

Preparing for the 2020 Census: Estimating Outreach Costs for Hard-to-Count Communities

States will play an important role in helping to promote an accurate 2020 Census, but they can't do it alone. Achieving a fair and accurate 2020 Census will require states to invest in community-based organizations (CBOs) as partners to ensure that trusted voices in local communities reach skeptical people about why it is important to fill out the census form.

Historical trends tell us that not every household will submit their responses to the census questionnaire on their own ("self-response") for various reasons. These areas and populations are considered "hard-to-count" and will require additional outreach and education efforts ("Get Out the Count") by local trusted voices to ensure they are counted fully and accurately when the U.S. Census Bureau sends enumerators into the field to talk to each household one-by-one ("non-response follow up" or NRFU).

Below is an established methodology for estimating how much money would be needed to ensure a robust self-response and non-response follow-up outreach strategy by community-based groups. **The same calculation for each state is available by choosing the state from the drop-down menu in Tab 1 of the related Excel sheet.**

The calculation is based on three factors:

1. The percentage of households that did not respond by mail for the 2010 Census (Mail Non-Return Rate). This number assumes that community outreach efforts in 2020 will need to maintain the 2010 self-response rate and also persuade hard-to-count householders either to provide census responses on their own or to participate in NRFU. This includes populations that have traditionally been undercounted or are at risk of being undercounted in 2020, such as people in households with limited English language ability, people with low incomes, people of color, immigrants, single parents of young children, and people living in rural areas and/or on tribal lands.

2. The cost of CBO outreach per hard-to-count person. The Fiscal Policy Institute conducted a survey of 32 community-based organizations and found the average cost per hard-to-count person of three levels of outreach: basic (\$2/person), moderate (\$25/person), and intensive (\$75/person). Costs may vary by state, but this is a good guideline.

3. The number of hard-to-count people who should get each level of outreach. The standard for this analysis has been that 100 percent of hard-to-count people get basic outreach, 10 percent get moderate outreach, and 5 percent get intensive outreach. You can use this standard or vary it for your state.

Sample data below for New York. Choose your state in the associated Excel sheet.

Total Population	19,849,399
2010 Census Mail Non-Return Rate	24%
Hard to Count Population (Total Population in State x 2010 Census Mail Non-Return Rate in State)	4,797,289

Basic CBO outreach (\$2 per person)		
Share receiving this level of outreach	Number receiving this level of outreach	Cost at \$2/person
100%	4,797,289	\$9,594,579

Moderate CBO outreach (\$25 per person)		
Share receiving this level of outreach	Number receiving this level of outreach	Cost at \$25/person
10%	479,729	\$11,993,224

Intensive CBO outreach (\$75 per person)		
Share receiving this level of outreach	Number receiving this level of outreach	Cost at \$75/person
5%	239,864	\$17,989,835

Total State Funding to Community Based Organizations	\$39,577,638
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Background

The 2020 Census will have two phases: self-response and non-response follow up (NRFU). Census data collected during self-response (in 2020, via the internet, phone, or mail) historically are the most complete, accurate, and cost-effective. When households do not self-respond, they need to be counted in person by census enumerators, which is challenging, expensive, and presents the greatest risk that people will be counted inaccurately or missed entirely. Therefore, the goal of "Get Out the Count" campaigns should focus on boosting the self-response rate as much as possible – urging residents to either go online to answer the census questionnaire or to mail back or phone in their information.

Where are we getting these numbers?

- The New York-based Fiscal Policy Institute conducted a survey of community-based organizations to determine the **cost-per-person** for outreach for the 2020 Census in their calculation for New York state. For more information, see their report here: <http://fiscalspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FPI-Brief-Census-Outreach-Funding.pdf>
- The Census Bureau updates demographic information for all communities each year. The Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center/City University of New York uses those updates to help stakeholders target hard-to-count census tracts through its interactive map at www.censushardtocomountmaps2020.us. For this estimate, we use the overall mail non-return rate and the Census Bureau's 2017 population estimate for each state.

Why should CBOs be involved?

Data collected from the census set the course of our nation for the next decade, determining the apportionment of political power, redistricting, the allocation of more than \$800 billion in federal funding annually, and the identification of current and future business and nonprofit needs. Community-based organizations, including service-based, labor, grassroots, and advocacy groups at the local, state, and national levels can play a vital role as trusted messengers and validators in "Get Out the Count" campaigns. With adequate funds, CBOs will be able to reach specific hard-to-count communities during self-response and NRFU. This robust investment in community-based outreach can help ensure accurate resources and representation for the decade to come.

What can CBO outreach look like?

Basic outreach for community-based organizations includes sponsoring activities such as public forums, providing information to people who come to their institutions, and some level of direct outreach. Moderate outreach includes not only public forums and broad outreach, but also multiple in-person discussions with people in hard-to-count populations. Intensive outreach allows for high numbers of contacts with hard-to-count individuals and for some longer sessions explaining the process, including in-language discussions for households with limited English, outreach to homeless populations, and work with people who do not have access to the internet or are not familiar with filling out computer forms.

To learn more and get involved

Visit www.censuscounts.org or email information@censuscounts.org

Census Counts is a collaborative campaign to ensure that the 2020 Census is fair and accurate. The campaign works to ensure adequate funding for the 2020 Census and prevent harmful policies; educate policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels; employ strategic communications to educate the public about the policy improvements necessary for a fair and accurate census; and engage and mobilize stakeholders to ensure an effective "Get Out the Count." This analysis is co-sponsored by the Fiscal Policy Institute, State Voices, The Leadership Conference Education Fund, and Center for Urban Research at The Graduate Center / CUNY.