counted in order to access resources and representation, partners did not have talking points for a population that did not want to receive federal resources or believe in the need to be represented in Congress. In another example, sharing information about the mandate protecting individual data did not alleviate concerns within the cannabis community that enumerators on their property would report them to government agencies for growing cannabis.

Despite these specific challenges, customized messages delivered by trusted messengers worked to advance the goal to ensure that Californians get their fair share of federal resources and Congressional representation by encouraging the full participation of all Californians in the 2020 Census.

VII. SwORD & OTHER DATA SOURCES

Data, analytics, and technology were the bedrock of the Campaign. A key California 2010 Census campaign finding was the need for greater coordination and information-sharing between the State and its outreach and messaging partners. In response, the State contracted with the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), a leading company in geographical information systems (GIS) mapping and spatial analytics technology, to develop and launch the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) mapping tool. SwORD was the online platform through which the Census Office and partners shared information, collaborated on outreach activities, and coordinated efforts.

The Campaign was a data-driven initiative, and partners used SwORD in various ways, depending on need and campaign stage.

From its inception, the Campaign was rooted in data. As previously described, the calculation of the CA-HTC Index was based on data, as was the application of the CA-HTC Index to identify the tracts for focused outreach. SwORD housed a wide variety of maps and data about traditionally hardest-to-count areas and the populations within them. SwORD included tools partners could use to target outreach efforts and plan activities including canvassing, events, and place-based support, such as initially planned Questionnaire Assistance Centers. Not surprisingly, many strategic and implementation plans initially developed based on data from Fall 2019 had to be significantly revised in Spring 2020, based on newly available data. SwORD allowed partners to provide data on covered census tracts or block groups, outreach locations, and activity outcomes, so the Census Office could monitor work being conducted. While SwORD provided a shared data system that all partners could use, some partners also increased their own regional data knowledge with local tools and/or processes. Constantly changing conditions required adjustments over the course of several months, which necessitated additional data monitoring and tracking of each change's impact.

> How did different partners utilize the statewide database (i.e., SwORD), and how could it be more useful?
>
> How did partners track their level of effort, monitor milestones, and progress toward saturation of a hardest-to-count population or place? To what extent was statewide data collection augmented by local tools and/or processes?

The majority of data sources within SwORD were open government data from a variety of federal, state, and other public sources. As the central source of data evidence, contractors also input their data from all activities into SwORD to assist with tracking, accountability, and transparency, in addition to submitting quarterly reports and data to the Census Office detailing their outreach activities.

The real value of SwORD was that all of the data that were entered were in a single, central place, and were combined together to see patterns and trends. The data were specifically formatted and curated for census outreach, saving countless hours of research, data formatting and manipulation, and other tasks for partners to figure out on their own. Partners could view activities together and

in combination with other layers, such as the CA-HTC Index and Self-Response Rates. Partners' use of SwORD to track their level of effort, monitor milestones, and watch their progress toward saturation of a hardest-to-count population or place meant that everyone involved in the Campaign had access to the same data for decision-making. This aggregation of data into one Campaign-wide source of information helped identify opportunities for collaboration and other efficiency gains through combining contractors' efforts. Finally, SwORD supported Census Office success metrics, identified best practices, ensured accountability, and helped evaluate how contracted partners allocated taxpayer dollars. Census Office staff relied on SwORD and other reports to manage contracts, review required deliverables, and support coordination among contractors.

Real-time data in SwORD created a shared mechanism and language to focus on data.

Described by one interviewee as "the biggest saving grace," Campaign partners utilized SwORD to identify and understand what was happening in all census tracts, with special attention on tracts identified as hardest-to-count. During the response period, the Census Office and partners were able to identify gaps in coverage and take corrective steps through monitoring response levels and then providing rapid response with deployment to low-responding areas. Similarly, as specific census tracts started trending with higher Self-Response Rates, it was possible to see which organizations were working in a particular tract and decide what needed to happen next. Both SwORD and the dashboards created by the operations team were used to "figure out exactly which tracts were responding, and which weren't." Technology allowed better and real-time coordination during planning and deployment efforts. Through collaboration and coordinated efforts, the Census Office was able to enhance efficiencies and limit duplicating the work of the U.S. Census Bureau.

By late 2019, SwORD contained over 100 "layers" or datasets containing demographic and other useful information that partners could add to a map to help understand their area(s). Data sharing on outreach efforts and funding investments was an integral part of the coordination and partnership across the Campaign. While partners could review SwORD data dashboards or maps on their own, collaboratively analyzing data with a variety of people can provide insights that are difficult to reach looking at the data individually or in silos.[16] The operations team regularly attended Census Office-sponsored calls to present information from SwORD, often leading to questions that were "more nitty-gritty into the data" to the exploration of census tracts that "needed more attention or time or energy." As an example, presentations regarding the Nonresponse Followup rate allowed partners and Census Office staff to delve into areas with low response rates and try to correlate outreach efforts with response rates:

> I think everything went great. [The Census Office operations team] needs to have the award of the year. SwORD was a godsend. In the beginning, we didn't even know how we were going to tackle it. And here he [Jim Miller] came with the low response rate maps, and it made my life so much easier. Especially with so many counties, and I think he needs an award because he was so wonderful.

[16] Tackels, Devon. The Definitive Guide to Collaborative Analytics. https://www.sigmacomputing.com/blog/the-definitive-guide-to-collaborative-analytics/

In addition to reviewing dashboards and maps created by the operations team, some partners hired their own data specialists to analyze and report on data of specific interest locally, including by zip code. Unfortunately, not all partners had the same technical knowledge. Some partners were quite sophisticated at data analysis and geographic information system (GIS) analysis, but not as knowledgeable about demographics. Other partners, such as community groups that knew about their community, may have found data and GIS and mapping new territory. To augment detailed maps and analyses, simple infographics and data summaries visually presented data in digestible bites. For example, the California Complete Count Campaign Snapshots[17] used charts, pictures, maps, and tables to provide an "at a glance" update of Campaign progress to date. Many Regional Program Managers shared and explained data as part of the standing agenda for their scheduled calls, and many interviewees described having the internal capacity to collect and analyze their own internal data. However, partners who did not have this internal capacity to analyze and interpret data to inform their activities may have felt overwhelmed by SwORD data.

The activities in the SwORD Self-Service Reported Activity Portal do not accurately represent all Campaign activities.

As powerful and informative of a tool as SwORD was in the Campaign in terms of mapping Self-Response Rates, any analysis of self-reported activities in SwORD requires nuance, examination, and a healthy dose of skepticism. Unfortunately, reporting data following the shared timelines and formats was challenging for some partners throughout the Campaign. Despite partners' best efforts, there were likely many more activities conducted that were not reported in SwORD. In addition, partners did not include activities conducted with non-State resources, since they were under no contractual obligation to do so. While SwORD includes hundreds of thousands of activities through every stage of the Campaign, any analyses of Campaign activities should acknowledge that the data in SwORD should not be considered a comprehensive list of every activity that occurred.

Many of the data quality concerns about the self-service reported activities are centered around limitations in partner data capacity and/or misaligned expectations regarding data entry and reporting within the Campaign. Specific suggestions for improving data entry are detailed in Appendix C, but some partners shared challenges in reporting activities when they were out in the community and away from their computer. Another partner mentioned that they did not have enough dedicated staff time or capacity to devote to ongoing data entry, especially when reporting schedules were more frequent than planned. Some organizations were just not used to entering data for every activity they completed and

[17] CA Complete Count Campaign Snapshot. June 30, 2020. https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/Campaign-Snapshot-06.30.20-Final.pdf

could have benefited from enhanced technical assistance to help provide consistent updates to SwORD. Another suggestion was to develop an application partners could use to enter activities from a handheld device. Finally, some partners may not have been clear about the purpose of collecting reported activity data and may not have understood the critical importance of SwORD data within the Campaign.

In 2030, it will be helpful to provide additional reminders throughout the Campaign that data collection serves multiple purposes, all of which support the Campaign work: identifying gaps for planning and response phases, ensuring contractual monitoring and accountability, and conducting statistical data analysis. In the end, the data available for analysis to support and inform Campaign decision-making is only as good as the data entered into the SwORD system. Unfortunately, data quality[18] was challenging in the SwORD system, resulting in data limitations and requiring caveats in any analysis using SwORD data. LPC was able to cross-reference examples mentioned in the online survey, interviews, and in the sample of activities with a narrative description in SwORD but was not able to reconcile all activities.

Other data, in addition to SwORD, was also critical for decision-making.

Without a doubt, partners used available data to make decisions about how and when to pivot. In addition to the data visualizations and dashboards created by the Census Office operations team that brought the SwORD data to life, over three-quarters of the evaluation online survey respondents reported relying upon their own staff's knowledge of the community as a helpful source of information, which reinforces the value of partners' local wisdom to know their communities and what they need. The majority of survey respondents (70%) also found resources developed by the Census Office (e.g., weekly partner calls, peer learning labs, e-newsletters, partner convenings, SwORD technical assistance and webinars) to be helpful in their decision-making. In addition, local anecdotes, and stories (60%) and mandates from local/state authorities (60%) helped inform decision-making. When so much was uncertain and unknown in 2020, partners turned to trusted sources of knowledge, at both the local and state level.

In addition to objective quantitative data, subjective qualitative data informed campaign activities, particularly in terms of community organizing:

> Data is amazing, and data-inspired outreach is powerful. However, nothing beats the feedback and guidance of local partners who have an intuitive knowledge and understanding of their communities and the context in which the outreach will take place. Thus, to design successful outreach and achieve a complete count, it is critical to combine data with the intuitive knowledge of partners and their understanding of the local reality.

As one interviewee shared, "if you don't have a community built when you're organizing, you're already half-a-step behind. So, it was very interesting to see indigenous knowledge exchanged." For example, partners working to count people experiencing homelessness used data from the

[18] DAMA International Data Management Body of Knowledge, https://www.dama.org/cpages/body-of-knowledge

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-in-Time Count[19] to "provide a general sense of where people are, but for the most part [they] relied on [their] own relationships with communities to hear about what they were doing and how things were changing on the ground." Local Complete Count Committees were often a space to bring together a variety of community leaders, local trusted messengers, and U.S. Census Bureau staff to learn from and employ local knowledge and resources.

Finally, in addition to focusing on Self-Response Rates and activities in California, the operations team worked closely with the U.S. Census Bureau and their counterparts in other states to monitor statewide and national data. This collaboration around data helped provide context for campaign outcomes, as the U.S. Census Bureau provided data updates throughout and after the Campaign.

[19] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count. https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/

VIII. CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES

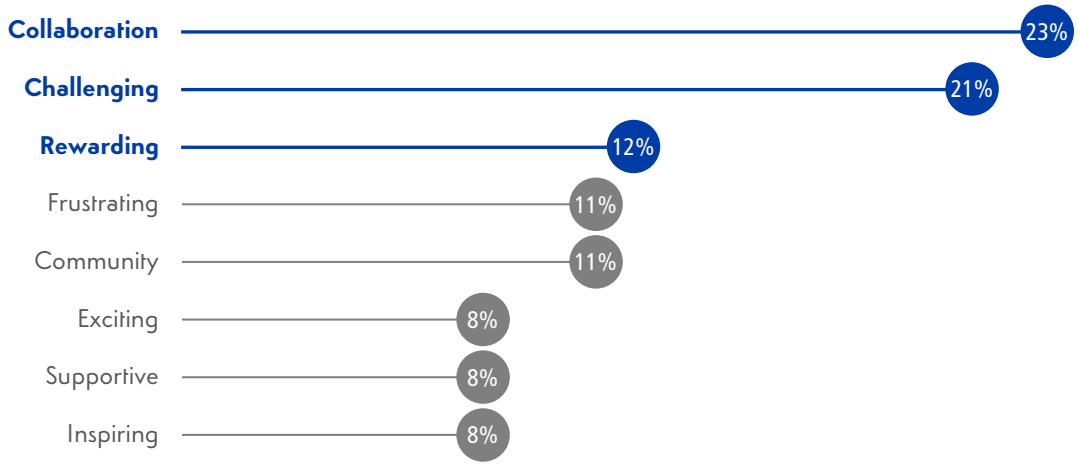
In addition to the Self-Response Rate, interviewees shared intangible local outcomes from the Campaign, including an expanded sense of community pride and increased civic engagement. Some collaboratives and committees formed for the census are demonstrating their ongoing strong partnerships by continuing to work within their communities. In addition, the Campaign experienced increased organizational capacity to conduct outreach and mobilize communities. On a statewide level, some partnerships resulted in new collaborative opportunities that may continue to set the stage for future innovation. As one interviewee remarked, "to see government and philanthropy and non-profit working in this way was really pioneering." On an individual level, another interviewee prioritized "pushing forward at the national level and then using everything that we set up to continue to educate and build residents [who] know how to interact with their government and to effect democracy."

What combination of strategies and tactics were subjectively perceived to be most effective and/or which strategies and tactics objectively yielded the best outcomes?

Overall, survey respondents and interviewees expressed deep pride in a successful effort to educate, motivate, and activate hard-to-reach communities in California to complete the census, in many cases exceeding the 2010 Self-Response Rate in some of the hardest-to-count census tracts:

> Surpassing our 2010 Census response rate was the goal, but the true sense of accomplishment was attained through the multiple local groups, organizations, and agencies that volunteered their time and energy to support our county's census outreach efforts. This served as a true test of a community coming together in creative new ways to better serve and support the places where they live. That was the most rewarding experience through this whole 2020 Census outreach journey.

While the 2020 Census was a more difficult endeavor than expected due to several challenges already discussed, overall, survey respondents were mostly positive about their experience during the Campaign. When asked to describe their census experience with three words, the most common responses were: collaboration (23%), challenging (21%), and rewarding (12%).



Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (65%) felt that their census experience will be very or extremely useful in their future work. Respondents shared that they learned a lot about engagement, the demands of a statewide campaign, how essential trusted messengers and trusted institutions are, the importance of collaboration, and the need to be "more aggressive early on to cultivate relationships and partnerships."

Census partnerships expanded and strengthened community collaboration.

Several interviewees shared that their Local Complete Count Committee will adapt and continue now that the 2020 Census is complete, in order to capitalize on the relationships and momentum built. As partnerships built during the Campaign continue, it is important to acknowledge that many connections made are strong enough to continue without ongoing Census Office support:

> So many [partners] are leveraging relationships to do their work, and [the Census Office is] not included in it. Folks are able to connect directly, which I think is amazing and definitely a byproduct of the work we were able to do together. We were able to create a blueprint for not only census work, but other regional partnerships; how to do community government and philanthropy partnership well. I think [the] partners are again, the true, true rock stars.

Campaign partners gained a greater understanding of each other's services: "[w]e all connected around the census for the first time around this population of folks, and I think that's going to be lasting." In addition, the Campaign expanded the understanding of how national, state, and local government can play a leadership role as a connector and as a bridge for organizations: "we can show cross-collaboration between federal offices and state offices and the public sector, and the nonprofit side of things. We were able to operate as a mechanism…." It is truly a public, private, federal partnership that was built:

> I have such an abiding love for this community because everybody just helped so much; it was amazing. It was very heartwarming to see that people really care. Our state partners were awesome – so cool, responsive, really helpful.

Like the local relationships built within Local Complete Count Committees, several interviewees shared a desire to continue with public/private partnerships built through the Campaign. As one partner shared, "we want to keep those channels open, so even after all of this is over, this has truly opened doors for communities to speak to one another, for the State to speak to Tribes in different way. And to tell the Governor's Office 'hey, this is what's happening. This is what we're hearing. I need you to pay attention to this.'" With intention, the relationships built in the Campaign can continue and strengthen, maintain momentum, and set the stage for the 2030 Census. As one interviewee suggested, "continu[e] to work with the partners so we are not just coming back to them in 10 years and saying, 'okay it is time to do census again.'"

Several respondents believed that the infrastructure created during the Campaign can be maintained and mobilized for other community needs, as well. One interviewee shared, "with…COVID-19, I am sure the county will continue to lean on the connections we have made throughout the process. The county health department will definitely benefit from the connections we have made in disseminating the vaccine." Another interviewee confirmed this assumption:

"certainly, it is a small community and when you're in public organizations you get to know everybody. I am certainly looking at pulling that organization back together for when the vaccines come out."

The Campaign helped increase organizational capacity.

Pivoting to new activities required learning how to use new technologies and tools. Not only did partners need to shift their entire operations to virtual platforms in response to statewide and local stay at home orders, but partners also had to learn how to implement strategies they originally did not plan to use. Many partners shared that they had to quickly learn the phone banking process and platform, including training, scripts, advice, call lists, and more. In addition to phone banking, the organizations shared that they were able to build capacity and expand in areas they had not previously engaged, including social media, text messaging, and other new skills in conducting outreach without in-person canvassing.

The shift by the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2020 Census to prioritize an online response option during the self-response period coincidentally aligned well with the shift to more digital outreach strategies. Partners used less paper as all outreach materials became digital, and the planned Questionnaire Assistance Centers moved from paper questionnaires to emphasizing the online form. Unfortunately, in some cases this shift away from paper resulted in wasting unusable print materials either due to the inability to distribute the materials or the inappropriateness of the materials. In some cases, the imagery used was no longer appropriate as it included congregated groups of people.

While the shift to virtual and digital platforms was disruptive and challenging at first, by the end of the 2020 Census enumeration, many partners described increased organizational capacity and enhanced ability to reach additional hardest-to-count communities. They now can plan future campaigns without relying solely on cost-intensive, in-person activities. Despite the risk that so many partners prioritizing social media would result in "over-saturation of the digital space creating fatigue among residents," the digital interaction many partners cultivated with their communities far exceeded their expectations. One partner shared, "when we moved to phone/text/digital only, we were pleasantly surprised about the number of folks who answered our calls and texts."

However, not all communities benefited from the shift to digital activities and virtual platforms. Aligning with many of the data elements in the CA-HTC Index, many of California's hard-to-reach communities tended to also be the areas with higher levels of COVID-19 outbreaks and lower levels of broadband access or digital literacy.[20] The digital divide limited many communities' ability to

[20] See also: *Parts of L.A. hit hardest by COVID-19 also among those where census response lags 2010*, May 12, 2020. https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/los-angeles-county-census-participation-covid-19

both receive the new social media messages and complete the census form online. Even if communities did have access to social media or digital messages, many partners believed that many hardest-to-count populations would have been better served in person, rather than by phone or online.

After the census enumeration period ended, several regions held virtual 2020 Census celebrations to acknowledge their partners and all of their accomplishments. Not only did the celebrations offer a chance to acknowledge how hard the work was, but also provided a space to honor relationships that were built, both among partners and within communities.

One interviewee shared a story of a community member coming into one of their Questionnaire Assistance Centers at the beginning of COVID-19, which was open because they were also providing emergency services. "A woman took two buses to come down to fill out her census; she needed some assistance and only trusted this community partner to help her do that. Just stories like that, heartwarming but showcase the power of having community to process." In the midst of several simultaneous crises, partners learned "about how to do our work better and more efficiently and how to exercise leadership in this moment:"

> Cultivate those on-the-ground trusted messengers that work with people. The questionnaire assistance was most effective because the few opportunities we had to do that were with very trusted messengers. If you're distrustful of government, [it] doesn't matter if it's state, federal, or local, you need someone outside of that realm to advocate on your behalf. And you have to pay [the advocates], they're spending a lot of time and a lot of work. When I look at the cost of the county to go out and do that same amount of work, the rate of return is much better.

The Campaign not only reinforced the importance of trusted messengers in community engagement, but it also reinforced the importance of using data to guide decision-making. From the start, the Census Office invested in SwORD and supported partners to use data in planning and implementation. While some organizations were already comfortable with using data, data collection and interpretation was a new capacity for many organizations, built during the Campaign.

Similarly, the Census Office created and provided tools for partners to build new capacity in communications:

> Many partners who had never done communications were now – for the first time – buying Facebook ads or learning about media buying processes through communications technical assistance. Our goal was historic in not only reaching the hardest-to-count [communities] but working alongside partners who had a pulse on and [were] part of the community. The infrastructure that was created (although it can always be improved) showed that government and community can work for a common good.

In addition to support and technical assistance provided by the Census Office, several partners engaged their own media subcontractors to oversee their specific communications campaigns. However, not all partners had the infrastructure to bring on that level of expertise.

The diverse capacity between and among local and statewide partners, and especially among some partners' networks of organizations, required different levels of investment and technical

assistance. Some regions were "sophisticated" when it came to media, while others required more technical assistance to deploy their local media plans. Across organizations, the difference in capacity was not necessarily correlated with size. Organizations or counties may be large but may have only had one or two people dedicated to the 2020 Census. As one interviewee shared:

> I had a little bit of administrative help when I had so many contracts I couldn't manage, but there should've been a project lead, a communications lead, a data lead, someone to just be the administrator to make sure all those meetings are happening in a consistent way. There should've been a team of minimum three, maximum five, [and] a paid person from each county.

While many partners increased their media and communications capacity, one interviewee shared, "the entities able to have the most impact were entities that had a lot of infrastructure, money, capabilities to bring to the table in the first place." While many partners increased capacity and infrastructure through the Campaign, the pressures of COVID-19 increased the challenges on some smaller partners that did not have the infrastructure to restructure to cloud-based computing or pivot to digital outreach. The State's investment was critical, especially for partners starting with lower levels of capacity.

California leaders invested toward a statewide Campaign to activate California's 2.52 million households in the hardest-to-count areas.

> I think at the end of the day, what is really important is to personalize the data. I'm not saying we didn't do that, but I think we forget that 10.5 million households self-responding, is times 2.1 per person per household. We forget these are our moms, our dads, our grandparents…. We are really setting that foundation for the future.

In addition to supporting Campaign operations, SwORD reports were combined with, and compared to, U.S. Census Bureau response data to further judge Campaign effectiveness and allowed partners the opportunity to address low response rates with revised outreach activities, where necessary. A partner may have been performing activities and planning future activities in a census tract that, based on U.S. Census Bureau response data, was responding at a relatively high rate. Other tracts in the same partner's area, however, may be responding at a lower rate. SwORD and U.S. Census Bureau data presented clear evidence that the planned activities should be focused on the under-performing tract. In this way, the Census Office and the partners were able to ensure the most efficient use of state resources by performing outreach activities in the areas that needed it the most, when they needed it.

The explanation for why many less hard-to-count or non-hard-to-count tracts (with a CA-HTC Index of 69 or lower) did not meet their 2010 Self-Response Rates is unclear, and many interviewees shared they did not necessarily anticipate that outcome. Of those tracts, 22 percent (1,423 out of 6,419) had a 2020 Self-Response Rate that was two percentage points or more behind their 2010 Self-Response Rate. Since there was not a pandemic during a previous census, and there was no online self-response form, it is difficult to tease out the extent to which COVID-19 impacted Self-Response Rates in non-hardest-to-count census tracts compared to the 2010 rates. However, something was clearly happening in tracts not identified as hardest-to-count.

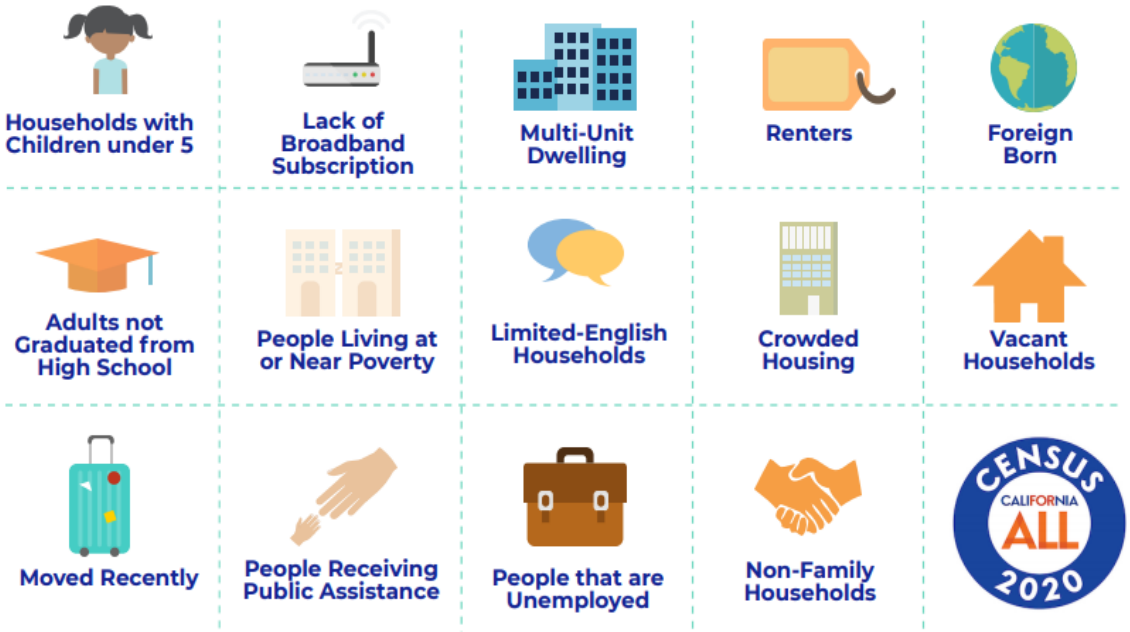
Among the tracts that were identified as hardest-to-count, Self-Response Rates in 28 percent of census tracts with an CA-HTC Index greater than 69 (451 out of 1,583 tracts) were higher than 2010 Self-Response Rates, and another 10 percent of hardest-to-count tracts (162 out of 1,583 tracts) were no more than two percentage points behind their 2010 Final Self-Response Rate, reflecting the role these tracts played as the foundation and focus of the Campaign:

> And though we hit our 2010 mark in the midst of a pandemic, I would like to say we kicked [butt], to be very informal. I'm just so proud of this team, this gorgeous group of people, even the ones that go beyond our contracted partners.

Overall, California finished data collection with a Self-Response Rate of 69.6 percent, an increase of 1.4 percentage points over its final 2010 Self-Response Rate of 68.2 percent.[21]

While the focus of the Campaign was only California, the state's Self-Response Rate was often compared to other states. As detailed in the "California's 2020 Census Efforts were Historic" infographic,[22] of the 10 largest states, California had the highest average Self-Response Rate in hardest-to-count areas. In addition, as Figure 1, created by the Census Office external affairs and media relations team shows, California outperformed other states in getting people in all 14 hard-to-count groups to respond to the 2020 Census.

Figure 1 | California Outperformed Other States



[21] Quarterly Progress Report to the Legislature. California Complete Count – Census 2020. January 28, 2021. https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/01/FINAL_Q4-2020-Census-LegReport_Jan28-2021.pdf

[22] Exhibit C: "California's 2020 Census Efforts were Historic" infographic in Quarterly Progress Report to the Legislature. California Complete Count – Census 2020. January 28, 2021. https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/01/FINAL_Q4-2020-Exhibits-Combined_Jan28-2021.pdf

As of October 28, 2020, California's statewide Self-Response Rate of 69.6 ranked 15th in the nation (with ties), exceeding the United States national Self-Response Rate of 67.0.[23] "Traditionally, California has served as a leading indicator for the decennial census. California drives the national rate given the State has approximately 10% of all U.S. households."[24] One interviewee described California as "the stronghold that held the tent up for all 50 states." From the outside, California's success may be just because "they had all the money." However, people within California understand that the state's vast size and diverse population make counting difficult:

> I think we were super successful when you look at our numbers compared to other states, our own response rates in 2010, and additional challenges. I think we knocked it out of the park, and the State's investment was money very well spent. We built an entirely new data platform for SwORD that can be used for endless other projects. We created this awesome network that can be used for other State program like Listos,[25] like the State emergency outreach efforts. I think we have a lasting legacy; this incredible gift of the partnerships that have been formed. I think we did a really good job on a crazy crazy backdrop.

Through funding trusted messengers, investing in media outreach, and building a census infrastructure, the State prioritized participating in the census and demonstrated the importance of counting every Californian:

> [The Campaign] refute[d] many of the inaccuracies and xenophobia that was coming. You couldn't have had a less trusted messenger than our federal government, and the fact that people took a federal government survey speaks volumes to trusted messengers being able to deliver that very confusing and complicated message. Yes, your president is telling you that you will be targeted and removed from the census count, but here's why you should do it anyway. Books need to be written about this.

While the final household response rates are still to be determined as the U.S. Census Bureau tabulates the final count, partners, Census Office staff, and vendors expressed pride and a sense of accomplishment from their participation in the Campaign. Regardless of the "momentous moments" and "contextual challenges" that challenged their work, the Campaign reached the hardest-to-count Californians and established a partnership infrastructure that, if cultivated, can serve California for years to come.

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[23] U.S. Census Bureau. Total Response Rates by State. https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/nrfu.html
[24] Press Release: California Exceeds 2010 Census Self-Response Rate In 2020 Count. September 16, 2020. https://californiacensus.org/press-release-california-exceeds-2010-census-self-response-rate-in-2020-count/
[25] https://www.listoscalifornia.org/

IX. WHAT REMAINED CHALLENGING

Trusted messages about the political climate were necessary to assuage community concerns about the "rhetoric coming from the [federal] administration [that] really had an impact on our Spanish-speaking communities." Despite the best efforts of census messaging and partner outreach, confusion and concern continued beyond the end of the enumeration period:

> In early 2019 through summer 2019, hardest-to-count communities and the general population were very confused about whether or not a question about citizenship would appear on the 2020 Census questionnaire [or online form]. Conflicting media reports, statements from the federal administration, and the circulation of sample questionnaires exacerbated the confusion about the citizenship question on the census questionnaire. While the final version of the questionnaire did not include a citizenship question, the confusion remained. And later throughout the enumeration process, the federal administration communicated its intention to utilize census information and other questionnaires to determine a person's citizenship, which created a chilling effect on census responses. While community partners and [regional] stakeholders sought to correct misinformation about the citizenship question and/or the application of census information to determine citizenship, the confusion remained during the Nonresponse Followup period with some partners voicing community concerns. Some hardest-to-count individuals and families were hesitant to complete the census due to continued confusion and fear of the census information having an adverse effect for the individual and/or their family.

Which communities or population segments ultimately refused to complete the Census, despite partners' best efforts, and why?

The "chilling effect" of the political climate extended beyond the citizenship question controversy. Partners also had to address anti-Asian racism that increased due to racist and xenophobic COVID-19 rhetoric from the federal administration. Attacks on all immigrants, but especially people without documentation, the fear of a politically divided country, and mistrust and distrust in the government overall were barriers that arose during the 2020 Census. Partners, Census Office staff, and vendors all had to address continuous and evolving community concerns.

Even with extensive local knowledge, trusted messages, and trusted messengers, some communities remained challenging to reach.

Despite partners' best efforts, some communities or population segments remained challenging to educate, motivate, and activate to complete the census, including:

Anti-government sentiments: While mistrust and distrust of government was an anticipated barrier within immigrant communities, there was less focus on "the more privileged people who are also distrustful of government," such as Libertarians who believe in zero government interference, for whom standard talking points did not work. Similarly, the cannabis community

"does not want people sniffing around…as the count went on, it was harvest season, and it was even more of a problem."

Crowded Housing and Multi-Unit Dwellings: Outreach partners reported that property management refused to let U.S. Census Bureau enumerators into their multi-unit dwellings, or even release resident numbers or information, due to legal and confidentiality issues.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community: Partners could conduct outreach in American Sign Language and had community connections, but it was unclear whether U.S. Census Bureau enumerators could communicate using American Sign Language. A statewide partner gave a presentation to Campaign partners, but one interviewee was not sure whether this community received appropriate outreach.

Farmworker communities: Even though partners knew how to identify and reach farmworker communities, it was harder for them to commit to taking the census, often due to fear and mistrust and distrust of government institutions. One example of how trusted messengers were able to creatively reach farmworkers was partners in Region 6 distributing personal protective equipment and census materials in vineyards and reaching remote areas by horseback.

Group Quarters: Because the U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Group Quarters Enumeration, it was difficult for local partners to confirm whether a facility was counted or not.

Households without broadband subscriptions: As described elsewhere in this summary, conducting digital outreach in communities with a high proportion of households without a broadband subscription was extremely difficult.

People experiencing homelessness: With the pivot to virtual outreach, people experiencing homelessness mostly could not be reached via digital platforms, and partners could not ask people to risk COVID-19 exposure to be counted. In addition, there was limited partnership and coordination with the U.S. Census Bureau conducting the count of people experiencing homelessness during service enumeration. Although partners reached out to provide support and information to facilities serving people experiencing homelessness in preparation for the count, the U.S. Census Bureau completed the enumeration following their established, uniform procedures.

Senior/Older Adult communities: Reaching seniors/older adults was harder with COVID-19, especially home-bound seniors not going out and with concerns about "weird census phone calls" being a scam. Some Seniors remained distrustful of their information being protected or secure in the online census form. In addition, it was difficult to find a comprehensive mailing list of Senior Centers to conduct outreach via mailing.

Tribal communities: One of the biggest challenges was that some Tribes completely closed access to their lands due to COVID-19 for the protection of their tribal community and future. Tribal sovereignty required explaining to U.S. Census Bureau enumerators that Tribes that closed their borders down could not be obliged to open for enumeration.

Veteran communities: Although partners tried to reach out to veteran-serving organizations about the census, many were "just focused on COVID-19 outreach to those communities," ensuring food and housing needs were met, and could not add another layer of messaging.

Additional hard-to-count communities were identified during outreach activities.

Interestingly, one of the biggest new discoveries or unexpected results came in areas "where you wouldn't think we had hardest-to-count communities." One interviewee shared that they identified "pockets" of hardest-to-count communities in middle or lower-middle class areas without a non-profit structure due to a perceived lack of need. Reaching these previously unidentified clusters of people required creativity. In some cases, pockets of very specific subgroups, for example, several indigenous groups in small rural towns in the San Joaquin Valley or Vietnamese Catholics in Orange County, required partners to engage with new organizations to serve as a bridge and provide outreach to these communities in unanticipated hyperlocal areas, sometimes with unanticipated language needs.

The Language and Communication Access Plan identified required languages through a data-driven methodology that established minimum thresholds (based on the total number and/or population percentage of limited English proficiency speakers in a geographic region), with stepped-up requirements for areas with larger, more diverse populations with limited English proficiency. At a minimum, all contractors were required to provide language support activities in English and Spanish, which ensured that at least 91 percent of California's estimated limited-English proficiency population would be covered by the LACAP requirements. For the activities, partners were also required to provide accessible outreach activities and services to people with disabilities.

The Language and Communication Access Plan "aimed to ensure that language and communication access is linguistically and culturally appropriate and provide equal and meaningful access to California's vulnerable populations."[26] It also set language requirements by geographic area in addition to the 12 languages/language groups statewide and ensured equal access to census information for people with a disability. Some partners identified language needs in their communities beyond California's top 12 non-English languages, which necessitated hiring certified translators to translate documents and provide language access for these communities.

Some traditionally "easier to reach" communities had lower than anticipated Self-Response Rates in 2020 Census.

Many in the Campaign were surprised by low participation in areas that "traditionally respond" to the census, including areas of San Francisco, Pacific Palisades, Malibu, and other areas in Los Angeles County, among others. It is unclear whether the lack of response was COVID-19 related, either people in these communities relocating or the census simply being a lower priority. However, as one interviewee pointed out, "[the] Campaign was not targeting them…[the media] buy was not targeting them. They were not getting as high of a touch." Particularly in the Los Angeles area, the initial Campaign investment focused only on approximately 45 percent of the area's census tracts, many of which improved over their 2010 Self-Response Rate. In July 2020, as part of its Nonresponse Followup Strategy, the Census Office allocated an additional $10 million to focus on increasing response rates in low-performing census tracts in 21 counties throughout the State. The targeted strategy identified three priority communities based on: (1) hardest-to-count (CA-HTC

[26] Language and Communication Access Plan: https://census.ca.gov/2019/05/17/lacap/

Index greater than 69) household self-response data as of June 4, 2020; (2) tracts with the most significant self-response challenges; and (3) the highest estimated number of households (i.e., density) that had not responded to the census as of June 4, 2020.[27]

The Campaign also considered the messaging, which was developed and tested to educate, motivate, and activate hardest-to-count community members, which may not resonate as strongly for non-hardest-to-count community members. Different messaging may have been needed to motivate them to complete the census form:

> I did not understand the financial power of the census.... You're sitting in Beverly Hills or San Francisco, you're not like 'I'm not losing a congressional seat.' It doesn't feel real, like telling Miami they'll be underwater in 30 years.

Many of the insurmountable barriers to achieving a complete count were due to unavoidable, unprecedented, and unique challenges that arose during 2020. However, some of the challenges related to infrastructure or planning, which provides opportunities to mitigate these challenges for the 2030 Census.

[27] Quarterly Progress Report to the Legislature. California Complete Count – Census 2020. July 31, 2020. https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/07/2020_0731_-Q2-Progress-Report-to-the-Legislature-_FINAL.pdf

X. LESSONS LEARNED FOR 2030 CENSUS

The most frequently mentioned lessons learned to carry forward in planning for the 2030 Census was to start early – in every respect. While no one could have predicted the unprecedented challenges that arose during the 2020 Census, partners cited the need to develop contingency plans for the "wildest scenario possible," as early as possible. Early engagement, particularly of stakeholders, early local, regional, and statewide planning, and early training were mentioned as critical for future success.

Engage stakeholders early – possibly continuously from 2021 to 2030.

A Campaign of this size takes time to plan and implement. The backbone agency, the Census Office, needs time to ramp up, as do partners. Maintaining and strengthening capacity built during the 2020 Census will support the foundation for 2030 Census planning. One interviewee shared a lesson learned that "entities that had infrastructure to do civic engagement were able to pivot in much better ways. If I'm a funder, we need to be funding, testing on infrastructure. It takes a lot of time, a lot of base building, organizing, that's not just relationship-based, but [also] data and technology-based."

What shared lessons learned can be carried forward in planning for Census 2030?

It takes a lot longer to build something new from scratch than to just maintain what is already there. Many groups convened for the 2020 Census will continue in some format beyond the Campaign. As the 2030 Census looms in the distance, reflecting on 2020 provides insight into strategies that are free/low cost and provides high-level information about the type of partnerships and strategies that were useful in 2020. Even if the specifics are outdated in 10 years, the team building, morale boosts, and energy harnessed during a global pandemic can serve as inspiration to new teams in 2030. Attention in the coming decade to sustain stakeholder relationships and infrastructure will reduce the need to start from scratch when 2030 Census planning commences.

Start statewide Campaign planning during the Local Update of Census Addresses Program (LUCA) stage.

As one of the first stages of census operations, the Local Update of Census Addresses Operation (LUCA) "provides tribal, state, and local governments the opportunity to review and comment on the U.S. Census Bureau's residential address list for their jurisdiction prior to the census." The LUCA stage is critical because "[t]he [U.S.] Census Bureau relies on a complete and accurate address list to reach every living quarters and associated population for inclusion in the census."[28]

[28] Local Update of Census Addresses Operation (LUCA) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/luca.html

If continuous engagement is not possible, the 2030 Census campaign could begin as early as during the LUCA stage – to verify addresses and establish systems to reach Post Office Box-holders. Engagement during this stage would improve outreach in rural areas and on tribal lands. Several partners described challenges with re-visits and re-interviews, and other partners shared that some people did not know their physical address and instead "they kind of just picked a spot to put their home." Taking the time early to "clean up the list" and work with landlords to share physical addresses could help increase self-response and Nonresponse Followup completion rates. In addition, locally developed mailings can augment the U.S. Census Bureau's mailings to Post Office Box-holders in order to reach this hard-to-reach population.

In anticipation of the LUCA Operation for Census 2030, cities and counties can build on relationships developed in the 2020 Census to creatively identify ways to best participate in LUCA Operations for their jurisdictions. For example, combining the multiple records that municipal governments have access to (e.g., building and planning, voting, even utility records) with local knowledge that partners have access to will improve the output of the LUCA Operation, which will help increase success during the 2030 Census self-response operation.

Establish clear goals and metrics before the Campaign launches.

Overall, the Campaign's mandate to reach the hardest-to-count Californians by funding organizations that are the trusted messengers was broadly agreed to be the right directive and correct strategy. However, multiple interviewees described challenges in the Campaign without clearly articulated and agreed upon goals and metrics from the start.

Eventually, the Campaign used the 2010 Self-Response Rate as a comparison rate, but some interviewees highlighted the significant differences between 2010 Census and 2020 Census, which makes that comparison problematic. Not only did funding strategies differ, the 2010 Census primary mode of self-response was by a paper questionnaire, with a telephone option. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau moved to an online form, with paper and phone offered as main method for response in only select communities. Despite limitations with using the comparison to 2010 Self-Response Rates, that improved Self-Response Rate metric represented hours, days, and months of work by hundreds of partners and volunteers across California. As just one example, in Region 10:

> From North County in San Diego to mid-city in San Diego, to East County, to the fields of Imperial County, a movement was built. Whether it was by Universidad Popular in North County, RICH in City Heights, to Promotoras in the South Bay, Chula Vista, to Comite Civico, or Campesinos Unidos, they accomplished amazing work and finished first in the State for most improved Self-Response Rates since 2010.

In addition to clear metrics, one partner suggested that providing reporting timelines and templates prior to the launch of the Campaign will allow partners to understand their scope of work and what/who will be needed to implement the project. Understanding reporting expectations would help partners to plan and coordinate their efforts. Including specific language within contracts detailing reporting requirements and the organization's expected data systems capacity, such as reporting frequency, method, volume, and level of detail required, would help explicitly reinforce the need for partners to meet minimum reporting requirements as part of the Campaign.

Clarify roles and responsibilities; communicate what to expect during each stage.

With such a vast ecosystem of statewide and local partners, vendors, and stakeholders, clarifying roles and responsibilities is critical for collaboration to work and for partnerships to flourish. Many partners expressed confusion about vendors' roles, capacities, and resources, as well as their responsibilities in relation to other partners.

In addition to confusion regarding the Campaign partners within California, there was some confusion and mixed messaging by the federal enumeration. Often residents who had already completed the census were irritated that they were still being contacted, which they perceived as being "bothered or hounded." Outreach conducted by non-local partners or U.S. Census Bureau enumerators was "awkward," as the people were not familiar with working in California's unique landscape, and in some cases, personal safety was a concern. Many partners shared that people were confused and concerned when they received enumerator visits even after they completed the census form online. Starting the public census education phase earlier, including providing information about what to expect during each stage of the 2030 Census, would help Californians understand how the Campaign and U.S. Census Bureau activities align and differ.

Consider alternate campaign funding models.

While thankful for California's investment in the Campaign, some partners felt that the strategy of providing funding to counties to distribute locally may have been inefficient and resulted in "more fighting…than [I] anticipated, and it marred what was supposed to be a collaborative and unifying effort." Engaging philanthropies and cities early on, as well as redrawing the regions, could adjust the approach for resource development from a branding/compliance perspective to an outreach perspective. Expanding the table intentionally by creating intersectional alliances through funding and aligning regions with other natural boundaries (e.g., congressional districts, media markets, or geographic/cultural similarities) could smooth collaborative partnerships:

> I think that our specialization on the hardest-to-count [before] the census, having relationships with multiple community-based organizations, with key tribal influencers and individuals really helped us be able to not only have the pulse on the community but really know how to reach them. Relationships with the campesinos and other organizations were really key in helping us complete the task. Another thing that I think we did that might not be as common in research but was actually very valuable was to try to hire people within those hardest-to-count communities, train them, have them be an asset to the work. [It] not only empowers them but provide[d] financial help when a lot of those communities needed it.

The challenges of operating the Campaign through a state bureaucratic system are detailed earlier in this summary. The funding model was intended to be a ground-up leadership and implementation approach. For example, the outreach contracts tasked contracted partners with identifying appropriate subcontractors and identifying what amount of funding they would receive. In the allocation of additional Nonresponse Followup funding, the Census Office identified budget priority areas such as, language access, health and safety measures, and targeted tactics. The Census Office issued rules and guardrails, reviewed subcontractor lists, suggested funding amounts, gave guidance or asked for further detail, and had final approval, but many of the

decisions on who was going to do what, and how much they received in funding, was up to the contracted partners.

In some areas, funding counties added an additional level of bureaucracy due to county contracting procedures. The allocation of funds to Administrative Community-Based Organizations or other community agencies may have been more streamlined compared to counties that "acted as the middleman," as one interviewee put it. Funding cities and large community-based organizations in unincorporated areas may result in partners who are more nimble and more knowledgeable about community nuances and needs, rather than focusing funding on counties, as a default. During initial state legislative hearings in 2018, stakeholders suggested grants be awarded rather than entering into contracts. While no interviewees proposed an alternate funding structure, the funding structure will be an area for careful consideration in 2030 Census planning.

Prioritize regional/local messaging early, then align with State and Federal materials.

The Campaign's design combined statewide and regional/local messaging to reach hardest-to-count communities across California. As the Campaign launched, departments, teams, partners, and vendors were brought on board on different timelines. As one example, within the Census Office, the communications team joined later in the Campaign, resulting in delays in messaging and collateral development.

For many partners, the messages and materials developed by statewide vendors were ineffective in their communities. Many partners had to spend significant time and financial resources to translate, modify, and sometimes create all new media materials. Going forward, focusing on and funding regional or local media first, from the start, would prioritize local messages and images, which would then inform the development of statewide messages. Out of the need to expedite timelines, partners created their own individual collateral or used U.S. Census Bureau flyers, while waiting for coordinated materials later developed by the Census Office. Partners also held off or waited to execute marketing strategies and collateral while waiting to hear about the statewide tactics, and again felt like they had to scramble to fill in needs that were not met by statewide plans. In contrast, prioritizing local messaging first will identify areas where statewide media can then backfill.

Invest in more extensive and diverse translation to reach all Californians.

The demand for translation was particularly challenging for partners who were already stretched thin, or whose subcontractors were already translating COVID-19 related materials to keep their communities safe. To address this challenge, the Census Office identified language support as a budget priority when allocating additional Nonresponse Followup funding. Nonetheless, partners felt that asking subcontractors for ongoing translation services as messages continually changed was an excess burden. Thus, some partners could only rely on in-house translation support, which limited the number of languages to the "more dominant languages that the census already covers, but then there were other languages we just couldn't provide that support on." Another interviewee lamented the "limited support available for languages to complete the census. Especially those that might not have the strongest traditional ethnic media and really relied more on in-person assistance." For example, one partner shared that many elders are illiterate, even in

their native languages, and therefore cannot read any of the materials or complete the census without verbal assistance. One suggestion for the 2030 Census is for the Census Office to curate a list of pre-approved and designated translators contracted by the State for both translation and interpretation needs, accessible to all funded partners, and with a contractual and agreed upon "quick" turnaround time.

Find the "sweet spot" for digital outreach vs physical collateral.

Like challenges reaching the diverse languages across California, households without a broadband subscription or individuals with limited digital literacy remained especially hard to reach with the Campaign-wide pivot to digital outreach due to COVID-19. Some partners were concerned about the over-reliance on digital methods because they could not reach people without digital access, while other partners were concerned that they were digitally reaching people too often:

> We tried not to bombard folks with too many touches (in-person, over-the-phone, texting, etc.) after realizing that folks were opting out because of too much outreach. We had to pivot again and make sure we're touching folks fewer times and expand our area to cover ground we weren't doing so before.

Emphasizing digital outreach requires a fine line of engaging in ways that reach people, but also does not overwhelm them. Limits on affordable broadband infrastructure is an issue closely tied with equity of access that extends beyond the rural areas of California. While the digital landscape will likely look quite different by 2030, early training and technical assistance should reflect a balance between digital outreach and physical materials.

Identify new ways to conduct outreach in rural areas.

Despite focused efforts in rural areas, the Self-Response Rate in some locations remained lower than partners would have liked. In some cases, the sheer geographic size and rugged terrain in rural areas challenged the ability to reach people in person. Even if partners could reach the more remote sections of rural California, in some cases, people living there "don't want to be reached." And, when COVID-19 restricted the ability to conduct in-person outreach, online methods were hindered by the lack of access to broadband and one single mailing by the U.S. Census Bureau to Post Office Box-holders. Early engagement with rural partners can help to brainstorm new ways to reach rural Californians.

Augment SwORD and obtain additional data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Section VII of this report details the use of SwORD and other data sources to inform planning, decision-making, and activity implementation. Lessons learned for the 2030 Census include developing a more robust training and technical assistance system, as well as an app-based tool for partners to use to enter data into SwORD, instead of spreadsheets, in order to mitigate the need for data clean-up by the operations team. An extensive list of specific suggestions for improving SwORD for 2030 Census is included in Appendix C.

In addition to revisions to the SwORD system, establishing a more robust data and reporting monitoring system will help result in a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of Campaign activities. This might include establishing data-related milestones in contract language or requiring trained and dedicated data entry staff as part of each contract.

As much data as was available on a state, region, county, and census tract level, additional data from the U.S. Census Bureau could have helped partners determine where to focus their efforts. For example, it was not always clear which Tribes had allowed Census Update Leave or Nonresponse Followup to occur and which were trying to be counted by other means, like by proxy. In addition, there was "tons of confusion between answering without a unique I.D. and if those census responses were valid and being counted because they never seemed to increase the Self-Response Rate when [we] knew people were answering."

Finally, the Census Office requested block group-level data from the U.S. Census Bureau, but that request was denied. Unfortunately, specific block-level data would have helped partners know "which households were enumerated, and which were not. Having such information would have enabled our partners to lead more surgical outreach activities."

Create detailed archives/documentation.

The final suggestion for the 2030 Census aligns with the purpose of this narrative evaluation report: "do not reinvent the wheel" and build upon lessons learned during the 2020 Census. Many partners were required to innovate in response to unique and chaotic circumstances, which can inform future census work in more predictable times. One possibility is to create "a database of all the great ideas used for outreach in 2020 and make that information available early in the [2030] campaign." Many partners have created their own local lessons and playbooks from the 2020 Census to help them quickly stand-up 2030 Census operations.

In summary, while addressing some of these lessons learned is outside the capacity of the Census Office, starting early, collaborating broadly, and carefully coordinating timelines for 2030 Census activities can help mitigate some of the frustrations and challenges experienced, and potentially increase the successes achieved in the 2030 Census.

APPENDIX A | ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The purpose of the evaluation online survey was to reach a large number of partners to gather their responses, reflections, and interpretations of the Campaign in order to start telling the deeper stories behind the numeric data. In late October 2020, as the Campaign was winding down, LPC invited 146[29] partners to complete the survey and received 86 total responses across different categories and regions, for a 62% response rate.[30] As shown in Table 2, respondents represented each of the major partner types, as well as each of the 10 census regions and statewide areas across California. Although the percent of partners in each region who responded differed (e.g., 53% of all partners in Region 1 vs. 100% of all partners in Regions 7-10), the percent of partners in each region and area was very close to the percent of all respondents in that region and area. For example, the 15 partners in Region 1 represented 11 percent of all partners invited, and the eight respondents from Region 1 represented 9 percent of all survey respondents. Statewide partners represented 16 percent of all partners but were overrepresented as 19 percent of survey responses and tribal partners, representing 23 percent of all partners, were only 16 percent of survey responses. While 14 tribal partners responded to the survey, this represents 38 percent of all 32 contacted tribal partners.

Table 2 | Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Organization Type	n	% of all partners (n=86)
County	27	31%
County Office of Ed.	17	20%
Tribal Government	15	17%
Administrative CBO	10	12%
Statewide CBO	9	10%
Sector Outreach	4	5%
Higher Education	2	2%
Alternative County Fiscal Admin.	2	2%
Total	86	100%

	Partners		Responses	
Region	# invited	% of all (n=140)	# received	% of all (n=86)
1	15	11%	8	9%
2	11	8%	7	8%
3	13	9%	8	9%
4	12	9%	6	7%
5	12	9%	7	8%
6	9	6%	6	7%
7	4	3%	4	5%
8	3	2%	3	3%
9	3	2%	3	3%
10	5	4%	5	6%
Statewide	22	16%	16	19%
Tribal Lands	32	23%	12	14%
Total	140	100%	86	100%

[29] LPC received contact information for 151 unique organizations, but some partners represented multiple organizations. LPC emailed 146 unduplicated partner email addresses and received five bounce backs, for a total of 141 valid email addresses.

[30] The typical survey has an average response rate of around 30%, so this is a good response rate, especially considering that the survey was launched at the end of the Campaign, when many partners were rolling off.

A list of the 86 responding organizations is presented below:

1. Alameda County Complete Count Committee
2. Alameda County Office of Education
3. Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Government
4. CA Black Census and Redistricting Hub
5. Cal Community Colleges Chancellor Office
6. Calaveras County Economic & Community Development
7. California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University
8. California Community Foundation
9. California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.
10. California Labor Federation, Field
11. California Primary Care Association
12. California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
13. Canal Alliance
14. Charitable Ventures
15. Chicken Ranch Rancheria
16. City of Stockton
17. Council for a Strong America, ReadyNation
18. County of Contra Costa
19. County of Fresno
20. County of Inyo
21. County of Kern County Administrative Office
22. County of Kings, Community Development Agency
23. County of Lake, Department of Social Services
24. County of Los Angeles, Chief Executive Office
25. County of Mendocino
26. County of Napa
27. County of Orange, County Executive Office
28. County of Riverside
29. County of Sacramento
30. County of San Luis Obispo
31. County of Santa Cruz
32. County of Tehama
33. Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
34. Equality California Institute
35. Foundation for California Community Colleges
36. Homebase
37. Imperial County Office of Education
38. Inland Empire Community Foundation
39. Karuk Community Development Corporation
40. Lake County Office of Education/Healthy Start Youth and Family Services
41. Latino Community Foundation
42. Los Angeles County Office of Education
43. Mechoopda Indian Tribe
44. Merced County Office of Education
45. Morongo Band of Mission Indians
46. NALEO Educational Fund
47. Napa County Office of Education
48. Orange County Department of Education
49. Pala Band of Mission Indians
50. PICO California
51. Placer County/Community Development
52. Quechan Indian Tribe
53. Redwood Valley Rancheria
54. Resighini Rancheria
55. Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians
56. Riverside County Office of Education
57. Sacramento Region Community Foundation
58. San Diego Association of Governments
59. San Diego County Office of Education
60. San Francisco County Office of Education
61. San Joaquin County Office of Education
62. Santa Barbara County
63. Santa Barbara County Education Office
64. Santa Clara County Office of Education
65. Santa Clara County Office of the Census
66. Santa Cruz County Office of Education
67. Santa Rosa Cahuilla Indians
68. Shasta County
69. Shasta County Office of Education
70. Sherwood Valley Rancheria
71. Sierra Health Foundation
72. Sonoma County Office of Education
73. Stanislaus County Chief Executive Office
74. Stanislaus County Office of Education
75. Susanville Indian Rancheria
76. Trinidad Rancheria
77. Tulare County Association of Governments
78. Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools
79. United Way Bay Area
80. United Way of San Diego County/Community Impact
81. United Ways of California
82. Ventura County Counts
83. Ventura County Community Foundation
84. Yuba Sutter Economic Development Corp (Sutter County)
85. Yuba Sutter Economic Development Corp (Yuba County)
86. Yurok Tribe

APPENDIX B | INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY & RESPONDENTS

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a nuanced understanding of the Campaign, identify issues that arose, understand adjustments made in response to changing circumstances, and recognize lessons learned and future needs to educate and motivate for an even more complete count in 2030.

In November 2020, LPC invited 35 partners, Census Office staff, and vendors to participate in an interview via Zoom. The initial list of invited partners was generated from partners who agreed to participate in the interviews at the end of the partners' online survey (see Appendix A) conducted as part of this larger assessment of the Campaign. Invited interviewees were selected to provide a broad representation across regions, hardest-to-count communities, and experiences. Census Office staff identified representative respondents to replace partners who later declined the optional interview or were unresponsive, as well as additional critical stakeholders to include beyond the initial list of 35. As shown in Table 3, the 40 respondents represented 20 different organizations, reflecting each of the major partner types, almost all of the populations least likely to complete the census, urban, rural, and suburban communities, and each of the 10 census regions. Some interviewees represent multiple roles, and some roles have multiple interviewees.

Table 3 | Roles Represented by Interview Respondents

15 vulnerable populations identified as least likely to respond to the 2020 Census[31]
Latinos
African Americans
Native Americans and Tribal Communities
Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (API)
Middle Eastern North Africans (MENA)
Immigrants and Refugees
Farmworkers
People with Disabilities
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ)
Seniors/Older Adults
People Experiencing Homelessness
Children Ages 0-5
Veterans
Areas with low broadband subscription rates and limited or no access
Households with limited English proficiency

[31] News Release: State Census Office Announces More Community Partners, March 22, 2019. https://census.ca.gov/2019/03/22/news-release-state-census-office-announces-more-community-partners/

Community Partner Type
Administrative Community-Based Organization
County
County Office of Education
Statewide Community-Based Organization
Tribal Government Partner
Tribal-serving Organization
Vendors
Media, Public Affairs, and Strategic Communications
Phone Banking
California Complete Count - Census 2020 Office (Census Office) Leaders & Staff
California Government Operations Agency
Executive Team
External Affairs and Media Relations
Operations Team
Statewide Initiatives
Outreach

Agencies/Organizations Participating in interviews (in alphabetical order) included:

1. Asian Americans Advancing Justice
2. CA Black Census and Redistricting Hub
3. California Community Foundation
4. California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
5. California Complete Count – Census 2020 Office (Census Office)
6. Charitable Ventures
7. County of Contra Costa
8. County of Kern
9. County of Mendocino
10. Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
11. Homebase
12. Los Angeles County of Education
13. Mercury Public Affairs
14. NUNA Consulting Group
15. Pala Band of Mission Indians
16. Riverside County Office of Education
17. Sacramento Region Community Foundation
18. Social Quest
19. Street Level Strategy
20. United Way of San Diego County

APPENDIX C | SwORD-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation process also included an exploratory analysis of data from the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment mapping portal (SwORD). LPC worked closely with the Census Office, especially the operations team, to understand and explore SwORD data to understand the activities that impacted Self-Response Rate.

Despite limitations detailed in Section VII, SwORD was nothing short of a marvel – a gamechanger – that allowed Campaign partners and the Census Office to track efforts, monitor changes, and understand self-response data in almost real time. Recommendations in this section are highly detailed and specifically geared towards improving SwORD for increased efficiency and utility for users and researchers in the future.

Data System Development | There are several opportunities to enhance the SwORD system and data reporting processes to streamline data in the 2030 Census. Like every data system, data cleanup identified many issues and required many hours of effort by the operations team to clean and organize. In order to support partners to use SwORD, assist the operations team to ensure data quality, and help everyone by simplifying data clean-up, future versions of SwORD could:

1. Develop an app-based tool for partners to use, instead of spreadsheets, in order to mitigate "dirty data" or mis-formatted spreadsheets.
2. Clarify goals/purpose of collecting reported activity data. Data collection should serve multiple purposes: identification of gaps for planning and response phases, monitoring and contractual accountability, and statistical data analysis.
3. Use forced choices for activity names and unique identifiers for organizations. While the categories may not cover each and every possibility, combining the most common responses into fixed categories will result in cleaner and more useable data. A unique ID will allow analysis to determine who did which activity.
4. Increase clarity about who is entering data on behalf of a partner: is it the partner or a subcontractor? For example, SwORD could clearly define that "Parent Organization" represents the partner funded by the Census Office, while "Reporting Organization Name (CBO)" represents a subcontractor and "organizer" represents a sub-subcontractor, etc. This will require clarity about different roles within the campaign.
5. Revise upload templates to be tighter, with more forced choices. Many organizations uploaded batch data with many variations, which required many hours of clean up by the operations team.
6. Consider how to collect data regarding partnerships and collaboration. Since each organization is entering their own data/activities, explore how activities could be linked or co-reported.
7. Explore how to better calculate and report impressions and the percentage of impressions that reached hardest-to-count communities. Impressions reported in SwORD are estimates and cannot be reasonably assumed to be accurate. Similarly, allowing users to estimate the number of impressions that were in the hardest-to-count communities resulted in many records of "dirty data," including many reports that exceeded 100% reach into hardest-to-

count communities. Developing a clearer and more precise way of tracking impressions, or another metric of impact, will allow for a greater understanding of the impact of the self-service reported activities reported in SwORD.

8. Instead of uploading Implementation Plans as spreadsheets, Technical Assistance specialists could assist partners in entering planned activities directly into the online mapping system, as partners could do with the Outreach Planner in SwORD.
9. Streamline and align the entry of outreach data from Census PDI and Amplify (canvassing, phone banking, nudge alerts, etc.) to be similar to outreach data entered by partners via the Self-Service, in terms of both timeliness and data quality.

Many of these data quality suggestions can be implemented in the system development stage and tested by users before launching in real time to increase quality and reduce the need for clean-up on the back end.

Geography | The CA Complete Count and SwORD had a significant location element. The work and the outcomes were arranged around approximately 8,000 census tracts and 10 regions. To improve location data, future versions of SwORD could:

1. Include other levels of location analysis. Partners shared that it was difficult to think of their work in terms of census tracts; they tend to think about city or county levels.
2. Consider how to manage borderlands between regions, counties, etc. The lines, and work, were often blurred, which challenged data collection and reporting. For example, if something happened right along the border of a county, or region, which region claimed the activity? How was a radio advertisement that crossed media markets tracked by region?

So much of the census work is geographically based, it will benefit the campaign overall to carefully think through borders and boundaries, as well as how those border lines impact tracking and reporting.

Training | The Census Office provided trainings to SwORD users, along with refresher trainings and weekly user support calls. Comprehensive training and technical assistance can address each of the data quality issues described in the introduction. To enhance the effectiveness of SwORD, future trainings and support for SwORD could:

1. Significantly expand and enhance technical assistance capacity in 2030 to assist internal and external stakeholders. The operations team should have up to10 TA specialists to work with internal and external outreach and communications stakeholders throughout all phases of the California Complete Count effort.
2. Continue to explore more effective methods of presenting data at regional or statewide calls to answer questions in real-time.
3. Widely advertise training and technical assistance materials recorded and posted online for users to access on-demand and as new users are added.
4. Work with funded partners to mitigate the impact of data entry staff turnover. This may include requiring a data entry staff member in contracts/grants.
    - When the main SwORD user in an organization leaves without a replacement, data entry and data quality suffers, especially when the position is not re-hired or re-trained.

5. Continue to update maps and applications to provide real-time information.
6. Revise the data dictionary to be more user friendly.

Training is an ongoing challenge but developing a standardized training system from the beginning can help increase data entry and data quality throughout the duration of the Campaign.

In Summary | The revolutionary and cutting-edge nature of SwORD supported the use of data in the 2020 Campaign, and a shared data system will be necessary for the 2030 Census. There is no way to know what promises technology holds for the 2030 Census, but the current SwORD system, these recommendations, and feedback presented in other evaluation documents can be a foundation for the development of an updated data tracking system.

Accessibility Report

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Summary

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Detailed Report

Document

Rule Name	Status	Description
Accessibility permission flag	Passed	Accessibility permission flag must be set
Image-only PDF	Passed	Document is not image-only PDF
Tagged PDF	Passed	Document is tagged PDF
Logical Reading Order	Passed manually	Document structure provides a logical reading order
Primary language	Passed	Text language is specified
Title	Passed	Document title is showing in title bar
Bookmarks	Passed	Bookmarks are present in large documents
Color contrast	Passed manually	Document has appropriate color contrast

Page Content

Rule Name	Status	Description
Tagged content	Passed	All page content is tagged
Tagged annotations	Passed	All annotations are tagged
Tab order	Passed	Tab order is consistent with structure order
Character encoding	Passed	Reliable character encoding is provided
Tagged multimedia	Passed	All multimedia objects are tagged
Screen flicker	Passed	Page will not cause screen flicker
Scripts	Passed	No inaccessible scripts
Timed responses	Passed	Page does not require timed responses
Navigation links	Passed	Navigation links are not repetitive

Forms

Rule Name	Status	Description
Tagged form fields	Passed	All form fields are tagged
Field descriptions	Passed	All form fields have description

Alternate Text

Rule Name	Status	Description
Figures alternate text	Passed	Figures require alternate text
Nested alternate text	Passed	Alternate text that will never be read
Associated with content	Passed	Alternate text must be associated with some content
Hides annotation	Passed	Alternate text should not hide annotation
Other elements alternate text	Passed	Other elements that require alternate text

Tables

Rule Name	Status	Description
Rows	Passed	TR must be a child of Table, THead, TBody, or TFoot
TH and TD	Passed	TH and TD must be children of TR

Headers	Passed	Tables should have headers
Regularity	Passed	Tables must contain the same number of columns in each row and rows in each column
Summary	Skipped	Tables must have a summary

Lists

Rule Name	Status	Description
List items	Passed	LI must be a child of L
Lbl and LBody	Passed	Lbl and LBody must be children of LI

Headings

Rule Name	Status	Description
Appropriate nesting	Passed	Appropriate nesting

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