



CENSUS 2020

Messaging and Outreach Toolkit

Connecting with
African American
Families and Communities

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS – What is the U.S. Census?

What is the Census?

The Census is how U.S. government counts every single person living in the United States, Washington D.C, and the five U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the U.S Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It is conducted every 10 years. The Census has a long history. The U.S. Constitution laid out the purpose of the Census, which was to count each person living in this country to determine the number of political seats that are assigned to each state. The first Census was administered in 1790, and this practice has continued every 10 years since that time. In 1954, rules regarding how the Census was to be conducted and how data is to be handled were written into Title 13 of the U.S. Code.

Why do we conduct the Census?

The Census is not just a survey that we fill out every 10 years. It is an essential and necessary tool used by the government to make critical decisions on behalf of the population. It is the single best source of information we have about the people living in our country. Our whole system of democratic representation is based on the Census. It is THAT important. There are three main reasons we conduct a Census. First, it is written in the U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 2), that the country must conduct a count of its population once every 10 years. Second, the data collected through the Census is used to determine how billions of federal dollars to be used for education, transportation, health, workforce development, housing and more is divided across all of the states. Finally, Census data is used to determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, and it is also used to draw congressional and state legislative districts.

Who is counted in the Census?

Anyone living in the U.S. should be counted on the Census. This includes citizens, non-citizen legal residents, non-citizen long-term visitors and undocumented immigrants of any age. Babies, children, adults and senior citizens are all to be counted on the Census. Everyone is counted!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS - Why is the U.S Census Important?

What specifically does the Census do to improve the lives of people living in the United States?

There are two main reasons that we encourage people to complete the Census on behalf of their community and their state: (1) we want to make sure that our state gets all of the federal dollars it is owed to pay for important programs and services; (2) we want to make sure that we do not lose political representation in the U.S. Congress.

Let's talk first about the resource and planning benefits to our state and community.

Federal Dollars – Approximately \$800+ billion dollars are provided to the states every year from the federal government. That's a big pot of money, so what does it pay for? Some of the major programs and services that impact people and families include:

- Medicare and Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Highway planning and construction
- Federal Pell Grant for college students
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher
- Special Education grants
- Head Start
- Energy assistance
- Career, workforce and unemployment assistance

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Government Planning – Local and state governments use census information to understand the characteristics of the people and families living in their communities. This is important information because many federal and state-funded programs and services have criteria and requirements that have to be met before distributing the program grant dollars. Some programs are tied to geography or place or residence, while some are tied to personal characteristics (age, gender race, income levels, etc.). Census data can also be used to determine where population is growing or decreasing, which can impact where schools, hospitals and libraries are built, where new or expanded roadways need to be developed and the location of public safety departments (emergency services, police, fire).

Social Service Planning – Community-based organizations and agencies are a critical part of program and service delivery at the local and state levels. Executive directors, program directors and direct line staff need to have a very clear understanding of the people living in the communities they serve and the issues they face. Census data allows these organizations to examine the living arrangements, income, education and workforce characteristics of their clients and participants. This information helps agencies serve clients better, and provides them with data and statistics to advocate for additional funding and support.

Business Planning – Local businesses of all sizes use census data as a form of market research to help make important business decisions. Businesses can learn about the characteristics of the local workforce, the types/levels of educational attainment in a given area, and characteristics of potential customers and clients. A small daycare owner would be very interested in learning more about the number of children living in a given area and the number of working adults in that area. A contractor with a focus on restoring older homes would be very interested in learning more about communities with housing stock built prior to 1920. A lawn care company that works with businesses and rental properties would want to find communities with a larger percentage of rental properties. Data from the Census can provide all that information to business owners!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS - Why is the U.S Census Important?

Emergency Response – Disasters and epidemics happen, and when they do, it can sometimes require a national or multi-state response. Disaster recovery specialists, public health officials, first responders and federal/state planners use census data to identify how much help may be needed in a given area based on the population and the characteristics of that population. Planners need to know the age of residents, how densely packed or far apart residents live from one another, and what resources exist in the community to support the response. Census data has been critical in helping officials track disease outbreaks, combat epidemics, support communities after a natural disaster and improving population health.

Basis for Additional Federal Surveys – The U.S. Census is important in and of itself. It provides useful data for all of the purposes listed above. But it also serves as the population base for dozens of other federal surveys – the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, the American Housing Survey, National Crime Victimization Survey, Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons, and many others. These other federal surveys allow government, nonprofit and for-profit entities to more fully explore characteristics, issues and needs in their communities.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS - Why is the U.S Census Important?

Next, let's talk next about representation and political power.

Apportionment – This is a very fancy way of saying, “The Census determines how many seats out of 435 each state is given based on their state population.” The number of U.S. Representatives each state has is not guaranteed or set in stone – it changes every 10 years based on changes in state population. States that see a massive increase in population should expect to elect more U.S. Representatives into Congress. States that are losing population should expect to elect fewer U.S Representatives to Congress. This is why being counted in the Census is so critical in a place like Illinois (and many places in the Midwest and Northeast) – we are losing population. We know that many families are relocating to the south and west, so those counts are already gone. We must encourage everyone that still lives here to commit to be counted so that we don't lose our voice in Washington D.C.

Redistricting – Local and state officials use census data to redraw local, state and U.S. Congressional district boundary lines. States that see a massive increase in population should expect to be able to create new legislative districts, because we have to make sure that each district contains roughly similar or equal numbers of people. We do this because we don't want to give too much influence to any one district – an overly large, or overly small, district results in an unequal sharing of power. States that are losing population should expect a decrease in legislative districts. Again, this is why counting every person is critical to communities in the Midwest and Northeast. We know that our population is decreasing in Illinois, and it is more important than ever to count every single resident.



The Importance of the Census for African Americans

For the census to be truly effective as a tool for funding and political representation, everyone must be counted. When the census fails to count all people, this results in something called an “undercount.” African American children and adults have historically been one of the most undercounted groups in the United States. While there have been improvements in participation rates over time, this is still a concern for African American families and communities with a large percentage of African American residents.

What was African American participation in the 2010 Census?[1]

The African American undercount rate overall was 2.5%, compared to a total undercount rate of 0.5% for other respondents. This amounts to approximately 800,000 African American persons not counted in 2010. Participation rates vary by age and gender, and here is where true differences in participation emerge. There was a net 4.6% undercount of African American males in 2010, compared to a 0.1% net undercount for African American females. Much of this gender difference is centered on males aged 20-64, who typically have higher rates of incarceration, health issues and mortality rates than their female counterparts and males of other races and ethnicities. African Americans males aged 30-49 years old have a net undercount rate of 10%. In contrast, the net undercount rate for White males of this age range is approximately 2%. This suggests a real lack of data on a sizable portion of our adult male African American population.

What about the counts of African American children in the 2010 Census?[2]

African American young children are another group that are disproportionately undercounted in the census. The overall net undercount for children aged 0-4 years old was 4.6%, which is surprisingly high in general. For African American children, rates were even higher. Young African American children aged 0-4 years old had a net undercount of 6.3%, compared to an approximately 3% net undercount of White children in the same age range.

[1] W.P. O’Hare, *Census Coverage of the Black Population*. Springer, 2019.

[2] W.P. O’Hare, *Census Coverage Differentials by Age*. Springer, 2019

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The Importance of the Census for African Americans

Researchers have examined reasons why younger children are less likely to be counted than older children and determined it is likely a combination of reasons. The youngest children are more likely to live in renter households, live with blended families, live in a single parent household, live in a low income household, live in a household that receives public assistance, and/or have moved or changed residences in the past year. All of these things lead to an undercount of children in general, and African American children in particular.

Why does this undercount matter?

An African American undercount results in a loss of money and power for these communities. African American families are more likely than other families to live in a low income household, to experience unemployment and lower educational attainment and to experience a greater frequency and severity of serious disease and health conditions. We have many federally-supported programs and services that are designed to address these issues, but when we have an undercount, these resources are not going to the families and communities that need them most. Local and state governments rely on the large sums of money from the federal government to help pay for health care, educational expenses, transit and transportation improvements, public safety and food nutrition programs. Agencies and nonprofits rely on the population data gathered from the census to help determine where to provide these services based on community characteristics and needs.

Political power and representation also matters to African American families and communities. Legislative districts require that the populations in any one district is roughly equal to the population in the other districts. So if an area is losing African American population, and the remaining African American residents are not being counted on the census, this can result in a redrawing of legislative boundary lines that reduces the influence of African American voices and preferences in political decision-making. States in the Midwest and Northeast are at risk of this happening during the redistricting process that will follow the 2020 Census. This is why an accurate count in 2020 is so important.



What Stands in the Way of an Accurate Census Count for African Americans?

African Americans are considered a hard-to-count group. But what is this and what does this mean for African American families and communities?

Federal, state and local governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations and agencies all work together every decade to help residents get counted in our communities. Messaging and outreach campaigns are created to motivate participation in the census, and field workers walk the neighborhoods to help count people that have not responded to their census form. In spite of all these efforts, there are still people that do not complete the census. While everyone has the potential to not be counted, there are some groups of people in the United States that have regularly been undercounted in our decennial Census. The Census Bureau has labeled these groups “hard-to-count.” African Americans are considered to be a part of the hard-to-count group.

Hard-to-Count: A Definition

Hard-to-count is a term used to describe people that are at risk of being undercounted because they will not or cannot fill out the census form. There are many reasons why a group might be classified as hard-to-count, and some groups experience multiple reasons at once. Here are the primary reasons a group might be hard-to-count:[3]

- **People and families are hard to locate** – Some people do not live in traditional household dwellings, or they may live in shelters, may move from one family member’s home to another, or may not otherwise have a stable place to live. It makes it very difficult to count these individuals. Even people that living in traditional dwellings can be harder to count if they are renters or have to relocate regularly for their job. Families with young children, young adults and persons displaced by natural disasters or unemployment are some of the most mobile and hard to locate individuals during the census.

[3] Government Accountability Office, 2020 Census: Actions Needed to Address Challenges to Enumerating Hard-To-Count Groups. GAO-18-599, 2018.



What Stands in the Way of an Accurate Census Count for African Americans?

- **People are hard to persuade** – People have varying levels of comfort and trust in the census process. Some people are unfamiliar with the questions on the census, what it does and why it is important to complete. Others do not trust that their information is private, that it will not be shared with other entities, or that it is safe for them and their family to complete. Some people are distrustful of government agencies in general, and the census is seen as an extension of that. Finally, some people do not see the value in the census, in spite of efforts to explain how it can benefit families and communities.
- **People are hard to interview** – Language and literacy barriers make it much more difficult for some people and families to complete the census, and may make them reluctant to work with the field workers assigned to their neighborhoods to help them complete their form.

How might African Americans be undercounted in the Census?

African American individuals and families are considered hard-to-count, but why? They may face a number of barriers when it comes to census participation. Even among those willing and able to complete their form, there can be misunderstandings that lead to an undercount. The following are key reasons why African American residents might be undercounted in the census, even if a household member filled out the form. [4]

1.Lack Awareness: Didn't Receive Mailings or Get Visit from Field Worker [Logistical Barriers]

- **Living in multi-family dwellings** – African American individuals and families often live in multi-unit dwellings, particularly in larger U.S. cities in the Midwest and Northeast. It is possible that their unit was not included in the census Master Address File, or they are not reliably receiving all of their mail to their unit.

[4] W.P. O'Hare, *Differential Undercounts in the U.S. Census*. Springer, 2019.



What Stands in the Way of an Accurate Census Count for African Americans?

- **Living in non-traditional dwellings** – African American individuals and families that live in a converted basement unit, garage unit or attic unit might not live in a dwelling that is recognized as a housing unit by the Census and would therefore not receive census notice or visits from a field worker.
- **Living in communities with high rates of eviction or dislocation** – African American individuals and families may be renting in buildings that more readily go into foreclosure or are otherwise converted into non-rental units, prompting a quick relocation from the property. They may fail to receive their census notice, or may be shuffling between residences during the census period.

2. Unwilling to Complete Form [Attitudinal Barriers]

- **Privacy fears** – Research on barriers to participation among African Americans has shown that privacy fears are a considerable worry for people. A fair number of people do not wish to complete the form in spite of assurances that this information is confidential and not shared among agencies or with local landlords, the police or health and social service agencies.
- **Legacy of racism and government distrust** – African American individuals have reasons to be concerned about how systems and institutions will treat them and their families. Along with privacy fears, there is a general reluctance to share information that people feel can be used against them in harmful ways by institutions that have not always acted in their best interest.
- **Other pressing matters or issues** – The Census is an important document to complete, and people might very well recognize this but still have other issues that prevent them from completing the census form. African Americans, as a whole, are more likely to live in lower income households, be renters, be underemployed or unemployed and experience a greater frequency and severity of health conditions. People that are working multiple jobs or inflexible work hours, are battling current physical or mental health issues, or have unstable housing or daily routines may not complete their form even if they believe it is important to do so.



What Stands in the Way of an Accurate Census Count for African Americans?

3. Errors on the Census form [Accuracy Barriers]

- **Confusion regarding who gets counted** – It is not uncommon for African American households to include blended families, extended family members and other non-related household members. This can leave a lot of people confused as to who gets counted on the census form. The Census Bureau uses the “usual residence” rule for determining who should be counted on a form. Households should count on their form EVERYONE that they would consider to be a resident of that home on April 1, 2020. For example, a long-term visitor that will be returning home would not be considered a resident in the home. But a friend or family member that is using your home as a residence as of April 1, 2020 would be counted on your form. Other examples of blended family or blended household census counts include:
 - o A grandmother that is counting her grandchildren that live with her (this may also include the children’s mother if she is also in the home)
 - o An adult son counting his parents that live with him in his home
 - o A mother counting both her biological children and step-children
 - o A family counting their foster children living with them
 - o A father counting his children that live most of the year with him (children with parents that have a joint custody agreement)
 - o An adult in an apartment of single, unrelated roommates that is counting all of their roommates on the form
 - o An unmarried couple counting themselves, as well as the biological child of just one of the adults
 - o A married couple counting themselves, their biological and step-children (even if from a previous marriage) and their newborn baby
 - o An adult counting themselves and friend that has shared their home for a long time

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What Stands in the Way of an Accurate Census Count for African Americans?

- **Intentional concealment of people living in the home** – People sometimes will intentionally leave family members or household residents off of the census form because of the mistaken belief that this information will get them in trouble or jeopardize their housing. For example, if a housing unit is supposed to have a maximum of 4 people, but there are 6 residents in the home, the responder might not include those other two people for fear of getting kicked out of their residence or getting in trouble with their landlord. Families with an undocumented resident might fear deportation. Families that are claiming dependents for programs and services may be reluctant to admit they are not actually residents in the home. In reality, census information is not and cannot be shared with landlords, housing authorities, social service agencies or other government and nonprofit organizations. These reminders might convince more families to participate, but it is a real fear and may continue to result in an undercount of children and adults.

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Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

There are known logistical, attitudinal and accuracy barriers facing the African American community, and previous research conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and other agencies and institutions have helped clarify these in the lead up to the 2020 Census. A list of resources and additional information is available at the League's website (www.chiul.org) so that you can read these findings directly, but the summary of these findings were included in the previous section.

Recognizing the need for targeted messaging and outreach strategies, the Chicago Urban League planned and hosted a series of World Café community discussions, focus groups and key informant interviews to gather recommendations for the most effective strategies for African American communities.[5] In total, League staff spoke to approximately 100 people through these different research activities. The following recommendations have been summarized from all of the conversations held between August 2019 through December 2019.

[5] *World Café: A form of guided, large-group conversation in which participants are seated at tables and provided with a list of questions they will discuss. Each question is given a set amount of time to discuss and a note-taker records the responses for the group. Near the end of the session, all of the tables report back on their responses to the question. This continues for all questions. Focus Group: A form of guided, small-group conversation in which participants respond to the questions being asked, but can also respond to the statements and thoughts shared by other participants. Key Informant Interview: A one-on-one interview with someone considered to be an expert on a given issue, or otherwise has important or useful knowledge to share on an issue, a population or a community.*



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

African American Messaging Recommendations

Focus of Messaging

- **Acknowledge the legacy of distrust.** If your messaging is not focusing on issues of distrust, and recognizing the very real history of why African Americans would be distrustful of the government, systems, institutions and agencies, then any Census messaging will be met with valid skepticism. African Americans have faced a legacy of racism and harmful policies and practices that have been sanctioned or commissioned by our federal, state and local governments. If messages and messengers pretend this is not an issue, or broadly discount this worry instead of acknowledging it, it will be impossible to gain the trust necessary to motivate people to complete their census form.
- **Undercounts as a form of systemic neglect.** Messaging often lays blame for nonresponse rate on individuals, but there are bigger factors at work that also influence participation rates. We know that the world itself is divided into the “haves and have nots.” We know that money and food and resources are not limitless. We know there is not currently enough to go around to meet the needs of all the people living in our community. Our whole political system and our policy-making processes are designed to determine not only who gets a share of the pie, but how large a share of the pie they will receive. Data from the Census helps determine that share of the pie. There are national and local efforts to count all people in the Census. But ultimately there are not enough people and resources to truly make sure that every single person is counted, in spite of best efforts. This is a problem for the federal government, but it is an even bigger problem for the communities that will not get what they deserve. Failing to participate in the census is framed as an act of individual neglect or laziness, but if we truly wanted to count every single person, we might prioritize our government funding and planning in different ways during the census planning and response period. We have to fight to be counted, and fight to count our friends and neighbors and colleagues, in spite of these limitations and barriers.



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

African American Messaging Recommendations

- **Make it personal.** There is often a lot of focus in messaging on how governments and businesses and agencies can use the data, but that is not a convincing reason for the average person to fill out a census form. It is better for them to understand the exact programs and services they might access in their community that actually improves their lives. Help respondents understand that the Census is the first step in a long process of receiving benefits not only for the community, but for their own families. Census data is used to provide money that pays for people to (1) join or rejoin the workforce, (2) give their children a head start on their education or provide needed school supports, (3) address new or ongoing health issues, (4) provide care for their elderly family members, (5) fix the potholes and roads banging up their cars, (6) make sure the library has the books and technology families need for learning and fun.
- **Help people understand the consequences of not responding.** Messaging should also focus on what families and communities stand to lose if enough people don't complete the Census. Every person that is not counted in a given community means an actual loss of money and power to that community. The federal government will send less money to the area, and it WILL go to other communities. Fewer members of Congress will represent the state and that power WILL go to other states. This is not a possibility, but reality, because the census is designed to do help government agencies make these kinds of decisions.
- **Emphasize civic duty.** People may not understand that filling out the census form is similar to voting – it is part of our civic duty to our support our communities and the people living in them. This message may not work on everyone, as some people have been more vocal in recent years regarding their beliefs about the ineffectiveness of voting and political representation as a means of making change in long-segregated African American communities. However, it is an important parallel to draw, especially for those people that might not have made the connection between the two activities being a similarly important form of civic engagement.



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

African American Messaging Recommendations

Messages that Acknowledge Concerns while Encouraging Participation

- **Help people understand how their information is protected and private.** Many respondents worry about what happens with the information once it is collected. It is also very important to make sure that respondents know that this information is in no way given to agencies, businesses and organizations that provide them with benefits, programs or services. Many people fear that this information can be shared with or leaked to employers, landlords, Department of Health and Human Services and public housing agencies, police and courts, and other agencies. Fears that information sharing can lead to a loss of freedom, changes to their living situation or rent costs, and a loss of eligibility for benefits and services prevents many people from completing the census form.
- **Create a short, simple catch phrase that acknowledges concerns and is easy to remember.** Messengers and materials don't often have a lot of time to spend with people to convince them to participate in the census. A messaging statement like "Safe. Secure. Simple. Significant." is a great way of addressing multiple concerns at once in an easy-to-remember format. The census form IS safe to complete because it asks for general information that cannot be tied back to a respondent or their household. The census form IS secure because there are many technological and legal protections in place to make sure that privacy is not breached and data is not shared with other agencies and entities – it is in fact a crime to do so. The census form IS simple because it is a brief survey that takes about 10 minutes to complete. The census form IS significant because it is the tool that we use to make critically important funding and political decisions at the federal and state levels.



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

African American Messaging Recommendations

Diversity of African American Community and Different Types of Messages

- **Messaging to the African American community should reflect diversity.** Media, stories and narratives about African American families often portray them in very limited, stereotypical ways, and this can lead to very narrow messaging campaigns. African American families are very diverse, as are their experiences. One example of limited messaging is focusing solely on the role of the census in public benefits and nonprofit services, while failing to recognize the importance of the census for African American entrepreneurs and business owners, community and housing developers, elected officials, educators and medical professionals, business executives, laborers and others. The League has created fact sheets from multiple angles, and additional resources can be found online at the League's website (www.chiul.org).
- **Messaging about community needs should recognize that “community” is both a geographic place and a group of people.** Targeted messaging should be reflective of the needs of both types of community: physical place AND members of the diverse group of residents with shared experiences and characteristics. Grassroots and community-based organizations, small businesses and community leaders that are centered in the neighborhoods they serve are an excellent resource for developing hyperlocal messaging about the physical and resource needs of a geographic area. These important stakeholders can help translate how large pots of federal money for transportation, education and health care can be used to pay for concrete things that the community needs, like that mental clinic on South Halsted Street or those large potholes on 79th Street. Trade and business associations, policy and research institutes and larger nonprofits focusing on specific issues (education, health care, workforce development, business development) or specific populations (African Americans, Latinx, BGLTQ individuals) can serve as excellent resources for developing issue or population-specific messaging about the benefit of the census and the concerns of these industries or groups.



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

African American Messaging Recommendations

Census 2020 as an Unfilled Promise for Resource Equity

- **Don't ignore the observation that communities still have considerable needs despite decades of census participation.** African American residents living in segregated, disinvested communities have looked around their neighborhoods and legitimately asked if their participation in previous censuses delivered on the promise of more resources and programs for their communities. It is understandable to be frustrated and disheartened by the slow pace of change, the incremental and uneven development in African American communities and the continuous struggle for economic equity. Messages should not deny this reality or convince people to believe otherwise, as residents can point to examples around them as evidence. Rather, messages should acknowledge this frustration while also recognizing that the inequitable policies and systems that have held back African Americans have been centuries in the making and will take time to unravel. Continued and complete participation in the Census is part of this work, but it is not a quick fix.
- **The Census is a tool, not necessarily the solution.** It can be annoying and offensive to African American residents to hear repeatedly that the census gives voice to their needs and concerns, when residents, community leaders and elected officials routinely use their actual voices to do this. The Census does not guarantee change, but instead provides data to show what changes might be necessary. Still required are advocacy, direct action and political maneuvering to press elected officials for money, programs and services to address identified needs. Messaging should not give an unrealistic impression of the power of the census – it is a tool to fight for the resources that communities need, but it is not a magic wand that solves all problems. Be honest about its limitations while still emphasizing the role it plays in the fight for equity.

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Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

Outreach Recommendations

There are two main goals in Census 2020 outreach with African Americans (1) raise awareness and understanding of the census and (2) answer questions and provide support to individuals completing the census form. Businesses, government agencies, faith communities, nonprofits and community-based organizations are all important partners in outreach work.

Raising Awareness

- **Use targeted messages and trusted messengers.** The Chicago Urban League has created logos and materials that can be used with African American audiences, and we'll include more information on those in the final section. Organizations can also use the recommendations listed in this section to create their own messages and materials. Trusted messengers are equally important in making sure messages are heard and received by African American audiences. African American communities are home to many trusted organizations, and those most be used during the Census outreach process. Organizations where community members regularly congregate or visit are excellent sites for raising awareness, sharing information and encouraging participation:
 - Churches and faith institutions
 - Senior homes and senior service centers
 - Schools and youth service centers
 - Community-based nonprofit organizations
 - A beloved or respected business serving the community
- **Find natural community leaders and give them the tools they need to be Census 2020 ambassadors.** Elected officials, business and nonprofit leaders, pastors and ministers are all important people to recruit for sharing information and materials about the census, but don't stop there. In many neighborhoods and community areas, there are those people that everyone knows. These natural leaders make great census ambassadors because they care about the community, they enjoy speaking with others and are happy to use their connections and enthusiasm to reach more people.



Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

Outreach Recommendations

- **Engage block clubs and neighborhood associations.** Few people know their neighborhood and neighbors as well as block club leaders and members. Encourage members to share postcards, flyers and other information with neighborhoods residents.
- **Encourage local elected officials to get involved.** Local elected officials, such as aldermen and commissioners, tend to have existing communications, online and social media platforms to share news, notices and updates. These are excellent platforms to share information about the census, so encourage local elected officials to provide materials and information to their constituents. They also have a lot of experience convening townhalls, community meetings and other gatherings with members of their community, and may be able to pull those together quickly to raise awareness and increase motivation to complete the census.
- **Understand the benefits and limitations of different messaging tools.** Any census outreach campaign will require messaging strategies catered to different groups in the African American community. A strong outreach campaign will include as many of these elements as possible, recognizing that not all organizations will have the capacity to do all of these things.
 - **Printed materials.** Flyers, postcards and posters are good for raising awareness, but are less effective for people with limited literacy. Recording videos and hosting them on your website or social media channels can be an effective alternative to printed materials.
 - **Social media.** Major social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn can be good options for adults and families, but the photo and video sharing platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok and YouTube are increasingly the apps of choice for younger audiences.

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Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

Outreach Recommendations

- o **Community/Virtual events.** Hosting community events at community organizations can be helpful, but should account for the different availability of working adults, parents, seniors, shift workers and others. The digital divide can make it more difficult to host virtual events, but they are inexpensive and flexible for peoples' schedules, so it is worth exploring this as an option (particularly if your community provides free community wi-fi access).
- o **Pop-Up outreach to meet people where they are.** Another great option is to partner with locations that people regularly visit during the week: churches, beauty salons and barber shops, a favorite community restaurant, neighborhoods bars, grocery stores and shops, and events at schools and community centers.

Provide Support for Census Completion

- **Familiarize people with census forms.** Many respondents worry about what questions are going to be on the form. It is very helpful for organizations promoting census participation to make paper or electronic copies of a sample census form to clients and community members so that they can see for themselves what is exactly on the form. This will help respondents understand how general the questions are, since many respondents worry that the questions will be overly personal, overly sensitive or ask for information that would be embarrassing or concerning to share.
- **Help people understand who to count in their household.** Many respondents can be unsure of who to count or where people are counted. The League created an FAQ of commonly asked questions that agencies, nonprofits and organizations can use to prepare themselves for questions that might arise from clients and communities. This information can also be found on the [census2020.gov](https://www.census2020.gov) website.

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Messaging and Outreach in African American Communities to Increase Census 2020 Participation

Outreach Recommendations

- **If possible, provide space and technology on-site to help people complete their census form.** If you work at an organization that can provide the space and computers for clients and residents to complete their census form, that can go a long way to increasing participation. Trained staff and volunteers can provide respondents with Census Bureau guidance on how to respond to the form and who to count on the form. This also provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers to address any concerns about data privacy, information sharing and other worries in the moment that might have prevented people from completing their form.

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“Money + Power: We Deserve our Fair Share” Census 2020 Campaign

The Chicago Urban League knew that we would need to create messages specific to the African American community if we wanted to be effective in our outreach work. We convened focus groups from October–November 2019 with clients aged 20–60 to develop messages and themes for our Census 2020 education and outreach campaign.

We tested the following messages with participants, and feedback regarding those messages will be included to provide clarity as to why we selected our campaign message:

- **MESSAGE ONE: The President didn’t want communities of color filling out the Census. Stand up, fight back and be counted.**
 - o **Background:** Media reports released in the spring and summer of 2019 suggested that the 2020 Census was engaging in practices to reduce participation among people of color, such as including the citizenship question, reducing outreach budgets and stalling on outreach planning and implementation. We wanted to test a resistance message.
 - o **Feedback:** Respondents unanimously didn’t like this message. It failed to tell them anything about the census, what it does or why it is important. Further, several respondents mentioned that it validates existing skepticism of the government, but doesn’t really help anyone overcome the reservation people might have to complete the form. As one respondent noted: *Lots of people don’t trust the government, so you’ll get a “Shrug, and?” response from people. If the government wants you to do something, you’ll ask, “Well who are you?” or “What’s in it for me?”*

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- **MESSAGE TWO: Complete the Census to shape your community for the better!**
 - **Background:** Many arguments for completing the census form are centered on improving the community through funds allocated by census counts. We wanted to test a message that was explicitly action-focused.
 - **Feedback:** Respondents had a very lukewarm response to this message. When we presented this message, we had a lot of follow-up questions about how exactly the census helps communities. Respondents then made it very clear that because they had so many questions about what the census actually does for communities, this was an ineffective message because it left them with more questions than answers. However, they felt it was better than the first message. That’s not an endorsement, though, because many respondents felt it was very boring and uninspired and would not grab anyone’s attention. Said one respondent: *This feels like a cliché. A survey can’t make the world better and people won’t see it that way. It’s not a message that leaves people inspired – it makes them ask questions about how it will actually help their neighborhood.*
- **MESSAGE THREE: YOUR voice matters. Participate in the 2020 Census to make sure it is heard.**
 - **Background:** The census is a form of civic engagement not unlike voting, as it is a critical piece of the political decision-making formula for funding and representation. We wanted to test a message that was similar to voter mobilization messaging.
 - **Feedback:** Respondents unanimously did not like this message. Many respondents noted that the census is an important tool to collect data and inform decisions, but it was not perceived as being representative of the voice of the people. Many respondents also noted their people have been raising their actual voices on needs and issues facing African American people and communities for years and have not been heard, so a survey can’t possibly be more effective than those voices and people contacting legislators, marching in government buildings, etc. A comment from a respondent mirrored by several respondents: *This is lame. What is my voice going to be heard for? What are you going to hear me say with a census?*

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- **MESSAGE FOUR:** The Census = Money and Power. We deserve our fair share!
 - **Background:** The League released a census research brief in May, 2019 that examined the impact of an undercount for Illinois. We titled the report “Money and Power,” because that is what is at stake when we do not have a complete count of all residents. We wanted to test a message that played on this title.\
 - **Feedback:** Respondents overwhelmingly liked this message. Most of the respondents thought it would be very effective in grabbing people’s attention, and would also quickly and concisely let people know why they should complete the form. Many respondents liked the use of the words “money,” “power,” and “deserve” because they are strong words and they suggest the seriousness of needing people to participate in the census. Respondents also liked this this recognized that African American communities have not been getting what they need, and that this is not OK – that they do deserve their fair share of resources and programs and services. Said one respondent: *This really sends a message. It lets people know that you’re not just being counted to be counted. You are being counted because you will get something from this. You deserve to get something from this. This tells me that the Census matters.*



“Money + Power: We Deserve our Fair Share” Census 2020 Campaign

Census 2020 Campaign: Message and Logos

The League’s primary message and logo for our Census 2020 outreach campaign is: “Money + Power: We Deserve Our Fair Share!” We selected this campaign based on feedback from our focus groups, as well as recommendations from all of our previous community conversations and interviews. Please visit www.chiul.org for all the materials listed below.

The logo below will be used on all of our promotional materials, and we encourage other agencies, businesses and organizations that serve African American families and communities to feel free to use these logos on your promotional materials. Different formats will be available for download on our website. Also included on the website will be different logo options, should you be looking for a variety of messages, or a different message for your census outreach campaign. These logos include:

- Money + Power: Stand Up and Be Counted
- Money + Power: It’s About Time
- Money + Power: We Need It, Be Counted
- Money + Power: We Count Too, Get It Done

Census 2020 Campaign: Fact Sheets

The League has created four fact sheets that we encourage you to share with friends and family, clients and staff, community members and others. These fact sheets are focused on African American families and communities, although much of the information is general enough to be shared with anyone. The following fact sheets are available on the League website:

- Why the Census Matters for African American Families
- Why the Census Matters for African American Communities
- Why the Census Matters for African American Businesses
- Why the Census Matters for Social Service Agencies

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Census 2020 Campaign: Social Media

We encourage you to get on social media to share the word on Census 2020 and its importance to African American families and communities. Please feel free to use our logos as graphics for your social media posts. We ask that you please tag us on the following platforms when you are posting:

- **Twitter:** @ChiUrbanLeague
- **Facebook:** @chicagourbanleague
- **LinkedIn:** /chicagourbanleague

We’re using the hashtags **#MoneyandPower** and **#Census2020** for our postings, and encourage you to use the same if you are planning on using these campaign materials.

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“Money + Power: We Deserve our Fair Share” Census 2020 Campaign

Census 2020 Campaign: Sample Social Media Posts

- The Census = Money + Power for our communities. We deserve our fair share! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Black children and families are regularly undercounted in the census and our communities lose needed money. Commit to be counted this year! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Black families need good schools, good jobs, good medical care and good roads in our communities. The Census helps us fight for that. Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Census 2020 is a chance to learn more about Black families and communities in Illinois. You count, so be counted! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Black lives matter, so fight for the money and power our families and communities deserve. Stand up and be counted! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Do you know someone receiving Medicare or Medicaid, SNAP or TANF benefits, special education or workforce training services? The census determines how much money Illinois gets for these programs. Get counted! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- Census data will be used to give out \$800+ billion annually in federal programs for education, health, housing and workforce development. Make sure we get our fair share by getting counted! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020
- I commit to be counted for myself, my family and my community. We deserve our fair share! Learn more: www.chiul.org #MoneyandPower #Census2020