

2020 CENSUS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brief Statement of the Problem

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a population count of people living in the nation, in accordance with the U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 2. Despite best efforts to count every household, many individuals are undercounted. During the 2020 census, officials in Prince George's County sought to count every resident by encouraging historically undercounted populations to self-respond to the census.

Background Information

The U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census in 2020 was the first time residents were given the option to complete their census questionnaire online, in addition to by mail or phone. In the 2010 census, the County had an estimated undercount of 19,900 residents, a 68 percent self-response rate, and 74 percent overall household count of residents. Significantly low self-response rates were found in College Park, Hyattsville, and Joint Base Andrews. As a result of an undercount in 2010, the County lost an estimated \$363 million dollars in federal funding.

In preparation for the 2020 census, the County established a Complete Count Committee (CCC) of more than 100 active members, which included a cross-section of community partners that helped lead outreach efforts. To increase the County's self-response rate, CCC members developed a thorough outreach and marketing strategy to engage historically undercounted populations. The strategy involved dividing the campaign into three phases: Phase I: Educational, which included workshops, trainings, and developing census partners; Phase II: Promotional, which included implementing census ads throughout the County, conducting interviews with local news outlets and establishing census messaging on social media platforms; and Phase III: Get Out the Census, which included a plan to engage the public through a series of community events (door-to-door, phone banking, block parties). During the educational phase, CCC members prioritized community engagement with low-income households, non-English-speaking individuals, college students, rural areas with limited internet access, transitory areas, apartment complexes, homeless populations, veterans, and children under the age of 5 years old.

Geographic outreach focused on historically undercounted areas that had low self-response rates in previous censuses throughout all nine councilmanic districts. Undercounted areas included Langley Park, College Park, Joint Base Andrews, Hyattsville, Oxon Hill, Suitland, Capitol Heights, Laurel, Greenbelt, District Heights, Mount Rainier, Lanham, and Bladensburg. It was equally important to identify cities with the most Spanish-speaking households because these community members tend to experience language barriers that often discourage them from completing the census. These cities were Chillum, University Park, West Hyattsville, Adelphi, Riverdale and Riverdale Park, Laurel, Mount Rainier, and Bladensburg. A monthly report was produced by the Prince George's County Planning Department to track areas that fell below the 60 percent self-response rate.

Preparation for a successful census count was also attributed to the County's participation in the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program where 43,000 addresses were corrected and accepted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Census maps of historically counted areas and daily self-response rates helped the County target areas that fell below 60 percent completion of the census.

Online translated resources helped community partners disseminate information to residents about the census. Between September 2019 and November-2020 the PGCensus2020 website generated 378,994-page view and 290,379 unique views.

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Social media advertisements were purchased and helped the County reach residents with 734,055 impressions. Other communication mediums consisted of sending direct mailers. Direct mailers were sent to 66,000 households in September of 2019 and to 180,000 households representing 470,000 persons in January of 2020.

The County received \$244,208 in census grant funds. With census funding, the County was able to develop a partnership with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to purchase census advertisements at 45 bus stops and several Metro stations. More than 400 partnership events (townhalls, festivals, workshops, etc.) helped the County reach residents in hard-to-count communities.

The U.S. Census Bureau established four Maryland Area Census Offices (ACOs). The closest location to Prince George's County was in Hanover. Despite continued efforts to establish a census office within Prince George's County, the U.S. Census Bureau was unsuccessful. The U.S. Census Bureau exceeded applicant hiring pool goals; 21 of the 30 census field supervisors had Spanish language skills, about 2,300 individuals were invited to train as enumerators, and 1,600 enumerators were successfully trained and hired in the County.

When the Coronavirus (COVID-19) hit in March 2020, in-person community engagement was limited out of an abundance of caution which forced most residents to shift to virtual learning, working from home, and seeking emergency medical attention. COVID-19 affected the decrease in community engagement regarding the census. However, community partners pivoted to engaging residents at meal distribution sites, through telephone banking, and virtual townhalls.

Additional challenges included a citizenship question that was proposed by President Donald Trump and an executive order to exclude immigrants from the census count. The Supreme Court ruled against inclusion of a citizenship question and a federal court blocked the executive order.

Conclusion

Prince George's County was able to increase its self-response rate from 68 percent in 2010 to 70 percent, which was just below the State's final self-response rate of 71 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau eventually reached 99 percent of the addresses in the County as part of the non-response (field enumeration) efforts. The Bureau anticipates releasing the final household self-response rate estimate in September 2021. A post enumeration survey that validates the combined accuracy of the self-response and the non-response follow-up will be completed by December 2021 as well. A redistricting commission for both Prince George's County and the State have been established.