

New Mexico Census Outreach Survey Provides Insights for Messaging and Outreach: Executive Summary

New Mexico
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
T A B L E
A project of the Center For Civic Policy



Latino  Decisions



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PROJECT OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

On behalf of the Census Funders Group/NM Counts 2020, NM Civic Engagement Table/Center for Civic Policy, Latino Decisions implemented a survey of New Mexico residents regarding the US Census, potential obstacles that could lead to a significant undercount in the state, and messages and messengers that can help organizations tasked with outreach improve their performance. The survey focused on the following topics: preferred mediums for information and outreach, trusted information sources, and views about the citizenship question on the 2020 Census. The survey also tests several messages and messaging themes intended to increase participation in the Census, and web-based respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of several marketing advertisements.

Latino Decisions randomly interviewed 960 New Mexico residents. The survey captures information to target sub-groups across the state historically less likely to participate in the Census in New Mexico. We, therefore, have oversamples in the data of the following groups and break out results of each population when they are distinct from the overall numbers generated from the survey:

- Latino/Hispanic population across New Mexico.
- Parents of young children: the data allows for comparisons between households with children 0-5 years of age, and 6-10 years of age.
- New Mexicans who rent their homes or apartments.
- Although the survey did not oversample Native Americans, the sample included enough Native American interviews to allow for our analysis to include this important community.

Surveys were completed using a blended approach that included online surveys, and live telephone interviews conducted via landlines and cell phones. The survey was available in English or Spanish and carries an overall +/- 3.7% margin of error, with larger margins for sub-

samples. Upon completion, the data were weighted to match the U.S. Census ACS for New Mexico. The survey was conducted from July 10 – July 20, 2019.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

While a majority (75%) of New Mexico residents indicate that they are very likely to submit a Census form this year, there is a smaller percentage of key historically undercounted sub-groups in the state:

Hispanic respondents (71%)

Native American respondents (65%)

Parents of children aged 0-5 (65%)/ children aged 0-10 (71%)

Renting Population (65%)

This percentage jumps to 95% when asked again at the end of the survey following exposure to the information in the survey -- a strong indicator of how effective outreach can improve Census performance.

The most common response provided for not wanting to participate was lack of trust in the government and information security (33%). One in five (20%) Hispanics stated that a lack of trust in the current administration is a reason why they do not plan to participate.

40% of Hispanics in the sample indicated that they are more likely to participate in the 2020 Census now that the citizenship question was removed. However, roughly half of Hispanics in New Mexico either do not trust their information will be protected (28%) or are unsure about the security of their private information (25%).

The second most common response for non-participation is that the Census is either not important or that they are simply not interested (29%). Lack of interest or perceived importance is alarmingly high for Native American (67%) and low-income (78%) New Mexicans and high among parents with young children (0-5 years of age) (56%), and renters (38%).

The survey identifies the need to provide basic information across the state. Only 58% of New Mexicans are aware that the Census can be completed on-line at the Census website, and 20% of New Mexicans are unaware that they need to include their small children in their Census form, with a greater percentage unsure of how to do this accurately.

Outreach efforts should direct New Mexicans to the US Census Bureau webpage for information, as this is the most trusted information source. New Mexicans viewed educators, medical providers, and first-responders, very positively and can, therefore, be used to connect the community to the Census webpage.

43% of the full sample would be more likely to fill out the Census form if Governor Lujan Grisham supported an outreach campaign, and 39% if Congresswoman Haaland was a

messenger for a campaign. Their mobilization potential is higher with New Mexicans who share their racial identity in both cases.

Mailing out the form to be returned is the most highly rated approach to submit the Census form (86%), with mailing out instructions to complete it online also rated highly (72%). New Mexicans view other approaches to submitting the form much less convenient or trusted, including home visits from a Census worker (50%).

Only 45% of respondents who lack regular access to the web indicated that they would be interested in using a computer at a local school, library, or mobile Census center to submit their information.

The survey identified several messages and message themes that performed well and could encourage more New Mexicans to submit their Census form if implemented using the right messengers and mediums for outreach. Below are some of the data-tested messages found to be persuasive to specific segments of the New Mexico population:

- Hispanic New Mexicans: “Federal law requires that the census is anonymous and the data secure. Your information cannot be given out or shared. Let's make sure in 2020 that every single Latino family is counted as part of America. Our voice matters.”
- Native American New Mexicans: “The Census is critical to our community. By participating, we speak for the generations of native people before us and for those yet to come. Census data can help determine our native communities’ needs for schools, housing, health care facilities, and roads.”
- Families With Young Children: “Due to the young child undercount in the 2010 Census, New Mexico is losing nearly \$32 million dollars in federal funds. We need to make sure all of New Mexico’s children are counted in 2020 to ensure our children get a fair shot at the resources they need to succeed and thrive in life, such as schools, childcare, and healthcare.”
- Overall Message Theme: “New Mexico needs everyone to participate in the 2020 Census to make sure we are getting our fair share of representation in local, statewide, and national government.”

Finally, the marketing images below increase motivation to participate in the Census among Hispanic New Mexicans and households with young children respectively.



