Syracuse University
Maxwell School of
Citizenship & Public Affairs
Maxwell X Lab

Understanding Census Non-Response

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Introduction

The New York State Census Equity Fund (NYSCEF), comprised of thirty-seven local, regional, and national foundations, was created to ensure a fair and full count of New Yorkers statewide for the 2020 Census. The Fund worked and collaborated with several coalitions and stakeholders with similar goals including the New York Civic Engagement Table, New York Counts 2020, New York Law School Census and Redistricting Institute, CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research, and the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island[1]. Once Census 2020 operations were completed, this group of stakeholders decided to combine their expertise to maintain the infrastructure that was created leading up to the 2020 census and work together to lay the groundwork for an even more successful count in 2030. As part of their strategy, they provided a grant to the Maxwell X Lab in January 2023 to identify mechanisms and strategies to increase self-response rates to the 2030 Census.

Maxwell X Lab (MXL), in its ongoing partnership with this community of stakeholders, seeks to accomplish several goals before the 2030 Census:

1. Understand why some New York State (NYS) residents did not self-respond to the 2020 U.S. Census,
2. Determine factors that will increase the likelihood that typically low-responding subpopulations in NYS will self-respond in the 2030 Census, and
3. Create an information/messaging strategy to increase 2030 Census self-response rates and evaluate its efficacy.

To accomplish these goals, we employed a multi-method approach to understand the scope of the problem and identify possible solutions. In the first phase of our research, we focused on understanding and identifying the reasons why NYS residents did not self-respond to the 2020 Census. We also gathered data on factors that could increase self-response rates to the 2030 Census. While the Census Bureau has conducted analyses on the characteristics of Hard-To-Count populations and has identified reasons for non-response, our study concentrates on the lived experience of NYS residents. We focus on highlighting factors that influence census response in NYS specifically and collecting personal testimonies explaining why people did not respond in 2020, even those who were connected to trusted messengers. Our primary goal in this first phase of the project was to gain background knowledge for a second phase in which we will design and test strategies to increase response rates to the 2030 Census.

In this first phase, we conducted three types of analysis, each building on the previous step:

- Spatial analysis using GIS technology and 2020 U.S. Census data to identify regions and communities in NYS that had low response rates. Based on these findings, we worked with the NYS Census Table to identify census tracts that had low response rates in 2020 and also included community organizations that received funding from NYSCEF in the past. We believed these established relationships were important to help organize and facilitate focus groups.
- Focus groups with people who lived in or near census tracts identified in the first step. The

[1] See Appendix A for a full list of contributors

focus groups took place in Buffalo, Syracuse, Ithaca, and Poughkeepsie and allowed us to hear from NYS residents directly. The discussions focused on understanding individual's exposure to, knowledge of, and participation in the 2020 Census. The discussions were an open forum to better understand individual's reasons for their response or lack of response to the 2020 Census.

- Survey of a representative sample of 1000 NYS residents to understand if factors identified during the focus group as reasons for not responding to the census applied to a larger sample of respondents throughout the state. The survey data analysis allowed us to determine the factors associated with responding to the 2020 Census and provided insight into interventions to help improve response rates to the census in the future.

Key Takeaways

Reasons for Census Non-Response

- A common theme in both the focus groups and the survey data is the lack of knowledge about the decennial census. Many of the sampled NYS residents have no sense of the purpose and value of the census.
    - In the focus groups, many participants reported having no understanding of the census. Some people had never heard anything about it, while others did not understand any of the census materials sent to them because of language barriers.
    - In the survey data, 35% of those that did not respond to the 2020 Census reported it was because they did not know anything about the census.
- Several community members in the focus groups said that they have no incentive to complete something for the government, especially when the government does not provide any benefits for them. They expressed concerns about the true purpose of the census, fearing that the data would be used for immigration purposes. Participants also emphasized that they have yet to see any resources allocated to their neighborhoods from previous census counts. They argued that they have no reason to believe that completing the census will benefit them.
- Another theme that came up through both focus groups and the survey data was apathy.
    - Of people who did not respond to the 2020 Census, 16% reported it was because they did not have time for it.
    - A substantial proportion of the focus group participants could not remember if they had even participated in the 2020 Census. They stated that the census is not salient relative to meeting the needs of their families.
    - The survey respondents showed similar apathy toward the census: at least one-eighth of NYS residents are unsure if they responded to the 2020 Census when they were questioned in the summer of 2023. We expect that this proportion might be even higher in hard-to-count census tracts.

Factors Associated with Non-Response

- The survey data analysis highlighted that there are several factors associated with non-response to the census. The data suggests that age, residential location type, income, education level, whether an individual is foreign born, and voter registration are important when

predicting the likelihood of an individual responding to the 2020 Census.

- These factors can help us design relevant interventions that may change individual's likelihood of responding to the 2030 Census.

Suggestions for Improving Response Rates

- The top suggestion from both focus group participants and the survey data is to increase people's understanding of the census and how it can benefit them. They highlight that it is not just about telling people that they need to be counted, but explaining how ensuring that they are represented will help them and their communities in specific ways.
    - Census promotional materials needs to be more explicit in linking government support to the census. In Syracuse, NY, focus group participants stated that "seeing the results" of the census would help them become more engaged. They stated that showing the community the impact of participation after the census was taken would be powerful.
    - People also expressed the importance of describing in advance what the questionnaire entails. It may increase self-response rates if it is clear that you do not need to share personal details such as your social security number or immigration status.
    - Materials used to explain and promote the census should be accessible. This means translating materials to multiple languages, containing large and clear text, availability online, allowing for text to speech, and other features ensuring accessibility.
- Another key set of suggestions was around the census promotion timelines. NYS residents expressed that a potential solution to drive increases in self-response is to promote the census at more regular intervals.
    - When the census is collected every decade, many young people, the demographic group least likely to respond to the census and the one most likely to have never responded before, become eligible. They need to be made aware of the census and what it entails long before they are sent the questionnaire.
    - In addition to the frequency, census promotions should also occur on a variety of platforms that can cater to all the different demographics (e.g., TikTok for a younger population).

Next Steps

- Future interventions to increase self-response rates in NYS to the 2030 Census should be designed with these findings in mind. By understanding NYS specific census barriers, attitudes, and motivators, we can now test data-driven communications and advertising campaigns on improving self-response rates and data quality.
- In the next stage of our research, we will conduct a survey experiment that tests possible strategies to increase self-response rates to the 2030 Census.

Stage 1: Focus Groups

Site Selection and Recruitment

Maxwell X Lab subcontracted with an experienced focus group facilitator to conduct discussions in Buffalo, Poughkeepsie, Syracuse, and Ithaca. These sites were selected because they were located in or near census tracts with extremely low 2020 Census self-response rates and had a community organization that received a grant from the NYSCEF to support their census outreach in 2020. We partnered with Hopeprint in Syracuse, Catholic Charities in Ithaca, For the Many in Poughkeepsie, and Open Buffalo in Buffalo. Each organization received a $500 grant from NYS Census Table for their support and partnership. At each site, the community organization worked with our team to recruit between six and eight people for the focus group discussions. We requested substantial representation of people who did not complete the census in 2020 at each site. This was especially important for our research design, as we wanted to understand why individuals who were connected to a trusted messenger during the Census 2020 outreach had still not completed the census questionnaire. We provided food and drinks at each of the events, and everyone who participated received a $25 cash card.

Following best practice for focus groups, the facilitator allowed participants to lead the conversation; however, the facilitator prompted the discussion with key guiding questions about the census:

1. What do you know about the census?
2. Do you remember if you responded to the 2020 Census?
3. Do you know people who did not respond?
4. What were some of your reasons for not responding?
5. What were your reasons for responding?
6. Are there things that would change your mind about responding? What are they?
7. Is there anything that you can think of that might change the mind of someone who does not respond to the census?

The focus groups took place in June and July of 2023. Table 1 offers information on dates, locations, and number of participants at each site. In our analysis, we provide an overview of the themes touched upon in all sites and then provide detailed coverage of the take-aways from each site.

Table 1: Focus Groups

Community Org	Date	Location	Participants
Hopeprint	6/5/2023	Syracuse, NY	8
Catholic Charities	6/7/2023	Ithaca, NY	9
For the Many	6/8/2023	Poughkeepsie, NY	6
Open Buffalo	7/27/2023	Buffalo, NY	5

Overarching Themes

The facilitator identified four overarching, sometimes overlapping, themes across all sites when discussing the primary reasons that individuals did not participate in the census:

1. Fear and Distrust of Census Outreach
2. Privacy
3. Lack of Understanding/Awareness
4. Antipathy toward Government

While the four overarching themes are relevant across all participating sites, the specificity of contexts and nuances of response differ from site to site (see site specific analysis). For instance, antipathy toward government in Buffalo is contextualized by being adjacent to a Sundown Town, heightened by perceived racism, and a history of racial segregation.

1. Fear and Distrust of Census Outreach

Fear and distrust of census outreach was a common factor addressed across all sites. Participants expressed a fear of the unknown and of being taken advantage of when they began to receive mailings seeking personal information. Many reported that they worry about fraud, having received mailings, calls, and emails with malicious intent in the past. They reported being unclear on which mailings to trust and unsure of how to identify legitimate documents from potentially harmful ones. Participants who did have census workers come to their homes reported fearing strangers knocking on their door. They expressed not feeling safe or comfortable sharing personal information with people who came to their homes unannounced.

- "I worry about who is at the door when they knock and do not want to answer it, especially as we are in unsafe neighborhoods."

2. Privacy

Many people were suspicious of the true purpose behind the Census Bureau's data collection efforts. Given the politicized debate around adding a citizenship question, the most common apprehension was a negative consequence for filling out the requested information. They questioned why the Census Bureau needed this information and with whom it would be shared. These sentiments highlighted both a distrust of government and the importance of an individual's right to privacy.

- "A lot of people don't trust what the government is going to do with the data. I don't think there's any way to change that based on how the government treats people in this country."
- "People are suspicious about what the government is using the information for and whether the information will be shared."
- "It's a privacy issue. We want to guard our privacy."

3. Lack of Understanding/Awareness

The overwhelming majority of participants across sites who did not respond in 2020 did not know much about the census or its purpose. As noted in the site-specific sections below, people

had varied reasons for their lack of knowledge about the census. Some stated that they were a product of their environment, having grown up never learning or seeing anyone complete the census. For immigrant populations, the language barrier contributed to the lack of understanding. Even if they received informative flyers, they did not understand any of the information being distributed. There was also little to no understanding of the legal obligation to fill out the census.

- "If you aren't taught that it's important or an environment that people valued it/did it then you wouldn't know to do it."
- "If you don't know what it's for, you're not going to do it."
- "I'm not going to take a test I didn't study for."
- "If people who are Americans in this group didn't even know what the census is or that it is an obligation, then what does it mean for all the immigrants or non-English speakers."

4. Antipathy Toward Government

"Why should we bother?" was a frequently expressed sentiment. Among the participants who understood that the census is conducted to count people and determine resource allocation to communities, many expressed they have never seen proof of this resource allocation. Participants stated that they have never received anything from the government or benefitted from government policies. They did not think there was any harm in completing the census, but they did not perceive any benefit either, concluding that they would be better off ignoring it. Without proof, they believed, there was no incentive to do anything required by the government.

- "People are getting counted, and money isn't coming."
- "What good does it do me?"
- "The government will still do what they have on the agenda regardless of the data from the Census."
- "Is the Census really going to make anything better?"
- "The Census benefits you depending on what group you are in, what ethnicity you belong to."
- "Whether they have the data or not, it doesn't directly affect us."

Suggestions

At the end of each session, participants were asked to share what they thought might encourage more people to participate in the 2030 Census. Respondents from all sites provided similar recommendations: to partner with trusted sites, and to improve understanding of the census based on the relevant context and the specific population's needs. Some stated, at the end of the focus group, that this experience had educated them, and they felt differently about participating in the future. However, some people believe that there are people who will never change their decision not to participate. Some participants also expressed that until they felt truly represented and supported by the government, they had no interest in doing something that would have no benefit for them.

Focus Group #1: Syracuse, NY

Number of participants: (8) Five participants could not recall whether they had filled out the 2020 Census, two participated in the 2020 Census, and one did not.

Hopeprint is located on Syracuse's North Side. Their micro-neighborhood of focus is a 30-block portion bordered by N Salina St, E Division St, Park St, and Kirkpatrick St in the 13208 ZIP Code. Half of the residents who call this neighborhood home are "foreign-born". Focus group participants explained that this area was seen by many as a "dangerous place". The conversation revealed a lack of clarity regarding receiving and filling out the census in 2020 amongst nearly all participants. Many could not definitively answer if they had completed the 2020 Census. The sections below highlight the key themes that emerged from the conversation and highlight site specific reasons for those reasons.

Fear and Distrust of Census Outreach

Participants in this group particularly had strong fears of being swindled and robbed. Many participants in this group reported concerns about fraud as they had received many mailings, calls, and emails in the past soliciting information for nefarious purposes. Many people in the group expressed that they are not comfortable speaking or understanding English, making it difficult to discern between promotional or fake materials and important documents that require a response. One participant used an example of "National Grid" calling her when, in fact, it was not National Grid. She noted that people should call during office hours, not past 6 p.m., because that "raises a red flag." In addition to mailings, people were also nervous about the unannounced visits from census workers. Given their location, they were reluctant to open the door to strangers - especially to people who did not speak their preferred language.

- "The people that come knocking on your door are the same people that come to rob you."
- "North Side of Syracuse has a lot of fights and problems. Not only are people scared to open a door when it is knocked on, but the people that knock on the door (who deliver the census) don't go to places such as the North Side because it's dangerous."

Lack of Understanding/Awareness

The majority reported that the language barrier is a "big problem" as people cannot understand material provided about the census. Some households do not speak English, so the census questionnaire is thrown out or ignored. Households that speak some English have difficulty filling out the entire census with confidence. There is a lack of translators and language resources for these groups to complete the census in an informed manner. They claimed that any messaging about the purpose of the census, including how the data is shared and managed by other agencies, is not reaching this population. The participants explained that the census-specific vocabulary is also not easily translated; when some documents have translations, people still do not understand its purpose.

Privacy

Participants expressed their fears around possible repercussions to participating in the census. Many voiced suspicions over where the information was going, especially those involved in legal proceedings and undocumented immigrants. Even participants in the group who were US citizens thought that the

census was being used to find undocumented people, so they understood why many in the neighborhood avoided it. In addition to specific fears on immigration, participants also generally believed that the government could easily misuse this information for other reasons. Statements illustrating this mistrust and concern for privacy are as follows:

- "I'm sovereign to this land, and I am still very distrusting and skeptical of the government."
- "I received the census, didn't fill it out, and then ran them (government census recorders going door to door) off because I was not going to participate."
- "They are going to come and take your child to protective child services." (If you complete the census.)
- "Signing documents is signing your rights over to the state."

Suggestions

Access: One gentleman in the group shed a positive light on the census. He completed the census online and explained that it is "as old as time." He thinks it is important for people to know that completing the census will help the neighborhood "get what people need: schools, hospitals, and so on." He believes many lack access to information, meaning they cannot access TV and computers to learn more about how the census can benefit their community.

- "People need more awareness/knowledge." (He also understood that some people do not have the means, e.g., language barrier or no TV).
- "Everyone should get the census the same way and with the same message."

Results/Proof: Two people stated, and the majority agreed, that "seeing the results" of the census would help them trust the system. In other words, what did my community gain by all of us participating in the census?

- "I would like to see it to its ending."
- "I would complete the census if it's developed to do something that I could see at the back end."

Focus Group #2: Ithaca, NY

Number of Participants: (9) Four did not participate in the 2020 Census, two participated, and three had no memory of whether they did.

Initially, focus group participants spoke negatively about the census, stating its purpose was political and that the data gathered were used to target certain populations. Many voiced that they did not remember if they have even received the census. Reasons stated for not participating in 2020 include:

Lack of Understanding/Awareness

With one exception, this whole group expressed confusion about the purpose of the census. The majority stated that when they were growing up, no one around them ever knew about it or did it. One participant remarked, "I'm 32 years old now and just learning about the census in this focus group. I was never around people that knew about it." None of them knew that it was a legal obligation, mentioning that they would have responded if they had known.

- "If you aren't taught that it's important or an environment that people valued it/did it, then you wouldn't know to do it.
- "If you don't know what it's for, you're not going to do it."
- "If people who are Americans in this group didn't even know what the census is or that it is an obligation, then what does it mean for all the immigrants or non-English speakers?"
- "If I knew it was a legal obligation, I would have definitely filled it out."

Fear and Distrust of Census Outreach

Once again, in this site, people reported being fearful of strangers knocking on their door and being swindled.

- "I worry about who is at the door when they knock and don't want to answer it, especially when they are in unsafe neighborhoods."
- "My family experienced identity fraud, and I worry about what is real or if I'm being scammed."
- "Scams are prevalent in many of our lives today."

Privacy

This group also expressed significant concern over how the government would handle and use the information being collected, especially for immigrant or refugee populations. Many expressed uncertainties around why there was a need to collect this information at all. These communities do not know if their information will be used against them or if they will experience negative consequences as a result of participation.

- "The census is a way for government to do a lot of things, gather information, and track certain demographics."
- "The census benefits you depending on what group you are in, what ethnicity you belong to."
- "Politicians take this information to make decisions that go against our interests." (Relating to power and position.)
- "Data can be manipulated." (Referring to the government using data to its advantage.)

Antipathy Toward Government

Many people had negative feelings toward the Census because they did not think it was effective; they did not see a change in communities that needed it most. Participants stated that people keep explaining that the census helps distribute resources, but they have not experienced any of those benefits in their communities.

- "If I am not seeing change, then what are they really doing with this information?"
- "It's not so much about resources. We never saw any change."

Suggestions

At the end of this focus group discussion, many participants who had not responded in 2020 stated that they would likely respond in 2030. They highlighted that learning more and having a detailed conversation about the census helped them understand the purpose and benefits of the it. One of the participants who had responded to the census in 2020 stated that, while she had not seen changes

where she lives, there are many that have benefitted from the information collected through the census in the last decade. This participant stressed that marketing around the census should be highlighting how communities have benefited in the past. Many focus group members also strongly felt that people need to be informed within the 10-year span, not only immediately before a census. They argued that highlighting programs or resources made available to the community because of the census between decades would have a much larger impact on the public's willingness to respond in the future.

- "Have better education about it in schools."
- "Better PR because it's every ten years, and that's a long time in between. People become adults in that span of time and in those between years use social media more. Don't just advertise right before the census."
- "Local councilmen/politicians need to tell (the) town to do the census and what it is."
- "Pride is a big issue. No one is going to say they don't know what it is because they are too prideful. Make it a part of people's life to know what it is."

Focus Group #3: Poughkeepsie, NY

Number of Participants: (6) Five participated in the 2020 Census, and one did not.

While our primary target population were those who had not filled out the census, this site had many participants who had completed it in 2020. The facilitator's questions remained consistent with the protocol but were modified to ask for perceptions of why other people do not fill out the census. Of note, there were two Hispanic women who did not speak English, but a translator was made available to ensure accurate communication. The following themes emerged:

Lack of Understanding/Awareness

Most participants responded in 2020. Their understanding of the census centered on allocation of resources and representation. They were aware that being counted in the census meant their needs were more likely to be represented. Their perceptions of why others in the area may not have participated were related to confusion about the census' purpose. The one individual who had not filled out the census reported (through the translator), "I didn't know what it was for. What is the census used for?" Many in the room agreed these discussions around intention and purpose were critical to increase participation. A second individual shared (through translation): "I filled it out because it helps the government know how much resources to give people. I told my children; we have to do our part to support our people and the country."

Privacy

A majority of the participants believed that people in their neighborhood did not respond to the census because they were worried about repercussions of participating. Many of their neighbors were involved in legal proceedings or were undocumented, and they were extremely worried about filling out a document for the government that may negatively affect them. One participant also mentioned that people may be concerned about the data being shared with landlords, revealing more people living in a house than are technically allowed. While the information being collected is framed by enumerators as innocuous, it can be concerning for people worried about any rules they may be breaking. The

participants, who had mostly responded to the census in 2020, said that they understand why there is a great deal of hesitancy to share information.

- "People want to be cautious. How the data is being used?"
- "It's a privacy issue. We want to guard our privacy."
- "I don't think you're allowed to have another tenant." [on people who did not want information on the true number of tenants in their home to be known]
- "It's unknown how far this information will spread."
- "Why do they need to know this? They know everything about us anyway."
- "A lot of people don't trust what the government is going to do with the data. I don't think there's any way to change that based on how the government treats people in this country."

Fear and Distrust of Census Outreach

All agreed there was a general sense of distrust and hesitancy in their community when people arrive at their homes and knock on the door. People were not opening the door to hear from someone conducting the census; therefore, they did not learn why it was beneficial or how the Census Bureau is not allowed to share information with other agencies. "It's a little intimidating to have someone knock on your door."

Antipathy Toward Government

Even though most of the participants in this focus group filled out the census in 2020, many reflected that they still have not seen its benefits. It is hard to convince someone to keep doing the census because it will help them when they have yet to experience any of the help.

- "Is the census really going to make anything better?"
- "What is the positive benefit?"
- "At the end of the day, what good does it do me?"

Suggestions

As most of this group had filled out the census, the facilitator asked the group for advice on messaging. "What message needs to be heard? Who are the trusted messengers? What would encourage people to fill out the census?" The responses highlight a need for more in-depth messaging that goes beyond only informational fliers. Many people believe that a conversation is more helpful to explain how the census works and for whom it is important. People also believe that the census process needs to be demystified. What are the actual questions on the census? They stated it would help if people were provided information before the census is mailed out because many think they are required to be more informed than is necessary. Some people may have avoided completing the census because they assumed it requires the submission of important documents that many people do not have immediately on-hand. Finally, participants continuously suggested highlighting how the census benefits the community to increase participation in 2030.

A summary of the responses follows:

- "It's conversations like these. We need more in-depth information. That knowledge would help.

This conversation would encourage me to fill out the census."

- "Let people know what it entails. People think it's more involved than it actually is."
- "It's not going to take long. You're not going to have to look up things. Before they start, let them know what it's going to look like, so they aren't afraid of doing it right away."
- "I think information has to come from people they already know, like this organization."
- "Share outcomes of the census and what it's being used for and the benefits of it."

Focus Group #4: Buffalo, NY

Number of Participants: (5). Three participants did not fill out the 2020 Census, (1) was unsure, and (1) did fill out the census in 2020.

The following themes emerged as the facilitator discussed participants perceptions of the census and the thinking that went into their decision around filling out the census in 2020:

Privacy and Distrust of Government

The overarching theme among participants at this site was distrust of government, people in high-ranking positions, and businesses. Participants reported lacking trust for how census data would be handled- especially after watching people "being taken from their homes and off the streets of Buffalo while Trump was president and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had a strong presence in Buffalo." One participant, who worked in the social justice field, adamantly explained that a fear of repercussion after filling out the census- explicitly mentioning the deportation of immigrants- far outweighed any perceived civic obligations.

- "There was a lot of talk at the time (among this population) about not putting immigrant populations at risk, and not trusting that the administration at the time wasn't going to do something inappropriate with the information."
- "They used to use it [the census] to track our ancestors and where they had been. It has changed to target specific populations and twist information."
- "We need to keep us safe" because of intense distrust in political systems, government agencies, and law enforcement keeping information private.

Antipathy Toward Government

Many understood that the census dealt with documenting the population and, consequently, allocating resources. However, an overwhelming majority felt it was pointless because they never saw the needed resources allocated to their communities. Their community has many needs (e.g., "We have many children, and there are no playgrounds, fresh fruits/vegetables, community centers to provide enough for them in a close enough proximity.") and they never see resources from the government for their identified needs. The participants in this group also felt that the government did not provide support for communities of color and therefore felt no obligation towards assisting the government.

- "They say if you fill out the census, it affects the dollars that come into your community, but we aren't getting any dollars anyways. So that conversation is lost on a lot of people because what difference does it make?"

- "They are up there playing chess, and we are down here still playing checkers." (The feeling of being left out of the loop and forgotten.)
- Many felt that organizations (even the facilitators) are extracting information from their communities while providing no benefit. There was a general air of "the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer" regarding money, time, and information. "We have a rule in social justice work: if you don't pay people their value, you don't believe that they have value."
- "Now, what you don't know because you are not from Buffalo is that Tonawanda, a town just on the outskirts of Buffalo, is a sundown town[2], and it's still a stronghold for white supremacy in our city. So, recognizing that 17 of the biggest white supremacy organizations have quadrupled their base in the last four to five years - all of these things playing together at the time (the conversation about what happens if Trump becomes president again, what happens with these communities) - the census, with all due respect, is the last thing that we are thinking about right now."

Suggestions

When asked what could be done to persuade them to participate in 2030, a conversation arose about feeling undervalued in society and needing deep systemic change. The group agreed that their communities need to be valued; this means providing resources and money for their time and effort when completing the census. People expressed they are too busy providing for their families and meeting other urgent needs (e.g., putting food on the table and a roof over their heads) to worry about the census and why it matters.

One member involved in community engagement said that it was especially important when working with marginalized populations to ensure they feel valued and to get the information in front of them often to educate them. From his perspective, this meant:

- "Every year (in between censuses), you should do some type of marketing, like conversations within the community brought together by free food, polling to see how people felt about previous census, posting those results and ads to provide education as to what the census is."
- "Making sure that there is a trusted community leader & agency being funded to appropriately (to show value) educate their own communities and their needs the way they know best."
- "Once information is delivered, there needs to be an immediate opportunity to go fill out the census right there on the spot. People are much more willing to go do something they just learned about."
- "You need to not just think about what you can gain from us but instead how to foster a working and balanced relationship of give and take."

[2] Sundown towns, also known as sunset towns, gray towns, or sundowner towns, are all-white municipalities or neighborhoods in the United States that practice a form of racial segregation by excluding non-whites via some combination of discriminatory local laws, intimidation or violence. The term came into use because of signs that directed "colored people" to leave town by sundown.

Stage 2: NYS Survey Findings

In the next step of this research phase, we conducted a survey of a representative sample of NYS residents to understand if the themes identified during the focus group were generalizable to all state residents. The questions asked were informed by the suggestions made in the focus groups. The survey was administered by a highly reputable nonpartisan research firm YouGov to 1,000 respondents, representative of the population in NYS. Respondents were asked questions about their participation in the 2020 Census, why they did or did not participate, and what factors lead to participation. In addition, we collected a broad slate of demographic information on each respondent. Respondents were also asked for suggestions to improve response rates for the 2030 Census. The results discussed in this report highlight key take-aways from the survey responses.

Spatial Distribution of Responses

Using residential zip codes, we were able to map out the location of survey respondents across the state. As the maps show, a majority of respondents resided downstate in NYC and Long Island, with other concentrations in upstate urban areas like Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and the Capital Region. Areas without any coverage had zero respondents. Though the sample is demographically representative of NYS, it is important to note that the spatial distribution suggests that a majority of responders reside in cities.

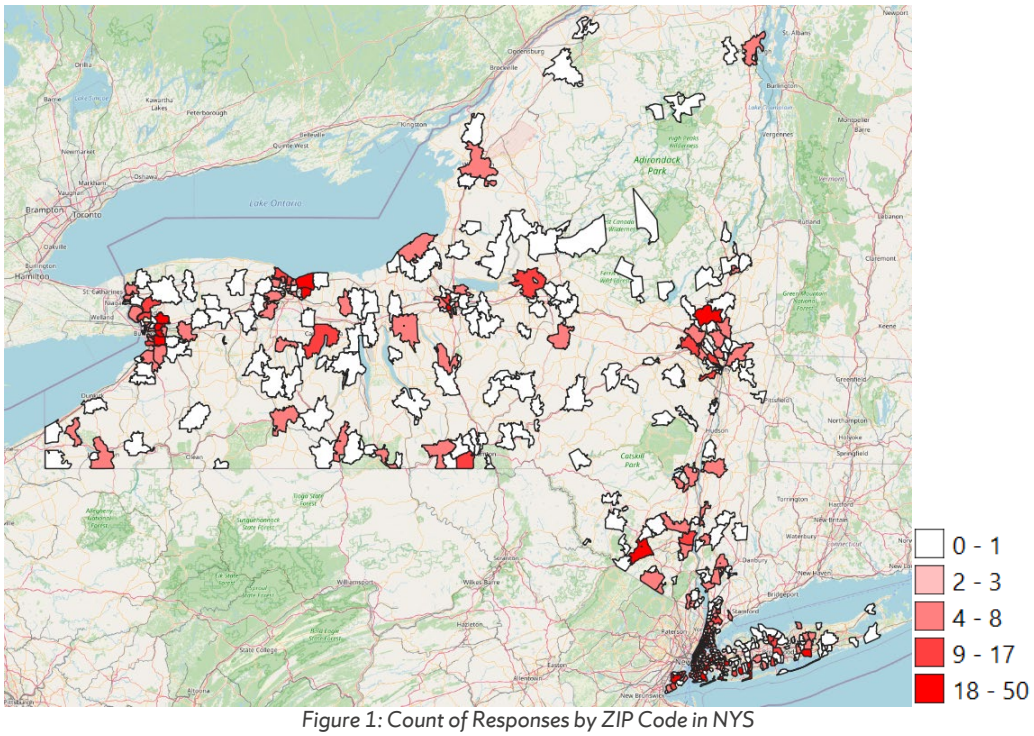

Figure 1: Count of Responses by ZIP Code in NYS

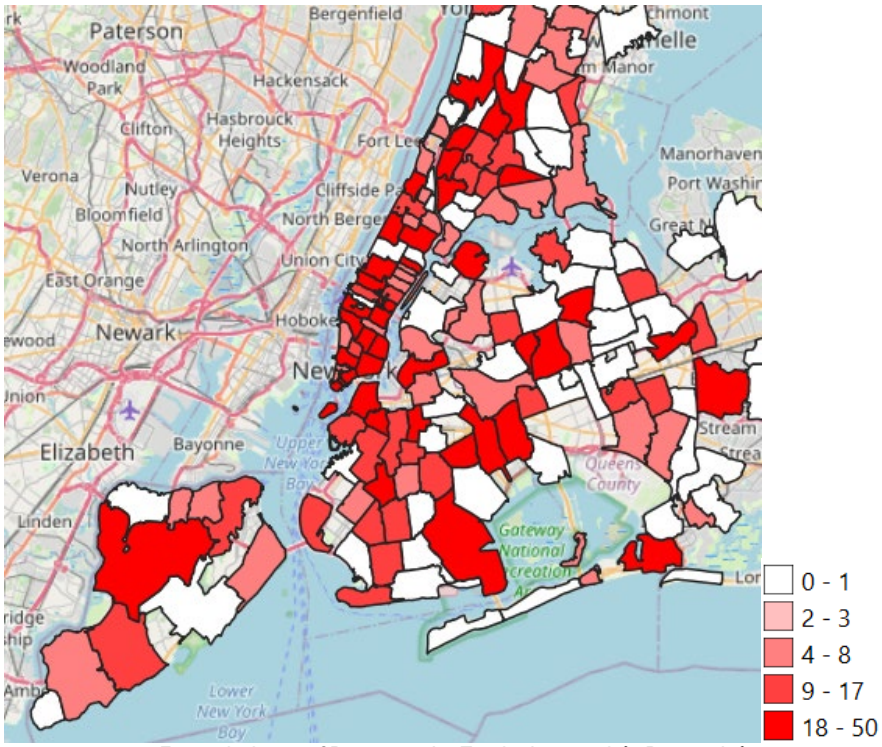

Figure 2: Count of Responses by ZIP Code in NYC (5 Burroughs)

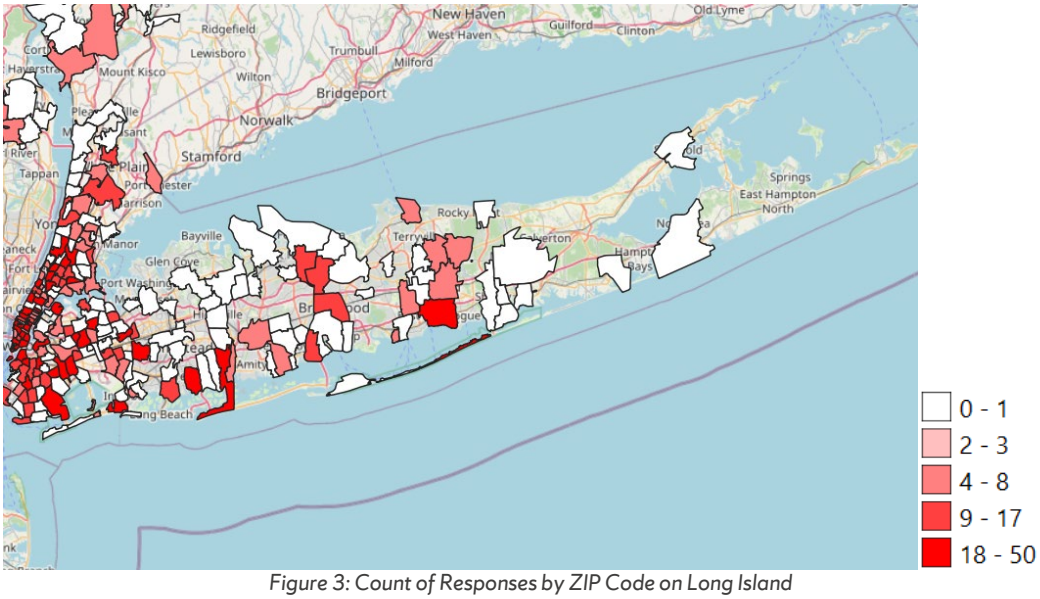

Figure 3: Count of Responses by ZIP Code on Long Island

Participation in the 2020 Census

Among our survey respondents, nearly three-quarters (N=752) responded to the 2020 decennial census, with the remaining respondents either not responding (N=128) or reporting that they were not sure if they responded (N=120).

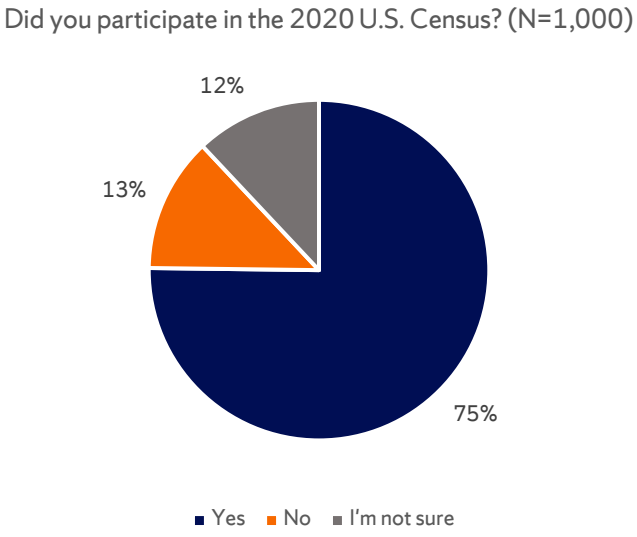

Figure 4: 2020 Census Participation

Respondents were then asked, "Did anyone reach out to you, in person or by telephone, about filling out the census in 2020?" Almost two-thirds (61%) of respondents reported that no one reached out to them about completing the census, and 30% of respondents reported being contacted about the census.

Table 2: Census Communication

	N	Percent
Yes	300	30%
No	613	61%
I don't remember	87	9%
Total	1000	100%

Breaking down the responses by their participation in the 2020 Census, we see that 37% of respondents who participated in 2020 were contacted by someone about filling out the census compared to only 15% of respondents who did not participate.

Table 3: Census Communication by Census Participation

	N	Yes	No	Don't Remember	Total Percent
"Yes" Participation	752	37%	63%	0%	100%
"No" Participation	128	15%	71%	14%	100%
"Not Sure" Participation	120	3%	40%	58%	100%

Sample Demographics

Table 4 reports demographic information for the NYS sample. We provide information for the full sample of 1,000 respondents and separately for those who participated, those who did not, and those who were unsure. The full sample respondent's mean age is 50 years, with a slight majority being female (52%) and white (60.5%). A majority of the sample is a U.S. citizen. Breaking out the demographics by respondent's participation in the 2020 Census shows that there are significant differences between the groups. On average, respondents who did not participate in the 2020 Census are younger than those who did participate, more likely to be female, non-white, and have lower levels of education. Finally, there were a greater number of foreign born respondents and a significantly lower voter registration rate amongst those who did not participate in the census compared to those who did. Among the group who could not remember if they participated, they are also younger, more likely to be non-white, have less education, and are less likely to be registered to vote relative to respondents who did participate in the 2020 Census.

Table 4: Sample Demographics

Variable	Full Sample	"Yes" Participation	"No" Participation	"Not Sure" Participation
Age	49.9	52.2	42.2	43.8
Sex				
Female (%)	52.3	51.6	57.8	50.8
Male (%)	47.7	48.4	42.2	49.2
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	60.5	64.5	44.5	52.5
Black (%)	16.3	14.5	27.3	15.8
Hispanic (%)	11.8	10.6	15.6	15.0
Asian (%)	4.9	4.8	7.0	3.3
Native American (%)	1.1	0.8	0.8	3.3
Two or more races (%)	2.7	2.9	0.8	3.3
Other (%)	1.8	1.1	3.1	5.0
Middle Eastern (%)	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.7
Highest Education Level				
No high school	3.1	1.6	9.4	5.8
High school	27.6	26.7	28.9	31.7

Some college	13.9	12.5	14.1	22.5
Two year college	9.6	9.3	14.1	6.7
Four year college	26.7	27.9	24.2	21.7
Post graduate degree	19.1	21.9	9.4	11.7
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	12.5	10.4	25.0	12.5
US Citizen (%)	87.5	89.6	75.0	87.5
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	43.2	44.8	32.0	45.0
Republican (%)	24.7	26.2	26.6	13.3
Independent (%)	22.9	22.5	23.4	25.0
Other (%)	3.1	2.9	2.3	5.0
Not sure (%)	6.1	3.6	15.6	11.7
Voter Registration (%)	85.3	91.0	64.8	71.7
N	1,000	752	128	120

Simulation

To understand how these factors are related to the likelihood of individuals responding to the census, we ran a simulation. Using the data available, we estimated the factors that are most likely to influence the three different response categories (responded, did not respond, not sure). Our results suggest that variation in age, race, education, income levels, reported political party affiliation, voter registration status, and immigrant status do influence the likelihood that an individual responded to the 2020 Census[3].

To better understand the importance of these distinct factors, we start with a hypothetical individual and report the chances that this person would respond, would not respond, or fall into the "do not know" category. For example, we take an individual with a high predicted likelihood of voting and simulate what factors change their likelihood of having responded to the 2020 Census. The data indicates that a Black man, who is registered to vote, identifies as a Democrat, is 50 years old, has a college degree, reports an income between $50,000 to $100,000, lives in the city, and is a US citizen is 91.3% likely to have responded to the 2020 Census. The table below shows how changing one characteristic of the hypothetical person described changes their predicted probability of having responded to the 2020 Census. We note the factor that changed in the first column.

[3] We use a multinomial logit regression model to determine this. Full estimates from the model can be found in the technical appendix.

Table 5: Simulation Values

	Responded	Did Not Respond	Don't Know if Responded
Hypothetical person (described above)	91.30%	5.90%	2.80%
Change to female	90.50%	7.10%	2.40%
Change age to 20	80.90%	13.10%	6.00%
Change race to Asian	95.12%	2.78%	2.10%
Change to foreign born	83.50%	13.80%	2.60%
Change education to high school drop-out	73.80%	18.70%	7.60%
Change education to post-graduate	93.30%	4.10%	2.50%
Change income to less than 50k	89.70%	6.40%	4.00%
Change party to Republican	88.80%	9.50%	1.70%
Change voter registration status to "not registered" to vote	81.30%	14.00%	4.70%
Change location to suburbs	88.70%	6.60%	4.70%

The table above highlights which factors change an individual's likelihood of having participated in the 2020 Census. For example, reducing the age of our hypothetical person from 50 years to 20 years, keeping all other characteristics the same, reduced their likelihood of having responded to the 2020 Census by more than 10 percentage points. The model suggests that age is a key factor related to one's likelihood of responding, but also quantifies it. Age may be one of the most important determinants of non-response based on how variation in age changes the predicted probability of having responded to the census. Changing the education level of this individual from four year college degree to no high school education level reduces their likelihood of having responded to the census by 17 percentage points. This model therefore suggests that education is also an especially important determinant of non-response. While we only ever change one factor at a time, one can imagine that young, high school dropouts are a group that was highly unlikely to respond to the census. Changing the hypothetical individual's voter registration status to not registered also reduces their likelihood of having responded to the 2020 Census by 10 percentage points, highlighting that voter registration is related to non-response.

This simulation exercise is not meant to be interpreted causally. In other words, we do not mean to imply that if one increased their education from a high school drop-out to a college graduate, they would become 17.5 percentage points more likely to respond to the census. Instead, these simulations highlight the factors to target when designing future interventions to increase census response and gives some sense of the relative importance of the various factors.

Reasons for Not Responding

The survey asked participants who did not respond to the census why they chose not to respond. The primary options provided for this multiple choice question came from the focus groups. We also

provided an option "other" with a text box for respondents to write in their reasons. The most common response was that they "didn't know anything about the census" (35%). Among those who selected "other," respondents wrote many varied reasons such as being outside of the U.S., living in transient housing or being unhoused, not receiving the census form, or just forgetting to do it.

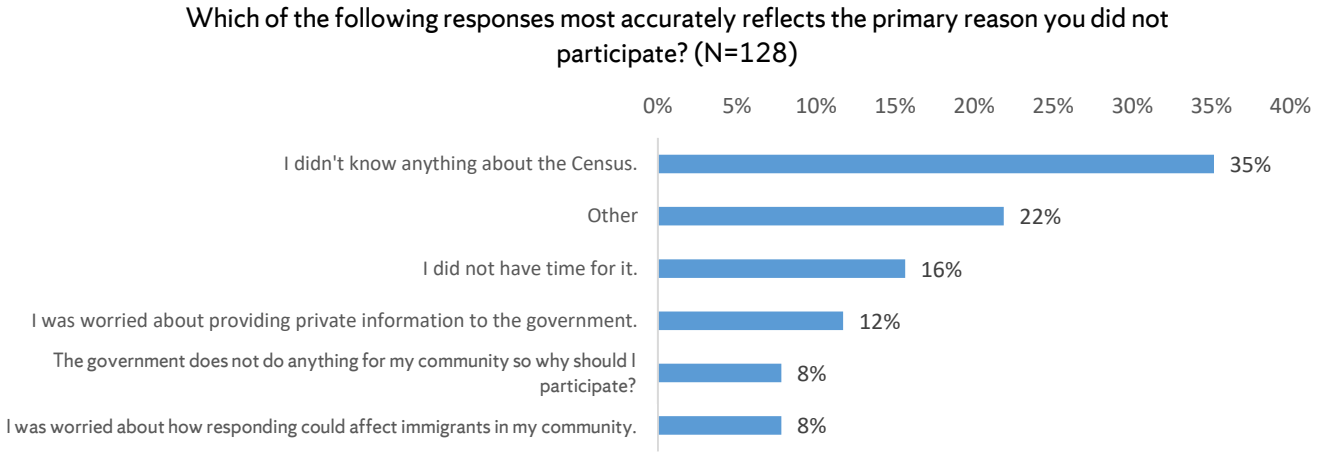

Figure 5: Reasons for Not Responding

Reasons for Responding

Respondents who did participate in the 2020 Census were asked why they chose to respond. The results indicate that 35% of the respondents participated because they knew an accurate count led to more government resources in their community. Several respondents also reported that they participated in the census because it was "my civic duty" (31%). Of the 3% of respondents that selected "other", the majority wrote in that they completed the census because it was required.

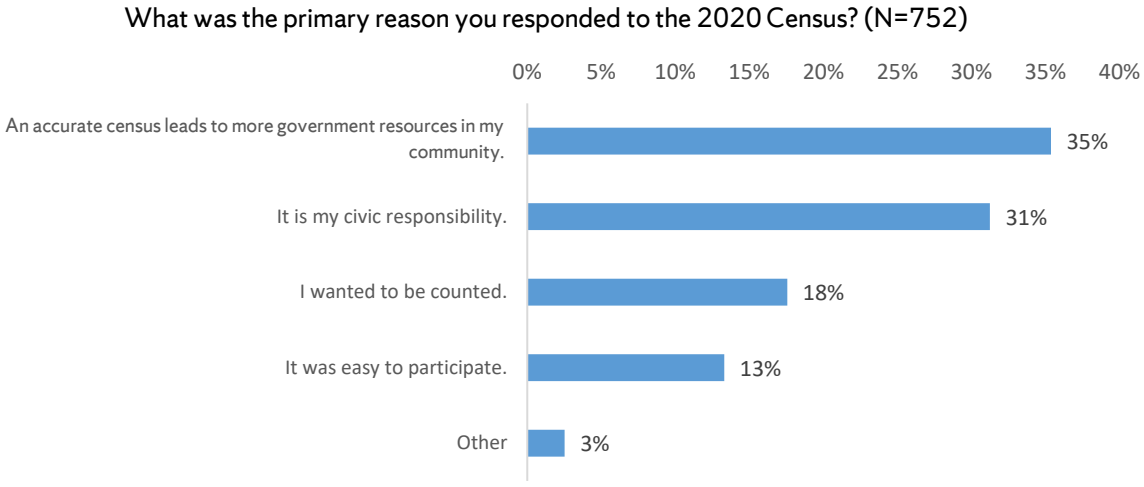

Figure 6: Reasons for Responding

Those who participated in the 2020 Census were then asked: "How did you respond to the 2020 Census?" Nearly half reported they responded by mail (48%), followed by online (24%), and in person (16%). This is substantially lower than the reported NYS 2020 Census online response rate, which was 51% (US Census Bureau, 2021).

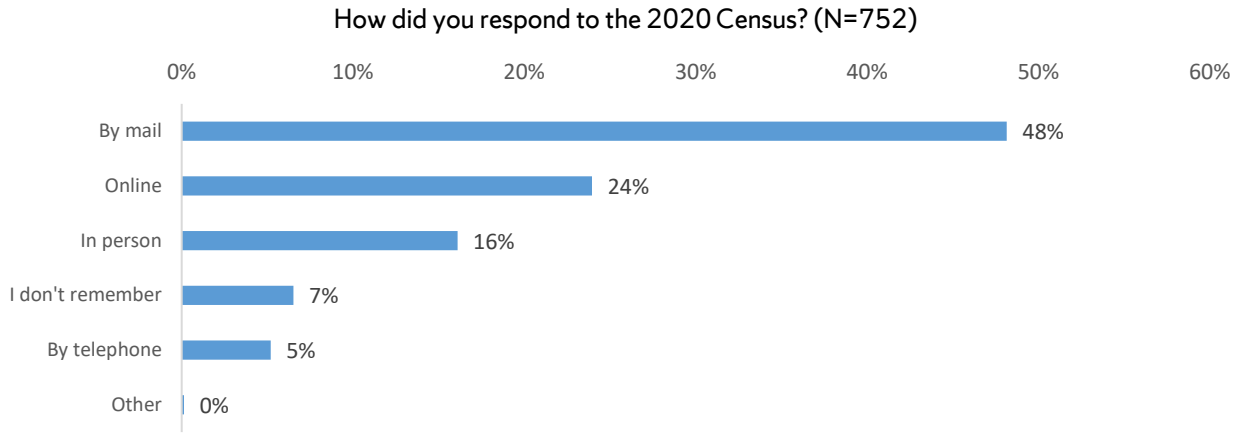

Figure 7: Census Response Type

Reasons People Think Others Are Not Responding

We asked those who did respond in 2020 and those who were unsure if they responded why they think others did not respond to the census. About 32% of respondents who did participate in the 2020 Census thought non-respondents were worried about "providing private information to the government", while a quarter thought it might be that they had family members who were undocumented immigrants. Interestingly, these reasons do not align with the reasons reported by people who did not respond (35% said they did not respond because they do not know anything about the Census). Noting the differences between perceived reasons for a lack of response compared to people's actual reasons for not responding highlights the importance of context-specific solutions to improving the count.

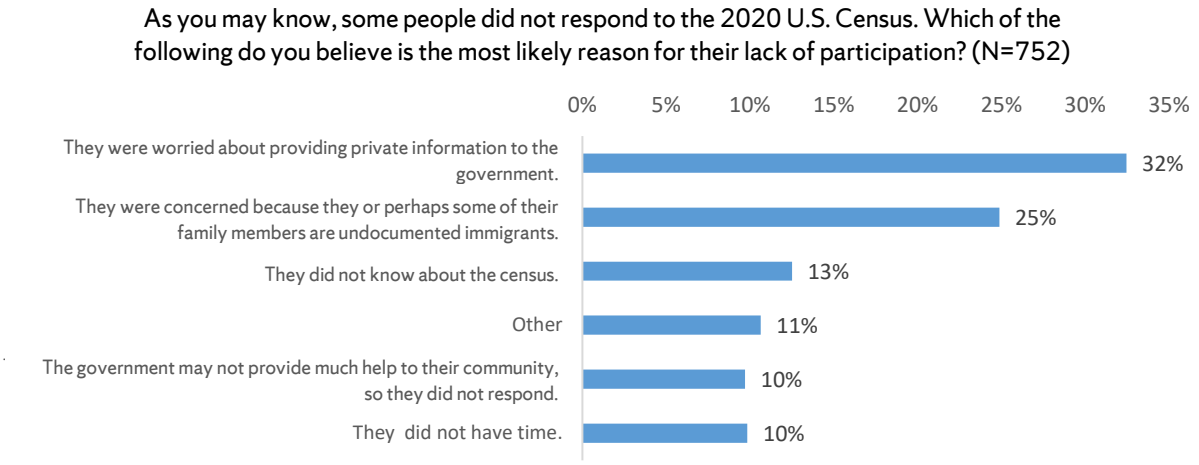

Figure 8: Reasons Why Others Did Not Respond ("Yes" Respondents)

Among the respondents who were not sure whether they participated in the 2020 Census, the most common explanation selected is that people did not fill it out because they did not know about the census, followed by reporting that they did not have time (Figure 9). These potential reasons aligned with the actual reported reasons from people who did not respond to the census in 2020.

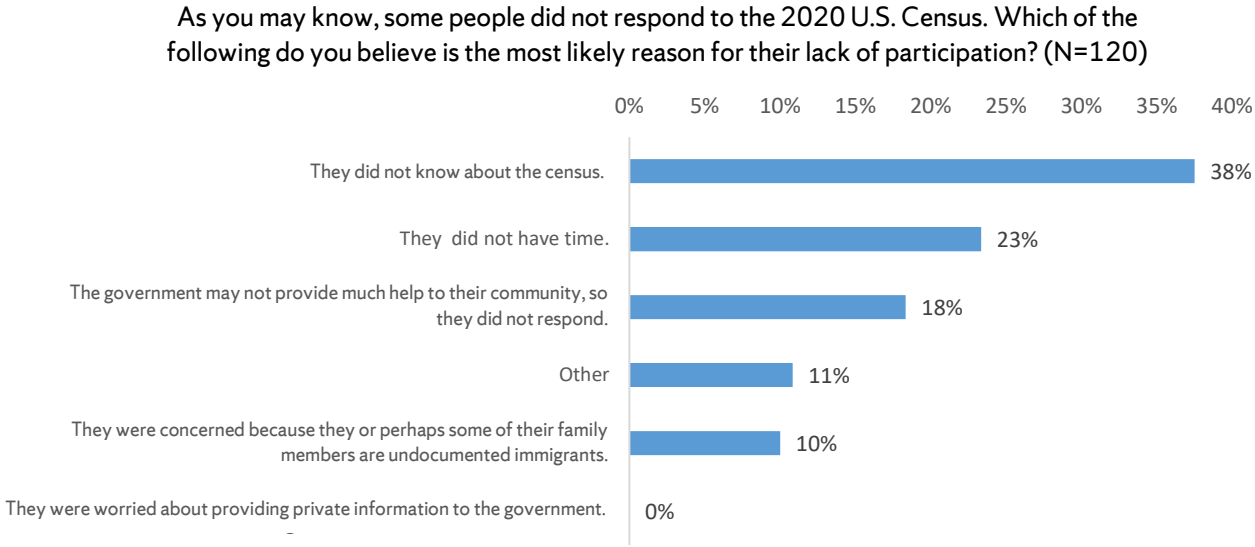

Figure 9: Reasons Why Others Did Not Respond ("Not Sure" Respondents)

Factors Affecting Responses to the Future Census

For respondents that indicated that they did not respond to the 2020 Census, we asked a set of questions, informed by our focus group data, to illicit an understanding of the factors that would encourage them to respond in the future. First, we asked non-responders if they understood census response was required by law. More than two-thirds of non-responders (69%) were unaware.

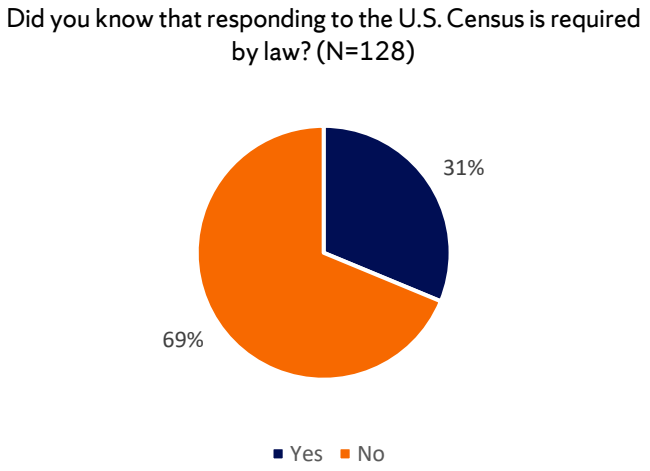

Figure 10: Census Required by Law

Among those who said no, we next asked if knowing that the census was legally required would impact their willingness to respond. Nearly half (43%) reported that they would have responded to the census if they knew it was required by law, 25% were unsure, and 32% did not think that information would have changed their non-response.

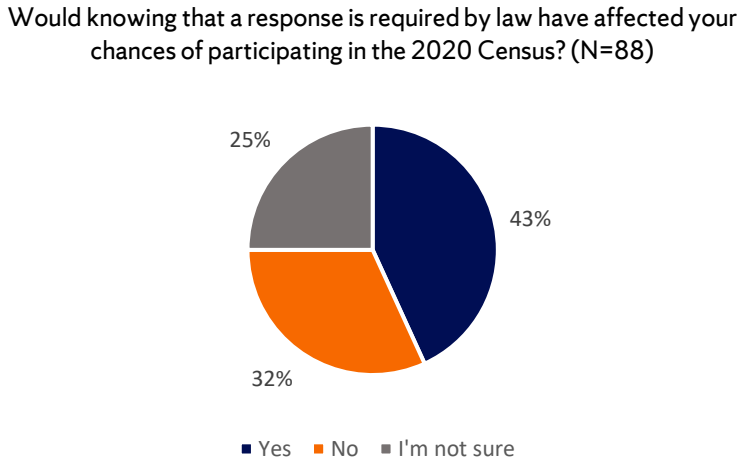

Figure 11: Participation Change for Legal Requirement

The focus groups also emphasized that some non-respondents either did not know that the census is used to allocate resources in their area or believed that responding to the census would not change the current trend of resource distribution in their neighborhoods. Drawing from this finding, we asked respondents if learning that government resources spent in NYS depends on the number of people counted during the census would change their mind about responding. A majority (51%) of respondents said that this information would have changed their mind, 17 percent were not sure, and 32% said they would remain non-responsive.

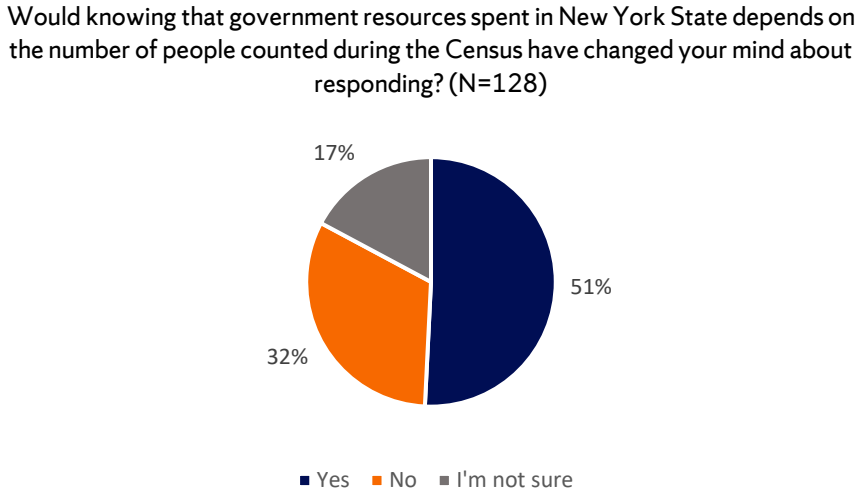

Figure 12: Participation Change for Government Resource Information

Finally, we asked respondents if hearing from a trusted member of their community would change their willingness to respond to the census. Almost half of respondents (45%) reported that they would have been more likely to respond in 2020 if they were encouraged by a trusted member of their community such as a religious leader or community organizer. There were 19% unsure how this would change their response, and 37% who would not change their non-response.

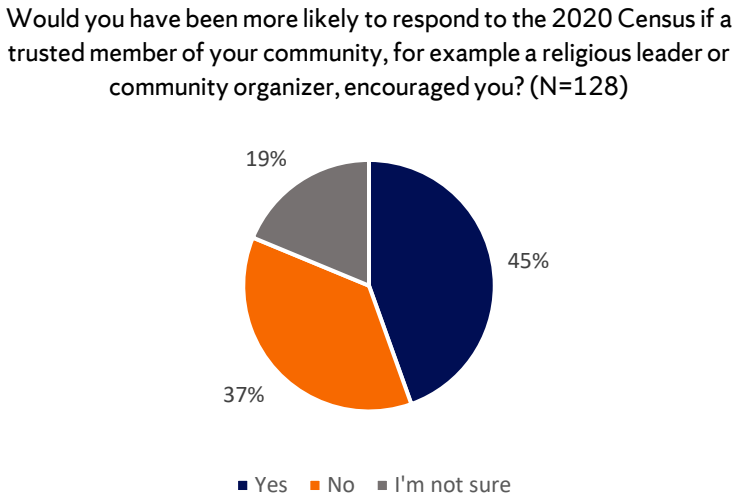

Figure 13: Participation Change for Community Leader

Suggestions for 2030 Census

In the final portion of the survey, among respondents who did participate or who were unsure if they had participated, we asked for any suggestions they had to encourage responses to the 2030 Census. This request was open-ended, and respondents had a text box to provide responses.

To analyze their response data, we used a conceptual content analysis framework where an X Lab analyst coded responses into common themes. Of the 872 people that were asked this question, 464 people provided valid responses to the question posed (valid was defined as relevant to the question). Twelve themes surfaced among these responses and are listed in the chart below. Importantly, some responses fit several themes; therefore, we allocated them to multiple categories. For example, the following text "To improve response rates for the 2030 Census, consider implementing targeted outreach campaigns through various channels such as social media, local community events, and partnerships with community organizations. Emphasize the importance of participation, address potential concerns about privacy, and highlight the positive impact of an accurate count on community resources. Additionally, utilizing multiple languages for communication can make the census more accessible to diverse populations" includes multiple themes and was allocated to several categories. Also of note, there were themes that overlapped but we describe the reasons for coding them as separate below.

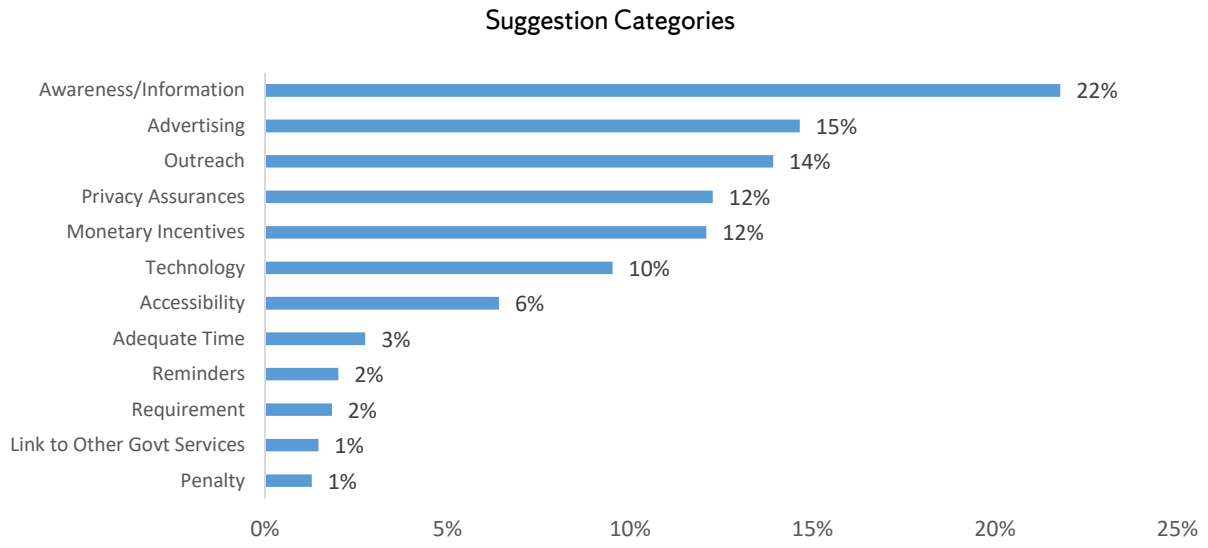

Figure 14: Suggestion Categories for 2030 Census

The most common suggestion was spreading awareness and providing more information to the population about the census, its purpose, and how to fill it out. Illustrative examples of suggestions under this theme include:

- "The only thing I can think of is to inform them that the census is the only way the government knows how many people are in your community, and how to provide resources to that community."
- "A mandatory civics lesson"
- "My state lost a U.S. Representative because people did not respond. They need to know that it will affect them immensely if they are not counted."

The second most common suggestion was linked, and it focused on the importance of advertising. In particular, responses encouraged being more creative and using resources outside of traditional marketing. We separated this category from the awareness/information theme as these responses

specifically suggested using traditional or social media marketing tools to make people aware of the census and the need to fill it out by a certain time period.

- "More PSAs where people will see them - on social media. Tik Tok videos and other attention grabbing media that especially is viewed by millennials and gen Z."
- "Better marketing for an entire year before census is due."
- "More public service announcements across social media in a variety of languages."

Nearly 15% of the responses fell under the category of outreach. Many people still suggested going door-to-door, even though this is current practice. Respondents also emphasized the importance of using trusted messengers or doing outreach in public spaces in areas where there tend to be low response rates. Again, outreach has similar connotations to spreading awareness/information and advertising, but comments in this category specifically focused on using face-to-face interactions to make people aware of the census and how to fill it out.

- "Make it available in shopping malls and grocery stores, but that would involve hiring census workers."
- "Partnering with community organizations, nonprofit organizations, and religious organizations to help spread the word about the census and its importance can help increase participation rates, especially in hard-to-reach communities."

Nearly 12% of the responses fell under the category of privacy assurance. This focused on highlighting and being transparent with disclaimers on data protection and privacy.

- "Specific assurances that the info won't be used for any legal actions or shared with agencies for legal or civil actions."

Another 12% of the responses suggested using monetary incentives such as gift cards, or tax credits/rebates.

- "I can only suggest going the same route that private companies do: Offering incentives. I assume the census letter will have an online code, as online response will only be more common in 2030 than 2020. Make that invite code double as a coupon code: You can also enter that code on your IRS income tax return for 2030, and if a census response from the same address was also received, you get a flat rebate of X dollars on your taxes. This shouldn't be too hard to accomplish, just a question of validating that a census response was actually received. And of course, the budget for the rebates."

Additional suggestions included bringing in more technology (texting instead of phone calls or mail, apps) and improving accessibility (provide the form in multiple different languages and make it short). Some people also suggested giving people enough time (at least a year or making a public holiday where everyone should fill out the Census), sending more reminders, making it a requirement, or penalizing people who do not complete it. Finally, some of the responses fell under the category of linking it with other government services. People suggested combining it with voting, submitting forms for social services, or tied to ID renewals.

Technical Appendix

Appendix A: NYS Census Equity Fund, Census Lite Members, and Funders

Collaborators	Organization
Allie Urbanski	Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
Asher Ross	New York Immigration Coalition
Pat Swann	The New York Community Trust
Jeff Wice	New York Law School and New York Census and Redistricting Institute
Jen Drake	The Dyson Foundation
Karla Bradley	The New York Civic Engagement Table
Lisa Fasolo Frishman	Engage New York
Melody Lopez	The New York Civic Engagement Table
Steve Romalewski	CUNY Mapping Service and Center for Urban Research
Sol Marie Alfonso Jones	The Long Island Community Foundation
Randi Hewitt	The Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes
Rebecca Sanin	Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
Wennie Chin	The New York Immigration Coalition

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Introduction

My name is Leonard Lopoo, and I am a professor at Syracuse University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study.

The U.S. Decennial Census is the count of people who live in the United States, and it occurs every ten years. In this study, I will ask you about your participation in the 2020 U.S. Census and for suggestions about how to increase census participation. This survey will take approximately 8 minutes of your time. Your individual responses will remain completely anonymous. Involvement in the study is voluntary. This means you can choose whether to participate and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Leonard Lopoo (lmlopoo@syr.edu).

Whenever one works with email or the internet, there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology being used. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

By continuing with this survey, you agree that you are at least 23 years of age or older and agree to participate in this research study.

[Q1]

Do you think the government provides as much assistance to your community as it does to other communities in your area? Examples could include investment in roads and garbage pick-up, high quality schools, and access to hospitals and clinics.

1. Yes
2. No

[Q2]

Do you think the government provides the right amount of services based on your tax contributions?

1. Provides too much
2. Provides too little
3. Provides the right amount

[Q3]

Did you participate in the 2020 U.S. Census?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I'm not sure

[Q4N]
Did anyone reach out to you, in person or by telephone, about filling out the Census in 2020?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't remember

[Q5N]
Which of the following responses most accurately reflects the primary reason you did not participate?
1. I did not have time for it.
2. I didn't know anything about the Census.
3. The government does not do anything for my community so why should I participate?
4. I was worried about providing private information to the government.
5. I was worried about how responding could affect immigrants in my community.
6. Other

[Q6N]
Did you know that responding to the U.S. Census is required by law?
1. Yes
2. No

[Q6NN]
Would knowing that a response is required by law have affected your chances of participating in the 2020 Census?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I'm not sure

[Q7N]
Would knowing that the U.S. Census Bureau cannot legally share information they obtain from the census with immigration agencies or security forces have made you more likely to respond?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I'm not sure

[Q8N]
Would knowing that government spending in your community, on infrastructure like roads and hospitals, depends on the number of people counted during the census have changed your mind about responding?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I'm not sure

[Q9N]
Would you have been more likely to respond to the 2020 census if a trusted member of your community, for example a religious leader or community organizer, encouraged you?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I'm not sure

[Q4Y]
Did anyone reach out to you, in person or by telephone, about filling out the Census in 2020?
1. Yes
2. No

[Q5Y]
What was the primary reason you responded to the 2020 Census?
1. It is my civic responsibility.
2. An accurate census count leads to more government resources in my community.
3. I wanted to be counted.
4. It was easy to participate.
5. Other

[Q6Y]
How did you respond to the 2020 census?
1. By telephone
2. In person
3. Online
4. By mail
5. Other
6. I don't remember

[Q7Y]
As you may know, some people did not respond to the 2020 U.S. Census. Which of the following do you believe is the most likely reason for their lack of participation?
1. They did not have time.
2. They did not know about the Census.
3. The government may not provide much help to their community so they did not respond.
4. They were worried about providing private information to the government.
5. They were concerned because they or perhaps some of their family members are undocumented immigrants.
6. Other

[Q8Y]
Do you have any suggestions for improving the chances that people who did not respond to the 2020 Census will respond to the 2030 Census?

[Q4NS]
Did anyone reach out to you, in person or by telephone, about filling out the Census in 2020?
1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't remember

[Q5NS]
As you may know, some people did not respond to the 2020 U.S. Census. Which of the following do you believe is the most likely reason for their lack of participation?
1. They did not have time.
2. They did not know about the Census.
3. The government may not provide much help to their community so they did not respond.4. They were worried about providing private information to the government.
5. They were concerned because they or perhaps some of their family members are undocumented immigrants.
6. Other

[Q6NS]
Do you have any suggestions for improving the chances that people who did not respond to the 2020 Census will respond to the 2030 Census?

Appendix C: "Yes" and "No" Census Contact Comparison

Variable	"Yes" Contact	"No" Contact	Pr	Significance
Age	44.6	53.6	0.000	***
Sex				
Female (%)	0.5	0.5	0.130	
Male (%)	0.5	0.5		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	58.3	62.3		
Black (%)	21.7	13.9		
Hispanic (%)	12.0	11.3		
Asian (%)	3.3	5.9	0.045	**
Native American (%)	1.0	0.8		
Two or more races (%)	2.0	3.3		
Other (%)	0.7	2.0		
Middle Eastern (%)	1.0	0.7		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	1.3	3.9		
High school	23.0	29.0		
Some college	11.3	14.7	0.009	***
Two year college	11.3	8.8		
Four year college	32.7	24.5		
Post graduate degree	20.3	19.1		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	0.1	0.1	0.966	
US Citizen (%)	0.9	0.9		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	48.0	40.8		
Republican (%)	27.3	25.3		
Independent (%)	18.0	24.8	0.079	*
Other (%)	2.3	3.1		
Not sure (%)	4.3	6.0		
Voter Registration (%)	0.9	0.8	0.003	***
N	300	613		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who were contacted by a census worker in person or by telephone to those who did not get contacted.

Appendix D: "Yes" and "Not Sure" Census Contact Comparison

Variable	"Yes" Contact	"Not Sure" Contact	Pr	Significance
Age	44.6	42.4	0.247	
Sex				
Female (%)	0.5	0.6	0.190	
Male (%)	0.5	0.4		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	58.3	55.2		
Black (%)	21.7	14.9		
Hispanic (%)	12.0	14.9		
Asian (%)	3.3	3.4	0.083	*
Native American (%)	1.0	3.4		
Two or more races (%)	2.0	1.1		
Other (%)	0.7	4.6		
Middle Eastern (%)	1.0	2.3		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	1.3	3.4		
High school	23.0	33.3		
Some college	11.3	17.2	0.067	*
Two year college	11.3	9.2		
Four year college	32.7	21.8		
Post graduate degree	20.3	14.9		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	0.1	0.1	0.523	
US Citizen (%)	0.9	0.9		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	48.0	43.7		
Republican (%)	27.3	11.5		
Independent (%)	18.0	26.4	0.001	***
Other (%)	2.3	5.7		
Not sure (%)	4.3	12.6		
Voter Registration (%)	0.9	0.7	0.000	***
N	300	87		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who were contacted by a census worker in person or by telephone to those who do not remember if they were contacted.

Appendix E: "No" and "Not Sure" Census Contact Comparison

Variable	"No" Contact	"Not Sure" Contact	Pr	Significance
Age	53.6	42.4	0.000	***
Sex				
Female (%)	0.5	0.6	0.642	
Male (%)	0.5	0.4		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	62.3	55.2		
Black (%)	13.9	14.9		
Hispanic (%)	11.3	14.9		
Asian (%)	5.9	3.4	0.075	*
Native American (%)	0.8	3.4		
Two or more races (%)	3.3	1.1		
Other (%)	2.0	4.6		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.7	2.3		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	3.9	3.4		
High school	29.0	33.3		
Some college	14.7	17.2	0.878	
Two year college	8.8	9.2		
Four year college	24.5	21.8		
Post graduate degree	19.1	14.9		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	0.1	0.1	0.476	
US Citizen (%)	0.9	0.9		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	40.8	43.7		
Republican (%)	25.3	11.5		
Independent (%)	24.8	26.4	0.012	**
Other (%)	3.1	5.7		
Not sure (%)	6.0	12.6		
Voter Registration (%)	0.8	0.7	0.007	***
N	613	87		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who were not contacted by a census worker in person or by telephone to those who do not remember if they were contacted.

Appendix F: "Yes" and "No" Participation Demographics Comparison

Variable	Full Sample	"Yes" Participation	"No" Participation	Pr	Significance
Age	49.9	52.2	42.2	0.000	***
Sex					
Female (%)	52.3	51.6	57.8	0.193	
Male (%)	47.7	48.4	42.2		
Race/Ethnicity					
White (%)	60.5	64.5	44.5	0.000	***
Black (%)	16.3	14.5	27.3		
Hispanic (%)	11.8	10.6	15.6		
Asian (%)	4.9	4.8	7.0		
Native American (%)	1.1	0.8	0.8		
Two or more races (%)	2.7	2.9	0.8		
Other (%)	1.8	1.1	3.1		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.9	0.8	0.8		
Highest Education Level					
No high school	3.1	1.6	9.4	0.000	***
High school	27.6	26.7	28.9		
Some college	13.9	12.5	14.1		
Two year college	9.6	9.3	14.1		
Four year college	26.7	27.9	24.2		
Post graduate degree	19.1	21.9	9.4		
Immigration Status					
Foreign born (%)	12.5	10.4	25.0	0.000	***
US Citizen (%)	87.5	89.6	75.0		
Political Party Affiliation					
Democrat (%)	43.2	44.8	32.0	0.000	***
Republican (%)	24.7	26.2	26.6		
Independent (%)	22.9	22.5	23.4		
Other (%)	3.1	2.9	2.3		
Not sure (%)	6.1	3.6	15.6		
Voter Registration (%)	85.3	91.0	64.8	0.000	***
N	1,000	752	128		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1. Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who responded to the 2020 Census to those who did not participate in 2020 and notes statistically significant differences between the groups.

Appendix G: "Yes" and "Not Sure" Participation Demographics

Variable	Full Sample	"Yes" Participation	"Not Sure" Participation	Pr	Significance
Age	49.9	52.2	43.8	0.000	***
Sex					
Female (%)	52.3	51.6	50.8	0.877	
Male (%)	47.7	48.4	49.2		
Race/Ethnicity					
White (%)	60.5	64.5	52.5	0.003	***
Black (%)	16.3	14.5	15.8		
Hispanic (%)	11.8	10.6	15.0		
Asian (%)	4.9	4.8	3.3		
Native American (%)	1.1	0.8	3.3		
Two or more races (%)	2.7	2.9	3.3		
Other (%)	1.8	1.1	5.0		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.9	0.8	1.7		
Highest Education Level					
No high school	3.1	1.6	5.8	0.000	***
High school	27.6	26.7	31.7		
Some college	13.9	12.5	22.5		
Two year college	9.6	9.3	6.7		
Four year college	26.7	27.9	21.7		
Post graduate degree	19.1	21.9	11.7		
Immigration Status					
Foreign born (%)	12.5	10.4	12.5	0.483	
US Citizen (%)	87.5	89.6	87.5		
Political Party Affiliation					
Democrat (%)	43.2	44.8	45.0	0.000	***
Republican (%)	24.7	26.2	13.3		
Independent (%)	22.9	22.5	25.0		
Other (%)	3.1	2.9	5.0		
Not sure (%)	6.1	3.6	11.7		
Voter Registration (%)	85.3	91.0	71.7	0.000	***
N	1,000	752	120		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who responded to the 2020 Census to those who are not sure if they participated in 2020 and notes statistically significant differences between the groups.

Appendix H: "No" and "Not Sure" Participation Demographics

Variable	Full Sample	"No" Participation	"Not Sure" Participation	Pr	Significance
Age	49.9	42.2	43.8	0.408	
Sex					
Female (%)	52.3	57.8	50.8	0.270	
Male (%)	47.7	42.2	49.2		
Race/Ethnicity					
White (%)	60.5	44.5	52.5	0.132	
Black (%)	16.3	27.3	15.8		
Hispanic (%)	11.8	15.6	15.0		
Asian (%)	4.9	7.0	3.3		
Native American (%)	1.1	0.8	3.3		
Two or more races (%)	2.7	0.8	3.3		
Other (%)	1.8	3.1	5.0		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.9	0.8	1.7		
Highest Education Level					
No high school	3.1	9.4	5.8	0.198	
High school	27.6	28.9	31.7		
Some college	13.9	14.1	22.5		
Two year college	9.6	14.1	6.7		
Four year college	26.7	24.2	21.7		
Post graduate degree	19.1	9.4	11.7		
Immigration Status					
Foreign born (%)	12.5	25	12.5	0.012	**
US Citizen (%)	87.5	75	87.5		
Political Party Affiliation					
Democrat (%)	43.2	32	45.0	0.039	**
Republican (%)	24.7	26.6	13.3		
Independent (%)	22.9	23.4	25.0		
Other (%)	3.1	2.3	5.0		
Not sure (%)	6.1	15.6	11.7		
Voter Registration (%)	85.3	64.8	71.7	0.249	
N	1,000	128	120		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who did not respond to the 2020 Census to those who are not sure if they participated in 2020 and notes statistically significant differences between the groups.

Appendix I: Multinomial Logit Regression

Census Participation		B	S.E.	P > |z|	95% C.I. For		Significance
					Lower	Upper	
"No" Participation	Age	-0.032	0.008	0.000	-0.047	-0.010	***
	Female	0.201	0.224	0.370	-0.239	0.640	
	Race						
	Black	0.551	0.296	0.063	-0.029	1.100	*
	Hispanic	0.031	0.337	0.927	-0.629	0.690	
	Asian	-0.398	0.506	0.432	-1.390	0.590	
	Native American	-0.027	1.161	0.981	-2.302	2.000	
	Multi-Race	-0.988	1.099	0.369	-3.143	1.100	
	Middle Eastern	-0.079	1.208	0.948	-2.446	2.000	
	Urbanicity						
	City	-0.146	0.265	0.580	-0.665	0.370	
	Town	-0.510	0.477	0.284	-1.444	0.420	
	Rural	-0.421	0.411	0.306	-1.228	0.380	
	Income						
	Income less than 50k	0.400	0.423	0.343	-0.428	1.200	
	Income 50k to 100k	0.146	0.438	0.739	-0.712	1.000	
	Income 100k to 150k	0.030	0.530	0.954	-1.009	1.000	
	Income 150k+	-0.635	0.625	0.310	-1.860	0.580	
	Political Party						
	Democrat	-0.523	0.317	0.099	-1.145	0.000	*
	Independent	-0.299	0.324	0.356	-0.934	0.330	
	Not Sure	-0.096	0.464	0.835	-1.005	0.810	
	Voter Registration	-0.333	0.301	0.269	-0.922	0.250	
	Political Ideology						
	Very Liberal	0.376	0.393	0.338	-0.394	1.100	
	Liberal	0.062	0.357	0.862	-0.638	0.760	
	Conservative	0.446	0.323	0.168	-0.188	1.000	
	Very Conservative	0.344	0.483	0.476	-0.603	1.200	
	Not Sure	0.522	0.415	0.208	-0.291	1.300	
	Foreign Born	0.987	0.307	0.001	0.385	1.500	***
	Education						
	No High School	1.472	0.509	0.004	0.475	2.400	***
	Some College	0.147	0.354	0.678	-0.547	0.840	
	Two Years College	0.703	0.370	0.057	-0.022	1.400	*
	Four Years College	-0.044	0.318	0.890	-0.667	0.500	
	Post Graduate	-0.467	0.424	0.271	-1.297	0.360	
	Voted Last Election	-1.545	0.272	0.000	-2.078	-1.000	***
	Constant	0.429	0.719	0.551	-0.980	1.800	

"Not Sure" Participation	Age	-0.031	0.008	0.000	-0.046	-0.010	***
	Female	-0.165	0.222	0.457	-0.599	0.000	
	Race						
	Black	-0.339	0.320	0.290	-0.966	0.280	
	Hispanic	-0.109	0.334	0.744	-0.764	0.540	
	Asian	-0.647	0.600	0.281	-1.824	0.520	
	Native American	1.175	0.778	0.131	-0.350	2.600	
	Multi-Race	0.206	0.622	0.741	-1.014	1.400	
	Middle Eastern	0.219	0.958	0.819	-1.659	2.000	
	Urbanicity						
	City	-0.570	0.257	0.026	-1.073	-0.060	**
	Town	-0.312	0.434	0.472	-1.163	0.530	
	Rural	-0.770	0.426	0.071	-1.606	0.060	*
	Income						
	Income less than 50k	-0.565	0.353	0.109	-1.257	0.120	
	Income 50k to 100k	-0.927	0.377	0.014	-1.666	-0.180	**
	Income 100k to 150k	-0.834	0.449	0.063	-1.714	0.040	*
	Income 150k+	-0.844	0.489	0.084	-1.803	0.110	*
	Political Party						
	Democrat	0.447	0.328	0.172	-0.195	1.000	
	Independent	0.287	0.342	0.400	-0.382	0.950	
	Not Sure	0.217	0.492	0.660	-0.748	1.100	
	Voter Registration	-0.257	0.322	0.425	-0.888	0.370	
	Political Ideology						
	Very Liberal	-0.243	0.406	0.551	-1.039	0.550	
	Liberal	0.391	0.304	0.198	-0.205	0.980	
	Conservative	-0.404	0.373	0.279	-1.136	0.320	
	Very Conservative	-0.079	0.535	0.883	-1.127	0.960	
	Not Sure	0.860	0.379	0.023	0.116	1.600	**
	Foreign Born	0.043	0.354	0.902	-0.651	0.730	
	Education						
	No High School	0.906	0.568	0.111	-0.207	2.000	
	Some College	0.517	0.313	0.099	-0.097	1.100	*
	Two Years College	-0.390	0.450	0.386	-1.272	0.490	
	Four Years College	-0.492	0.314	0.117	-1.106	0.120	
	Post Graduate	-0.594	0.382	0.120	-1.343	0.150	
	Voted Last Election	-0.961	0.274	0.000	-1.499	-0.420	***
	Constant	1.393	0.675	0.039	0.071	2.700	**

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1. The base group is respondents who participated in the 2020 Census.

Appendix J: "In Person" and "Online" Response Type Comparison

Variable	In Person	Online	Pr	Significance
Age	40.6	50.5	0.000	***
Sex				
Female (%)	45.5	50.0	0.439	
Male (%)	54.5	50.0		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	47.9	67.8		
Black (%)	24.0	9.4		
Hispanic (%)	18.2	7.8		
Asian (%)	6.6	7.8	0.000	***
Native American (%)	1.7	0.6		
Two or more races (%)	0.8	5.0		
Other (%)	0.0	1.1		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.8	0.6		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	1.7	0.6		
High school	23.1	18.3		
Some college	10.7	12.8	0.765	
Two year college	7.4	15.6		
Four year college	29.8	31.7		
Post graduate degree	27.3	26.7		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	13.2	14.4	0.764	
US Citizen (%)	86.8	85.6		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	54.5	46.1		
Republican (%)	24.8	19.4		
Independent (%)	17.4	27.2	0.127	
Other (%)	0.8	2.8		
Not sure (%)	2.5	4.4		
Voter Registration (%)	92.6	92.8	0.944	
N	121	180		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who responded to the 2020 Census in person to those who responded to the census online.

Appendix K: "In Person" and "Mail" Response Type Comparison

Variable	In Person	By Mail	Pr	Significance
Age	40.6	57.9	0.000	***
Sex				
Female (%)	45.5	53.9	0.109	
Male (%)	54.5	46.1		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	47.9	66.9	0.002	***
Black (%)	24.0	14.4		
Hispanic (%)	18.2	9.4		
Asian (%)	6.6	3.3		
Native American (%)	1.7	0.8		
Two or more races (%)	0.8	2.8		
Other (%)	0.0	1.4		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.8	1.1		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	1.7	1.9	0.296	
High school	23.1	30.9		
Some college	10.7	13.0		
Two year college	7.4	9.7		
Four year college	29.8	24.9		
Post graduate degree	27.3	19.6		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	13.2	8.8	0.163	
US Citizen (%)	86.8	91.2		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	54.5	39.2	0.051	*
Republican (%)	24.8	30.4		
Independent (%)	17.4	24.0		
Other (%)	0.8	2.5		
Not sure (%)	2.5	3.9		
Voter Registration (%)	92.6	89.8	0.367	
N	121	362		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who responded to the 2020 Census in person to those who responded to the census via mail.

Appendix L: "Online" and "Mail" Response Type Comparison

Variable	Online	By Mail	Pr	Significance
Age	50.5	57.9	0.000	***
Sex				
Female (%)	50.0	53.9	0.396	
Male (%)	50.0	46.1		
Race/Ethnicity				
White (%)	67.8	66.9	0.192	
Black (%)	9.4	14.4		
Hispanic (%)	7.8	9.4		
Asian (%)	7.8	3.3		
Native American (%)	0.6	0.8		
Two or more races (%)	5.0	2.8		
Other (%)	1.1	1.4		
Middle Eastern (%)	0.6	1.1		
Highest Education Level				
No high school	0.6	1.9	0.019	**
High school	18.3	30.9		
Some college	12.8	13.0		
Two year college	15.6	9.7		
Four year college	31.7	24.9		
Post graduate degree	26.7	19.6		
Immigration Status				
Foreign born (%)	14.4	8.8	0.047	**
US Citizen (%)	85.6	91.2		
Political Party Affiliation				
Democrat (%)	46.1	39.2	0.117	
Republican (%)	19.4	30.4		
Independent (%)	27.2	24.0		
Other (%)	2.8	2.5		
Not sure (%)	4.4	3.9		
Voter Registration (%)	92.8	89.8	0.256	
N	180	362		

*** = P < 0.01; ** = P < 0.05; * = P < 0.1 Statistical tests for difference include t-tests for continuous variables (e.g., age), proportion tests for binary variables (e.g., sex), and chi-squared tests for variables with multiple categories (e.g., race/ethnicity). Compares the characteristics of participants who responded to the 2020 Census online to those who responded to the census via mail.