Funding Community-Based Outreach for a Fair and Accurate Census 2020 Count in Oregon

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March 5, 2019

Education, awareness, and leveraging the strength of trusted community voices are essential for achieving a fair and accurate census count. Despite these efforts, however, an all too common obstacle to conducting a census enumeration is that some individuals are excluded, resulting in an undercount. Individuals at risk of being missed in the census are referred to as "hard-to-count" (HTC) populations. These individuals include young children, individuals of color, non-English speakers, rural residents, immigrants, non-citizens, low-income persons, renters, the homeless, and others.[1] Counting HTC individuals requires more resources—at the federal, state, and local levels—to support alternative (i.e. telephone and in-person visits), customized, and locally-specific data collection methods.

During the 2010 Census count in Oregon, roughly one in five (774,000 or 20.2 percent) Oregonians did not initially mail back their census questionnaire. Estimating whether this share will remain constant, or to what extent it might increase in 2020, is critical for establishing the baseline community-based outreach funding necessary to ensure that all Oregonians count. There is evidence that the new online response option could improve overall response rates.[2] At the same time, numerous challenges and barriers will likely make it more difficult to count Oregonians in the 2020 Census. These include, but are not limited to: the proposed citizenship question, increasing public distrust in government, growing fears among immigrants about the current sociopolitical climate, the first-ever online response option and concerns around the digital divide and security of personal data, and inconsistent and insufficient federal funding. Also, Census 2020 will coincide with the 2020 presidential primary process, adding yet another potential obstacle to individuals participating in the census.

The Census Equity Funder Committee of Oregon (CEFCO) asked us to calculate baseline funding for Census 2020 community-based outreach using an approach outlined by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI), an independent and nonpartisan public policy institute.[3] Our analysis, which largely follows the FPI methodological approach, is as follows:

1. **Forecast Oregon's 2020 population**. This number is the state's April 1, 2020, forecast population from the Office of Economic Analysis (OEA).[4]
2. **Estimate the HTC population**. The FPI approach uses the Census 2010 initial non-response rate as a proxy for the HTC population (i.e. given that these individuals require some degree of additional outreach). In this analysis, we present several scenarios using the Census 2010 Oregon non-response rate (20.2 percent) as a baseline figure.
3. **Estimate outreach costs**. The FPI approach assumes the following costs for community-based outreach—basic outreach at $2 per person for 100 percent of the HTC population; moderate outreach at $25 per person for 10 percent of the HTC population, and; intensive outreach at $75 per person for 5 percent of the HTC population.[5]
4. **Estimate total outreach costs**. The sum of the total costs for basic, moderate, and intensive community-based census outreach.

[1] Reasons why individuals are typically undercounted include: home address not included in census address roster, a fear of government and privacy, language issues, complex household relationships, and highly mobile populations with multiple addresses (e.g., renters).

[2] For example, prior to implementing an internet response in 2013, ACS non-response rates averaged 38–39 percent. More recently, in 2016 and 2017, non-response rates have declined to around 32 percent. Although it's difficult to draw any reliable inferences without a more robust analysis, the data suggest that improvement in ACS response rates could be due, in part, to offering respondents an internet response option.

[3] See: http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FPI-Brief-Census-Outreach-Funding.pdf

[4] As of February 28, 2019, the Office of Economic Analysis (OEA) reported a short-term population forecast for Oregon of 4,248,200 in 2019 and 4,300,000 in 2020. We used these July 1 figures to interpolate the April 1, 2020, number based on the average annual growth rate (AAGR).

[5] Per discussion with CEFCO, the outreach cost assumptions in the FPI report are reasonable for purposes of this analysis.

Scenario 1: Assume No Change in the HTC Population Share

With a statewide forecasted population of nearly 4.3 million, and assuming no change in the HTC percentage from 2010, this scenario estimates almost 900,000 HTC Oregonians in 2020. The various levels of community-based outreach will require almost $7.2 million in funding for ensuring a fair and accurate count (Figure 1). However, assuming that the HTC percentage will remain constant from 2010 is a key limitation given the current challenges and barriers.

Figure 1. Baseline Estimate—Census 2020 Community-Based Outreach Funding for Oregon.

Scenario 1: Assume No Change in HTC Percentage from 2010

4,291,633	April 1, 2020 Population Forecast (1)
20.2%	Hard-to-Count Population Percentage from Census 2010 (2)
866,910	Hard-to-Count Population Estimate

	100% of Hard To Count Population		10% of Hard To Count Population		5% of Hard To Count Population		Total
Oregon Total Population	Number of People	Basic CBO Outreach @ $2/person	Number of People	Moderate CBO Outreach @ $25/person	Number of People	Intensive CBO Outreach @ $75/person	State Funding to CBO
4,291,633	866,910	$ 1,733,820	86,691	$ 2,167,275	43,345	$ 3,250,912	$ 7,152,007

(1) Interpolated value based on Office of Economic Analysis (OEA) population forecast. See foonote 4 for more details.

(2) https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/

Source: Calculated by authors using methodology established by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI).

Scenario 2: Assume an Increase in the HTC Population Share

The challenges surrounding Census 2020 will likely make it more difficult to count Oregonians in 2020. It's unclear, however, how much more difficult it will be to count everyone. In Scenario 2, we present funding estimates assuming that the HTC population share will increase from 2010. If, for example, the HTC population share increases from 20.2 to 22.2 percent (i.e. a 10 percent increase from 2010), the required funding level for community-based outreach increases from $7.2 to $7.9 million (Figure 2). Assuming a 20.2 to 24.2 percent increase in the HTC population share (i.e. a 20 percent increase from 2010) means the funding level jumps to $8.6 million (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Middle-Range Estimate—Census 2020 Community-Based Outreach Funding for Oregon.

4,291,633	April 1, 2020 Population Forecast (1)
22.2%	Assume 10% increase in Hard-to-Count Population Percentage from Census 2010 (2)
953,601	Hard-to-Count Population Estimate

	100% of Hard To Count Population		10% of Hard To Count Population		5% of Hard To Count Population		Total
Oregon Total Population	Number of People	Basic CBO Outreach @ $2/person	Number of People	Moderate CBO Outreach @ $25/person	Number of People	Intensive CBO Outreach @ $75/person	State Funding to CBO
4,291,633	953,601	$ 1,907,202	95,360	$ 2,384,002	47,680	$ 3,576,003	$ 7,867,207

(1) Interpolated value based on Office of Economic Analysis (OEA) population forecast. See foonote 4 for more details.

(2) https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/

Source: Calculated by authors using methodology established by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI).

Figure 3. Upper-Range Estimate—Census 2020 Community-Based Outreach Funding for Oregon.

4,291,633	April 1, 2020 Population Forecast (1)
24.2%	Assume 20% increase in Hard-to-Count Population Percentage from Census 2010 (2)
1,040,292	Hard-to-Count Population Estimate

	100% of Hard To Count Population		10% of Hard To Count Population		5% of Hard To Count Population		Total
Oregon Total Population	Number of People	Basic CBO Outreach @ $2/person	Number of People	Moderate CBO Outreach @ $25/person	Number of People	Intensive CBO Outreach @ $75/person	State Funding to CBO
4,291,633	1,040,292	$ 2,080,584	104,029	$ 2,600,730	52,015	$ 3,901,094	$ 8,582,408

(1) Interpolated value based on Office of Economic Analysis (OEA) population forecast. See foonote 4 for more details.

(2) https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/

Source: Calculated by authors using methodology established by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI).

Summary

Funding community-based outreach that supports a fair and accurate Census 2020 in Oregon, using the FPI methodology, will likely require raising at least $7.2 to $8.6 million.

To provide greater context for the funding estimates provided in this analysis, we examined non-response rates from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS, a continuous annual sample of American households, provides critical data around social, economic, and demographic trends. In 2017, roughly 32 percent of Oregonians (1,300,000) were considered HTC (Appendix A). ACS non-response rates, however, are not directly comparable to the decennial census because most Americans have greater knowledge and awareness of the decennial census. Despite this limitation, our analysis of ACS data underscores three important points:

1. Census non-response rates vary by sociodemographic characteristics (see appendix A). This means, for example, that because it's harder to count children, people of color, and individuals living in rural areas, each of these subgroups will require customized messaging and outreach techniques to motivate them to respond to the census.
2. This funding estimate is specific to community-based outreach, which is an essential component for securing a fair and accurate count in Oregon. However, there are other elements—for example, media and communications and technical analysis—that will likely require resources as well.
3. Our analysis of ACS non-response rates suggests that the internet response option, implemented for the ACS in 2013, could improve Census 2020 response rates. What remains unclear however, is to what extent any improvement in response rates might be offset by the current challenges and barriers.

Appendix A. Oregon Hard to Count (HTC) Population[6] by Age, Race, Ethnicity, and Urban/Rural Status, 2017.

	Hard to Count (HTC)	Non-Hard to Count (HTC)	HTC Share
Age			
Children under 10	190,206	286,396	39.9%
Ages 10-14	94,098	153,422	38.0%
Ages 15-17	57,539	92,011	38.5%
Ages 18-24	129,728	235,188	35.6%
Ages 25-44	380,862	750,580	33.7%
Ages 45-64	296,722	768,836	27.8%
Ages 65+	166,777	540,411	23.6%
Total	1,315,932	2,826,844	
Race			
White Alone	1,082,566	2,424,879	30.9%
Black Alone	35,170	41,392	45.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native Alone	20,518	24,253	45.8%
Asian	33,263	152,828	17.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Alone	4,764	6,535	42.2%
Other Race Alone	66,811	47,637	58.4%
Two or More Races	72,840	129,320	36.0%
Total	1,315,932	2,826,844	
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	313,576	226,450	58.1%
Not Hispanic	1,002,356	2,600,394	27.8%
Total	1,315,932	2,826,844	
Living in an Urban or Rural Area			
Rural	589,718	969,352	37.8%
Urban	726,214	1,857,492	28.1%
Total	1,315,932	2,826,844	

Source: Calculated by authors using 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).
Notes: 1) Urban and Rural areas are based on designation of statewide Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMA).
2) Shares in red indicate they are higher than the HTC population share for Oregon (32%)

[6] To maintain consistency with the FPI approach, this analysis uses the 2017 ACS non-response rate as a proxy for the HTC population.