



# 2020 Census Evaluation Report:

## Understanding how Oklahomans are doing

### Executive Summary

The 2020 census marked an unprecedented effort by Oklahoma government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and community-based organizations partnering to engage in statewide census efforts. Their unified mission was to ensure a complete, accurate count of all Oklahomans in the 2020 census, especially those in historically hard-to-count groups. The decennial census count is a crucial tool policy makers use to ensure equitable distribution of political representation and resources. Each year, close to a trillion dollars in federal funds, representing hundreds of government programs and services, are distributed to states based on census data.

This report:

1. documents Oklahoma Policy Institute’s (OK Policy) census work,
2. reviews Oklahoma’s state-level census efforts, and
3. offers recommendations for the preparation of the 2030 census.

#### KEY FINDINGS:

- OK Policy reached approximately 78,751 individuals through 22 live virtual events.
- The Oklahoma Department of Commerce was able to update approximately 340,000 residential addresses as part of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program.
- Oklahoma organizations showed considerable resilience and ingenuity in adapting to ongoing uncertainties due to the pandemic and fundamental workings of the census at the federal level (i.e., continuously shifting timelines).
- On August 23, 2019, Oklahoma became the 36th state to establish a state Complete Count Committee.
- Oklahoma, along with 18 other states, did not allocate any state funds for the census.
- Recommendations for improving future counts include early allocation of state funds to support census work, improved broadband infrastructure, and meaningful, inclusive collaboration with non-traditional partners.



## About

Prior to the 2020 census, estimates reported approximately 34 percent (1,331,759) of Oklahomans were considered hard-to-count due to geography, race, ethnicity, or limited access to technology. Those at the highest risk for miscount were people of color, as well as children under five years of age. In addition, the majority of the hardest-to-count census tracts within Oklahoma are in rural communities with limited internet access. The American Community Survey estimated that 22.6 percent of Oklahoma households have no internet access or dial-up only. A census undercount would have a significant financial impact on Oklahoma. If only 10 percent of the hard-to-count population were not counted, Oklahoma would lose more than \$186.4 million in federal funding each year until a new census occurred. OK Policy sought to ensure the best possible representation of Oklahomans in the 2020 census, especially within historically hard-to-count groups.

OK Policy implemented a comprehensive outreach and education plan. From November 2019 through December 2020, OK Policy convened and provided resources to a statewide census coalition, utilized its Together Oklahoma grassroots advocacy program, and conducted a census evaluation.

## Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess and report on the effectiveness of Oklahoma’s overall strategy for census outreach and education. Data collection methods included both primary and secondary data sources utilizing a case study type design, which relies heavily on qualitative data and internal records. Meeting notes and internal records were shared with the evaluator. Secondary data in the form of publicly accessible records on census response rates were utilized to measure 2020 census self-response rate estimates. An original post-event survey was developed to gain participant feedback and change in knowledge regarding the census. Lastly, interviews with key stakeholders and organizations engaging in critical 2020 census outreach were conducted across the state.

The evaluation includes an assessment of the methods used and measures the effectiveness of the strategies deployed. OK Policy’s 2020 census outreach was evaluated to ensure that hard-to-count (HTC) populations were being reached. This report contains findings from internal surveys, publicly accessible census response rates, a review of Oklahoma’s state-level response to the 2020 census, and a summary of feedback from a sample of key partners for this 2020 census work.

## Introduction

The 2020 census is a critical and powerful information source that will significantly influence American policy for the upcoming decade. A complete and accurate census holds a promise of equity and fairness for political representation during the redistricting process, but also for the distribution of hundreds of billions of federal dollars nationwide. The failure to fully enumerate Oklahoma’s population could result in devastating consequences, including reductions in access to federal services and resources.

The 2020 census was unlike any other for many reasons. One was the proposal of adding a question to the census pertaining to citizenship status. The proposed citizenship question sparked a firestorm of national media attention and panic in communities that were afraid this question could be used against them. Despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the citizenship question not be asked on the census, fear and mistrust among HTC communities was prevalent throughout the 2020 census.

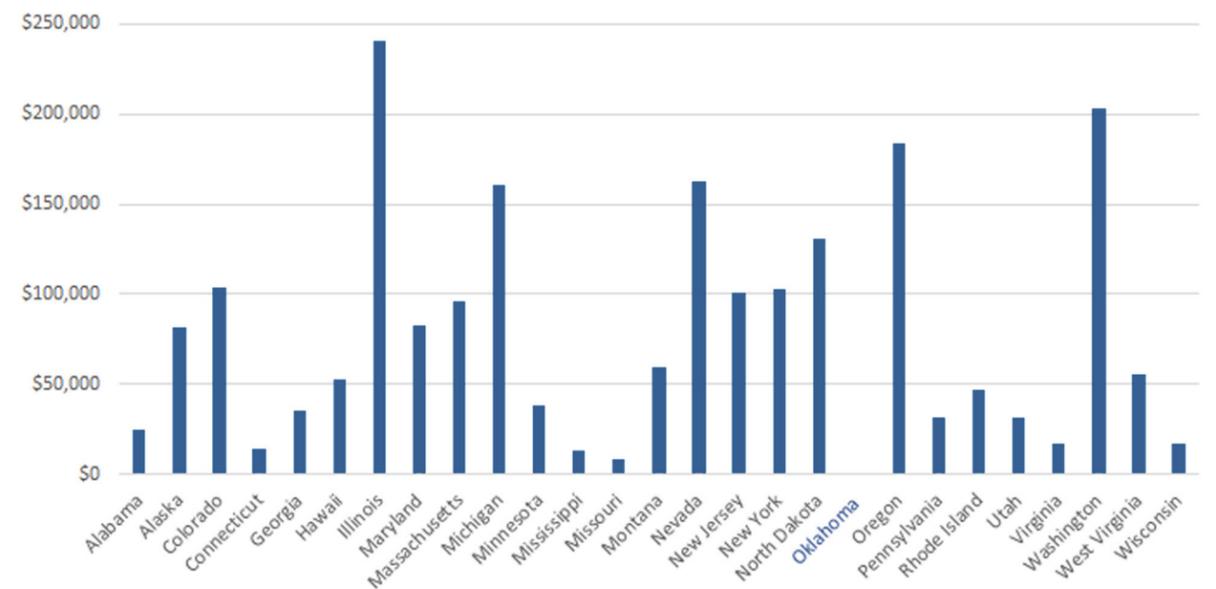
Adding to the difficulty were demographic changes that included increasing segments of the U.S. population

speaking languages other than English, the highly mobile nature of many populations, a growing distrust in the government, and a significant number of residents who lacked internet access to complete online census forms during the first census that was conducted online. A number of changes took place regarding support at the federal level for the 2020 census. For the first time, the Census Bureau prioritized cost savings over quality. Compared to past decennial counts, the Census Bureau reduced the number of regional census offices for 2020 and also reduced the number of on-the-ground staff. Then in March 2020, just as the census began in most places across the country, large-scale quarantines and shutdowns occurred because of COVID-19, which played havoc with the count.

## Oklahoma’s state-level census support

Oklahoma’s legislature did not appropriate any state funds to the 2020 census despite the fact that the decennial census counts are used to allocate federal funds to state-level programs. In fiscal year 2016,

State Appropriations for 2020 census per 100,000 residents



Source: National Council of State Legislatures



Oklahoma received \$9.36 billion through 55 federal spending programs with allocations guided by data derived from the 2010 census. When divided by the total number of residents, the amount listed previously equals about \$2,500 per Oklahoma resident. In addition, the federal government in 2020 distributed Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funds to states based on population counts from the 2010 census. Twenty-eight states appropriated funds to support the 2020 Census. With the exception of California, state appropriations ranged from \$400,000 to \$30.5 million, with an average of \$5.68 million. California was a notable outlier as it appropriated \$187 million starting in 2017. Four states did not appropriate funds until 2020. At the conclusion of the 2020 census enumeration, all four of those states ranked in the bottom 10 for self-response rates — suggesting that both timing and allocation of funds are significant factors to ensuring a complete and accurate census count. States that invested in the census early showed the impact of their investment when larger proportions of their population self-responded to the 2020 census.

In early 2018, the Oklahoma State Department of Commerce (DOC) began the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program. LUCA is an opportunity for state, local, and tribal governments to review and comment on the U.S. Census Bureau’s residential address list for their corresponding jurisdictions. By participating in LUCA, governments can improve census counts in their communities. Upon receipt of Census Bureau address lists, governments had 120 calendar days to review, update, and return their materials. According to DOC personnel, LUCA was a massive undertaking, often requiring staff to drive through neighborhoods to document and check addresses where local governments had not signed on to provide the data needed. Approximately 340,000 new residential addresses were submitted by the DOC and accepted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Oklahoma’s Complete Count Committee (CCC) was established in August 2019 by an executive order filed by Gov. Kevin Stitt. In a press statement released alongside news of the executive order, Gov. Stitt claimed that Oklahoma’s “population will exceed 4 million people.” By the time of the Governor’s order, 35 other states already had established complete count committees,

## Although state funds were not directly allocated for census promotion, DOC identified funds within their budget to employ for census use.

a majority of which were established similarly through executive orders issued by their governors. As for Oklahoma’s committee structure, Gov. Stitt’s order dictated the committee be composed of 20 individuals, each of whom were directly appointed by the governor. Of the 20, two were to be members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and two from the Senate, with each major political party equally represented by both legislative bodies. Aside from these particular seats, other seats were not as directly designated, with the order instead detailing that the other 16 seats represent “State government, all levels of local government, Oklahoma’s Indian Tribes, business, academia, community and nonprofit organizations, ethnic and faith-based communities.” The order also mentions that the committee should represent all “gender, racial, economic, and geographic communities of [Oklahoma] to reflect its diversity,” though individual seats were not designated according to these more general tenets. OK Policy worked closely with several members of Oklahoma’s state CCC. For example, Kara Berst serves on OK Policy’s Board of Directors. Additionally, Adam Soltani and Kyle Ofori participated in OK Policy online events.

### OKLAHOMA COMPLETE COUNT COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Adam Soltani
- Becky Reynolds
- Brent Kisling
- Brian McClain
- Carolyn Thompson
- Sen. Chuck Hall
- Francellies Otero-Berríos
- Hannah Davis
- Rep. Jason Dunnington
- Kara Berst
- Sen. Kevin Matthews
- Kyle Ofori
- Lisa Greenlee
- Lisa Powell
- Marnie Taylor
- Matt White
- Russell Boyd
- The Rev. Shannon Fleck
- Rep. Ty Burns
- Valerie Thompson

The Oklahoma DOC developed a three-phase plan for their 2020 census efforts, including: (1) data collection/preparation, (2) partnership development, and (3) marketing campaign. The data collection phase consisted mainly of LUCA, a Participant Statistical Area Survey, a Boundary and Annexation Survey, and the

New Construction Survey. Some examples from the Partnership Development phase included Oklahoma’s CCC hosting meetings in each quadrant to promote more local and tribal CCCs, and starting a Census Ambassador program. The Census Ambassador program consisted of approximately 16 Census Ambassadors from various state agencies to lead agency efforts and share ideas for census promotion. Although state funds were not directly allocated for census promotion, DOC identified funds within their budget to employ for census use. Their Marketing Campaign phase utilized over \$400,000 from the DOC’s budget to develop the OK, Let’s Count! campaign and collateral material development.

## Outreach

Recognizing a continued gap within 2020 census outreach work, OK Policy began its census work in November 2019. Acknowledging the late start to census engagement, the approach was designed to be prompt, strategic, and targeted. The census strategy consisted of a three-phases:

1. Education: Public Education and Consciousness-Raising
2. Activation: Direct Support to Communities
3. Evaluation: Lessons Learned

Immediately, the organization hired a Census Outreach Coordinator and launched a supporting web page.

Phase one included recruiting a statewide census coalition, conducting and participating in public events, and developing a communication plan. Building upon previously established relationships with community-based organizations, tribes, and nonprofits, OK Policy established an extensive network of statewide and national partners. (See Appendix A). OK Policy completed these activities by the end of 2019.

Phase two of the census strategy was conducted between January 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020, the original duration of the 2020 census. Phase two consisted of: continuing to run public events, identifying Census Assistance Center sites, launching neighborhood canvassing by volunteers, providing data support to



## OK Policy utilized a single point of contact to reach more than 200 different churches across the state.

coalition members, launching communication outreach, and providing monetary stipends to community partners.

Phase three included an evaluation of the 2020 Census — specifically documenting lessons learned to inform future census efforts within the state. However, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated many changes to the census process. The U.S. Census Bureau adapted or delayed various census operations. OK Policy also adapted, shifting planned in-person events to virtual events while keeping up-to-date on the U.S. Census Bureau pandemic guidance. Despite these challenges, OK Policy and its census partners were able to engage hard-to-count communities and encourage participation in the 2020 census.

OK Policy partnered with a coalition of more than 50 predominately Black, Hispanic, and Native organizations using a variety of methods to reach their communities, including text messaging, phone banking, socially distanced in-person events, social media, and other activities to enhance awareness of and increase self-response to the 2020 census.

OK Policy worked collaboratively with partners to plan events and activities. A ToolKit developed by OK Policy was used by the partner groups to plan activities and increase awareness about the importance of the census. Several organizations used existing, planned in-person

events to promote the census. OK Policy provided information and materials as requested by partner groups and connected partner groups with U.S. Census Partnership Specialists for assistance and support as needed.

A particularly useful partnership was with three statewide faith-based organizations: the African Methodist Episcopal Lay Organization, the Progressive Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, and the Baptist State Convention of Oklahoma. Through partnership with those three organizations, OK Policy utilized a single point of contact to reach more than 200 different churches across the state. Incentives were provided by the state organizations to encourage participation by the member churches. OK Policy's role was to provide information, technical assistance if needed, and overall guidance as partners implemented their activities. Another example of beneficial partnerships was the "Virtual Census Brunch" held over several hours on a Saturday morning. Using local partners as hosts and interviewers, OK Policy team members virtually "traveled" to five locations across the state, promoting census activities that were underway at each location. During each virtual stop, OK Policy highlighted partner organizations, interviewed guests, and discussed the importance of the census. The public was encouraged to complete the census, including safely dropping by a local in-person event (if applicable) for assistance. OK Policy staff managed the brunch's technical production, streaming the event live on three social media platforms and anchoring the event from the "studio."

Throughout census outreach activities, OK Policy tracked weekly response rates per county, with targeted advertising boosts within counties with the lowest self-response rates and with the highest rates of hard-to-count populations. Targeted counties showed a self-response increase of 4.34 percent across 15 weeks.

OK Policy hosted 22 live, virtual events from April 3, 2020 through September 30, 2020. Each event's outreach efforts targeted hard-to-count populations, catering to regional rural Oklahoma families and communities. When possible, OK Policy utilized Together Oklahoma, its nonpartisan, grassroots coalition of volunteer citizens, to host safe, socially distanced, in-person events

throughout southern portions of Oklahoma identified as hard-to-count areas. All events were educational, free, and open to the public. Participants were encouraged to complete the 2020 census and given information to take back to their communities to help advocate for at-home census completion. OK Policy reached more than 78,750 individuals across the 22 live virtual events. The estimated total engagement from live virtual events is 25,080 through various platforms, primarily measured by reactions, comments, and shares throughout all social media outlets for OK Policy and Together Oklahoma.

### Census Outreach Survey

As part of ongoing evaluation efforts, OK Policy gained feedback from participants of our virtual events. An electronic survey was sent to a focus group of virtual participants. This survey aimed to gauge virtual events' reach and obtain participant feedback to utilize in continuous quality improvement. The survey consisted of 13 questions used to assess virtual attendees demographics, completion of the census, access to census response methods, and overall satisfaction with its virtual events. Additionally, there were three response-dependent questions for participants to provide additional information.

Forty-six participants responded to the survey. All respondents answered a qualifying question to confirm they had participated in one of the organization's virtual events. Nearly all respondents reported they had already completed the census.

Participants reported their ethnicity, nine respondents identified as Hispanic or Latinx. American Indian respondents also provided tribal affiliations, which included: Choctaw, Cherokee, Apache, Comanche, Osage, Quapaw, Pawnee, Absentee Shawnee, and Muscogee (Creek) nations.

The majority of respondents were from major metropolitan areas, followed by rural, then suburban. Approximately one in five respondents reported children five-years or younger primarily reside in their household.

Most respondents said the events left them feeling more informed regarding the census.

Lastly, all respondents reported they would participate in another OK Policy event.

### Partner Feedback Summary

During the 2020 census, a diverse coalition of organizations representing different segments of the Oklahoma community mobilized across the state to encourage Oklahomans to participate in the census. A sample of seven key partners representing various perspectives were invited to provide in-depth feedback on their 2020 census work, including representatives from traditionally undercounted populations, faith groups, state agencies, and Oklahoma's nonprofit community as a whole. Partner feedback was received via one-on-one semi-structured interviews during September and October 2020. Interviewees summarized their census work, examples of success, lessons learned, and key takeaways.

#### Summary of Oklahoma Census work

Efforts to promote the 2020 census began years in advance. As far back as 2018, the State DOC began preparing to collect the addresses for census enumerators. In 2019, the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference began training volunteers who would perform the on-the-ground outreach work. One coalition member noted that "Compared to previous years, there was tremendous effort in Oklahoma this time around, much more aggressive marketing." By 2020, they had begun to assemble and settle into their roles, with the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits serving as a nexus for nonprofit coalition members.

The majority of the coalition's work focused on direct outreach, particularly in historically undercounted populations. Some of the specifically targeted areas were rural communities, Muslim communities, communities of color, and non-English speaking communities. The coalition pursued its mission of outreach primarily through in-person events (pre-COVID), phone banking, social media campaigns and events, and ad buys through local radio stations and newspapers statewide. In some instances, direct outreach workers — especially Spanish-speaking workers — were hired to engage with communities that would be otherwise difficult to reach



through traditional means. The array of methods used to perform outreach represents the coalition members' creativity and the diversity of the targeted populations, as there was no "one size fits all" solution to promoting census participation.

### How OK Policy adapted to 2020's changes

Like with many things this year, 2020's events caused considerable disruption to the census outreach efforts. In the words of one coalition member: "We were building the plane as we were flying it." Because the COVID-19 pandemic eliminated the possibility of hosting large scale gatherings, coalition members canceled in-person events and pivoted to almost exclusively online engagement. The costs of responding to the pandemic also left some organizations — especially those already funding their census work out of their standard operational budgets — stretched thin with little to no resources to devote to census outreach. OK Policy's monetary stipends to its census partners helped offset, but not fully cover, census work being undertaken statewide. However, the unusual situation brought about by COVID-19 forced organizations to be creative about expanding their outreach efforts through online events and other virtual campaigns. These adaptations, which were absolutely necessary for 2020, will be useful going forward when trying to reach Oklahomans through all possible avenues.

A source of organizational chaos widely considered to be even more difficult to deal with than COVID-19 was the ongoing uncertainty about the census's fundamental workings at the federal level. Throughout the year, the timeline in which the coalition could work to count people — and even which people were eligible to be counted — was frequently in flux. The shifting timelines made it difficult for member organizations to budget their time and money when planning for the duration of the census. At least one coalition member considered these changes to be "offensive" and further hindered a vital government operation already severely encumbered by the pandemic. The uncertainty about whether noncitizens would be counted in the census exacerbated some communities' distrust of the

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government, which was already a barrier in encouraging census participation. This year, many factors contributed to considerable organizational chaos. It is imperative that both the federal and state governments provide more stability and guidance going forward.

### The coalition's successes

Despite the many challenges faced by OK Policy's census coalition, organizations displayed considerable resilience and ingenuity. The most notable success was the coordination of the coalition itself. Pulling together community leaders throughout hard-to-count communities allowed them to pool resources while ensuring messages were tailored to their communities. Because of this, the coalition successfully managed to connect with difficult-to-reach populations. When reflecting on his most significant success related to census work, one coalition member stated, "Inspiring my community members, not only to complete their census but [being from a historically marginalized community] to associate civic engagement in a positive way." Another encouraging victory is that partner organizations encouraged at least 50 homeless persons who were previously unaware of the census to participate. Building considerably on efforts made during the previous census, the coalition inspired Oklahomans of all races and identities to become more civically engaged and advocate for their communities through the census

### Lessons learned

As the 2020 Census came to a close, some coalition members took the time to examine what steps to take in preparation for the 2030 census. The coalition members identified the overwhelming need for state-level funding. Oklahoma's state government provided no funding for census outreach efforts, leaving many organizations to rely on either small grants from outside sources or their standard operational budgets, which were not designed to bear the extra costs of census work. State funding would have allowed the hiring of more dedicated outreach workers, particularly ones who speak Spanish or other non-English languages, who would engage with undercounted communities. One coalition member noted, "For the 2020 Census, organizations had to piecemeal everything. We do not have the capacity. We need funding for workers."

State resources also would have lifted some of the outreach burden from Oklahoma's nonprofit organizations. While Oklahoma nonprofits are dedicated and talented, they should not be expected to single-handedly manage a pivotal task like census outreach. Given the immense importance of the census to Oklahomans and to the public services many residents rely on, it is vital that Oklahoma's state government provide funding in the future to ensure that all residents are counted and receive the support they deserve.

The next most important area for improvement is preparation. Many coalition members have reflected that preparations for the next census should begin years in advance and involve increased budgetary planning, multi-year marketing campaigns, and volunteer training. Having clear goals and implementation plans set well in advance will provide stability and regularity in 2030, allowing coalition members to more effectively accomplish the goal of ensuring the representation of all Oklahomans.

Finally, there is room for improvement in grassroots campaigning. Efforts must be made from the beginning to include organizations representing all Oklahomans,

not just those in power. Coalition members stated the following:

- "Organizational leaders being on a committee might look good for optics, but isn't helpful or productive to actually coordinating on the ground work."
- "We have to meet people where they are."
- "It's important to have existing relationships and not to take on the Big Brother-type role."
- "We don't need white, suburban, middle-class people planning campaigns for hard-to-count populations."

When trying to reach specific communities, it is important to engage with leaders and organizations within those communities during all stages of outreach preparation and implementation, as local leaders have the most hands-on knowledge of how to reach their community members. While the coalition has made considerable progress with its grassroots advocacy, the low self-response rates in certain parts of Oklahoma show a need for increased partnership in rural communities.

## Conclusion

Prior to 2020 census efforts, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated approximately 1,331,759 Oklahomans (34 percent) were hard-to-count due to geography, race, ethnicity, or lack of internet access. Similar to national trends, those at the highest risk for miscount are people of color, as well as children under five years of age. Furthermore, the majority of the hardest-to-count census tracts within Oklahoma are in rural communities with limited internet access. The American Community Survey estimates that nearly 1 in 4 Oklahoma households have no internet access or access to dial-up only. Thus, leaders across Oklahoma mobilized to lead the most extensive census campaign in Oklahoma to date. Complete Count Committees, tribal governments, and numerous nonprofit organizations led successful census campaigns that overcame unprecedented challenges and a lack of state funding. Working collectively, they showed true leadership during tumultuous times. OK Policy's census partners, Together Oklahoma members, and OK Policy's



Census Community Builders have taken the time to reflect on the most important lessons learned from their 2020 census work and provide recommendations for 2030 census planning.

At the beginning of 2020, organizations across Oklahoma were gearing up for statewide census efforts. Most were optimistic about Oklahoma achieving a higher self-response rate than past decennial census years despite a late start to census outreach work. As part of the LUCA program, the Oklahoma DOC submitted a record number of new addresses to the U.S. Census Bureau in hopes of achieving the most accurate census count possible. In November 2019, the Oklahoma Partnership Specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau reported Oklahoma had the most applicants for census enumerators of any state. However, when the coronavirus pandemic led to uncertainty surrounding not only the census but most aspects of our everyday lives, Oklahoma once again became at-risk for a significant undercount. In May 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau reported they had attrition of enumerators because of COVID-19.

As stated above, approximately 25 percent of Oklahoma residents do not have access to broadband internet. As the pandemic forced many organizations to shift their census efforts online, the lack of broadband internet access undoubtedly played a significant role in Oklahoma's attaining a final 2020 census response rate of only 61 percent. In May 2020, a member of the State Complete Count Committee representing rural southeast Oklahoma noted that limited broadband access was severely impacting self-response rates in the area. Oklahoma's self-response rates for the 2000 and 2010 decennial census was 64 and 62.3 percent, respectively. In addition to the census impact from lack of internet availability, the COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted the urgent need for reliable, in-home internet access for all Oklahomans. The pandemic quickly exposed that internet availability was critical for many Oklahomans to participate in virtual schooling, seek medical treatment via telehealth, work remotely, or access important safety information. In an increasingly technology-dependent society, investments in rural broadband access will help ensure all Oklahomans can electronically fill out their census and provide a critical lifeline in times of need.

## LOOKING BACK ON THE 2020 CENSUS:

- A lack of broadband internet access played a significant role in Oklahoma's final 2020 census response rate of only 61 percent. Investments in rural broadband access will help ensure all Oklahomans can fill out their census.
- Findings from a state-by-state comparison suggest that early state investment in the census is vital for an accurate count. Reduced government support in 2020 left a significant gap which had to be filled by tribal nations, businesses, and participating organizations.
- Developing clear goals and strategies well in advance, including multi-year campaigns and volunteer training, would improve future census work. This includes engaging lawmakers and those closest to hard-to-count communities early in the planning process

State appropriations play a vital role in a more complete enumeration within the state. Although many states dedicated funds to support an accurate census count, Oklahoma did not. The Oklahoma DOC used existing departmental funds to support the state's work through marketing campaigns. The Senate formed a bipartisan complete count committee to raise awareness of the census. However, reduced government support left a significant gap, which had to be filled statewide by tribal nations, businesses, and organizations — churches, community-based organizations, nonprofits, and others. The pandemic's devastating consequences demonstrated the detrimental effects of reliance on other groups across the state to prop up census work. As outreach workers across the state worked tirelessly to ensure that Oklahomans were receiving their most basic needs — food, housing, medical care, and more



— census work became less of a priority. Without state support, census outreach became another task left to those already struggling to support their communities. Allocating state funds for census work signifies more than just appropriations. Even prior to the pandemic, nonprofit leaders noted the difficulty of obtaining census investments from potential funders because the Legislature did not appropriate money for the census. The actions and inactions of the Legislature sent important messages to communities. As a result, this impacted potential investments within the state, as well as the level of trust Oklahomans have in their state government. Findings from a state-by-state comparison suggest that state investment in the census is vital for an accurate count, and early investment may be crucial to improving self-response rates.

Partner feedback suggests that early preparation — along with financial investment — is critical for census work. Developing clear goals and objectives well in advance, including multi-year campaigns and volunteer training, would improve census work in 2030. Another notable aspect of preparation would be to engage lawmakers early in the census planning process.

Perhaps the most crucial recommendation for everyone engaged in census work is meaningful collaboration. Forging meaningful relationships with non-traditional partners before beginning census work would improve outcomes. Those closest to hard-to-count

communities should shape the goals, strategies, tactics, and marketing of census campaigns. They are trusted community voices already engaging these hard-to-count populations. Notable feedback received from multiple sources includes targeted campaigns for hard-to-count populations. During the 2020 census, many in the Black community felt forgotten or overlooked. Additionally, one census partner noted Oklahoma City's Be Counted OKC media campaign did not originally include tribes or Native people. Campaigns should be inclusive, not only in their messaging but in their planning as well.

While the count officially ended on October 15, 2020, many uncertainties related to the 2020 census remain, including ongoing data validity checks and court cases. Despite unprecedented challenges, Oklahoma's final census self-response rate decreased only marginally compared to 2010. The 2020 census marked an unprecedented effort by Oklahomans engaged in wide-scale census efforts across the state. Documentation of Oklahoma's 2020 census efforts can serve as a starting point for future census efforts. Engagement exemplified by OK Policy's coalition work resulted in expanded partnerships developed through the census efforts and strengthened the collective voice of Oklahomans. The successes experienced during this process should serve as a catalyst to continue building inclusive meaningful partnerships throughout the state.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Ashley Harvey serves as OK Policy's Youth Policy Analyst. She joined OK Policy as the justice data analyst for Open Justice Oklahoma in September 2018. A native Oklahoman, she received her B.S. and M.S. from Oklahoma State University-Tulsa in Human Development and Family Science. She previously worked as a research assistant for OSU's Center for Family Resilience evaluating various community and grant funded projects. As an Albert Schweitzer Fellow, she developed and implemented a family strengthening initiative within Tulsa County Juvenile Detention Center. Ashley is an alumna of OK Policy's 2017 Summer Policy Institute. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. from OSU, where her research interests include family and community impacts of the justice system. She lives in the Tulsa area with her husband, Bryan, and their two children.

Josie Phillips is a policy intern for OK Policy. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a double major in Economics and International & Area Studies. She is an alumna of OK Policy's Summer Policy Institute.



## APPENDIX A: List of Census Partners

Name	Organization
Adam Soltani	CAIR-OK
Ameyka Pittman	Alpha Kappa Alpha - Beta Sigma Theta Chapter
Anastasia Pittman	The Pittman Group
Anthony Douglass	NAACP State Conference
Aretina MaHolmes	National Pan Hellenic Council - OKC
Bashawn Brooks	NAACP State Conference
Brenda Fields	Allen Chapel AME Church
Brenda Hernandez	Tango PR
Brenda J Fields	Oklahoma State Conference WMS
Calvin Miller	Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Cheryl Bollar	AME Oklahoma State Lay Organizations
Collette Houchen	Oklahoma City Chapter of The Links, Incorporated
Danne Johnson	National Pan Hellenic Council - OKC
Rev. David Wilson	Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC)
DesJean Jones	OIC of Oklahoma City
DesJean Jones	Progressive Oklahoma Baptist State Convention (POBSC)
Pastor Donald Chaney	Unity in Faith Ministries
E. Jennings Tyson	New Hope Baptist Church
Frank McClarty	Holy Temple Baptist Church
PG. Stacy Bert	St. Stephens Baptist Church-Wewoka, OK
Garland Pruitt	NAACP Oklahoma City Branch
Gerald Jackson	Mt. Triumph AME Church
Dr. Greg Anderson	Evangelistic Baptist Church of Christ
Jacobi Crowley	Great Plains Improvement Foundation (GPIF)
James Dorn	Mt. Triumph Baptist Church
James Greenwood	New Bethel Baptist Church
Dr. John Peoples	Faith Memorial Baptist Church
Joshua Higginbotham	BLM OKC
Justin Pendarvis	Greater First Baptist Church-Anadarko
Kamisha Busby	Zeta Phi Beta Chapter
Kary Free	Greater Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

Rev. Kevin Clayton	St. James AME Church
Kevin Moss	Antioch Fellowship Baptist Church
Lani Habrock	CAIR-OK
Larry Foster	Progressive Baptist Church
Laura Akers	Grace Center of Ardmore
Lee E. Cooper	Prospect Church
Leo C. Bray SR.	Historic Ward Chapel AMEC
Chaplain Lois Ross	The New Heart Ministry, Inc.
Major L. Jemison	St. John Missionary Baptist Church
Milton Combs	P.E.O.P.L.E. Foundation
Monica Murrell	Collins Community African Methodist Episcopal Church
Moses Howard, Jr.	Greater Marshall Memorial Baptist Church
Oscar Adams	St. Mark Baptist Church
Regan Green	Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
Ruth Rolfe	Avery Chapel AME Church
Rev. Shannon Fleck	Oklahoma Conference of Churches
Shaundra Ellis	Great Plains Improvement Foundation (GPIF)
Sheila Washington	Historic Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church
Sheryl Gregory	Great Plains Improvement Foundation (GPIF)
Susan Porter	NAACP State Conference
Suzette Chan	Thick Descriptions
Rev. T. Sheri Dickerson	BLM-OK
Pastor Tim Jones	True Reverence Baptist Church
Pastor Tony Wise	Voice of Praise Baptist Church
Willie Anderson	New Prospect Baptist Church-Perry,OK
<b>Additional organizations</b>	
Davis Chapel Lawton	
Fairview Baptist Church	
St. John AME - Tulsa	