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Connecting, strengthening, and inspiring
state and local child advocates



Census 2020

Findings based on focus groups and a
national online survey

September 10, 2019

FUNDERS CENSUS INITIATIVE (FCI)

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2020 Census Operations Series: Part 5 - Monitoring the Count in Real Time

Wednesday, September 18 | 1 - 2 PM ET

Part 5 of the **Census Counts Campaign** and the **Funders Census Initiative** census operations series will cover how organizations can monitor the count in real time.

Speakers:

Terri Ann Lowenthal, Census Consultant

Steven Romalewski, Director, CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research at The Graduate Center / CUNY

Moderated by: Sol Marie Alfonso-Jones, Senior Program Officer, Long Island Community Foundation

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The Problem

- The number of young children from birth to age 4 missed in the Decennial census is large and growing.
 - Over 2 million young children missed in 2010.
- Young children are missed for different reasons than adults.
- We need messages that persuade families to include young children when they respond to the census.

What We Know From Demographic Research

- Most children that are missed are left off the form when families respond to the census.
- Many children that are missed live in complex households.
- More likely to be missed when the person filling out the form isn't their parent.
- Children of color more likely to be missed.

Communities at Risk of Missing Many Children

- Higher share of racial/ethnic minorities.
- Higher share of households that are linguistically isolated.
- Higher share of young children living with grandparent householders.
- Higher share of young children not closely related to the householder.

Research And Messaging Goals

- To learn what parents and other householders with young children know about the Census and what they think about participating in it.
- To learn what they understand about including young children in the Census and what concerns they have.
- To identify messages that move parents and other householders to respond and include young children.
- To identify messages that make immigrant households more likely to count their young children.

Phase One Methodology: Focus Groups

Lake Research Partners conducted 13 in-person and 2 online focus groups in April and May 2019 among the following groups:

Los Angeles, CA April 22 nd	People/Grandparents living in multi-generational households
	Mixed race single mothers
San Diego, CA April 23 rd and May 8 th	People/Grandparents living in multi-generational households
	Low-income white parents
Baltimore, MD April 30 th	People/grandparents living in multi-generational households
	Low-income African American parents
	Spanish-speaking Immigrant Latinos (<5 years in Baltimore) in Spanish
El Paso, TX May 2 nd	People/grandparents living in multi-generational households
	Low-income Latino parents
Stockton, CA May 8 th	People/Grandparents Living in multigenerational households
	Low-income Immigrant Latinos (<10 years in US) in Spanish
Online Focus Groups May 7 th and 8 th	Medical providers serving families of young children
	Service providers serving families of young children

Phase Two: Online Survey Methodology

- Lake Research Partners designed and administered this online survey that was conducted from July 15 – July 28, 2019. The survey reached a total of 800 parents with children under 5 nationwide who make less than \$50K a year.
- The margin of error is +/-3.5%.

Key Findings



Key Findings – *Views of the Census*

- Participants across focus groups are most likely to associate the census with **tracking, counting the population, government, and numbers.**
- Most participants across the groups volunteer that participating in the 2020 census will **benefit their community.** While they struggle to make the connection to benefits for individuals, they easily see the connection between the census and their **neighborhood or community at large,** and can see the benefits that will come in the **future and for their children.**
- In the survey, **a majority of low-income parents with children under 5 reported being familiar with the United States census,** but intense familiarity is low (62% familiar, 27% *very* familiar). About one-third (34%) are unfamiliar with the census.
 - Those most likely to be *very* familiar include older parents, college educated parents, African American and Latinx parents, Spanish-speakers, married parents, Democrats and Republicans, and those who attend religious services often.
 - Those least likely to be familiar (40%-50% not familiar) are older parents, unmarried parents, Independents, and parents who rarely attend religious services.

Key Findings – *Filling out the Census*

- **A plurality** of parents (46%) say they **have filled out the census before**. Slightly less than one third say they have not filled out the census before and about one quarter aren't sure.
- **Age, education, marital status, and homeownership are key predictors of whether parents have filled out the census before.**
 - College-educated and homeownership parents are much more likely to have filled out the census compared to other subgroups.
 - Older parents are more likely to have filled it out, which is not surprising.

Key Findings – *Filling out the Census*

- While less than half recall filling out the census in the past, a **solid majority believe it is important to have an accurate census that counts everyone** (82% important, 56% *very* important).
- The subgroups who are most likely to believe it is *very* important to have an accurate census that counts everyone are:
 - White college graduates – 75%
 - Parents who have lived at their address for 11+ years – 74%
 - College-educated men* – 74%
 - Male homeowners – 71%
 - Republicans – 69%
 - Parents who often attend religious services – 69%

*note small sample size

Key Findings – *Filling out the Census*

- At the start of the survey, **nearly three quarters of parents say they are likely to participate in the next US census** (74% likely, 51% almost certainly). **About one-in-five (21%) say they are not likely to participate.**
- At the end of the survey, after reading the statements and messages, **parents are 9-points more likely to say they are *almost certain* to participate** – from 51% initially to 60% on the final ask.
- **Throughout the data, residential stability is a key predictor of how knowledgeable parents are, their experience with the census, and their willingness to fill out the census.**

Key Findings – *Filling out the Census*

- Both the parents surveyed and the participants in the focus groups say they would be **most likely to complete the census form online**. Two-thirds of parents (66%) say they would prefer to fill out the form online, 15% would prefer by mail, 7% would prefer phone, and 8% say they have no preference.
- A few participants in the groups say they would prefer completing the survey by mail, noting computer issues. Others say they would prefer phone because it would allow them to ask clarifying questions in real time.
- The majority, however, would prefer online because of convenience and environmental friendliness. According to studies, most families with young children – including low-income families – have internet access.
- People believe the door-to-door census is the most intrusive.

Key Findings – *The Census and Children < 5*

- **Nearly one-in-five would not include their children under 5 on the census (10%) or are not sure if they would (8%) after being informed that a number of people leave young children off the form. A solid majority (83%) of parents say they would include their children under 5 on the census.**
 - The subgroups who are most likely to be not sure are parents who are not familiar with the census at all (17% not sure) and Independents (13% not sure).
 - The subgroups who are most likely to not include their children under 5 on the census are college-educated men* (17% would not), African American renters (18%), parents with 3 or more kids under age 5 (18%), and parents who are not familiar with the census at all (16%).

*note small sample size

Key Findings – *The Census and Children < 5*

- Half (50%) believe people might not include children ages 5 and under on the census form because **the person filling out the form isn't sure whether to include them or not**. The next most likely scenario is that the person filling out the form doesn't see **why the government needs to know about the young children** (38%).
- Various scenarios where children are mobile and part-time residents are a third reason that parents believe contributes to uncounted young children:
 - Another adult who lives somewhere else has custody of the children
 - The children are living in the household temporarily
 - The children live in the household some days, but other days they live somewhere else
 - The children aren't the children of the homeowner or renter, but another person's child

Key Findings – *The Census and Children < 5*

- After learning over 2 million children under the age of 5 were missing in the last census, **more than two-thirds of parents report feeling concerned**, though intensity is mixed (67% concerned, 39% very concerned). Subgroups who are the most concerned are:
 - College-educated men* – 57% very concerned
 - Parents who often attend religious services – 51%
 - Latinx women – 47%
 - Parents who are likely to fill out the census – 47%
- Knowing **“you can fill out the census on your own schedule and that it only takes about 10 minutes to complete”** makes parents much more likely to fill out the census and include everyone living in the household (76% more likely, 53% much more likely). Highlighting the privacy guarantee* makes a majority of parents more likely to fill out the form (62%).

*Text of “privacy guarantee” - The Census Bureau has one of the strongest privacy guarantees in the federal government. If a Census Bureau employee reveals personal data collected in the census, that person can spend up to 5 years in jail or pay a fine as large as \$250,000

Key Findings – *The Census and Children < 5*

- Regardless of how the question is introduced – either with or without context* about “counting everyone where they live and sleep most of the time, even if the living arrangement is temporary, so long as the person has no other permanent address” – **parents are most likely to include those who live in the household “all of the time,” no matter their relation to the others in the household, on the census. They are less likely to include those who are temporary residents, even if they have no other permanent home.**

Most Likely to Include

- A baby, infant, or young child who is too young for school
- A family member and their young child who stays in the household all of the time
- A grandchild who stays in the household all of the time
- A foster child who is in the household
- A live-in boyfriend or girlfriend and their young child
- A friend and their young child who stays in the household all of the time
- A family member and their young child who stays in their own private rooms in the house
- A friend and their young child who stays in their own private rooms in the house
- A child or grandchild of someone who rents a room in a household and lives with them

Least Likely to Include

- A child or grandchild who stays in the household some days but not all of the time
- A family member and their young child who stays in the household some days but not all of the time
- A friend and their young child who stays in the household some days but not all of the time

*Split sampled questions

Key Findings – *Statements About the Census*

- The top statements parents find *very* important as reason to fill out the census and have everyone counted highlight **the link between the census and local school funding and how the census helps local governments plan for the future**. It is just as strong to highlight how local governments can use the data to plan with the mention of the dollar amount (\$800 billion) as it to leave the amount out among all parents. Parents are more connected to and trusting of the local government, so it helps to **mention local government first, and then federal funds**.

Counting your children in the census means your local schools will get more funding for your children

*Census data will help local government plan for the future and determine where more than \$800 billion a year in federal funding goes, including medical services, WIC, child care, funding for public schools, public transit, low-income housing, and special and adult education**

**Strongest
Statements**

The census happens once every ten years, so if we don't count a two-year-old, your community will have less funding for education, child care, and other services they need for 10 years, most of their childhood

*The census helps local government plan for the future and determines the level of funding programs and services young children receive from the federal government, including our schools, child care, housing, public transportation, and medical care**

*Split sampled questions

Key Findings – Top Messages

All messages from people working to ensure the 2020 census counts everyone also test strongly, with at least 49% of parents finding each message very convincing. The top testing messages are:

% Very Convincing

[Formula /Missed /Most Childhood*] We missed over 2 million young children in the 2010 census. Federal law uses formulas based on census data to distribute over \$800 billion in federal funding for 10 years to our states and communities. When we miss young children, our state and communities lose funds for 10 years for programs that children depend on like child care, schools, children’s health insurance, housing, and public transportation. That's most of their childhood.

57%

[Changes] Think about how much things can change in 10 years; people move and babies are born. The last census in 2010 showed that in one major city, a community had doubled in size in ten years. The correct census count of people in that community led to a \$50 million increase in federal dollars for schools, hospitals, and services for kids. Filling out the census can have real benefits for our children.

56%

[Formula/Missed*] We missed over 2 million young children in the 2010 census. Federal law uses formulas based on census data to distribute over \$800 billion in federal funding for 10 years to our states and communities. When we miss young children, our state and communities lose funds for programs that children depend on like child care, schools, children’s health insurance, housing, and public transportation.

55%

[Examples/2 Million*] Many of the programs that receive money from the federal government are designed to help young children. But we missed over 2 million young children in the 2010 census. Census data determines how much money the state gets for hospitals, child care programs, and early education. A census undercount of our children will result in overcrowded classrooms, fewer child care options, and busy hospital emergency rooms.

54%

[Examples*] Many of the programs that receive money from the federal government are designed to help young children. But young children are the most likely to be missed in the upcoming census. Census data determines how much money the state gets for hospitals, child care programs, and early education. A census undercount of our children will result in overcrowded classrooms, fewer child care options, and busy hospital emergency rooms.

54%

*split sampled question

Key Findings – *Top Messages*

- The strongest two messages include **values as well as programs**. The weakest message refers to democracy and is vague about programs.
- It is helpful to:
 - **give examples of what the losses will be if children are not counted**
 - **talk about the changes in the past ten years and the benefits of accurately counting children**
 - **include a values-oriented fact that missing children for the next ten years is missing them for most of their childhood**

Key Findings – Targeting

- Persuadable parents shift toward being likely to fill out the census and also include those who say they are unsure on both the initial and final ask. They are most likely to be under 39 years old and living in a rural community.
- Parents who shift toward being likely to fill out the census say they are not likely to fill out the census or are unsure initially, but shift toward saying they are likely to fill it out on the final ask. They are most likely to be unmarried and renters.
- Parents who shift toward being more likely to participate in the census and persuadable parents are most convinced by the **Formula/Missed/Most Childhood** message.

<p>Most important reason to fill out the census and have everyone counted for:</p> <p>Persuadables Shift toward Being Likely to Participate</p>	<p>The census helps local government plan for the future and determines the level of funding programs and services young children receive from the federal government, including our schools, child care, housing, public transportation, and medical care*</p>
<p>Most important reason to fill out the census and have everyone counted for:</p> <p>Shift toward Being Likely to Participate</p>	<p>Counting your children in the census means your local schools will get more funding for your children</p>

*split sampled question

Key Findings – *Citizenship Question*

- *Note: For this research, the qualitative research was conducted prior to the Supreme Court ruling regarding the inclusion of the citizenship question on the 2020 census. The quantitative research was conducted after the ruling.*
- Participants across groups, both Latinx/immigrants and non-Latinx/immigrants, agree that a citizenship question would **stoke fear and paranoia among people in the country**. Some make the connection between the citizenship question and the **Trump administration’s racist policies and bolstering of ICE**. They share how they think the question will **single out and target immigrants** and how it makes them **scared**.
- The Latinx participants were mollified after learning about **Title 13**. Some wished this information were more widely available and known among the immigrant community.

The Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the United States Code which provides strong privacy protection about the information collected from individuals and businesses. The Census Bureau has one of the strongest confidentiality guarantees in the federal government and government workers or others who disclose any individual’s information can spend up to 5 years in jail or pay a fine as large as \$250,000. It is against the law for the any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census or survey information that identifies an individual or business.

Key Findings – *Citizenship Question*

- In the survey, **a majority of parents say they have not heard anything about the addition of a new question on the census asking about their citizenship status (56%).** About one third (32%) are familiar.
- Among Latinx parents, 49% have not heard anything and 39% have.
- **A majority have not heard about the Supreme Court decision either (59%).**
- Among Latinx parents, 54% have not heard anything about the decision and 35% have.

Key Findings – *Citizenship Question*

- After acknowledging the final ruling by the Supreme Court and noting many may still be fearful, the top tier of statements that would make parents more willing to fill out the census form **highlight the importance of counting young children and the privacy guarantees**. These statements are **just as strong among Latinx parents**.

It is important to count all young children because they are citizens of this country and will grow up here

Strongest Statements

Revealing personal data from the census is a felony punishable by up to 5 years in jail and a fine of up to \$250,000

The constitution requires a count every 10 years of every person living in the country, and that includes immigrants and citizens

- Appealing to parents by highlighting the *importance of counting all young children because they are citizens* is strongest among those who shift toward being likely to fill out the census and persuadables as well. Those who shift toward not being likely to fill out the form are drawn to the statement highlighting the *constitutional requirement of counting the population every 10 years*.

Key Findings – *Provider Focus Groups*

- We conducted one group among service providers and one group among medical providers who interact with families with young children.
- While **some of the providers are optimistic**, believing their patients and families would fill out the census, others **worry that the fear families have around the government or the citizenship question** as well as general lack of information about it will hold them back from participating.
- Most providers say they **do not currently share information** about the 2020 census with their families and patients, but **they are willing to**.
- Medical providers share the following materials would be most helpful to aid in outreach: flyers, videos, tip sheets, infographics, and pamphlets in multiple languages. They think the best ways to reach parents of young kids are through schools and program offices, television, and in grocery stores.
- Providers emphasize the need for **concise, simple messages that make the connection between the importance of the census and their patients/families crystal clear**.

Strategy

- Much of the existing messaging about the importance of the census is transactional, which means people are “buying” something or are going to personally benefit in specific ways. Our goal is to fight cynicism because people believe they are not seeing the transactional benefit we are promising. It is important to include values with transactional benefits.
- Our challenges are:
 1. cynicism about government delivering
 2. getting people to take action
 3. the disconnect between the notion that people are not leaving their kids off the census, and the ease with which people can imagine scenarios where children would be left off the census

Strategy

- People who regularly attend religious services are a core constituency, creating the opportunity to deploy a faith strategy. Religious institutions can tell the people who attend services to spread the word about the census to friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors who do not attend services.
- When talking about the citizenship question, bring in the constitutional requirement and lift up the specific Title 13 language. Materials should include the Title 13 language.
- Young and mobile/ambulant parents would turn to their own parents for answers to questions about census. They also use Google.
- Grandparents could be good messengers to tell their adult children to count their own children (their grandchildren).
- Direct service providers should be persuaded to do outreach to families with young children.

LRP

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CountAllKids.org: Sign up for Campaign Materials

- Tested creative materials, fall 2019
- Social media campaigns for selected events
- Toolkit available in fall

