

## Census Message Research with Black Populations in California African American Civic Engagement Project (AA CEP)



### Project Overview

In the summer of 2018, the cohort groups of the African American Civic Engagement Project (AA CEP),<sup>1</sup> a project of California Calls, conducted its first ever Census Message Testing program with over 80 grassroots leaders from 10 organizations across the state. During the nearly 3-week program, AA CEP groups **contacted 15,996 individuals** in hard-to-count (HTC) communities, and **collected 11,822 survey responses**, testing knowledge, awareness, and opinions of the 2020 Census. Of the total number of contacted individuals, 69% (or 11,037 people) were identified specifically as Black/African American.

In particular, California Calls contacted HTC individuals across a total of 17 counties, 34 Congressional Districts, 30 State Senate Districts, 48 Assembly Districts, 46 Supervisorial Districts, and 112 Municipalities. Our goal was to contact HTC individuals in traditional high-density African American hub areas like Los Angeles and Oakland, emerging areas such as East Contra Costa County, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties, and places like Orange, Sacramento, and Santa Clara, which have significant pockets of Black voters as well. In addition, it is important to note that while we attempted to cast a wide net with our outreach, **nearly 59% of our outreach focused on the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino.**

County	Contacts	Surveys
Alameda County	1,478	909
Butte County	1	1
Contra Costa County	681	632
Kern County	26	20
Los Angeles County	5,772	4,416
Marin County	6	6
Monterey County	2	2
Orange County	28	21
Riverside County	858	644
Sacramento County	280	217

<sup>1</sup> AA CEP groups included: A New Way of Life, Black Women For Wellness, BLU Educational Foundation, Building Blocks for Kids, Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE), Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), Partnerships for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), Pillars of the Community, Safe Return Project, and Time For Change Foundation.

San Bernardino County	2,743	1,872
San Diego County	3,982	2,947
San Francisco County	11	11
San Joaquin County	1	1
San Mateo County	1	1
Solano County	3	3
Stanilaus County	7	4
Unknown Counties	115	115
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,996</b>	<b>11,822</b>

## **Program Goals**

The goals of the California Calls Black Census Message Testing (BCMT) Program were threefold:

- First, the program aimed to add to the landscape of Census message testing of hard-to-count (HTC) communities by activating the California Calls integrated voter engagement (IVE) apparatus to do outreach to Black individuals in HTC communities throughout the State of California.
- Second, the BCMT program also aimed to test and build capacity of our IVE field, tech, and data infrastructures to contact and build relationships with both voters and non-voters in HTC communities.
- Lastly, the program sought to begin educating and raising the awareness of HTC black communities on the importance of the 2020 Census and the key role it plays in ensuring HTC communities receive adequate federal funding for needed programs and services.

## **Methodology**

California Calls employed a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to accomplish BCMT program goals. Program tactics included:

- a. door-to-door canvassing of HTC black individuals (both voters and non-voters),
- b. site and street canvassing of HTC communities, including homeless populations, formerly incarcerated people, immigrants and refugees, parents, and young people;
- c. phone banking of African American identified voters in HTC communities,
- d. strategic communications via email and social media advertising to gauge key HTC communities' opinions and sentiments and to test the effectiveness of online engagement and peer sharing around the 2020 Census; and
- e. political education trainings and workshops to educate key community leaders and members about the importance of the 2020 Census.

The following is a chart highlighting the geographic areas we targeted using each outreach method:

<b><u>Tactic</u></b>	<b><u>HTC Communities</u></b>	<b><u>Geographical Targets</u></b>
<b>Door-to-Door Canvassing</b>	African Americans, Homeless Populations, Black Immigrant and Refugee Communities	Cities: Compton, Inglewood, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Palmdale, Lancaster, Richmond, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Pablo; Neighborhoods: City Heights, Downtown LA, (Skid Row) Southeast San Diego, South LA, Watts
<b>Site and Street Canvassing</b>	African Americans, Homeless Populations	Same as Door-to-Door Geographical Targets above
<b>Phone Banking</b>	African Americans, Immigrant and Refugee Communities	Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Stanilaus

<b>Strategic Communications</b>	African Americans	Facebook Users in California
<b>Political Ed Trainings</b>	African American Formerly Incarcerated Individuals, Immigrants and Refugees, Parents, and Women	Cities of Los Angeles, Richmond, San Bernardino, and San Diego

Trainings and Technical Assistance

In addition, we also provided comprehensive training and technical assistance to organizations conducting outreach during the program. For instance, in August 2018, BCMT program leads conducted a two-hour political education and field operations training for team leaders at each participating organization. California Calls also provided ongoing field operations and technical support throughout the program, including conducting weekly field operations calls to disseminate information, make necessary adjustments, and facilitate peer learning and sharing between subcontractor partners (ACEP groups).

Program Survey

The BCMT program survey consisted of 13 questions that attempted to test the general knowledge, awareness, and sentiments of HTC Black individuals around the 2020 Census. In particular, the survey questions broke down into 5 basic categories: (1) general awareness and likelihood to complete the 2020 Census, (2) methods for completing the 2020 Census, (3) key messages and messengers, (4) fears and concerns around the 2020 Census, and (5) specific questions about the proposed citizenship question. For some questions, respondents were asked to provide yes or no answers. For others, they were given a choice of responses and asked to select the one that best fits their beliefs or sentiments. Respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. The following is a list of the 13 BCMT program questions and the available responses for each.

**BCMT SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**

**General Awareness and Likelihood of Responding**

1. Do you think your communities need increased funding and representation?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
  - d. Refuse to Answer
2. Will you participate in our survey to improve local Census outreach efforts?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Send Survey Later via email
3. Prior to today, did you know that the Census will happen in 2020? [Yes / No / Undecided]
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
4. If the Census were held today, would you fill out the Census form? [Yes / No / Undecided]
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided

**Methods for Completing the Census**

5. Do you prefer to fill out paper forms or online forms?
  - a. I prefer to fill out PAPER FORMS instead of online forms;
  - b. I prefer to fill out ONLINE FORMS over paper forms;
  - c. I have NO PREFERENCE between paper and online forms

6. When you use the Internet, where do you typically use it?
  - a. Home
  - b. Work
  - c. School
  - d. Library
  - e. Cell Phone
  - f. Other
7. Which of the following do you trust most to give you accurate information about the Census?
  - a. Community Based Organizations
  - b. Friends and Family
  - c. Federal Government
  - d. State Government
  - e. Local Government
8. Which of the following is most important to you and your family?
  - a. Child Care
  - b. Health Care
  - c. Education
  - d. Transportation
  - e. Job Training
  - f. Housing

**Fears and Concerns**

9. Do you believe that answering your 2020 Census form could harm YOU PERSONALLY in any way?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
10. Do you believe that answering your 2020 Census form could harm YOUR COMMUNITY in any way?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided

**Citizenship Question**

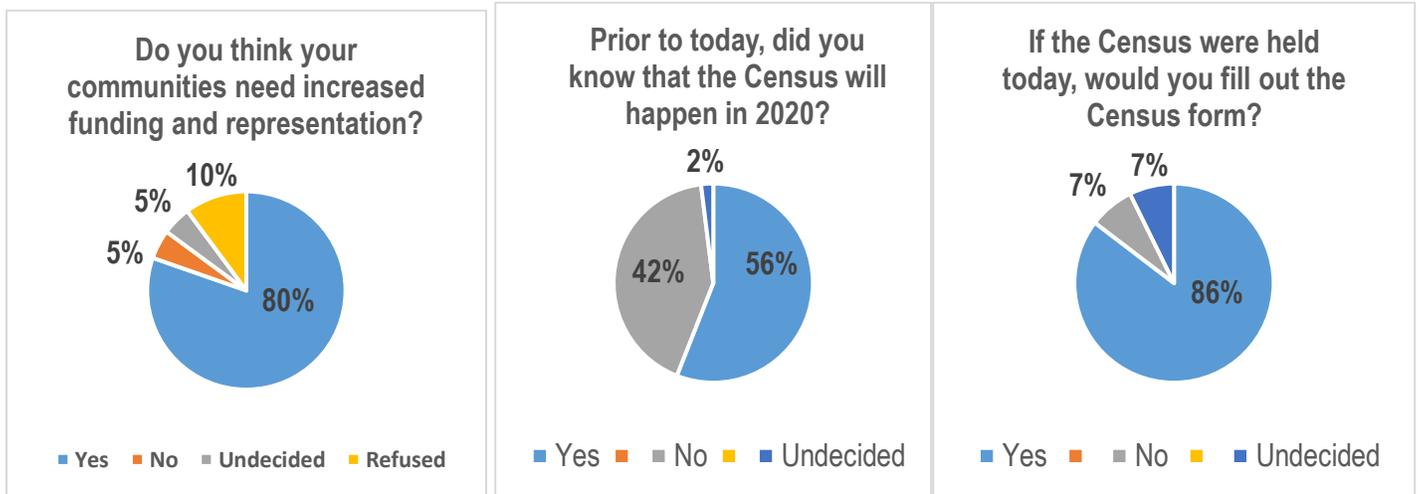
11. Do you support including a question that asks a person to identify their citizenship status on the 2020 Census?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
12. Are you concerned that a "citizenship question" could lead to an undercount of California's population?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
13. Are you concerned about the citizenship question being used to negatively target Black immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided

The BCMT program was staffed by **over 80 trained grassroots leaders** from the 10 participating organizations. Most survey takers had experience doing outreach as part of past AACEP IVE efforts. Most were also recruited and hired from the participating organization’s base or membership, making them trusted messengers to the HTC communities we contacted. All survey takers were trained by team leaders at each organization on why the Census is important; what’s at stake; script and messaging; survey taking methods; quality control; and the use of technology and data platforms.

## **Program Findings and Highlights**

The following are the results of the BCMT survey of Black HTC individuals throughout the State of California.

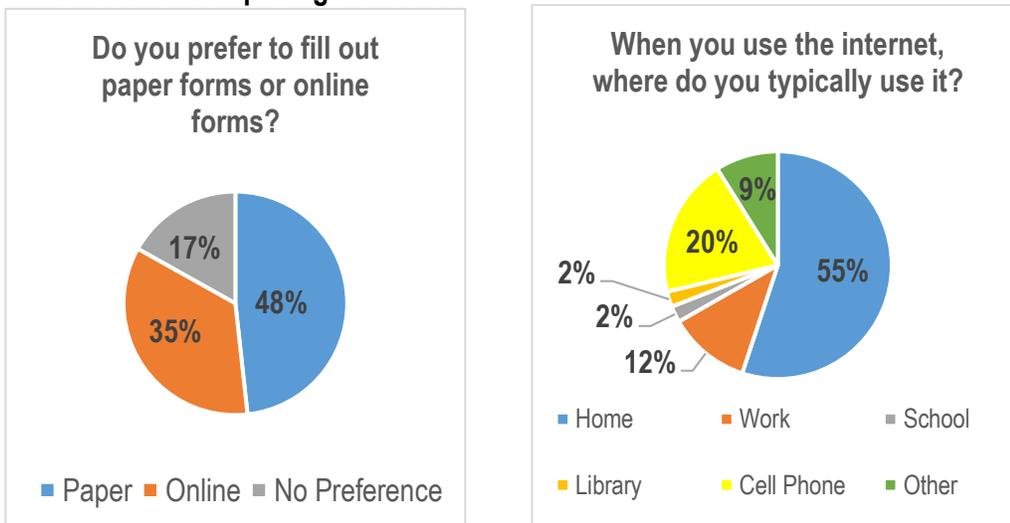
### **1. General Awareness and Likelihood**



**Key Highlight:** More than 1 in 2 respondents age 18 to 35 did not know the Census is happening in 2020.

- 1 in 4 respondents age 18 to 24 indicated that they would not fill out the Census form if the Census were held today.
- Only 59% of respondents age 55 and older knew that the Census would happen in 2020.
- Respondents 18 to 24 years old and respondents age 65 and older indicated that they were unsure if they would fill out the Census form at the same rate (11%).

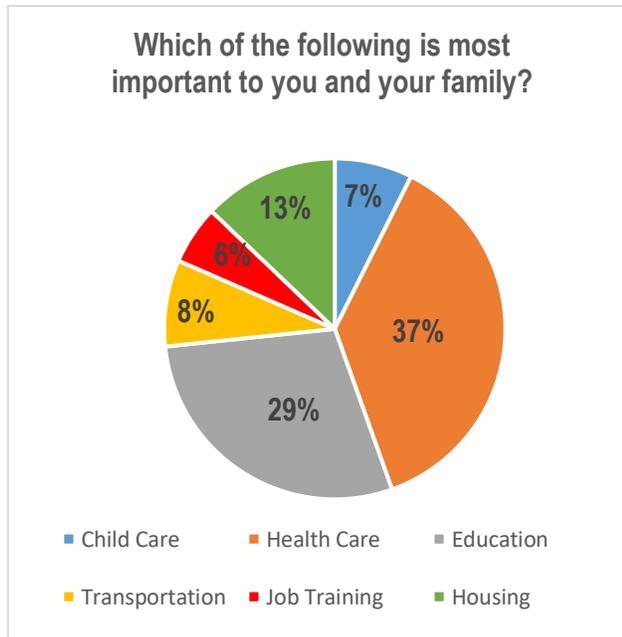
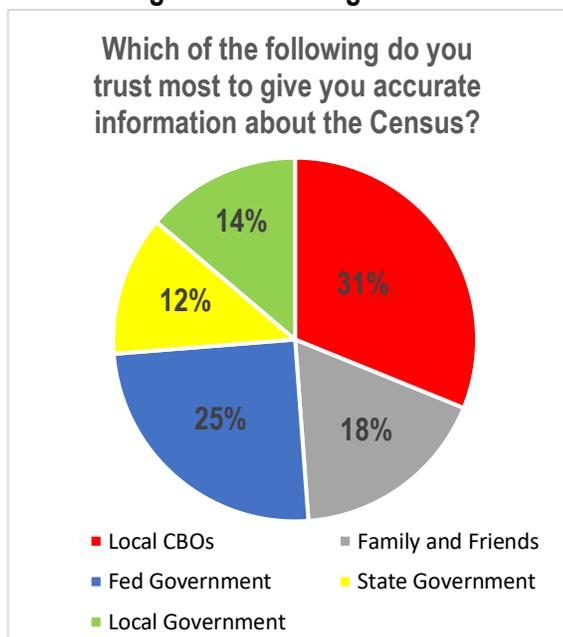
### **2. Methods for Completing the Census**



**Key Highlight:** 85% of respondents who prefer to complete paper forms are 45 years old and over.

- 43% of respondents who prefer to complete online forms are 34 years old and younger
- 32% of respondents 18 to 24 years old typically use the internet via their cell phone; 44% typically use the internet at home.
- 58% of respondents 55 years and older typically use the internet at home; only 14% typically use the internet via their cell phone.
- 54% of respondents who have no preference between paper and online forms are 55 years old and older

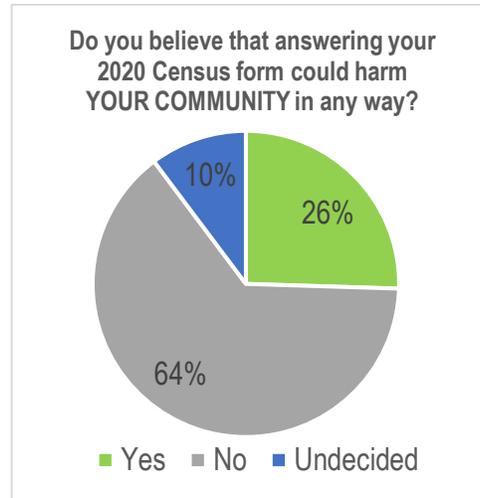
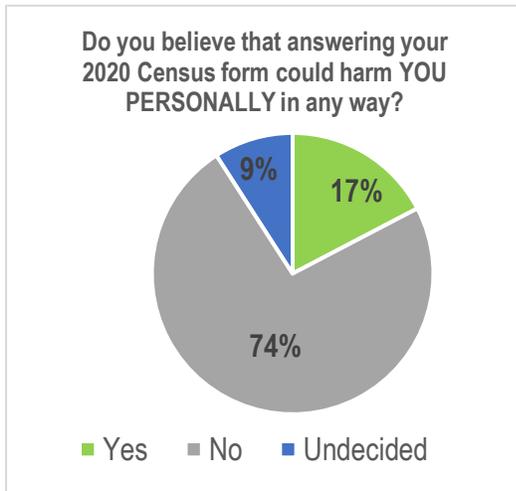
### 3. Messengers and Messages



**Key Highlights:** Interesting patterns were demonstrated in the responses to messengers and messages:

- 18-to-24-year-old respondents identified local community-based organizations as the most trusted messenger for Census information at the highest rate (37%). The second highest rate was 45-to-54-year-old respondents at 32%.
- Respondents 45 years old and over identified the federal government as the most trusted messenger at the highest rate (26%). 18-to-24-year-old respondents identified the federal government as the most trusted messenger at the lowest rate at 16%.
- Men and Women respondents identified health care and education as the most important issue to their families at similar rates. 38% of men identified health care as the most important issue compared to 37% of women. Similarly, 28% of women respondents identified education at their most important issue vs. 29% of men respondents.

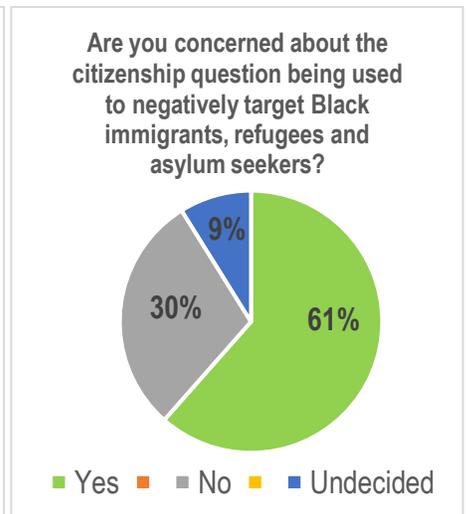
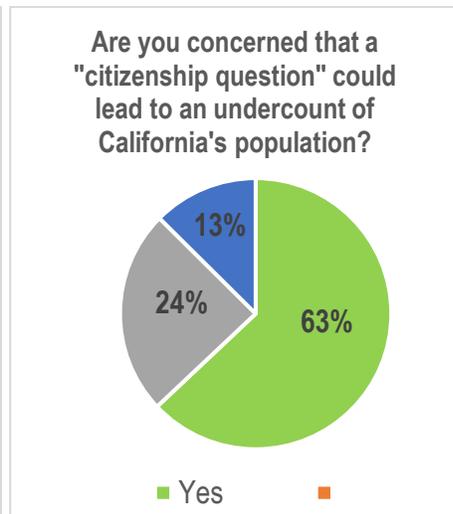
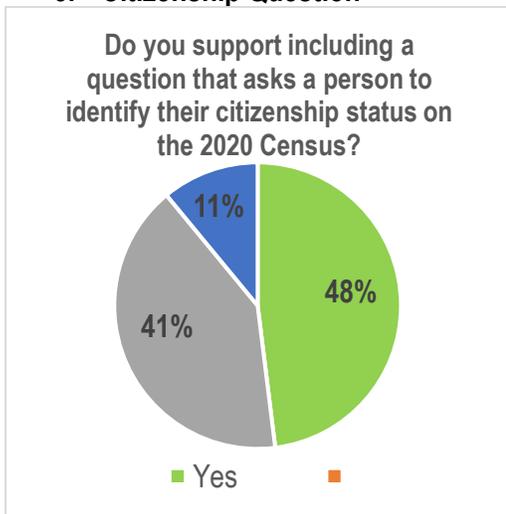
#### 4. Fears and Concerns



**Key Highlight:** More than 1 in 4 foreign-born respondents believe the 2020 Census could harm their community.

- 18% of foreign-born respondents also believe the 2020 Census could harm them personally.
- Respondents 18-to-24 years old and respondents 65 years old and over believe the 2020 Census could harm their community at the same rate (27%).
- Respondents 18-to-24 years old were undecided about whether the 2020 Census could harm their community at the highest rate (14%) among all age groups.

#### 5. Citizenship Question



**Key Highlight:** While US born African Americans support the inclusion of the citizenship question at 50%, more than 66% are concerned that it could lead to an undercount and 62% are concerned that the Census could be used to negatively target immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

- 62% of respondents 34 years of age and younger are concerned that the citizenship question could negatively affect Black immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers compared to 56% of respondents age 55 and older.
- 49% of foreign-born respondents do not support the inclusion of the citizenship question on the 2020 Census compared to 43% of US Born respondents.

## **Implications and Lessons Learned**

Based on our program results, California Calls makes the following recommendations in conducting outreach to Black HTC individuals and communities throughout California:

1. Connect participation in the 2020 Census to the opportunity for increased funding and representation for key health care, education, and housing programs. Groups should educate HTC individuals about the connection between the Census and federal programs that directly relate to these issues.
2. Educate young people (ages 18 to 35) about the importance of the 2020 Census and its timeline. For many, this will be their first time participating in a decennial Census, and they are less knowledgeable and more wary about participating.
3. Educate older Black HTC individuals about the timing of the Census as well. In addition, educate older HTC individuals about the availability of paper forms in completing the Census. Lastly, provide technical assistance and Census assistance kiosks in local communities to ensure older Black HTC individuals have the support they need to complete the Census.
4. In advocating against the inclusion of the citizenship question, connect the question to California's high risk of an undercount and the impact it might have on funding for key programs. In addition, highlight the negative affect it may have on black immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
5. Lift the importance of participating in the 2020 Census while also acknowledging the fears and concerns that HTC communities may have around the citizenship question. Develop a strategy to empower the most marginalized communities while lifting the privacy and confidentiality protections built into Census collection.

## **Next Steps**

California Calls is in the process of launching the California Black Census and Redistricting Hub to ensure African American-led and/or African American-serving organizations have the resources and capacity to lift the voices of African American individuals and communities throughout the Census and redistricting processes. The Hub will include California Calls anchor organizations, local Million Voters Project affiliates, and AACEP cohort groups. Specific components of the Hub include:

- Coalition Building with key African American-led and African American-serving partners and allies to ensure coordination between groups;
- Organizing Technical Expertise and Support;
- Strategic Communications to help lift and educate local residents in disadvantaged African American communities around the Census and redistricting processes;
- Outreach & Education in African American HTC Areas of the state;
- Policy Advocacy on key issues to ensure Census and redistricting policies work to the benefit of African American communities;
- Coordination with key non-African American-led and/or African American-serving partners and allies to promote collaboration vs competition between disadvantaged communities in the Census and redistricting process

## **Special Thank You**

Special thank you to **California Community Foundation** and the **Weingart Foundation** for providing the resources to support the BCMT and our outreach efforts to Black HTC individuals throughout California, and specifically in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties.

Also, a special thank you the 10 participating organizations from the African American Civic Engagement Project, who did the heavy lifting in contacting thousands of HTC Black individuals throughout the State.