

## Bringing It Home:

### Oregon's Census 2020 Efforts



# Inside

## On the Cover



"Ever on..."  
by Jessica Sullivan.

An Atlas and Mirror of the  
Portland Metropolitan Region

**Metroscape®**

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## Making Oregon Count in 2020

by Mac Cunningham

Page 4



## Counting Everyone Because Everyone Counts

The Value of Census Data for Local  
Decision Making

by Uma Krishnan

Page 6



## The Census is Political:

Hard-to-Count Communities Must be  
Reached

by WeCountOregon and Julia Michel

Page 18

## Departments

<b>Publisher's Notes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Landscape</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Periodic Atlas: Hard-to-Count Populations</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Indicators of the Censuscape</b>	<b>27</b>

## Greetings from the Publisher

College of Urban & Public Affairs:  
Population Research Center

Greetings!

At press time, Oregon is approaching a 95 percent share of housing units enumerated in the 2020 Census, exceeding our 2010 participation rate and ranking among the highest overall in the country. The stakes are high: Mac Cunningham discusses in these pages the uses of the census in funding formulas. Based on an analysis of 2017 federal spending, Oregon receives approximately \$4,600 each year per resident from federal programs guided by census data, and the state is likely to increase its representation in Congress as a result of faster population growth relative to the rest of the country. Uma Krishnan gives more details on local government use cases, highlighting the importance of the census for urban planning and how these data will be used to ensure that housing strategies are equitable. These efforts will provide valuable lessons for years to come and when planning begins for 2030 in the not-too-distant future.

Communities can be difficult to enumerate for a variety of reasons. In “Counting Oregon,” Cunningham, Wei, and Morris discuss how this manifests across the state. Rural regions and urban areas may be equally difficult to count for completely different reasons. WeCount has led the effort to create strategies for awareness and engagement with the census across the state. Julia Michel recounts the immense challenges surmounted, including the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis.

The window of opportunity to respond to the census (as of press time) ends on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. At the end of the year, the Oregon Complete Count Committee will stand down and public interest in the Census will wane. But the work of the Population Research Center will accelerate. We will evaluate the total population count against annual estimates, and assess reasons for discrepancies. This census will borrow from linked administrative data. New privacy practices mean fewer published tables and uneven reliability. Test data released under new differential privacy (DP) rules reflected that the treatment caused an utter breakdown of age structures in small areas. In light of the Census Bureau’s commitment to DP, we need to invest in tools to assess the quality and coverage of the census and to develop contingency plans.

Our collective efforts have made the harvest a success. Let’s pause to congratulate each other for our successes so far, and then let’s continue to work together in 2021 and 2022 to ensure that the census will be packaged into public data that are as accurate and precise as possible..

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## Making Oregon Count in 2020

by Mac Cunningham



Photo: Make Oregon Count 2020 Symposium

In our increasingly polarized national environment, the census remains one of the few tasks that all United States residents share in common. The results of the census will have implications for the decade to come.

### *What is the Census? And Why Does the Census Matter?*

Mandated by Article I of the United States Constitution, the census is the largest peacetime mobilization in the country.<sup>1</sup> Conducted at the start of each new decade, the census is an effort by the government to count every resident in the United States at the location where each person usually lives. While this once-a-decade survey might seem labor intensive, the results of the census impact every resident in the United States.

The original reason for the census as determined by the founders of the federal government was to allocate seats in the House of Representatives and by extension the Electoral College.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the census' role and importance have greatly expanded.<sup>3</sup> Results from the census impact policy-making and shape the future of the United States in six major areas: apportionment, redistricting, distribution of federal funds, planning, emergency response, and the population base for federal surveys.

### *Why Does the Census Matter to Oregon?*

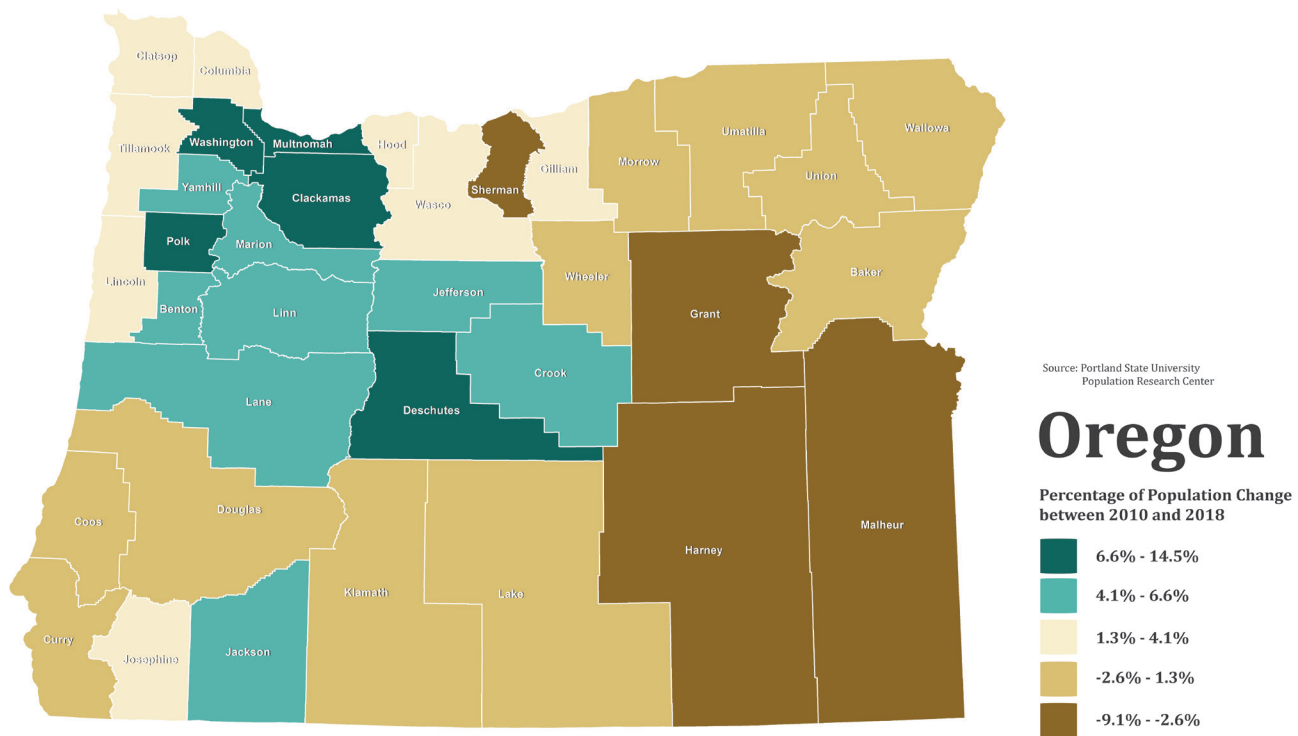
The 2020 census is particularly important because, during the 2010 census, Oregon missed out on gaining an additional House seat by 40,000 people.<sup>4</sup> However, through a complete 2020 count, Oregon stands to gain that additional seat, thereby amplify-

1. United States Census Bureau, "US Census Bureau Celebrates Role in US Constitution," news release no. CB19-CN.09, September 17, 2019, [www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/census-constitution.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/census-constitution.html).

2. "Why We Conduct the Decennial Census," US Census Bureau (website), last modified April 16, 2020, [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/why.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/why.html).

3. To learn more about the history of the census, see this webpage: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/about.html>.

4. Jeff Mapes, "Oregon Looks More Likely to Win 6th Congressional Seat Following 2020 Census," *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, December 31, 2019, [www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-congressional-seat-addition-2020-census-results-estimates/](http://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-congressional-seat-addition-2020-census-results-estimates/).



ing Oregonian's voice on the national stage.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, the census helps to determine the allocation of more than \$1.5 trillion in federal funds to states and local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and households across the nation. In fiscal year 2017, Oregon received more than \$19 billion in federal funding guided by census data. This equates to roughly \$4,600 per Oregonian in 2017.<sup>6</sup> For each person who is left uncensused, Oregon stands to lose vital federal funding. That means less funding for many key safety net programs such as the National School Lunch Program, Medicaid, highway planning and construction, Pell Grants, Section 8 Housing, and more.

Census data also helps to determine how local communities develop over the next decade. The census helps planners determine the need for major public sector

investments such as new roads, hospitals, schools and more.<sup>7</sup> Plus, businesses rely on census data to decide where to invest and open new stores, which, in turn, create jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Oregonians have now been hearing about “the big one” (the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake) for nearly five years. How well communities weather this event will depend, in part, on the census. Emergency responders depend on census data to determine where help will be needed and how much.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, the census is used as the population base for major federal surveys. If the census does not accurately reflect the US population, it will skew the results and methodology of federal surveys for years to come.

5. Ibid.

6. Andrew Reamer, "Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds" George Washington Institute of Public Policy, posted April 29, 2020, <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>.

7. Ibid.

8. Jim Tankersley and Emily Baumgaertner, “Here's Why an Accurate Census Count Is So Important.” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/us/politics/census-citizenship-question.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/us/politics/census-citizenship-question.html).

9. Mark Mather and Paola Scommegna, “Why Is the US Census So Important?” Population Reference Bureau (website), September 17, 2019, [www.prb.org/importance-of-us-census/](http://www.prb.org/importance-of-us-census/).

# Counting Everyone

## because Everyone Counts

### *The value of census data for local decision making*

by Uma Krishnan

Once every ten years the US Census Bureau conducts the decennial United States census, and 2020 is the year. The census is a national effort to count everyone in the United States. Unfortunately, this year the COVID-19 pandemic has captured the nation's attention even as the 2020 census struggles to claim relevance and broaden its reach. At the same time, census data has emerged as a critical tool for examining stark inequities in the demographics of who is contracting and dying of COVID-19. This year, counting everyone is more important than ever.

#### **The census shapes who benefits in society**

From the first census in 1790 to the current one, the census count has helped us understand our past, know our present, and prepare for our future. Framers of the Constitution mandated the census to ensure that each state had proper political representation. Today, the census numbers also shape a wide array of human services and other government spending.

#### **A legacy of undercounting**

Individuals in some communities are often missed by census counts—children, people of color, immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, and others. Some people decline to participate, sometimes due to fears about the government. Those who are often undercounted by the census are often the ones historically excluded from public decision-making, equitable economic opportunities, and access to basic resources. Counting everyone is critical to equitable distribution of resources and services, but a full count has historically been hard to achieve. Tragically,

enshrined in the legislative history of the census is the deep-rooted inequity of purposely undercounting segments of the population based on their status in civil society. Article 1, Section 2 of the US Constitution, which mandates the census, includes the following language:

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free Persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.

“Three-fifths of all other persons” is a direct reference to slaves. The practice of intentionally undervaluing persons through the three-fifths compromise ended when slavery was abolished in the United States. However, undercounting continues to remain a significant issue, especially for communities of color.

#### **Local governments rely on census data**

The census provides the most reliable and detailed information for describing demographics and housing in local areas. However, in the past, localities impatiently endured the ten-year wait for census data for decision-making, even as they watched population growth and decline and changes to housing stock. But, with vast improvements in information technology, localities, including Portland, have begun collecting more timely data, for example, through the

American Community Survey. However, these efforts cannot match the value of census data for resetting and recalibrating what's known about the demographics and housing characteristics of local areas.

The census count determines political representation at all levels of government. Other significant uses include distribution of federal funds to local communities for affordable housing, economic development, schools, infrastructure projects, transportation, emergency readiness, and other public services. There are other important ways in which localities use the census data alone or in combination with local data sources. For example, in cities across Oregon, census data is central to conducting a mandated Housing Needs Analysis and compliance with Oregon State Goal 10.<sup>1</sup>

### **Impactful use of Census data by Oregon cities**

Cities big and small, rural and urban across Oregon use census data in impactful and creative ways. The data forms the basis for analyses, policies, and programs. Examples include the following:

- Tigard is using census data to make strategic investments in clean drinking water and environmental well-being.
- Bend is using census data to plan and manage growth and to ensure housing affordability.
- Prineville is using census data to conduct a housing needs analysis. The city is in the midst of significant growth as a result of companies like Facebook moving into the area, and the housing needs analysis is required for Goal 10 compliance.

### **How Portland uses census data**

The Portland metro area uses census data in several important ways. These are but a few:

#### **► State of Housing in Portland Report**

Since 2015, the Portland Housing Bureau has been releasing the State of Housing in Portland Report annually to provide stakeholders and policy makers with a comprehensive look at Portland's hous-

ing market by neighborhood, housing type, and affordability. While the report provides a snapshot of the demographics and housing characteristics of Portland using the census data and estimates from the American Community Survey, it also examines Portland's policies and programs addressing rental and homeownership affordability, tenant protections, and homelessness. The report has evolved into a valuable tool that is much more than a descriptive snapshot of the households and housing stock in Portland. The report offers insights on a variety of issues, such as the changing racial mix of Portland neighborhoods, changes to the composition of housing tenure, and changes to median household income by race and ethnicity. The illustration from the first State of Housing in Portland Report<sup>2</sup> highlights changes to racial diversity by neighborhoods based on data from the 2000 census and the 2013 American Community Survey estimates (figure 1).

Importantly, the State of Housing in Portland Report provides a better understanding of who is being impacted most by the ongoing affordable housing crisis. The insights are critical for helping decision makers target efforts and resources efficiently and effectively.

#### **► North/Northeast Neighborhood Housing Strategy**

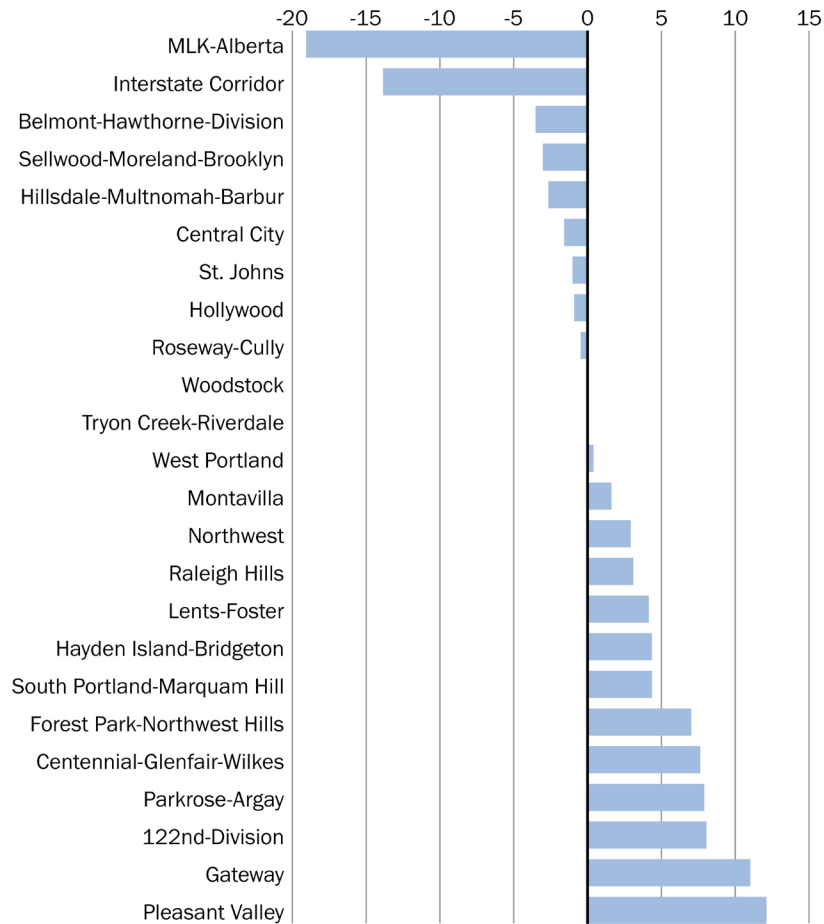
The North/Northeast Neighborhood Housing Strategy was started by the Portland Housing Bureau in 2014. The strategy addresses the legacy of large-scale displacement of the African American community and other communities of color in North and Northeast Portland since the 1970s. The strategy directs investments into new affordable rental housing, opportunities for first-time homebuyers, and home retention programs for longtime residents. The strategy prioritizes people at risk of displacement and descendants of families displaced due to urban renewal. The documentation and analysis for displacement of the African American community and other communities of color relies on decennial census data from several decades.<sup>3</sup> Census data from 1970 and 2010 depict the change in racial composition of the African American population in North and Northeast Portland over that time period (maps

1. Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals & Guidelines Goal 10: Housing. OAR 660-015-0000(10), <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/OP/Documents/goal10.pdf>.

2. Portland Housing Bureau, 2015 State of Housing in Portland (April 2015), <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/13332102>.

3. A series of maps that show the change in African American, Latino/Hispanic and additional population can be found in the information sheets at the website of the Portland Housing Bureau <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/79566>

Figure 1 Change in Racial Diversity by Neighborhood, 2000-2013



Source: Portland Housing Bureau, 2015 State of Housing in Portland (April 2015), <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/13332102>.

2 and 3).

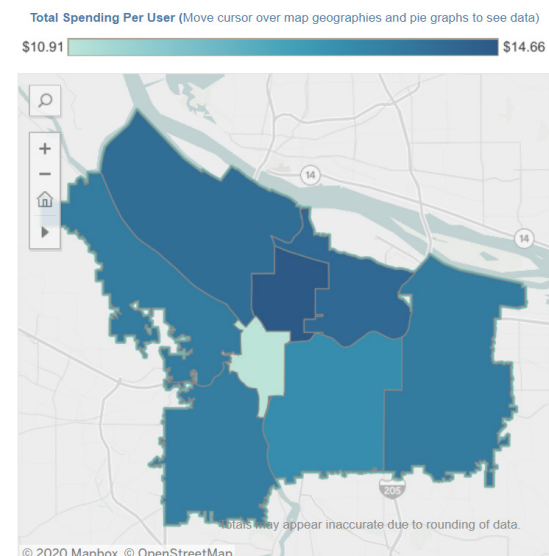
### ► Budget Mapping: An Equity Tool

Annually, Portland's City Budget Office uses census data to conduct budget mapping, which provides a graphic representation of Portland general fund revenues and operating and capital expenditures. This exercise tracks the flow of money for the current fiscal year within eight specific sub-geographies of Portland. By itself, the money does not describe the level of service provided or needed within an area, but it provides the amount of spending per person.

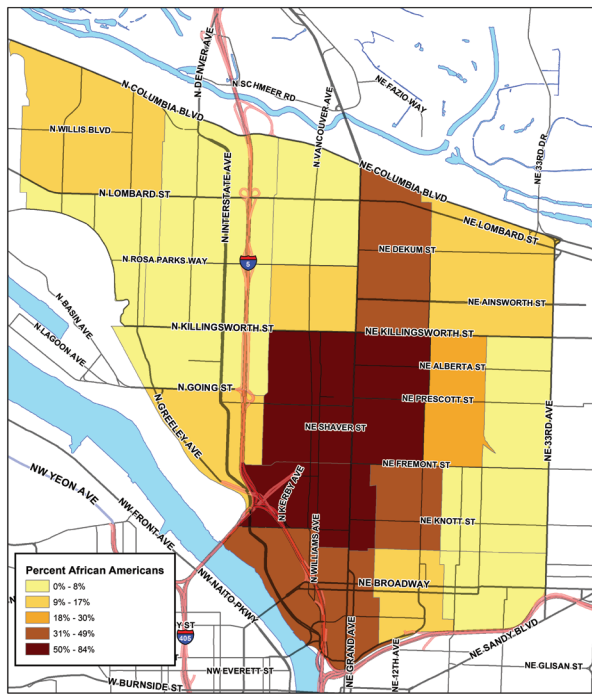
Again, the budget mapping exercise showcases an important use of census data that tracks spending levels in various sub-geographies of Portland. It serves as an equity tool for the city to address broad service issues and

explore how to make services reliable and affordable with equitable access.

Map 1



Source: Portland City Budget Office. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/54416>



**Black or African American Percent of Total Population 1970  
North/Northeast Portland  
by Census Tract**

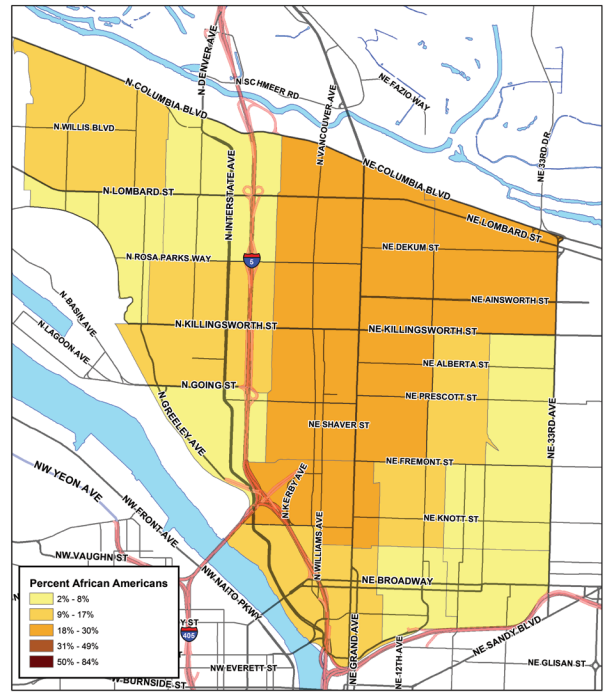
Created by Portland Housing Bureau, June 2014  
Source: 2010 Decennial Census, National Historic Geographic System

Area	African-American	Total	Percent
Portland	21,572	382,619	6%
North/Northeast	19,463	87,891	22%

Map 2

## Preparing for the census – the local road to 2020

Preparations start several years before a census. While the US Census Bureau undertakes nationwide planning, testing, marketing, and communication efforts, there are key projects for which the bureau relies on local partners. There is a local and regional collaborative effort to count hard-to-count populations, and there are other projects that collectively help to increase the response rate and accuracy. Local jurisdictions participate in a local update of census addresses. This process has become particularly critical as Portland sees increased construction of multi-family units. Also, invited participants reviewed and verified selected statistical area boundaries for the 2020 census following US Census Bureau guidelines and criteria. And the Portland Housing Bureau and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability collaborated on the Participant Statistical Area Program to ensure that the changes to census tracts match the construction and spatial reality. An example from that effort is the revision in spatial representation of Portland's Pearl District. In 2010, a single census tract (51) represented this area. The construction of hundreds of new housing units is resulting in splitting



**Black or African American Percent of Total Population 2010  
North/Northeast Portland  
by Census Tract**

Created by Portland Housing Bureau, June 2014  
Source: 2010 Decennial Census, National Historic Geographic System

Area	African-American	Total	Percent
Portland	36,695	583,776	6%
North/Northeast	12,274	83,237	15%

Map 3

of this single tract into three distinct census tracts (Map 4).

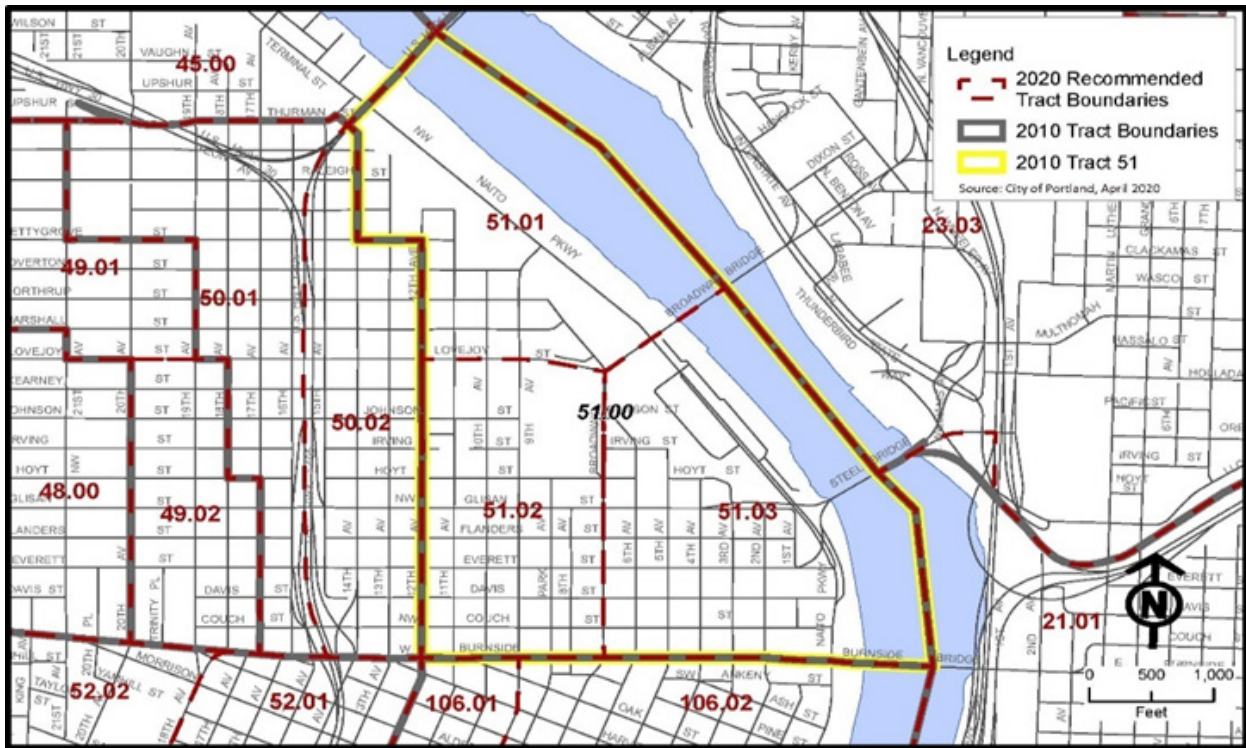
## ► Efforts to Improve Counting of the Hard-to-Count Population

The overall response rate for Portland in the 2010 census was around 80 percent. That means one-in-five Portlanders were not counted. For the 2020 census, Portland is making efforts to ensure that every Portland resident is counted. Since 2018, Portland has approved \$600,000 towards this effort.

Portland's Office of Community and Civic Life is the lead agency tasked with efforts to increase the hard-to-count response rate. The agency has been working in concert with community and agency partners to design and implement strategies that can reach out to this population and help them participate in the census.

## Everyone counts!

Conducting a decennial United States census is a profound process—an act that advances equity through the notion that *everyone counts*. However, since its inception, the census has been fraught with issues that are clearly not equitable. In fact, efforts for an inclusive



For the 2020 census, Portland's Pearl District is being split into three distinct census tracts: 51.01, 51.02, and 51.03.

Map 4

2020 census have been difficult due to a set of unique factors that have created additional challenges and barriers:

- It is the first-ever digital census, reinforcing a digital divide as many low-income households do not have broadband internet.
- There have been reductions and delays in federal funding.
- There was controversy over a proposed citizenship question.
- Some immigrants are fearful of participating due to the current political and social climate.
- Security of personal online information is causing concern.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is contributing to the risk of undercounting.

Given the high likelihood that Oregon is poised to gain an additional congressional

seat, there has been much interest in state-wide collaboration on increasing the census response rate, especially among the hard-to-count population. Portland has also invested heavily in these efforts. It remains to be seen whether a substantial increase in response rate among the hard-to-count population will be achieved. However, the simple act of trying to *count everyone* has the power to further equity like few other tools—it leads us to the fundamental truth that *everyone counts*.

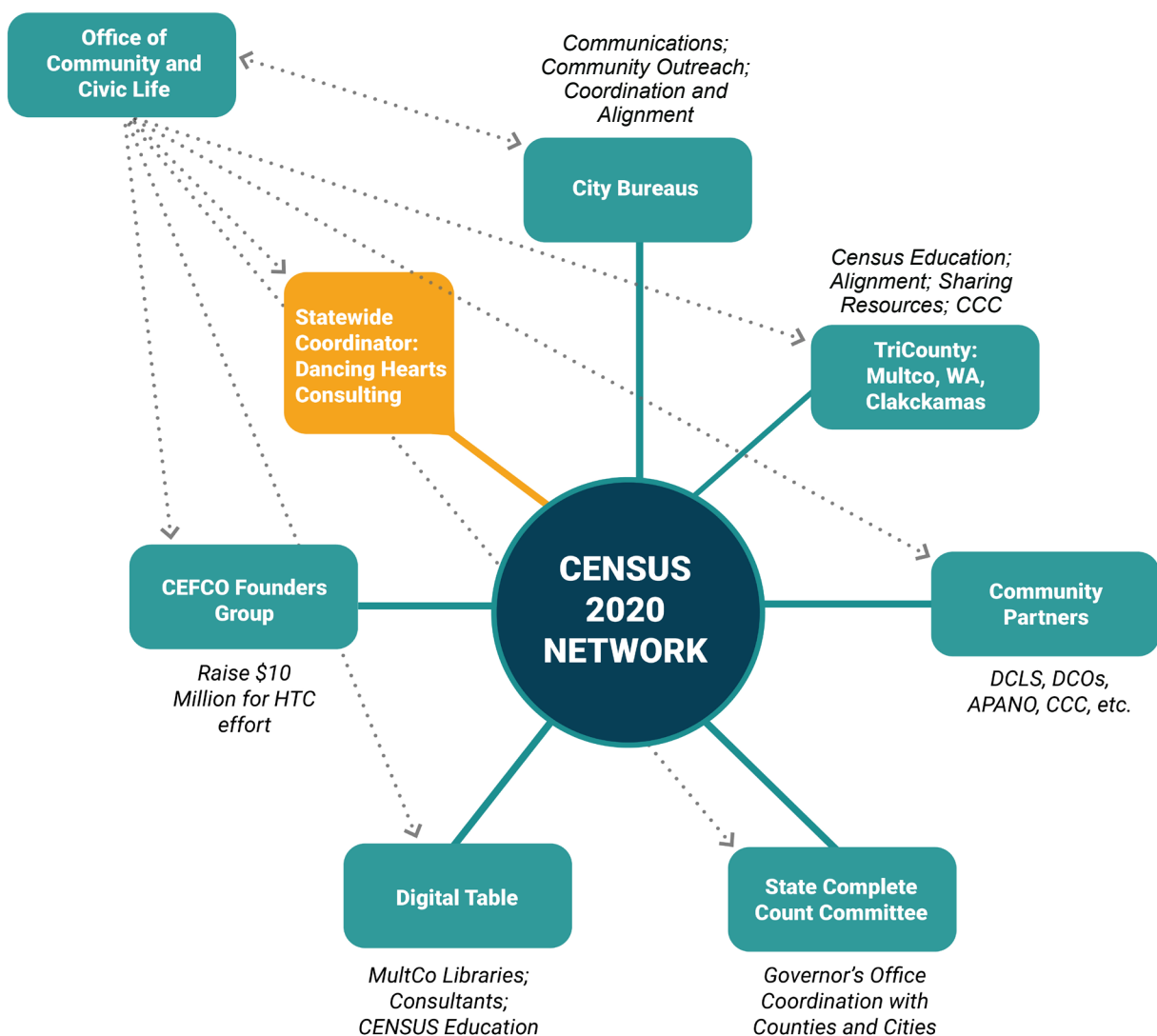
### Counting people experiencing homelessness

Every ten years all housing units in the United States with addresses in the US Census Bureau's master address file receive the short form that collects information on the number of people living as a household in the unit and information on whether or not the unit is owned or rented. However, since people experiencing homelessness lack an address, a separate system is in place for counting them.

Census takers working with local groups counted people outdoors and at other identified locations on April 1, 2020. People were also counted at service locations like emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens, and mobile food vans. One problem with this separate system of counting is that the census is not capturing persons who neither own nor rent a home but who have to double up with family or friends because they are experiencing homelessness. Equity would require that these people be counted as well.

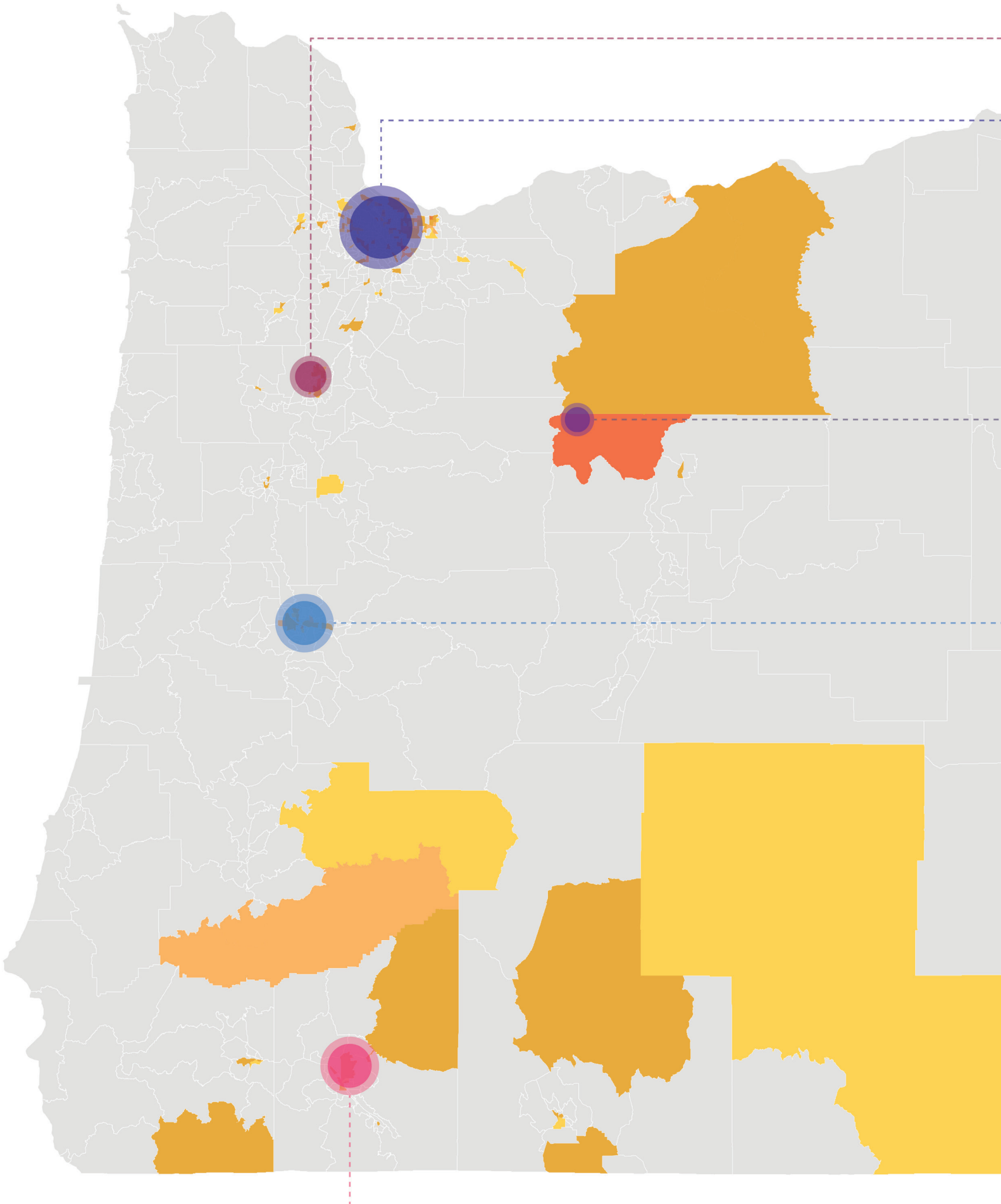
#### About the author

*Uma Krishnan currently works for the City of Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) as a Housing Program Coordinator, as well as teaching in PSU's Demography Certificate Program. Broadly, her research and teaching interests include applied social demography and affordable housing. She has a PhD in Urban Planning and Policy Development from Rutgers University.*



Portland's Office of Community and Civic Life is the lead agency tasked with efforts to increase the hard-to-count response rate.

Source: Office of Community and Civic Life



# Periodic Atlas of the MetroScape

## Counting Oregon

by Mac Cunningham, Xi Wei, and Randy Morris

Every United States census has challenges ensuring that every person responds and is counted. Individuals who are missed in the census count or “undercounted” for various reasons are often referred to as “hard-to-count” populations. Hard-to-count populations include rural residents, people of color, immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, children under age five, renters, and more.

For the 2010 census, the final mail return rate in Oregon was 76 percent. Census tracts with a mail return response rate of 76 percent or less are highlighted on the map on this page. Response rates closest to the state’s final response rate are light yellow, and those with lower response rates are shown in darker shades of orange and red. Over the next few pages, this article will identify the populations that are potentially being undercounted in these selected census tracts throughout the state.

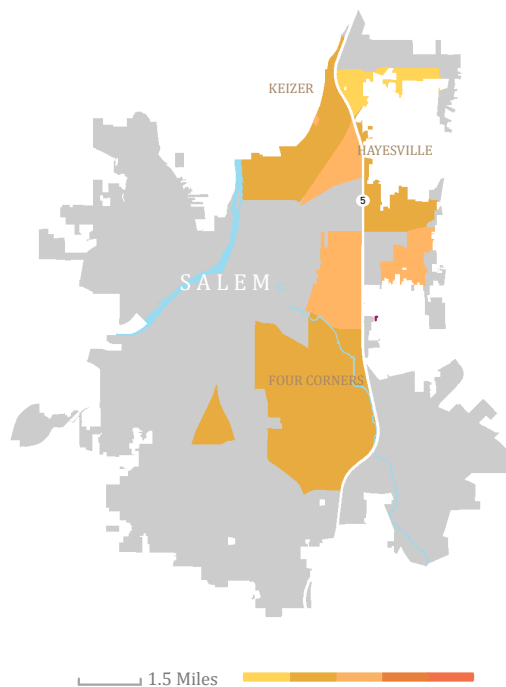
This map shows pockets of census tracts with lower response rates in southern and eastern Oregon, Douglas, Josephine, and Jackson counties. Klamath and Lake counties are all defined as rural with the major potential driver of lower response rates from potentially unoccupied or vacant housing units. Additionally, in southern Klamath County along the border with California, this rural census tract has a higher percentage share of foreign-born people, in addition to potentially vacant or unoccupied housing units.

East of the Cascades, all of the highlighted census tracts qualify as rural. For most of the census tracts, the potential driver of the undercount, like in southern Oregon, is unoccupied or vacant housing units. There may be other causes, however. The undercount in the census tracts of the city of Umatilla and parts of Hermiston are not due to unoccupied or vacant housing. Instead, for the city of Umatilla, the potential driver of this tract's lower response rate is undercounts of people of color and foreign-born residents. This is the case in parts of Hermiston and the surrounding area as well. In addition, in the Hermiston area, there may be undercounts of children under age five. In the census tract containing the towns of Tutuilla, Mission, Kirkpatrick, and more, the potential hard-to-count drivers, in addition to the potentially unoccupied or vacant housing units, include people of color. The combination of these two factors may be why this tract had a lower response rate than the other tracts in Umatilla County. Meanwhile, in western Pendleton, the potential driver is the area’s high population of renters. In the northern part of La Grande, the drivers for lower response rates were the population under five and a higher percentage of renters. It is worth noting, the tract with the lowest hard-to-count population response rate is in Jefferson County and home to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs reservation. Indigenous populations have historically had the lowest response rates for the US census.

≤ 76 ≤ 60

# Hard-to-count Oregon

Each census has challenges capturing responses from hard-to-count populations; however, these maps can help decision makers tailor their outreach campaigns for parts of the state with the lowest response rates. For much of southern and eastern Oregon, all of the tracts with lower response rates are rural, and the largest driver for much of these areas is vacant and unoccupied housing. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs reservation in eastern Oregon features the lowest response rate due to systemic barriers that limit Native American populations from completing the census. Meanwhile, in more urban areas like Medford, Eugene, Salem, and the Portland metro area, renters, people of color, children under five, and foreign-born residents are the likely sources of lower response rates.



---  Salem

*In Salem and the surrounding area, the tracts with the lowest response rates among hard-to-count populations are concentrated outside the central city to the north and east. The tracts with the lowest response rates in the Salem area tend to have high proportions of people of color, foreign-born residents, renters, and children under five. The tract with the lowest response rate, located in Keizer, had low response rates among all four of these groups.*



---  Medford

*In the census tracts containing Medford and the surrounding area, the most common potential driver of the undercount was the low response rates for children under age five and renters. In addition, for most of the census tracts in the downtown core and west of Interstate 5, the other major potential drivers of lower response rates were a high percentage of people of color, and in the tract containing most of downtown, a higher share of foreign-born people.*

### About the authors

*Mac Cunningham is a rising second year MURP student originally from Baltimore, Maryland focusing on issues related to affordable housing development and policy as well as the racial wealth gap.*

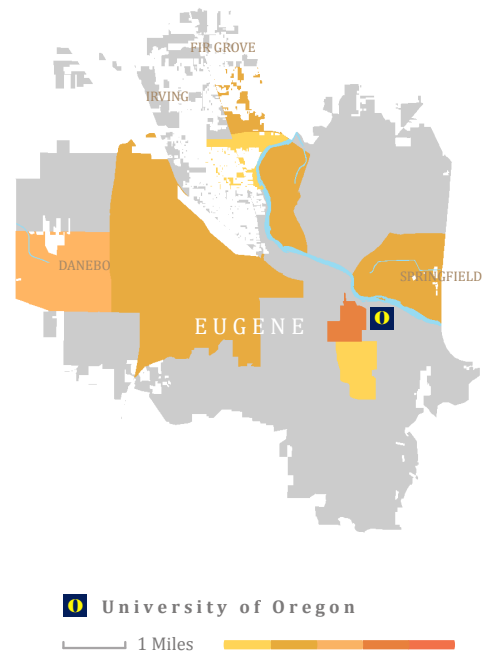
*Xi Wei is an urban planner, trained cartographer, and PhD student who dedicates to observe, create and promote inclusive planning environments.*

*Randy Morris is a research geographer and instructor at Portland State University, as well as a member of Portland's Mapping Action Collective (MAC).*



--- Warm Springs Reservation

*In 2010, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Jefferson County had one of the lowest response rates in Oregon (36.6%). The census tract has a population share of 95 percent people of color and a large population share of children under age five. Native Americans and indigenous populations have traditionally had the lowest response rates for the census due to unique counting challenges. Often, indigenous residents on tribal lands do not have street addresses and instead use post office boxes, which the US Census Bureau does not send census forms to.*



--- Eugene

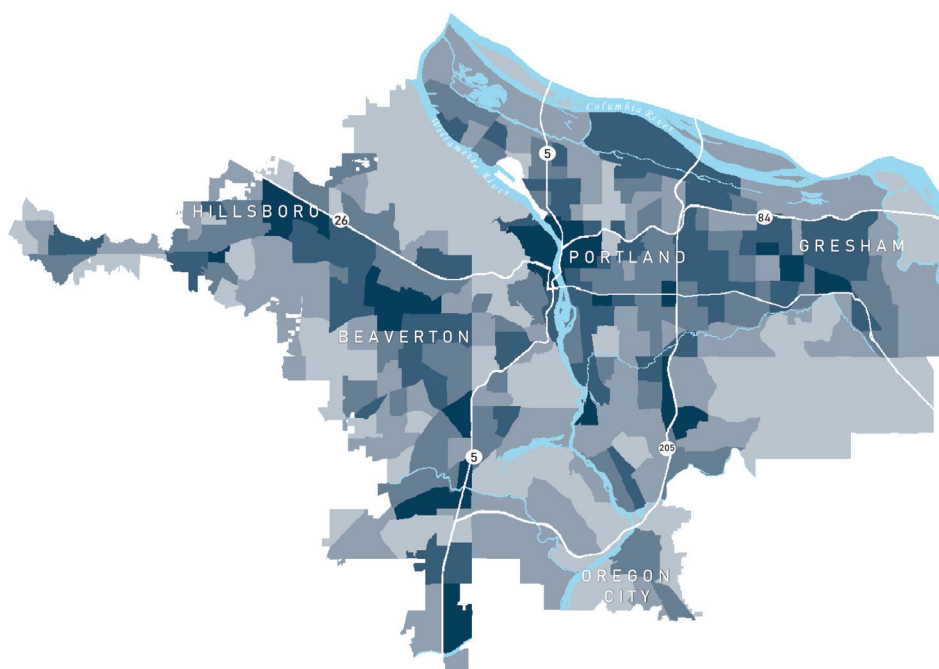
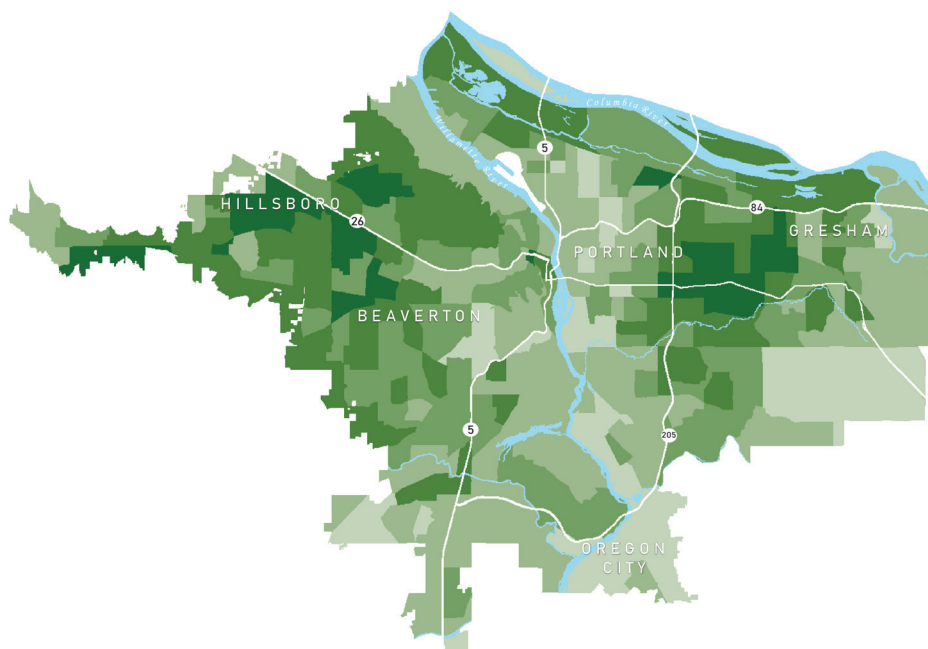
*For much of Eugene and Springfield, the largest driver of low response rates is likely the high percentage of renters in the region. The tract with the lowest response rate is adjacent to the University of Oregon campus and has an extremely high percentage of renters who are likely students. In the census tracts of western Eugene, people of color and children under age five are the potential drivers of lower response rates.*

# Hard-to-count Portland

## Foreign-born population



For the Portland Metro region, many of the census tracts with the lowest response rates are located in North Portland, East Portland, and eastern Multnomah County, the southeastern suburbs, and the western suburbs. The western suburbs, as well as East Portland and eastern Multnomah County, feature a higher percentage of foreign-born residents and these roughly overlap with many of the census tracts with lower response rates.



## Renters



Census tracts containing a higher portion of renters tended to be located in the central city as well as near major transportation arteries such as freeways and public transit lines throughout the metro area. However, the tracts with a higher share of renters and lower response rates tended to be located in East Portland and eastern Multnomah County, as well as near Sunset Highway and Interstate 5 in Washington County.

## Occupied housing units

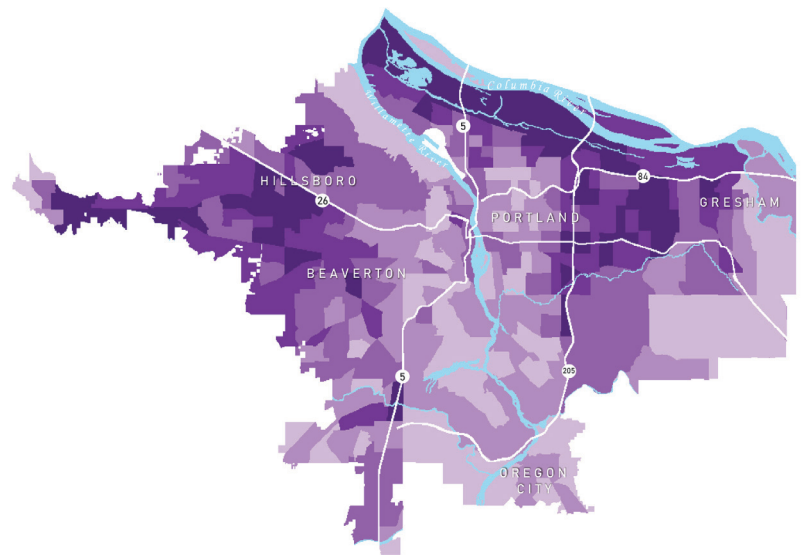


Interestingly, there is an area near Lake Oswego, southwest Portland, and Milwaukie that features a high percentage of units that may be unoccupied or vacant but does not overlap with the lower response rates map for the Portland region. Except for the northernmost areas of Portland, some areas near Interstate 205, Gresham, Hillsboro, and Beaverton, the housing occupancy map is close to the inverse of the map for populations of color.

## Population of color



Unsurprisingly, East Portland and eastern Multnomah County's percentage of foreign-born residents and people of color overlap. The tracts with the largest population share of people of color are located in East Portland and towards the city's northern border, eastern Multnomah County, and the western and southwestern areas of the Metro area in Washington County. These areas contain a higher portion of the census tracts with lower response rates compared to other parts of the Metro area.



## Age under 5



Children under the age of five are represented across the region except in Portland's central city area. However, this discrepancy also neatly overlaps with areas that feature fewer renters in northwest and southwest Portland, except for the downtown area.

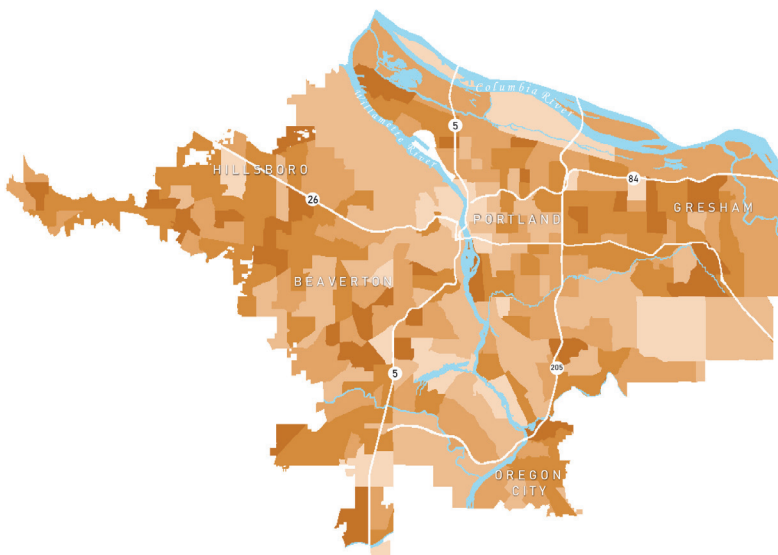




Photo: courtesy of We Count Oregon

# The Census is Political: Hard-to-Count Communities Must Be Reached



By We Count Oregon and Julia Michel



Historically, people of color and minority groups have been intentionally excluded from the United States census counts to ensure that political power is concentrated among white Americans. The legacy and impact of the census' racist construction has reinforced systemic oppression of communities of color, native communities, and rural populations. This means the interests of white, wealthy, landowning people have historically been, and currently are, better represented in many facets of Oregon life. Undercounting minority populations propagates a false narrative about population demographics that is mirrored in unjust political representation, policies, and federal budget resource allocation. The census headcount impacts who has political power and who does not. When Black, brown, and minority communities are undercounted, the result is an American culture and democracy that is inequitable. Today, there are exclusionary policies being forwarded by the federal administration. The White House's July 21, 2020, memo attempting to remove from the count undocumented people, in spite of the constitutional mandate to count all people in the United States, in addition to the decision to end the census a month early continue the legacy of inequality. Without intentionally reshaping the form and function of the census—with a commitment to equity—the census is a barrier to liberty.

We Count Oregon is the first woman-of-color-led statewide census campaign in Oregon purposefully designed to undermine exclusionary census norms. The We Count Oregon 2020 campaign reflects the values, cultures, and needs of hard-to-count communities. In Oregon, these are primarily communities of color (including Black, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Latinx, Indigenous and native communities), LGBTQI communities, children under the age of five, disabled people, rural communities, and people experiencing homelessness. Hard-to-count communities in Oregon had less than a 73 percent self-response return rate in the 2010 census. Due to the history of the census and a variety of contemporary political factors, these communities require additional engagement from trusted messengers. The We Count Oregon campaign is based on community insights centered in relationships and trust. This approach ensures understanding of the dynamics, concerns, information consumption patterns, fears, and myths that keep hard-to-count communities from voluntarily participating in the census.



*Photo: Esperanza Tervalon-Garrett, We Count Oregon State Campaign Manager.*

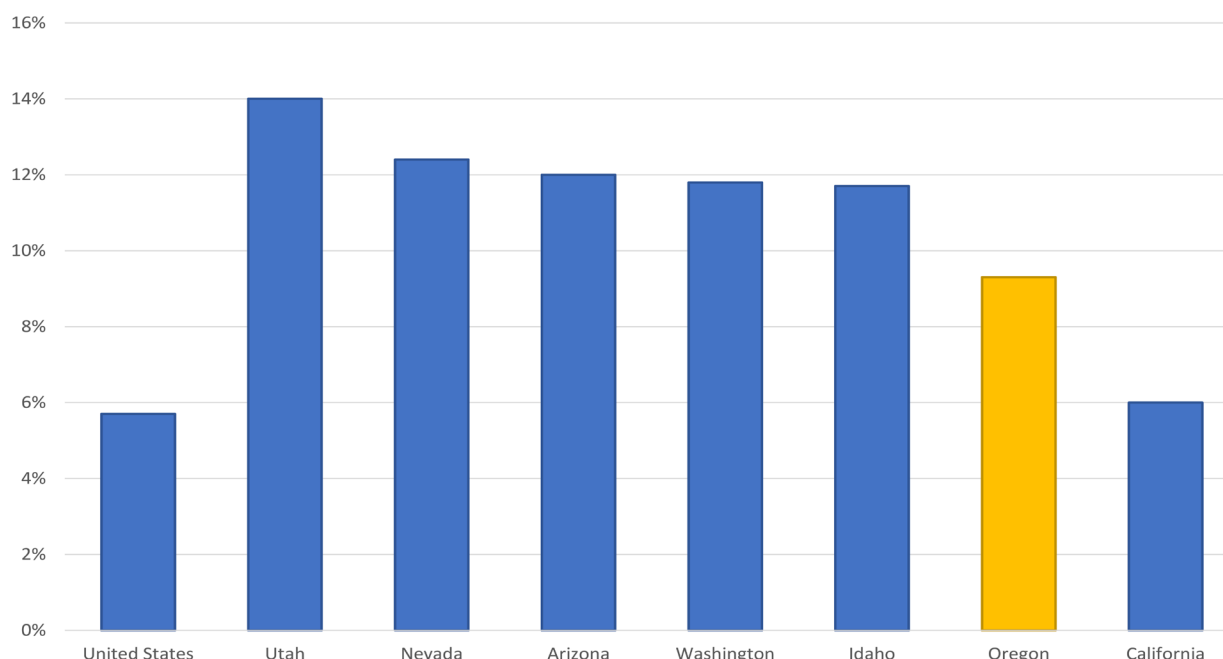
To achieve its goals, We Count Oregon integrates eleven culturally-specific, community-based organizations and has developed a strategy that is centered on race, culture, and language. The primary goal is to help hard-to-count communities remember that they count, that their voices have power, and that being counted enables them to change the narrative about who Oregonians are. We Count Oregon demonstrates that the cultural vibrancy and diverse perspectives of hard-to-count communities are an important part of the heart and soul of Oregon. These communities are Oregon's future.

As of 2018, Oregon's population growth rate ranked eleventh in the nation, an estimated increase of 364,226 persons or 9.5 percent

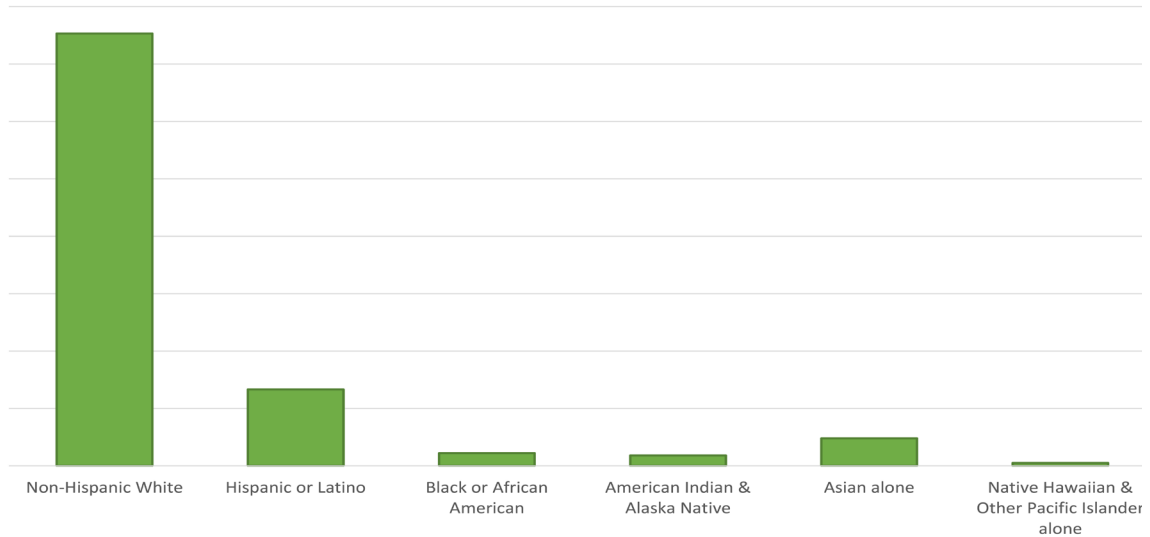
since the 2010 census count.<sup>1</sup> With a growing population, it's imperative that Oregon have an accurate headcount in order to allocate funds and representation accurately. Since 2010, 77 percent of Oregon's population growth was due to migration, including immigrants and refugees, who play an essential role in Oregon's economy. One in ten residents is an immigrant.<sup>2</sup> The Latinx population is the largest minority group in Oregon accounting for 13.3 percent of Oregon's population in 2018. Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders make up 5.3 percent, and Black people make up 2.2 percent of the population.<sup>3</sup> If these communities and other hard-to-count groups are overlooked, an opportunity will be missed for more socially-equitable distribution of funds for another ten years.<sup>4</sup>

1. Office of Economic Analysis, Department of Administrative Services, State of Oregon, Oregon's Demographic Trends, July 2019, [https://www.oregon.gov/das/OEA/Documents/OR\\_pop\\_trend2019.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/das/OEA/Documents/OR_pop_trend2019.pdf)
2. American Immigration Council, Immigrants in Oregon, May 8, 2018, [www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon).
3. "United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oregon," United States Census Bureau (website), [www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OR/PST045218](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OR/PST045218).
4. Letter to US Senators. The Census Project. <https://censusproject.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/finalcensus-project-sign-on-letter-re-census-extension-in-senate-relief-8-6-20-1.pdf>. Accessed September 1, 2020.

### **POPULATION CHANGE IN THE US AND THE WESTERN STATES, 2010 - 2018, US BUREAU OF CENSUS**



## OREGON RACE & HISPANIC ORIGIN 2018, US BUREAU OF CENSUS



### The Impact of COVID-19

In light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which began to make a lethal impact across the United States in mid-March, the approach to the 2020 census had to change. The US Census Bureau is obligated to protect the health and safety of everyone while fulfilling the statutory requirement to deliver the 2020 census counts to the president on schedule.<sup>5</sup> We Count Oregon's efforts to compel Oregon residents to self-respond online, by phone, or by mail continue. US Census Bureau administrators pushed the end of the counting period from July 31 to August 14. As of April 2020, states have committed to deliver the final population numbers to the president and Congress by the original deadline of December 31, 2020.<sup>6</sup> The US Census Bureau's efforts are not yet sufficiently scaled to ensure a complete census count in these unsure times.

We Count Oregon has shaped its response to COVID-19 based on three main goals:

- Ensure hard-to-count communities are up to date on the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the State of Oregon.
- Empower hard-to-count communities to feel connected, supported, and empowered during a time of uncertainty and physical distancing.
- Help communities see that taking the census enables political power, representation, and money that hard-to-count communities desperately need.

We Count Oregon followed the Centers for Disease Control recommendations to social distance in solidarity with the most vulnerable community members in hopes of flattening the COVID-19 curve.<sup>7</sup> The organization suspended

5. United States Census Bureau, "Census Bureau Statement on Modifying 2020 Census Operations to Make Sure College Students are Counted," news release no. CB20-RTQ.06, March 15, 2020, [www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/modifying-2020-operations-for-counting-college-students.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/modifying-2020-operations-for-counting-college-students.html).

6. Tom Banse, "COVID-19 Makes 2020 Census More Complicated Than It Already Was," Oregon Public Broadcasting (website), March 23, 2020, [www.opb.org/news/article/coronavirus-covid-19-census-2020-north-west-online-form/](http://www.opb.org/news/article/coronavirus-covid-19-census-2020-north-west-online-form/).

7. "These Simulations Show How to Flatten the Coronavirus Growth Curve," *The Washington Post*, March 14, 2020, [www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/corona-simulator/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/corona-simulator/).



Photo: Precious Edmonds and Renate Ray

door-to-door operations in favor of phone, text, and digital outreach strategies; canceled all in-person planned events in favor of online; and partnered with local service organizations to disseminate information to hard-to-count communities.

All of these changes came two weeks before April 1, 2020, National Census Day. We Count Oregon pivoted strategies grounded in behavior change theory to a digital event supported by over fifty partner organizations with the hopes of reaching hard-to-count populations. In an effort to drive statewide unity, the campaign invited the Governor's Office, the Oregon Complete Count Committee, and the Census Equity Fund of Oregon to partner in an online Census Day livestream. The digital event attracted nearly 500 people on Zoom and 5,800 on Facebook. On April 1, 2020, there was a 2.3

percent increase in census response from the day before—the highest one-day response rate of the year. According to experts, the only difference between the two days was outreach activities. In other words, the efforts of We Count Oregon and coalition partners had an impact.

Maintaining engagement within hard-to-count communities in this new and uncharted environment is critical to ensure that the next ten years have a more equitable distribution of public funds. In fact, the impact of disinvestment in hard-to-count communities due to COVID-19 is already apparent. People of color, farm workers, and members of rural communities are identified as essential workers without the proper equipment or work provisions to keep them safe. To understand these communities, a closer look at the historical and present context is needed.

### The Black Community

It is clear that representation matters on every level and that racism is the biggest barrier to overcome. The Black community in Oregon is vibrant, their voices matter, and their needs matter. The system was not designed for Black people or other hard-to-count communities; therefore, there is a lot of distrust in government procedures. The goal of We Count Oregon is to help Black communities see that being counted is a political act. It's an act of agency and empowerment.

When Oregon was granted statehood in 1859, it was the only state in the union with a constitution that forbade Black people from living, working, or owning property in the state. It was illegal for Black people to move to the state until 1926. Framing Oregon as a historically racist, white state (it had the highest per capita Ku Klux Klan membership in the country)<sup>8</sup> is essential for understanding the obstacles hard-to-count communities, specifically the Black community, face.

Black communities have been underserved and purposefully left out by entrenched white-nationalist groups whose existence depends on

8. Alana Semuels, "The Racist History of Portland, the Whitest City in America." *The Atlantic*, August 19, 2016, [www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/racist-history-portland/492035/](http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/racist-history-portland/492035/).

"Being left out is a part of the institutionalized dehumanization, othering, and oppression of Black people that are hallmarks of Oregon's legacy."

using race as a wedge to drive statewide politics.<sup>9</sup> That means Black community members rightly don't trust the systems that are in place to govern their lives. Some Black community members have concerns about data privacy, and given the history of racism and oppression, have developed apathy for local, state, and national politics, which have continually demanded Black support, but have failed to find solutions for the Black community's needs. Being left out is a part of the institutionalized dehumanization, othering, and oppression of Black people that are hallmarks of Oregon's legacy.

For instance, Oregon has the seventh-highest incarceration rate of Black people. That means for every 1,000 Black residents, about twenty-one are in prison. Pushing Oregon to count state prisoners as residents of their home communities, rather than residents of the places where they are incarcerated, would increase Black representation and better serve the Black community. According to research of the Population Reference Bureau, Black children are most at risk to be undercounted by 48 percent compared to white children's undercount, which is estimated to be nine percent.<sup>10</sup> This level of data inequity



Photo: Marchel Hirshfield, Census Equity Coordinator, APANO

paints an inaccurate portrait of Black communities translating into a lack of services and support for Black children.

### Immigrant and Latinx Communities

Other disenfranchised groups include immigrant and Latinx communities whose labor is critical to, among other things, the farming economy of Oregon. The recent failed effort to introduce a citizenship question on the 2020 census brought up legitimate and terrifying concerns about deportation and privacy for immigrant and Latinx communities. As a result, the one-in-nine

9. Nina Mehlhaf, "Tracking the White Supremacy Movement in Oregon." KGW8 (website), August 15, 2017, [www.kgw.com/article/news/local/tracking-the-white-supremacy-movement-in-oregon/464415792](http://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/tracking-the-white-supremacy-movement-in-oregon/464415792).

10. "Research Identifies New Strategies to Reduce Undercount of Young Children in US 2020 Census," Population Reference Bureau (website), June 12, 2019, [www.prb.org/new-strategies-to-reduce-undercount-of-young-children-in-2020-census/](http://www.prb.org/new-strategies-to-reduce-undercount-of-young-children-in-2020-census/).



Photo: Carlos Windham, Comedian, and Founder El Porvenir



*Photo courtesy of We Count Oregon.*

Oregonians who live with a non-citizen, which amounts to almost a half million people, are more likely to avoid the census and be undercounted. The assault on this community continued after COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Latinx communities. On July 21, 2020, the White House issued Memorandum on Excluding Illegal Aliens from the Apportionment Base Following the 2020 Census to prevent undocumented communities from counting when voting districts are redrawn through apportionment in 2021.

Disseminating facts about the census' security is paramount to undoing fears about participating. More than 10,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients live in Oregon. These young people and their families need to be represented in the census in order to have educational and recreational resources allocated to them.

Given the changes to US asylum and refugee policy, coupled with anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx narrative at the national level, these communities,

rightfully, are afraid for their lives and terrified they will be ripped away from their families and deported. It's important to note that 64 percent of Oregon's Latinx population is US born,<sup>11</sup> but the impact of the proposed citizenship question raised realistic concern for their safety and the safety of their families. While this population is distinct from first generation immigrants—approximately 96,000 Latinx Oregonians were born elsewhere—and both groups face similar social disparities.<sup>12</sup> These intersectional households have a variety of barriers to participation that We Count Oregon is addressing, particularly through multilingual communications and partnerships with long-time organizations working in these communities.

Localized efforts such as a census field organizer job fair, hosted by East County Rising and the Latino Network, helped boost participation within the Latinx community. That community grew by 72 percent since 2000 and currently makes up 12 percent of Oregon's population.<sup>13</sup> As COVID-19 has halted We Count Oregon's field-based out-

11. The Oregon Community Foundation, *Latinos in Oregon: Trends and Opportunities in a Changing State*, August 2016, [https://oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/reports/latinos\\_in\\_oregon\\_report\\_2016.pdf](https://oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/reports/latinos_in_oregon_report_2016.pdf).

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

reach, the group is turning to digital and phone outreach in partnership with critical Latinx-focused partners, such as PCUN, Causa Oregon, and Raíces, to reach this critical community.

### **Tribal and Urban Indigenous Peoples**

Long before settlers took over Oregon, before the adoption of the US Constitution, and before the first US census of 1790, there were native peoples living in the territory now known as Oregon. Specific challenges face these communities, including broken treaty agreements, disenrollment, and unrecognized tribes. Native peoples may resist participating in the census given how they have been erased from contemporary culture and face consistent stereotyping and outdated and inaccurate portrayals in pop culture and education.

Part C, Title VI, of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 details the national expectations to provide a quality education for American Indian, Alaskan, and Hawaiian Native students. Money allocated based on the census helps to fund federal grant programs to support the efforts of local educational agencies to meet culturally-related educational needs of native students; to ensure that students gain knowledge and understanding of native communities, languages, tribal histories, traditions and cultures; and to ensure that school staff who serve native students have

the ability to provide culturally-appropriate and effective instruction. With a long history of facing miseducation, misrepresentation, and inaccurate depictions of native peoples' histories, Indigenous and native people are rightfully distrustful of the state. After generations of institutionalized colonialism, it takes sustained efforts of reparation to build trust. Se-ah-dom Edmo is We Count Oregon's tribal community coordinator, enabling the organization to support and integrate the needs of Oregon's nine recognized tribes and urban native peoples.

Over the course of the campaign, We Count Oregon found that native peoples are concerned about information from the census being shared with other agencies including welfare, the IRS, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal officials, tribal courts, tribal police, and the military. The year 1860 was the first time American Indians were counted in the census as a separate population category. Since then, the US Census Bureau has made changes in the way it counts populations, but the process for tribal communities continues to be culturally unresponsive and unjust. To address this, the Oregon census process kicked off in the Warm Springs reservation to ensure that the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs had ownership in census participation. Counting tribal and urban native peoples will happen because of their commitment to their people.



*Photo: courtesy of We Count Oregon*

"Native peoples may resist participating in the census given how they have been erased from contemporary culture..."

## Other Considerations

While hard-to-count communities have the effects of social marginalization in common, there are specific considerations to take into account for why each community's participation has been low.

The US Census Bureau has increased efforts in collecting an accurate headcount of groups that are important to the work of We Count Oregon. Identifying information and outreach gaps is the first step in increasing the participation of hard-to-count communities. Next there's a need to identify underlying causes for the missing data, such as rural communities not having broadband internet for this year's first-ever electronic census, or Spanish-

speaking communities receiving English-only census mailings. Efforts have been made: braille and large print guides are available for disabled community members, and census language guides are available in fifty-nine non-English languages. But more work is needed.

Participating in the census is one act among many in achieving just political representation for all Oregonians. We Count Oregon will continue to do its part to achieve that goal. Learn more about the We Count Oregon campaign at [www.wecountoregon.com](http://www.wecountoregon.com)

"Participating in the census is one act, among many, in achieving just political representation for all Oregonians."

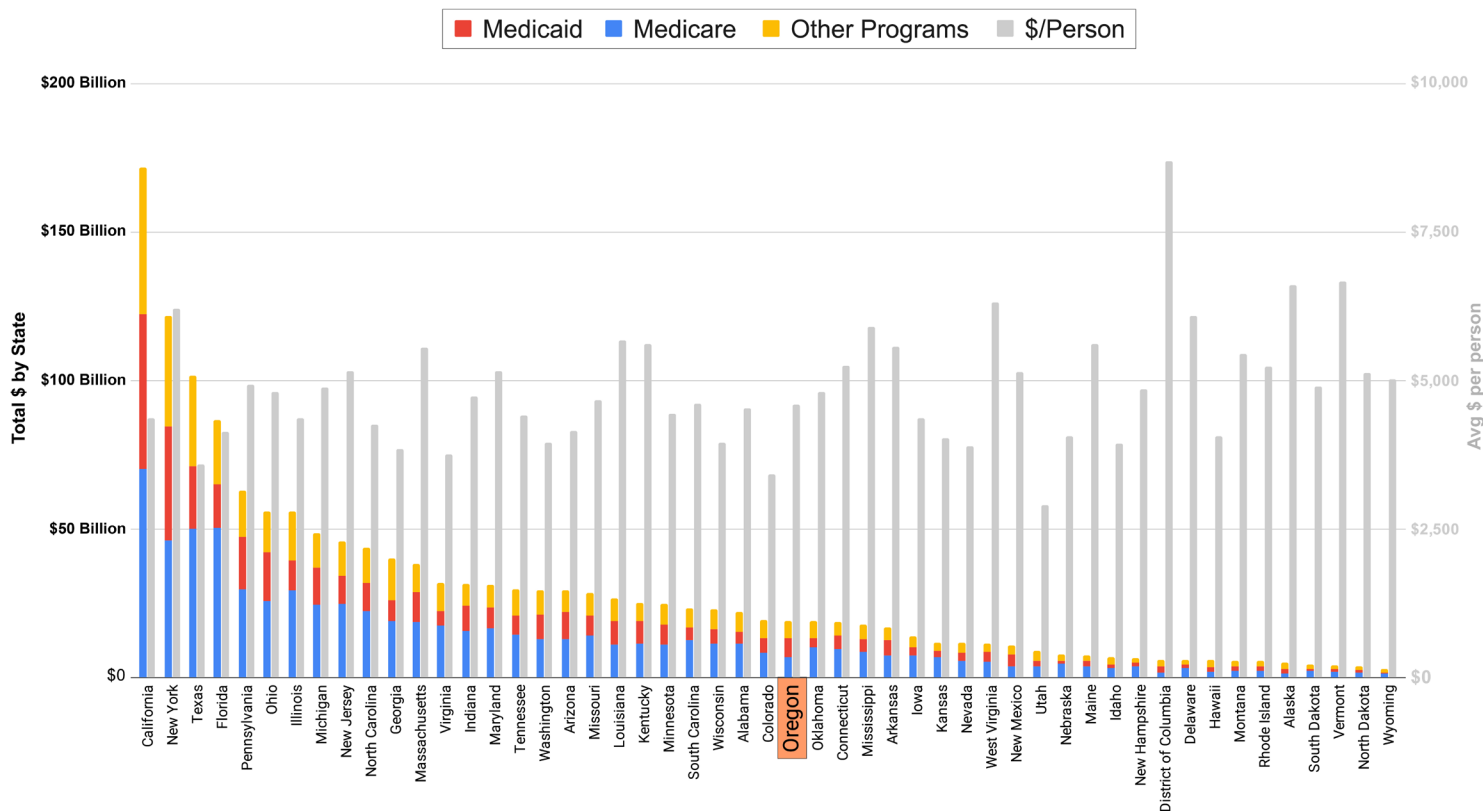


Photo: Make Oregon Count 2020 Symposium

# Indicators of the Metroscope

## Show Us the Money...

Census-based Allocation for Medicare, Medicaid and Other Programs (2017)



Each year local, regional, and state governments use the results of census decennial counts, as well as the annual estimates based on the census, to distribute significant federal funds.

According to researchers at George Washington University, over nineteen billion dollars in federal money was allocated throughout Oregon in fiscal year 2017 alone;<sup>1</sup> this amount equates to an average of approximately \$4,600 for each Oregon resident, close

to the national average of \$4,626. In addition to the largest disbursements in Medicare and Medicaid, census data also determines funding decisions for smaller, but still vital, programs such as the USDA's very low to moderate income housing loans (~\$20m), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (~\$67m).

1. "Counting for Dollars 2020: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds | GW Institute of Public Policy | The George Washington University," Gwu.edu, 2020, <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>.

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