

**The California Native Vote  
Preparing Us for the 2020**



**Project Field Research:  
Census**

The California Native Vote Project  
Census Field Research Evaluation Report  
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## The California Native Vote Project Field Research: Preparing Us for the 2020 Census

### 1. Background

The United States census is an important indicator that provides a population count every 10 years (US Census Bureau, n.d). Census data informs a multitude of resources in governmental and private sectors, as well as allocation of representation for the U.S. House of Representatives and state legislatures. More than \$800 billion annually is distributed among U.S. communities, and it depends heavily on the “fair and accurate” information that the census gathers (Leadership Conference Education Fund (LCEF), 2018). The 2020 census will be the first time that the Census Bureau utilizes and focuses most of their attention on an online response system (US Census Bureau, n.d). This will bring many new challenges to the already huge undertaking of conducting a thorough population count. American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) communities, historically have been considered a “hard-to-count” population, as these communities have been undercounted in past censuses that reflected an inaccurate picture of the population and needs of AIAN (LCEF, 2017, & Lujan, 2014). In 2010, AIANs that lived on tribal land had a 4.9% undercount and 1.95% for AIAN living off tribal land (Williams, 2012). Many AIAN utilize social services whose funding is allocated based on census-derived data (LCEF, 2018); there is a lot at stake for an accurate representation of AIAN in the census.

The California Native Vote Project (CNVP), a nonprofit that seeks to create historic advancements in Native American integrated voter engagement, has taken on leadership in state advocacy for Native peoples concerning the 2020 census. The CNVP has actively been on the ground outreaching to communities to engage AIAN voters to build political participation and power. Being in the field and interacting with different communities has provided the CNVP an opportunity to engage tribal communities throughout California about the importance of the census. To develop better strategies to best reach AIAN urban and rural communities throughout California, the CNVP sought to better understand the communities’ perceptions about the census and help fill knowledge gaps that may exist, as well as understand potential barriers to participation, their comfort level with census questions, best practices for reaching AIAN communities, and which messages resonate most.

Through this evaluation work, the CNVP seeks to expand our understanding of this topic and to help develop strategies related to messaging and mobilization that will serve the Native communities. This will also help CNVP develop ways to engage Native people in a collaborative approach.

This work is imperative to ensure the participation of all Native peoples. California has the largest count (723,225 individuals) and percentage (14%) of those who identify as American

Indian/Alaska Native alone or in combination with another race compared to the rest of the nation. There are currently 109 federally recognized tribes in California and 78 entities petitioning for recognition. Tribes in California currently have nearly 100 separate reservations or rancherias. Additionally, California has the largest urban concentration of AIANs in the country. In California, 89% of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in urban areas. Los Angeles County has the largest American Indian and Alaska Native population (156,325 individuals) in the nation.

Unlike other racial/ethnic groups, AIAN do not have racial/ethnic enclaves in urban or suburban areas. This is due to the Federal Relocation Act of 1970, which strategically isolated AIAN families that relocated from tribal lands to designated major cities. The lack of geographic concentration is a barrier to enumeration for this community. It is impossible to serve a large proportion of the AIAN community with traditional outreach methods in a few centralized places, and the small numbers in any particular location make it difficult and costly to design culturally appropriate and effective outreach strategies to meet their needs. Therefore, door-to-door outreach strategies do not work for this community, and innovative approaches must be utilized. With the Census Bureau's plan to focus the 2020 decennial census data collection efforts mostly on an online self-response system, it is important to understand how the community might respond to this and any barriers that may exist to getting a complete and accurate count of the Native community.

Native peoples typically share certain characteristics that compound their risk of being undercounted, such as 1) Poverty: Households in poverty are traditionally very hard to count. Compared to the US national poverty rate (13 percent), almost one-fourth (23 percent) of the Native community faces poverty; 2) Educational Attainment: Areas with lower educational attainment are hard to count. Native peoples tend have lower educational attainment compared to the U.S. average. About 83 percent of Native peoples have a high school degree or higher and 19 percent have a BA or higher, compared to national average of 88 percent and 31 percent, respectively; 3) Housing Insecurity: Close to half of American Indians and Alaska Natives are renters (48 percent). In addition, around 42,000 to 85,000 AIAN were doubling up (sharing spaces) with others in 2013- 2015. Furthermore, living in transitory housing increases the likelihood that the Census Bureau will not have the correct addresses for Native peoples; and 4) Age: Young children are traditionally a hard-to-count population. The median age among AIAN is lower than that of the average U.S. population by more than five years. For Native people on tribal lands, the median age is nine years lower than the U.S. average.

Additional barriers include:

- Issues based on geographic location differ among AIAN (rural vs urban). In rural areas, issues are similar to other small, remote locations in general. In urban areas, issues are similar to other urban poor.
- AIANs are particularly difficult to match to administrative records.
- AIANs experience a digital divide. Overall, according to census data, 58.2 % of American Indians use the internet which is low compared to the average White household. Some remote locations have little internet access. Cell phone coverage may be equally poor in some areas as well.

## **2. Aims & Objectives**

Specifically, the research aims of the project are as follows:

1. Determine what Native American populations in Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties know about the census, potential barriers to their participation, assessment of comfort level with technology, likelihood of responding, how they will answer race/ethnicity and possible citizenship questions, what contact methods are best for different segments of the population, and what messages resonate most.
2. Better understanding of how Native American populations interact with online and digital technologies, including testing ways that technology can be used to help Get Out the Count in 2020.

## **3. Evaluation Methods & Design**

A cross-sectional mixed-methods approach was used to explore research aims. Public opinion polls and focus groups were utilized to gain a better understanding of how Native Americans living in the Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties feel about the census.

### *Public Opinion Polls*

A quantitative public opinion poll survey was developed to be administered in-person and online. Eligibility for participation included adults 18 years of age and older, identify as Native American, and currently live in Los Angeles, Riverside, or San Bernardino county. The survey specifically asked participants' knowledge about the census, desire to participate in the census, how they will answer race/ethnicity and possible citizenship questions, potential barriers to participating (i.e. transportation or technology), comfort level with different technologies (online versus paper format), how they currently interact with online and digital technologies, and the best ways to outreach (communication methods and messaging). Individuals that completed the survey in-person received a \$5 gift card. People who participated online were entered into a raffle to win a \$100 gift card to increase survey participation.

Between September 2018 and December 2018, the CNVP administered 451 public opinion poll surveys at 20 canvassing and community events throughout the Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. A survey link was also created and disseminated through the CNVP Instagram and Facebook, resulting in 9 additional public opinion surveys. In order to ensure eligibility, participants were first asked if they identified as Native American, over the age of 18, and lived in Los Angeles, Riverside, or San Bernardino county. In total, 460 surveys were collected. Among those who participated, 65% of the respondents are female, 30% are male, and 2% identify as transgender/non-binary/third gender. Participants were 18 to 83 years old, and the average age was 45 years old. Over 140 tribes were represented among this sample. Additional demographics information in table 1.

Descriptive analyses were used to produce mean and frequencies for the public opinion poll surveys. In addition, Chi-square statistical analyses were conducted to compare differences between different geographical locations (rural and urban populations) and comparisons between income and age groups. Zip codes were used to determine if respondents lived on tribal lands (n=29) or non-tribal lands (urban) (n=249); participants who did not respond were not included in this analysis. Using the reported income level and number of people in the household, respondents were categorized into a high income (n=121) or low income (n=249) group. Participants whose income and household size were below the 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPL) were considered “low income” for the analysis; participants whose income was above 200% FPL were considered “high income”. Age was categorized by 18 to 24 years (n=50), 25 to 44 years (n=161), 45 to 64 years (n=155), and 65 years old and older (n=55). For the analysis, age was dichotomized between 18 years to 44 years of age (n=211) and 45 years of age or older (n=210). SPSS version 24 was used for analysis.

### *Focus Groups*

A qualitative focus group discussion guide was developed to examine more in-depth issues raised in the quantitative data collection, in particular about their perception of the census, any potential barriers they foresee for their own and their community participation, as well as how they would respond to certain questions, like the citizenship questions. We also wanted to gain an understanding of their knowledge and attitudes about utilizing online and digital technologies, such as their preferences regarding the various data collection methods (specifically the online, mail-in, and census enumerator options) that the census will utilize in 2020. In addition, participants were asked to complete an anchoring survey before the start of the focus group discussion to provide demographic information as well as to quantify if they had ever heard about the census, how important they felt it was to participate, and their belief on how the census form impacts the Native American community. Participants received a \$35 gift card for participating in the focus group.

Three 90-minute focus groups were conducted with 28 Native American individuals from two counties, which included Los Angeles, (2 focus groups, n=18) and San Bernardino (1 focus group, n=10). Most participants were female (86%), and age ranged from 18 to 70 years of age, with an average age of 41 years. CNVP recruited participant from community events and in collaboration with community leaders from those counties.

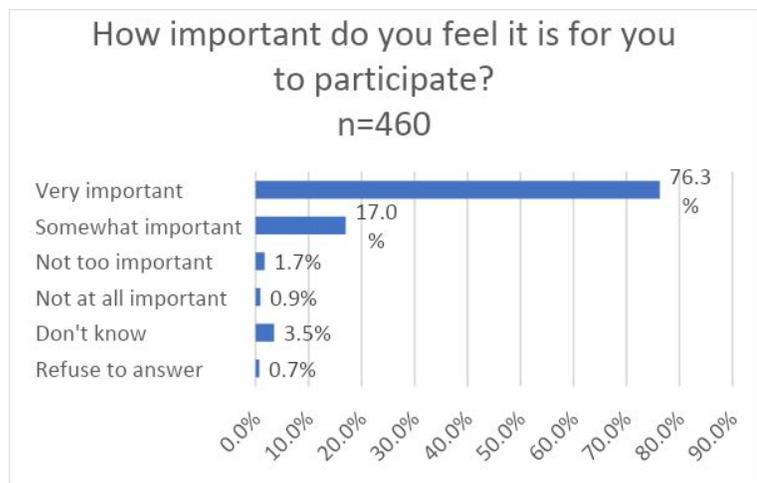
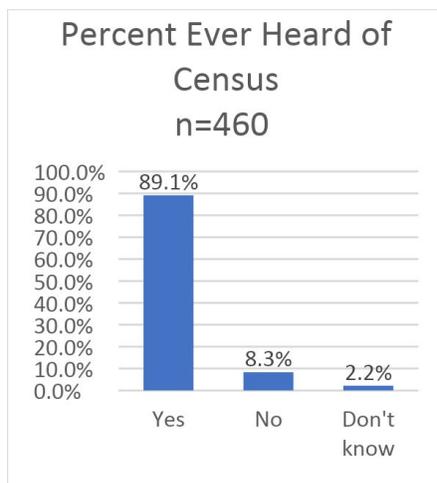
Qualitative data analysis of the focus groups was conducted by performing a content analysis. Focus groups were transcribed and coded based on major themes identified. “Open coding” analysis was used, which allowed for the identification of concepts based on the responses from participants. The list of topics was compared with those that were obtained from the public opinion surveys to conduct mixed-methods analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

#### 4. Results

##### Public Opinion Poll

###### *Census Knowledge*

Most survey participants had heard about the US census (89.1%); the majority (93.3%) reported the census to be “very important” (76.3%) and “somewhat important” (17%). Only 10.5% stated they did not know or were unsure if they knew about the US census.



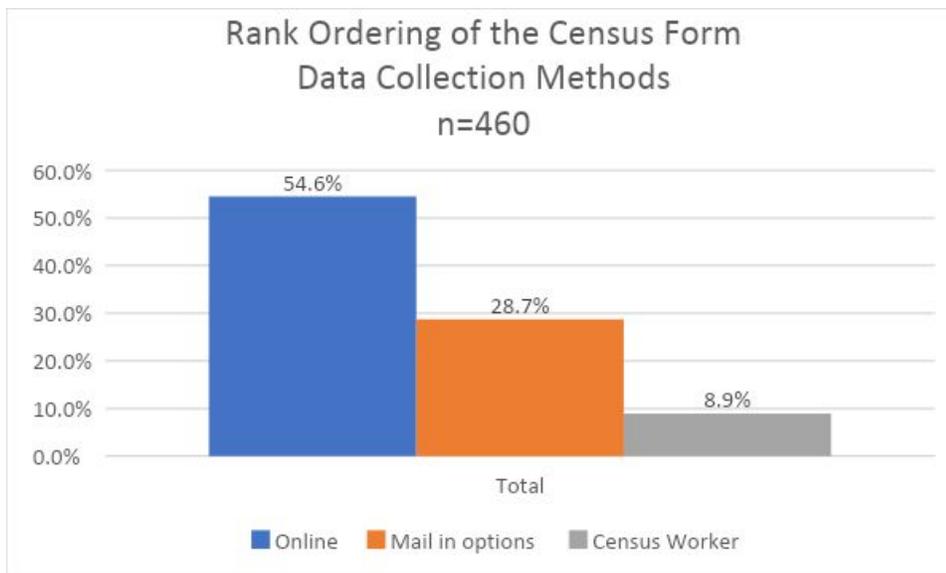
When we asked how filling out the census form would impact the community, a large portion (72.2%) reported it would benefit the community, however 9.6% stated that the census would “neither benefit nor harm,” and 8.5% stated that it will “both benefit and harm” the community.

The two main reasons that participants selected as to why it would be important for community to be counted are, “It’s important for Native community to be counted” (78%) and “for funding for community resources (Native programs and organizations)” (45%).

### *Census Participation*

We asked participants how likely they would participate in the 2020 census via the different methods that will be utilized by the Census Bureau. The majority of respondents stated they “definitely” or “probably” would likely participate online (87%) or by mailing in the census form (88.5%). A slightly lower percent (77%) stated they would participate if a census worker came to their door (and 18.7% stated they “might or might not”, “probably would not,” or “definitely would not participate”). When asked participants to explain why they would not participate if a census worker came to their door, many stated that they don’t answer the door to strangers, don’t trust anyone that comes to the door, some mentioned privacy concerns and other simply stated they don’t trust the government.

A little more than half (54.6%) of survey participants selected online as their top preferred method of completing the survey, following 28.7% and 8.9% that preferred the mail in and census worker options, respectively.



*Census Race & Ethnicity Questions*  
We wanted to determine how participants would respond to the census race and ethnicity questions. Table 1 provides the overview of how participants responded to these

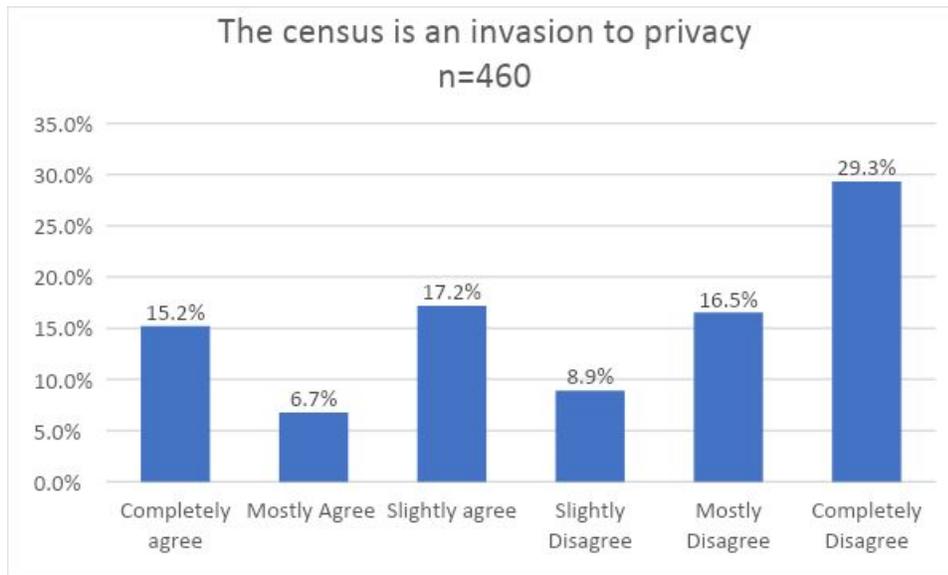
questions. Interesting, 40% of participants identified as having Hispanic origins. The race question was left as a multiple-choice question to allow for multiple response options. The majority of survey participants (86%) only selected one race, and mostly all (84%) selected American Indian and a very small percentage (2%) selected another race option (such as White or Other Race). Thirteen percent of participants selected 2 or more races. Overall, 97%

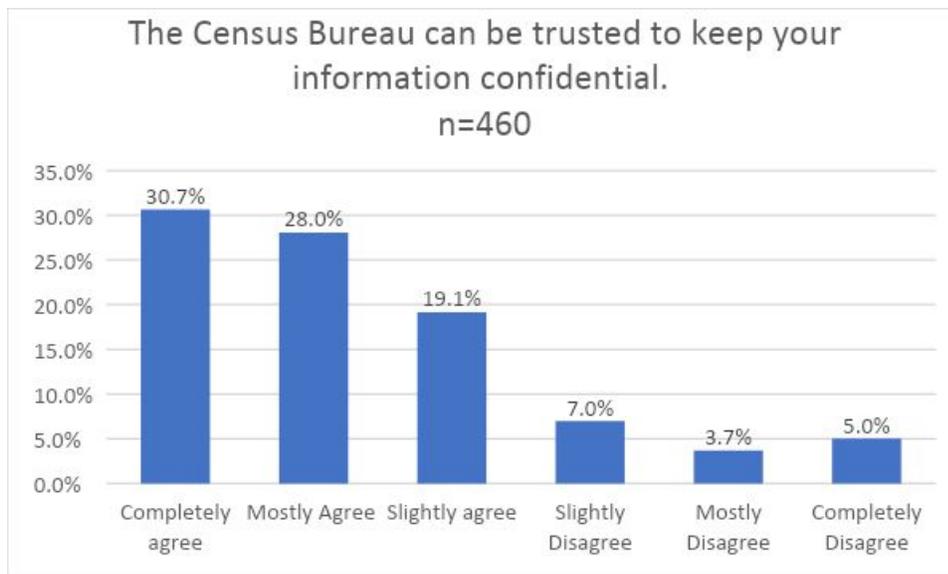
selected they were American Indian or Alaska Native (either alone or in combination with another race).

Since the eligibility criteria to participate in this survey was the requirement to identify as Native American, it is no surprise that mostly all participants (98%) reported being a U.S. Citizen. This is a question that may be added by the Census Bureau in the 2020 census. Therefore, we asked participants how comfortable they felt answering the question, and 91% reported feeling comfortable answering this question.

### *Confidentiality and Privacy Concerns*

Nearly 40% of participants agreed with the statement that the census is an invasion to privacy, however most (78%) participants still agree that the census can be trusted to keep information confidential.





We asked participants how much they trust different types of agencies to provide them with accurate information about the census, and the majority (70%) of individuals stated they trust “a lot” or “completely” Native American Community organizations. Only 42% stated they trust the Census Bureau and 37% trust the State of California “a lot” or “completely.” More information can be found in Table 2.

#### *Interaction and Use of Online and Digital Technologies*

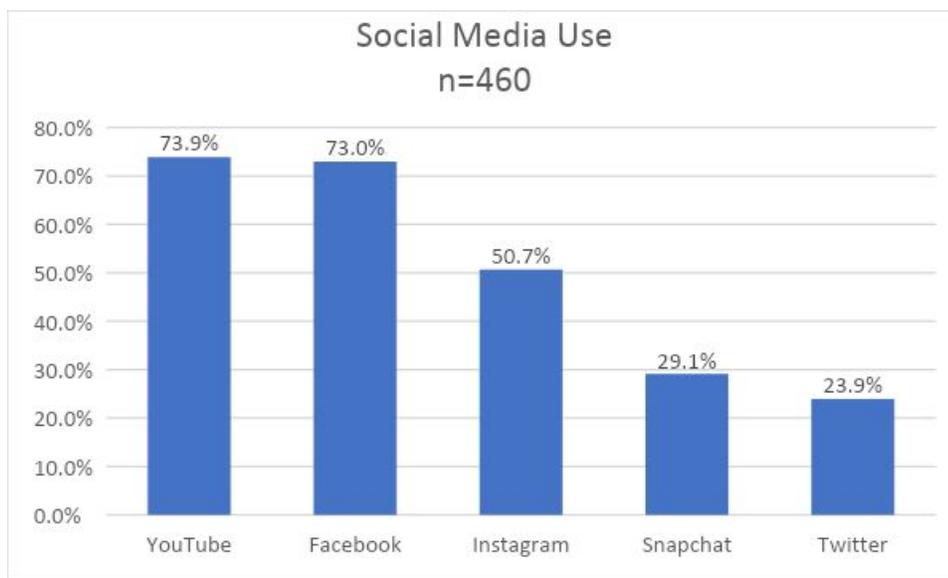
A little more than a third (35.2%) of survey participants reported that they “never” or “rarely” fill out forms online, and 24% reported “sometimes.” On the other hand, only 23% stated they “always,” “often,” or “sometimes” need to have someone help them when filling out forms online. The majority (80.7%) of participants stated they are “very” and “somewhat” confident using computers, smartphones, or other electronic devices.

Most participants (93%) reported having a cell phone and “always” and “very frequently” use them (82%). Eighty-eight percent of people who own a cellphone have a smart phone. Similarly, 87% stated they use text messaging and 77% stated they “always” and “very frequently” use it.

Twenty six percent of participants stated they do not have a desktop or a laptop computer available in their home, and 17% stated they do not have reliable internet available in their home. If respondents reported not having or they do not know if they have internet (n=82), they were asked how easy or difficult it is to access internet somewhere else. Of these respondents, only 22% stated it was “easy” or “very easy” to access the internet somewhere else. A larger portion (40%) stated it is either “very difficult” or “difficult” to access the internet somewhere else, and 23% stated it was not difficult or not easy (neutral). If respondents stated

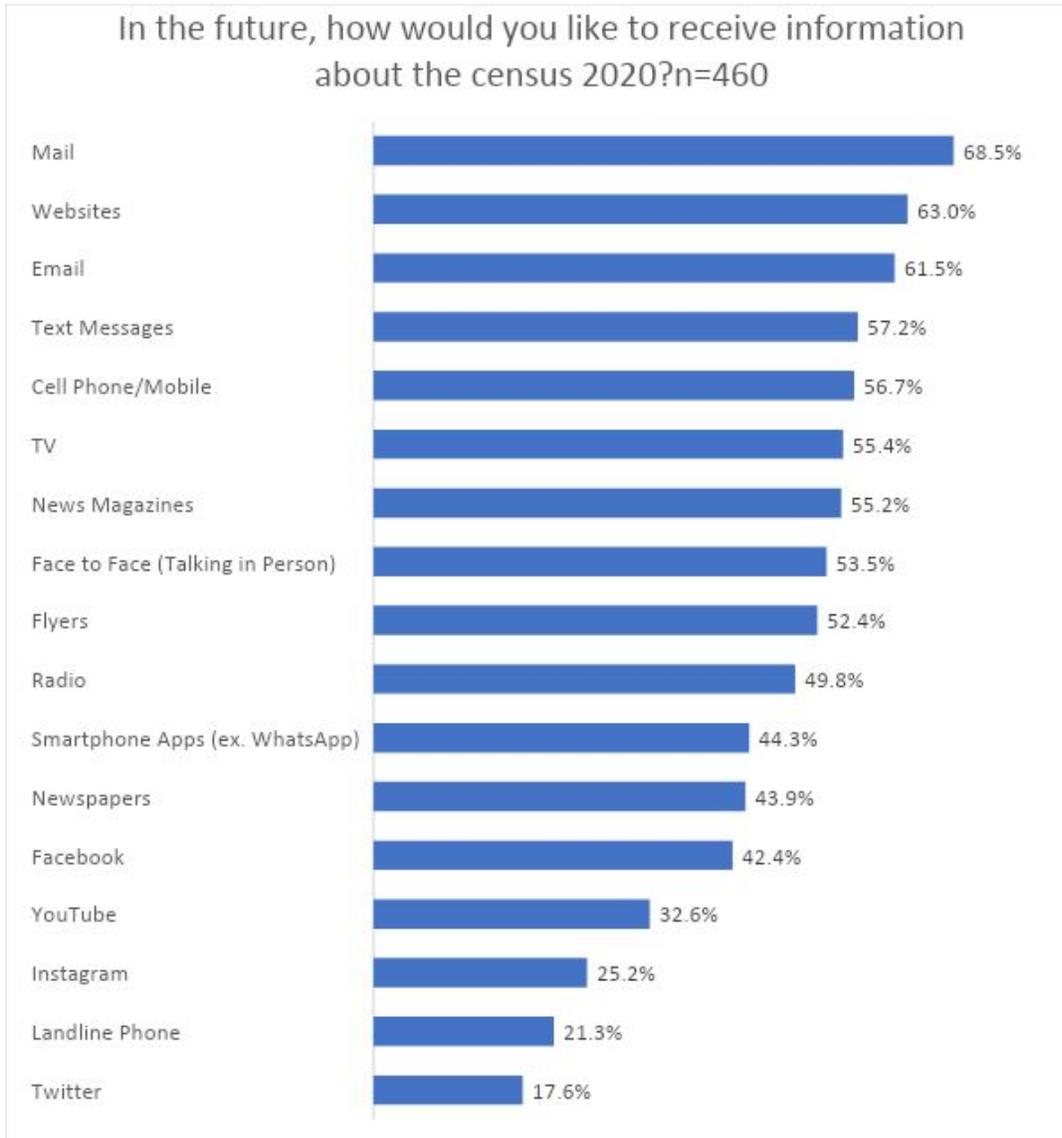
it was difficult or neutral to access the internet (n=52), they were asked to select from a list of multiple-choice options that list reasons why it may be difficult to access. The most common reasons reported were transportation issues (23%) and not knowing where to access the internet (15%). Twelve percent stated “other,” and listed things like accessing the internet on their phone, using their children’s internet, and needing lessons to use the internet.

We also asked survey respondents about their social media use, specifically Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube. The most common forms of social media used by participants were found to be Facebook (73%) and YouTube (74%). Half (51%) of the respondents use Instagram, and a lower portion use Snapchat (29%) and Twitter (23%).



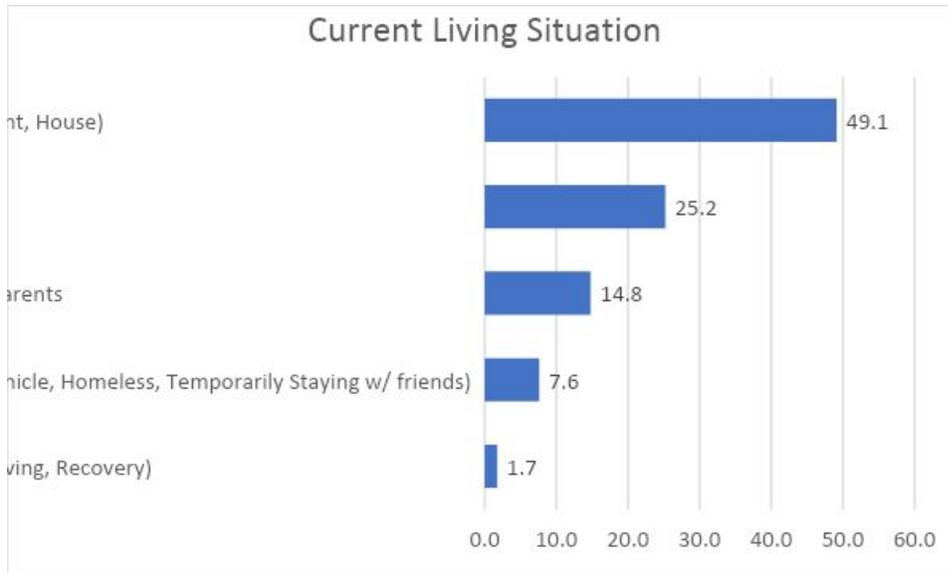
### *Methods of Receiving Census Information in the Future*

To learn about ways participants would like to receive information about the 2020 census in the future, we asked about numerous forms of communication (Graph XX). The top-three most common forms of communication were mail (69%), websites (63%), and e-mail (62%). Mostly all (95%) prefer to receive this information in English, and only 2% prefer their Native/Tribal language. The Native languages that were listed include, Creek, Diné/Navajo, Ipai, Seminole, Sioux, and Tsalagi.

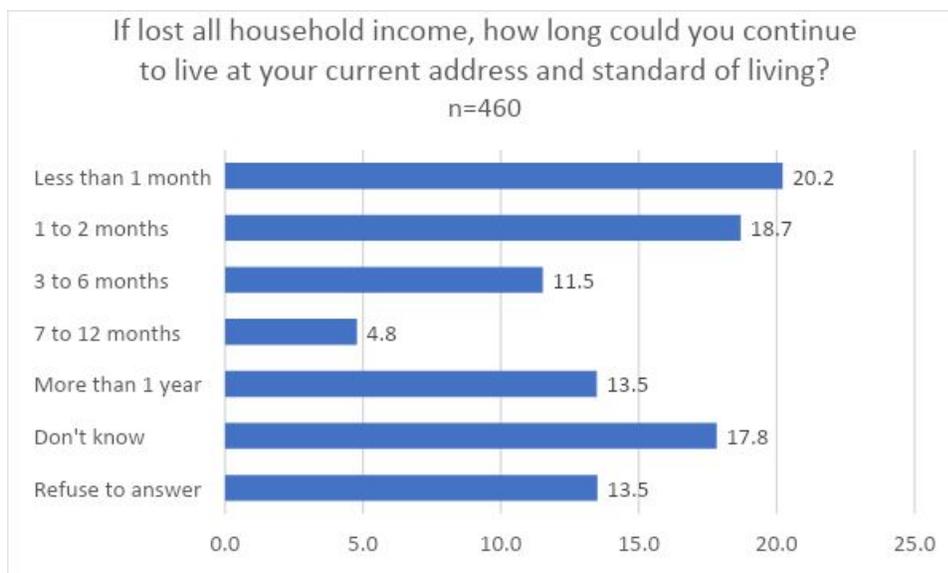


*Living Situation and Financial Stability*

Eight percent of respondents reported they do not have a stable living condition at the moment, and are either homeless, living in a hotel, shelter, car, or temporarily staying with friends or relatives. For those that have a more stable living situation, 15% live with relatives, and close to half (49%) either rent a room, apartment or house, and a quarter reported owning their home.



To gain an understanding of participants financial stability, participants were asked how long they could potentially continue to live at their current address and standard of living if they lost all their current sources of household income (such as their paycheck, public assistance, or other forms of income). Twenty percent of respondents reported less than 1 month, 19% stated 1 to 2 months, and 12% stated 3 to 6 months—this makes up half of all the participants. Only 5% reported 7 to 12 months, however 14% reported more than 1 year. Eighteen percent of respondents reported they did not know how long they could live without income, and 14% refused to answer this question.

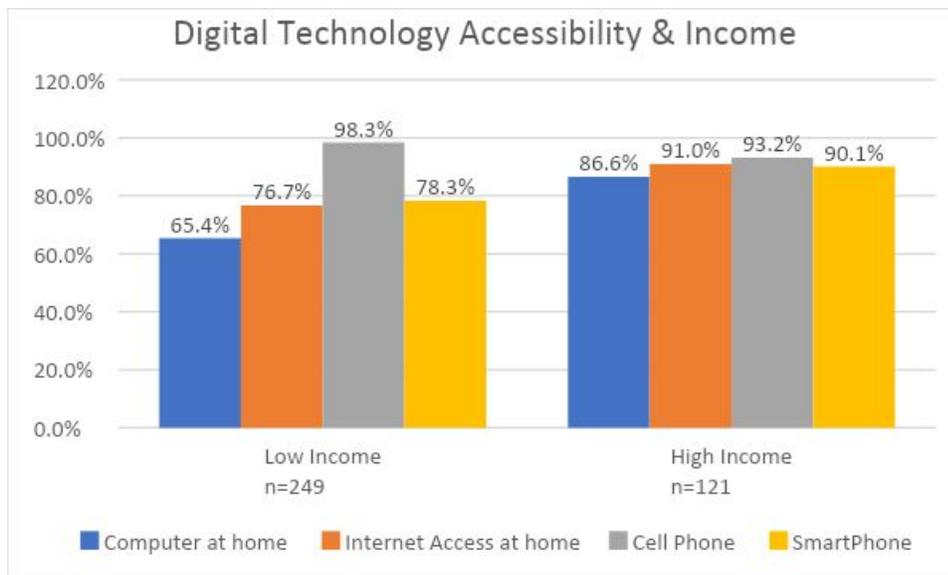


*Comparison of digital technologies and census response option preferences by urban/rural, income, and age.*

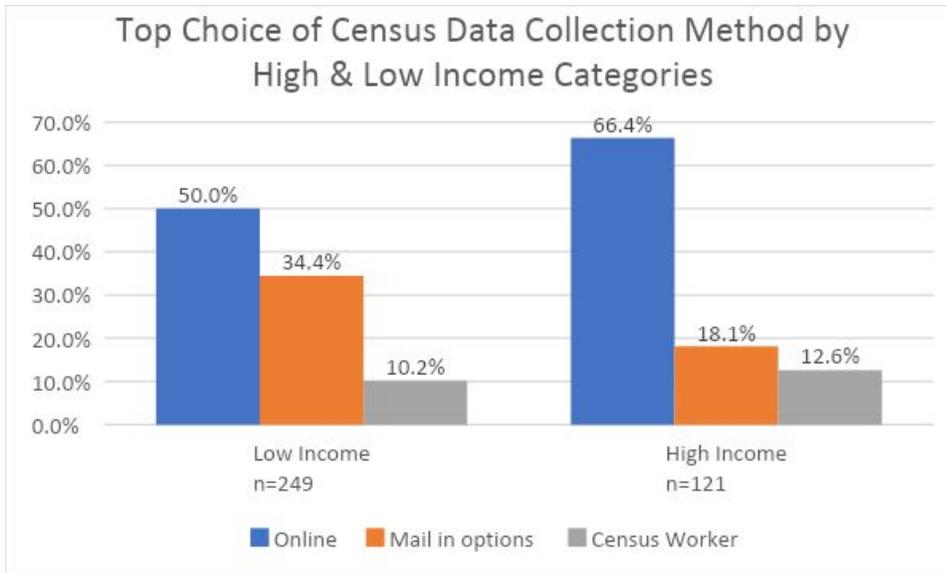
In order to see if there were any differences among the respondents on the accessibility of digital technologies (specifically having access to a computer and internet at home, cell phone and smartphone) and their preference for online, mail-in, or census enumerator data collection methods, we conducted chi-square statistical analysis to compare responses between urban/rural, income level, and age.

No significant associations were found between respondents that lived in urban and rural settings.

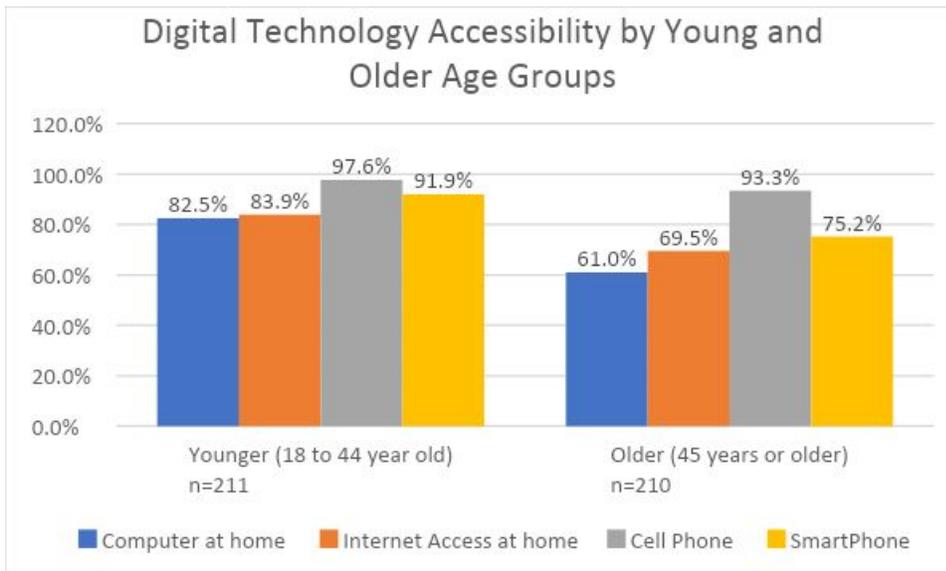
When we compared by income level, we found that income was significantly associated with having access to a computer ( $\chi^2_{(1)}=17.826, p<0.001$ ), internet at home ( $\chi^2_{(4)}=10.135, p<0.001$ ), and having a smartphone ( $\chi^2_{(2)}=7.705, p<0.02$ ). No association was found between income and having a cell phone.



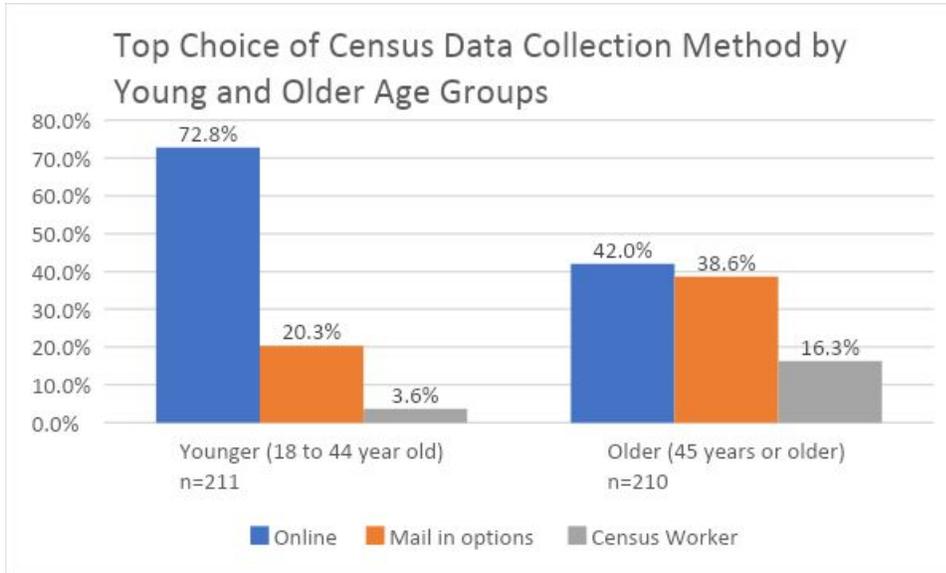
A significant association was also found between income and preference for online ( $\chi^2_{(1)}=8.532, p<0.001$ ) and mail-in ( $\chi^2_{(1)}=10.139, p<0.001$ ) census data collection options as a top choice. No differences were found among the use of a census enumerator.



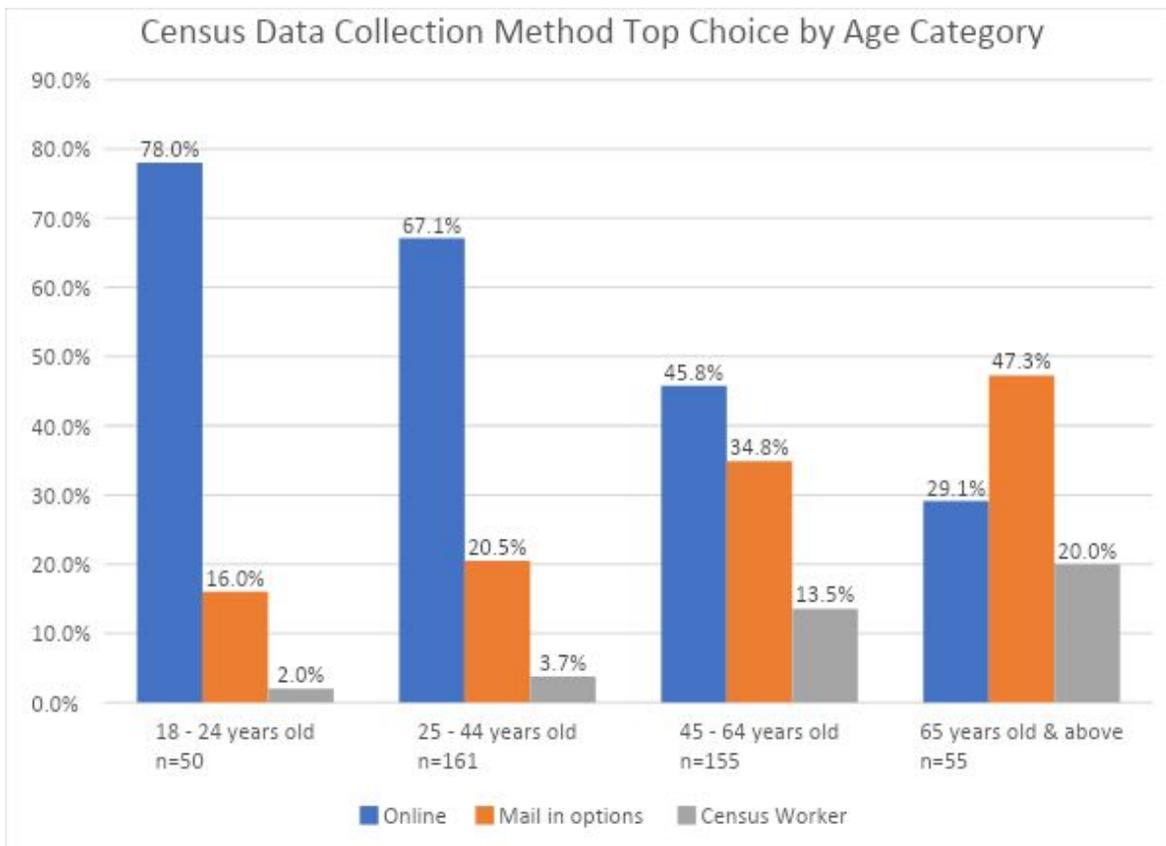
There was a significant association between young and older age groups and the accessibility of a computer ( $\chi^2_{(8)}=41.978$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), internet ( $\chi^2_{(8)}=32.979$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), cell phone ( $\chi^2_{(4)}=12.160$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and smartphone ( $\chi^2_{(4)}=35.132$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).



Significant differences were also found between the younger and older age groups in terms of their data collection preferences. The younger age group preferred the online data collection method ( $\chi^2_{(2)}=41.020$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and a larger portion of the older group preferred the mail-in option ( $\chi^2_{(2)}=16.522$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and the census enumerator ( $\chi^2_{(2)}=18.122$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) options, although online was the most preferred method.



Data collection method preference trends can be observed when categorized by age category.



## Focus Group Findings

The five main topics covered in the focus group discussion were, knowledge about the census, the likelihood of future participation in the 2020 census, potential barriers to participation, race/ethnicity and citizenship census questions, use of online and digital technologies and community defined solutions to increase participation.

### *Knowledge about the Census*

The first question that was posed to focus group participants was “what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear ‘the U.S. Census?’” The response to this question varied, for example some stated the “government,” “population count,” “ancestry,” and one participant stated “FEMA.” After this initial question, participants were asked if they had heard or were aware of the purpose of the census. The majority of participants stated they had heard and were aware of the census, with the exception of 1 or 2 people in two focus groups that stated they did not know about it. When participants were probed further to gage their understanding of what the census is used for only 1 or 2 participants in each focus group were able to accurately explain that the census was either for redistricting, congressional representations and/or funding. Some examples include:

*First thing I think of is elections, because that’s why they do the census, because they have to find out where the population is in order to portion, especially the house of representative districts, etc. that’s what I think of elections.*

*Funding, definitely funding and just identifying which people are the most needy.*

Approximately 25% of focus group participants stated other purposes for the census that implied they were not familiar or had a misconception of the census. For example, some believe that the census can be used to trace ancestry or by the federal government to track people. As one female focus group participant stated:

*I think they just want to track everybody, they say they don’t care people are legal they just want to do a count, but they really are trying to track people.*

When we asked who benefits from the information that is gathered via the census, no participant directly mentioned the Native American community. The Government was a common benefactor named, and in two focus groups white people were stated as benefactors of the census.

*The people who actually take the time to use it, we encourage the Native Community to fill out the census, then we can get more monies for our community. With that being said, I would say the white population benefits the most.*

Most participants believed consequences for not completing the census would result in less funding for Native American community-based organizations and social services for Native Americans. One participant mentioned a past experience with an enumerator during the last census that claimed she would receive a misdemeanor if she did not complete the census.

#### *Likelihood of future participation on the 2020 Census*

For the most part, respondents stated they would be willing to participate in the next census, and in two focus groups, at least one participant stressed the importance of why the Native American community should participate.

*I think the Native community really needs to. I don't think there is any difficulty that's too much for us not to do this. I think it's very important as a Native community that we be counted. So any difficulty, like I'm sure there are members in the community that would help. Funding is real important. These kids need funding.*

A couple of participants stated they chose not to participate in the past census, but one participant stated she might change her mind about it and would be willing to take the next census after learning from the focus group discussion about the resources that can become available with the funding that is allocated using census data.

*Well they [the census enumerator] had come to my door and I ran, I didn't open it. I don't know. Maybe after this it will change my mind. I heard her talk about positives, I never thought about positives of the census. [After] what she said, a light went on.*

#### *Potential barriers to participation*

When participants were asked about potential barriers that may exist to participate in the census, distrust in the government was a common theme that emerged. Some shared they just don't trust the federal government, and others questioned the motives behind the use of the data. Some sample quotes include:

*There are pros and cons. It's just the people behind it—what are their motives?*

*Distrust in the federal government, let's be honest.*

*I do believe that, they make a front of it to be good for schools and education, whatever they say it is for, but there is always another back agenda behind it no matter what. There is always an agenda and even if there isn't one when they go into it, it becomes one.*

One focus group participant shared she did not trust the census due to a previous experience with the census. She stated:

*I have a bad history with the census honestly, when I first think of census I think of mistrust*

Privacy and confidentiality was also a major theme that emerged in all three focus groups. Many focus group participants stated that the information provided to the census is not safe. A few comments include:

*The other issue is data breaches. This stuff is not secure at all. Let's be honest, data can be breached.*

*It's not safe, nothing is anymore, so it doesn't really matter. Everything is out there, your social security number is not important, none of those things they say are important are important. It's not safe at all.*

*Sounds like the biggest barrier is just mistrust.*

Participants also expressed concerns about the citizenship question as a potential barrier. The main concern was that this question would cause fear among immigrants or people that live with undocumented individuals, and mostly in the Hispanic/Latino community. Some even mentioned that this would affect not only those that would not be counted but the whole state of California since there is a large number of undocumented individuals.

*This whole thing that's happening with Trump and the citizenship question, that's going to scare a lot of people.*

*I am worried about citizenship question because California has a very large Hispanic population and our funding as a whole will depend on the numbers we have here. That will cut out a lot of the population out. If that doesn't get solved, and it ends up being one of the questions, then they really need to get out there that it's really important.*

Another barrier that was mentioned by at least one participant in two focus groups was homelessness. They recognized a large number of Native Americans are homeless and wondered if they were counted and how that would affect the census count.

*A lot of our people are homeless, they don't have a home, they don't have a voice, I think that's one of the big problems.*

Another theme that emerged when discussing barriers to participation is the lack of knowledge of what the census is, what its used for and how it benefits the community. Several mentioned that raising community awareness is key to eliminate this potential barrier.

Census workers not from the community, and in particular not from the Native/Tribal community were considered a barrier to Native American community participation in the census. Many mentioned having census workers that are from the Native community could reduce this potential barrier.

*I don't think they canvas as much in our communities, whereas in the city they might go knocking on your door. But they [census] ain't going up to the rez and knock from door-to-door, there's roads that you don't even know and if people in that community aren't involved than it's just not going to happen.*

#### *Race/Ethnicity and Citizenship question*

When we asked about the potential citizenship question that the census is considering adding, many expressed concerns that this would cause fear and result in an inaccurate census count. When we asked how participants would respond to the citizenship question, several people wondered if dual citizenship can be entered (for example citizen of the US and of their tribal nation).

*I think whatever tribe I'm enrolled in I would put that as a dual citizenship.*

*I think if they put dual citizenship would they put a space to put a citizen number or enrollment number?*

At least one individual expressed they would select "No" to the US citizenship question, because they are a citizen of their tribal nation.

*I am a citizen of my tribal nation and government, I would probably mark no. US citizen, nope.*

Native identification on the census was another important theme that emerged in all three focus groups when discussing the citizenship and race/ethnicity questions of the census. Several participants discussed the importance of selecting "American Indian" only as the sole race category reported on the census, even if they were of mixed race. Many discussed that if

two races are identified, then those get clumped together in another category, therefore not really providing an adequate count of American Indians. Many stated that they would select American Indian only even if they were of mixed race.

*In the last census, I used to put on mixed race because I am, but from now on in the census I'm going to put down Native American because I want to make sure that our people have the best shot of getting as much federal money as possible. If they going to allocate it anyhow might as well try to get as much for ourselves as possible that we can.*

Another theme that emerged naturally in conversation when discussing race/ethnicity selection in the census from two focus groups was Hispanic misclassification. A few people in two focus groups discussed how Native Americans can sometimes be classified as Hispanic, just based on physical appearance. They explained this misclassification happens beyond the census but in other locations where they document your race/ethnicity such as in clinics. They went on to say how important it was to make sure census workers are trained properly to ask participants their identification directly, versus just documenting what they assume.

*Yeah really important because that even happens in the clinics. It's always like that, by the way we look.*

#### *Use of online and digital technology*

For the 2020 census, the Census Bureau will focus most of their efforts on the first digital census option, which will be the first-time participants will be able to participate online. Due to this effort, the census has reduced its funding for other data collection methods used during other decennial censuses, such as the mail-in form option, and the field census enumerators that would conduct door-to-door visits to complete the census form. Focus group participants were asked how they think their community would prefer to complete the census form, either by mail or online. Several focus group participants expressed online would be preferred, however there were a handful that stated they would prefer by mail. Some highlighted the fact that not everyone has access to the internet, in particular in more rural areas which could pose a potential barrier to participation.

*Where we live in the mountains [on the reservation], there isn't internet. Only the high tech, like my brother, who could get the extenders and know where in the mountain to put something like that. Everybody doesn't have internet up there. My one cousin, she lives on top of the mountain, and they have Netflix, it takes 2 weeks to watch a movie. They have no cell phone service. They check their messages when they come into town. Cell phones not important, but walkie talkies are important up there.*

A couple of participants also expressed not having confidence using the internet:

*If I can't find a job application, I'm not going to find that [census form].*

It was also made very clear that focus group participants believed that the elders would not prefer using online digital technologies and would prefer face-to-face interactions. They even suggested having events specifically for the elders to help them fill out the census. However, the younger participants did express they would prefer to use digital technology versus by mail or an enumerator.

*Well there are a lot of older ones, so by mail. Elders don't know the internet. Even my uncle, he is 67 years old, we had barely talked him into getting an answering machine and he lives in the city, and he still wouldn't do it.*

*The [younger] age, they will do anything, they can do it. Anyone after 40 or 50 years old, face to face is the best.*

*Give them lunch, can have it at the tribal hall, if there is food they will come. And with elders you have to have respect and listen to their stories.*

At least one focus group participant stated it wasn't only the elders that may have difficulty, but also individuals with low literacy:

*The truth is some of them can't read either. I have cousins that are my age that can't read because they didn't go to school.*

#### *Community Defined Solutions to Increase Census Participation*

Focus group participants were asked about their thoughts on how the census can outreach to Native communities to ensure a more accurate count. The most common theme that emerged from this question was to increase awareness about the census in order to increase participation.

*Educating them on what exactly the process is, once they get all the information, because, I think that's part of the distrust part that nobody knows what happens, and how the whole system works. Yeah we see it, we hear it, but we don't know what that process is. Part of that process, helps people to understand, and then they say, 'oh I see what*

*happens, I see what happens with that, oh I see.’ Now they know that at the end, that after all this happens, this can happen. these are the possibilities as a results of participating.*

Raising awareness and how it affects funding was seen as the most important motivator to complete the census. Many stated that if the community knew how the census affects funding for social services such as Indian Health Service, Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and their respective Native community organizations they would be more willing to participate. Therefore, raising community awareness is key.

*Promoting [the census] is informing them, that it will benefit them through funding for agencies. Letting them know that in order for the Indian center to continue, or any Indian social services that we receive, we need to be counted, to support those in that way.*

It was recommended by all focus groups that a way to increase awareness about the census among the Native Community would be to host events, roundtable discussions, or have information booths at different events as well as different locations (such as community hubs, clinics or the DMV) to provide the community with information. They also mentioned not only focusing on common events such as Pow Wows, but other types of community gatherings.

*I think the census should physically go there to hard to reach communities, have events, and have an enrollment coordinator, you have to go in there and be there with someone in the circle or the people there won't care.*

Focus group participants also discussed the importance of having census enumerators that are from Tribal communities to alleviate some of the issues of mistrust in the community.

*I always see a lot of white people, they should hire our own, maybe it will be different, better numbers that our community would be interested, and they would do it.*

Partnering with tribal governments and organizations was another important theme that emerged when asked how the census can get a better count of “hard to reach” Native communities. These are trusted entities in the Native community that can increase participation.

*I think it just needs to be a collaborative effort between the Tribe and the census. But it also would have to be something that a tribal member would have to have access to and then it would have to be reported back.*

*I think that if the census really wanted to, they could go to the tribes. Because I know I rely on my tribe for information. If each tribe made the effort to educate, let them know this is why we need it because, this is as a result, because of the census this is how our Tribe is benefiting from it.*

One focus group participant expressed the importance of partnering with Tribal governments and organizations and the time it takes to build trustworthy relationships.

*This is something that you really can't wait till the last minute to do as well. If you want to do this, it takes time to build those relationships and build that trust. It would be better to get going earlier on to try to build those relationships than later. That also takes a real investment in what they call human capital, you really have to get to know those people on the ground to develop those relationships so that you can build that sense of trust.*

Another strategy that was suggested was the use of Native community leaders or celebrities to help spread the word about the census importance and its purpose.

*I think if people in our community saw people in roles that they know who they are, they might feel more inclined to inquire or hear about it.*

*How about well- known Native celebrities that can be spokespeople. You can have Adam Beach out there.*

It was recommended that all forms of communication methods should be utilized to spread the word about the census (this includes billboards, radio, tv, social media, etc.) to effectively reach all age groups. Utilizing trusted forms of communication was also mentioned, such as Native radio stations.

*It just has to go out all ways [communication], you can't pick one or two, you just got to use different ways. Because there are so many different things going on, some kids go to school in the city some that do Instagram, and some that do Facebook, have a little bit of everything going on. You just have to put it out there and do the best you can.*

*I think on TV, but it's going to have to have an explanation of what [the census is] for. Like 15 or 20 second commercials that will explain what it's for and how they will benefit.*

*Native radio stations. In New Mexico they have Indian calling, something accessible in LA, like [the Native TV channel] FNX.*

The use of Native American imagery or using Native identity/pride were also expressed as an important way to reach the Native community. Some suggestions were using tribal specific imagery that would resonate with different Tribal communities such as baskets and rattles. Another suggestion was to give people who have completed the census with Native specific incentives that shows their Native pride and participation in the census.

## **5. Discussion & Recommended Strategies**

The 2020 census is an important undertaking and will require a more accurate count of Native American individuals to truly reflect the growing number and needs of the population. Historically, the Native community has been hard-to-count, and with the new focus of the online self-response option, this creates additional challenges that the community will need to address in order to accurately and fairly be represented in the census (LCEF, 2018). A number of important resources that are available and heavily utilized by the Native community will be affected with an undercount, therefore it is imperative that the community does all that it can to ensure everyone gets counted.

The California Native Vote Project (CNVP) set out to investigate the community's knowledge, perceptions and preferences related to the census, to provide useful information and help outline community derived strategies to increase participation and to ensure that all Native individuals are counted and represented in the U.S. census. The information gathered sheds light and also amplifies what we already knew about potential barriers to participation and provides information that can be used to help motivate and mobilize the Native community to be accurately represented.

Many Native American individuals have heard about the census and know that it is important; however through focus group discussions, we learned that many were not able to accurately describe its purpose, what census data is used for, and how it directly benefits their community. In addition, there is a high level of distrust of the government among the community, which is not surprising given the historic relationship between Native peoples and the federal government. Privacy and confidentiality issues were heightened with the shift to online census response coupled with the potential question about citizenship status. Participants identified barriers to online participation for tribal members who live on tribal lands; some tribal lands in California are geographically isolated and do not have internet towers. In both the public opinion poll and focus group discussion, participants agreed that elders in the community would prefer in-person methods and mail. They believe elders may not understand how to utilize digital technology or may not have reliable internet access. Participants 45 years of age and older did not prefer online or digital communication to complete the census or receive information about the census. Those who were 18-44 years of

age, indicated they would prefer to participate in the census online. It can be advantageous to tailor in-person education based on age about the census and provide in-person assistance with completing the census at trusted community centers.

Through the focus groups, we also learned that having an increased knowledge of the census's purpose and how it affects the community, in particular with how funding is allocated to important community resources, can help motivate individuals to take part in the census. In particular a message strategy that may resonate in this community is tying how these resources are connected to future generations. Focus group participants shared strategies that may help increase participation among the Native community. The focus group findings also emphasized things we knew about our community, in particular about having trusted members of the community to take part in this effort to encourage the community to participate but also when it comes to time to responding to the census, it's important to have census enumerators that are part of the community to alleviate relevant trust issues.

The results of the evaluation are in alignment with current data about hard-to-count populations and participation in the US census. The findings from this evaluation show that in conjunction with other racial/ethnic communities, the overarching barriers to participation are distrust of government, misconceptions of the census, and the collective opinion that the census does not directly benefit their respective community (Team Y&R, 2018).

With the findings from this research project, we have synthesized the recommended strategies to increase AIAN participation in the 2020 census:

#### *Curriculum development*

- Develop curriculum based on knowledge gaps and misconceptions
- Funding sources informed by census-derived data, addressing privacy concerns, and how participation will affect future generations
- Tailor curriculum delivery based on age
- Create infographics about the census and distribute on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

#### *Information dissemination*

- Make technology and census information available for community members at community events, tribal offices, and trusted community organizations.
- Attend existing community groups (e.g. Monthly elder's group at United American Indian Involvement Center, Tribal TANF monthly family community event, etc.)
- Increasing awareness should be strategized based on age. Utilizing different approaches that will resonate with different age groups of the community. To increase the likelihood of

participation, digital technology and online tutorials providing instruction on how access and complete the census online should be tailored to younger AIAN adults.

- Move over, all focus group participants agreed the need for more in-person roundtable discussions or talking circles about the census, as well as having a presence in community gatherings where information can be shared.

#### *Messaging*

- Identify and engage Native influencers who can share the message of the importance of the census.
- Utilize region-specific imagery that may resonate with local tribal communities. This may be used in digital and non-digital forms of outreach.

#### *Capacity building*

- Future strategies for AIAN community engagement should include building relationships with community leaders early on, utilizing community members as advocates to participate in the census, and hiring AIAN enumerators.
- Promote and assist in the creation of Tribal Complete Count Committees across the state

This assessment shows that American Indian/Alaskan Natives are open to participating in the census given the impact census data has on funding social services often utilized by their community. According to the focus groups, strategies that focus on physically visiting hard-to-reach tribal communities and urban AIAN community centers are still very important and can be influential in increasing participation. Future strategies should focus on educating AIAN communities about the census process and purpose.

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Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

Demographic Information			Do you live in Los Angeles, Riverside, or San Bernardino County?			Total n=460
			Los Angeles n=299	Riverside n=105	San Bernardino n=56	
Age						
	18-24 Years Old		27 (9.0%)	12 (11.4%)	11 (19.6%)	50 (10.9%)
	25-44 Years Old		106 (35.5%)	32 (30.5%)	23 (41.1%)	161 (35.0%)
	45-64 Years Old		108 (36.1%)	32 (30.5%)	15 (26.8%)	155 (33.7%)
	65+ Years Old		34 (11.4%)	19 (18.1%)	2 (3.6%)	55 (12.0%)
Gender						
	Female		182 (60.9%)	67 (63.8%)	37 (66.1%)	286 (62.2%)
	Male		83 (27.8%)	30 (28.6%)	16 (28.6%)	129 (28.0%)
	Transgender/non-binary/third gender		9 (3.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (2.2%)
	Prefer to self-describe		4 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.9%)
Ethnicity	Hispanic		109 (36.5%)	40 (38.1%)	35 (62.5%)	184 (40.0%)
		Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano	85 (28.4%)	33 (31.4%)	29 (51.8%)	147 (32%)
		Puerto Rican	2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (0.7%)
		Cuban	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
		Other	21(7.0%)	7 (6.7%)	5 (8.9%)	33 (7.2%)
Race	White		29 (9.7%)	10 (9.5%)	6 (10.7%)	45 (9.8%)
	African American		8 (2.7%)	1 (1.0%)	2 (3.6%)	11 (2.4%)
	American Indian/Alaskan Native		289 (96.7%)	101 (96.2%)	54 (96.4%)	444 (96.5%)
	Native Hawaiian		0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
	Asian Indian		1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
	Chinese		1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
	Japanese		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Filipino		1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
	Korean		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Vietnamese		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Other Asian		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Guamanian		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Samoan		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Other Pacific Islander		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	1 (0.2%)

	Other Race		8 (2.7%)	5 (4.8%)	3 (5.4%)	16 (3.5%)
	One Race		260 (87.0%)	89 (84.8%)	45 (80.4%)	394 (85.7%)
		American Indian/Alaskan Native Alone	253 (84.6%)	87 (82.9%)	44 (78.6%)	384 (83.5%)
	2 or more Races		36 (12.0%)	14 (13.3%)	10 (17.9%)	60 (13.0%)
Place of Birth						
	In the United States		298 (96.7%)	101 (96.2%)	53 (94.6%)	443 (96.3%)
	Outside of the United States		8 (2.7%)	4 (3.8%)	3 (5.4%)	15 (3.3%)
Citizenship						
	Yes, born in the US		287 (96.0%)	101 (96.2%)	51 (91.1%)	439 (95.4%)
	Yes, born abroad of American parent(s)		3 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.7%)
	Yes, A US citizen by naturalization		4 (1.3%)	3 (2.9%)	1 (1.8%)	8 (1.7%)
	No, not a citizen of the US		2 (0.7%)	1 (1.0%)	3 (5.4%)	6 (1.3%)
Educational Attainment						
	Some Elementary School		2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.4%)
	Some Middle School		2 (0.7%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.7%)
	Completed Middle School/Junior High		2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.4%)
	Some High School/No Diploma		36 (12.0%)	6 (5.7%)	3 (5.4%)	45 (9.8%)
	High School Graduate		50 (16.7%)	20 (19.0%)	8 (14.3%)	78 (17.0%)
	GED		13 (4.3%)	9 (8.6%)	3 (5.4%)	25 (5.4%)
	Some College, No Degree		85 (28.4%)	33 (31.4%)	17 (30.4%)	135 (29.3%)
	College Graduate		63 (21.1%)	15 (14.3%)	18 (32.1%)	96 (20.9%)
	Some Graduate School		11 (3.7%)	7 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (3.9%)
	Completed Graduate School		28 (9.4%)	14 (13.3%)	6 (10.8%)	48 (10.4%)
	Other		6 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	7 (1.5%)
Current Living Situation						
	Own Home		58 (19.4%)	42 (40.0%)	16 (28.6%)	116 (25.2%)
	Rent Apartment		120 (40.1%)	21 (20.0%)	7 (12.5%)	148 (32.2%)
	Rent House		42 (14.0%)	20 (19.0%)	10 (17.9%)	72 (15.7%)
	Live with Parents		43 (14.4%)	7 (6.7%)	11 (19.6%)	61 (13.3%)
	Live in a Hotel		1 (0.3%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.9%)
	Live in a Shelter		3 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.9%)
	Live in Car/Vehicle		1 (0.3%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.7%)
	Temporarily Staying with Friends/Relatives		13 (4.3%)	6 (5.7%)	4 (7.1%)	23 (5.0%)

	Other		16 (5.4%)	4 (3.8%)	4 (7.1%)	24 (5.2%)
Years in Current Home						
	Less than 1 Year		43 (14.4%)	13 (12.4%)	8 (14.3%)	64 (13.9%)
	1-5 Years		71 (23.7%)	41 (39.0%)	23 (41.1%)	135 (29.3%)
	6-17 Years		93 (31.1%)	22 (21.0%)	12 (21.4%)	127 (27.6%)
	18-64 Years		78 (26.1%)	19 (18.1%)	10 (17.9%)	107 (23.3%)
	65+ Years		4 (1.3%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (1.1%)
Annual Combined Income						
	Less than \$5,000		50 (16.7%)	7 (6.7%)	4 (7.1%)	61 (13.3%)
	\$5,000-\$11,999		28 (9.4%)	7 (6.7%)	4 (7.1%)	39 (8.5%)
	\$12,000-\$15,999		20 (6.7%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (1.8%)	23 (5.0%)
	\$16,000-\$24,999		24 (8.0%)	11 (10.5%)	5 (8.9%)	40 (8.7%)
	\$25,000-\$34,999		19 (6.4%)	11 (10.5%)	3 (5.4%)	33 (7.2%)
	\$35,000-\$49,999		28 (9.4%)	11 (10.5%)	2 (3.6%)	41 (8.9%)
	\$50,000-\$74,999		29 (9.7%)	23 (21.9%)	8 (14.3%)	60 (13.0%)
	\$75,000-\$99,999		22 (7.4%)	5 (4.8%)	7 (12.5%)	34 (7.4%)
	\$100,000+		27 (9.0%)	10 (9.5%)	5 (8.9%)	42 (9.1%)
	Refuse to Answer					
	Don't Know		21 (7.0%)	9 (8.6%)	5 (8.9%)	35 (7.6%)

Table 2. Participant Level of Trust

	Trust them completely	Trust them a lot	Trust them more or less	Trust them a little	Do not trust them at all	Do not know who they are
The Census Bureau	22.2%	20.2%	34.8%	10.9%	7.8%	2.0%
The State of California	17.0%	20.2%	35.4%	13.5%	10.2%	1.1%
Native American Community Organization	41.7%	28.7%	16.1%	3.5%	1.5%	4.3%