



# 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS) Survey and Focus Groups Report Findings Presentation

Monica Vines  
US Census Bureau

June 6, 2019



# Outline

- 1 CBAMS Overview
- 2 Study Design
- 3 Key Findings
  - A Intent to Respond
  - B Knowledge Gaps
  - C Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers
  - D Potential Motivators & Facilitators
- 4 2020 CBAMS Conclusions & Recommendations
- 5 2020 CBAMS Mindsets





## A 6x3 grid of 18 photographs showing diverse people of various ages and ethnicities smiling and interacting. The images include: an elderly woman in a grey shirt; a group of young women sitting on a picnic blanket; a family of four in a field; a group of young women sitting at a table; a man smiling next to a horse's head; a man in a plaid shirt looking at a laptop; an elderly woman in a grey jacket; two young women hugging; a young boy with a white cast; a man and a woman looking up; a man in a white shirt; two men working on a boat; a group of young men standing together; a woman smiling with a man in the background; a woman in a blue shirt holding a cup; a woman in a blue shirt next to a horse; a woman wearing a red headscarf; two young women laughing; an elderly man's face; a young boy's face; and a man and a woman smiling together.

# CBAMS Overview

## Purpose



Understand attitudes, barriers, & motivators toward the census



Inform & inspire creative strategy



Increase self-response to the 2020 Census

## Research Questions

1. Who intends to respond to the census?
2. Where do gaps in knowledge about the census exist?
3. What barriers would prevent people from completing the census?
4. What would motivate people to complete the census?

## Methodology



Quantitative Survey



Qualitative Focus Groups

## A 6x3 grid of 18 photographs showing diverse people of various ages and ethnicities smiling and interacting. The images include: an elderly woman in a grey shirt; a group of young people sitting on a picnic blanket; a family of four in a field; a group of friends sitting at a table; a man smiling next to a horse; a man in a plaid shirt holding a paper; an elderly woman in a grey jacket; two young women hugging; a young boy with a flower on his shirt; a man and a woman looking up; a man in a white shirt; two men on a boat; a group of people standing together; a woman smiling; a woman in a blue shirt; a woman in a blue shirt and hat; a woman in a red headscarf; two women laughing; an elderly man's face; a young boy's face; and a man and a woman smiling.

## Study Design: CBAMS Survey

The 2020 CBAMS Survey was administered from February to April 2018 to **50,000 addresses** in all **50 states and Washington, D.C.**

---



Questionnaire consisted of **61 questions**



**Adults 18+** were eligible to participate via mail or web



Households in the sample **received a prepaid incentive** and up to **five mailings** inviting them to participate



**Oversampled** Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and other small-sample races.







Roughly **17,500 people responded** to the survey

## Study Design: CBAMS Focus Groups

2020 CBAMS Focus Groups held in March and April 2018.

---

-  **42 focus groups** conducted with **11 audiences** across **14 locations**
-  **16 focus groups** were **non-English**
-  **Focus group transcripts** went through a rigorous process to ensure intercoder reliability
-  Transcripts were analyzed **to identify themes** among response barriers and motivators

## Study Design: CBAMS Focus Groups

2020 CBAMS Focus Groups conducted among the 11 audiences.

---

American Indian and Alaska Native

Black or African American

Chinese – Cantonese and Mandarin

Low Internet Proficiency

Middle Eastern and North African

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI)

Rural

Spanish (Puerto Rico)

Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

Vietnamese

Young and Mobile



## A 6x3 grid of 18 photographs showing diverse people of various ages and ethnicities smiling and interacting. The images include: an elderly woman in a grey shirt; a group of young people sitting on a picnic blanket; a family of four in a field; a group of friends sitting at a table; a man smiling next to a horse's head; a man in a plaid shirt holding a paper; an elderly woman in a grey jacket; two young women hugging; a young boy with a white substance on his face; a man and a woman looking up; a man in a white shirt; two men on a boat; a group of people standing together; a woman smiling; a woman in a blue shirt; a woman in a blue shirt and hat; a woman in a red headscarf; two women laughing; an elderly man's face; a young boy's face; and a man and a woman smiling.

## Key Findings Areas



Intent to Respond



Knowledge Gaps



Potential Concerns &  
Attitudinal Barriers



Potential Motivators &  
Facilitators

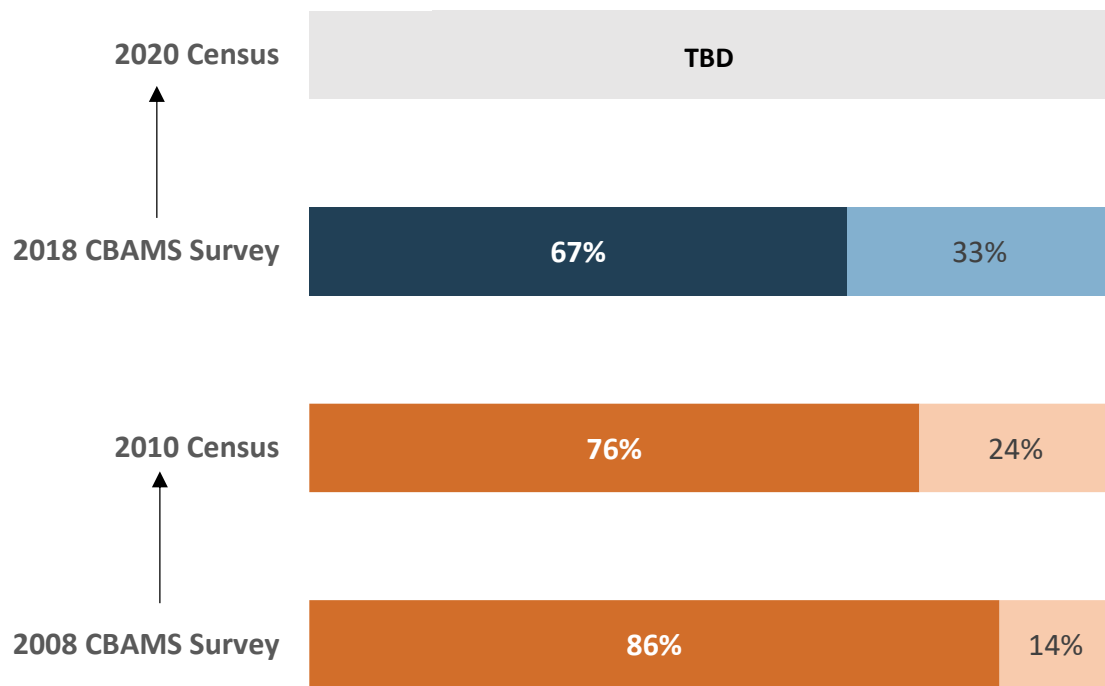


## Intent to Respond



# Two out of three said they were likely to respond

CBAMS Survey and Decennial Census  
Measured vs Observed Response Rate



The mail return rate to the 2010 Census was **10 pts lower** than measured in the 2008 CBAMS Survey



CBAMS measures those who are “extremely” or “very” likely to fill out the census form if the census were held today.

*Note: Due to methodological differences, direct statistical comparisons between 2008 and 2018 survey are not appropriate.*

||

Authorized Use Only

Team Y&R

United States  
Census  
2020



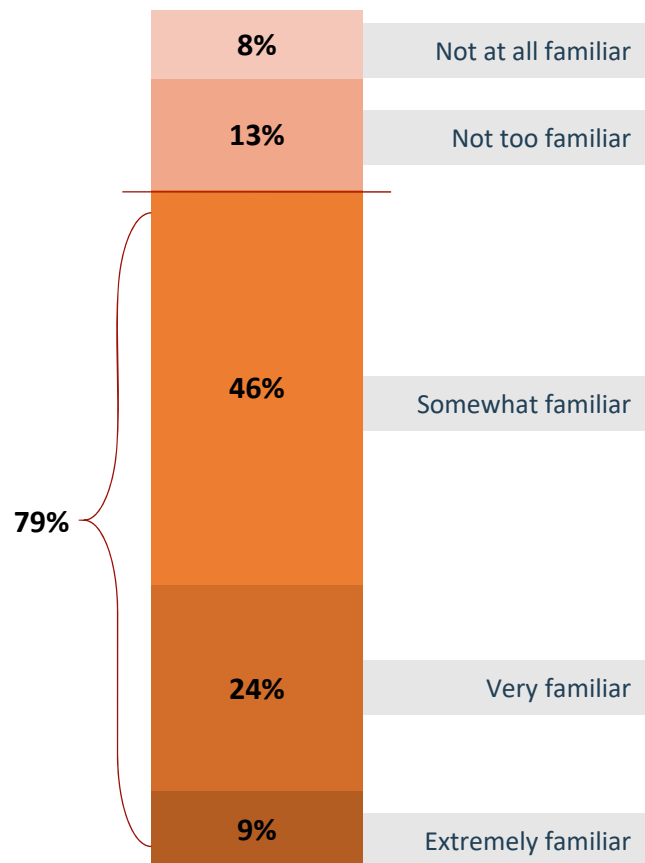


## Knowledge Gaps



## Many know the census basics but not much more

How familiar are you with the U.S. census?



### In their own words

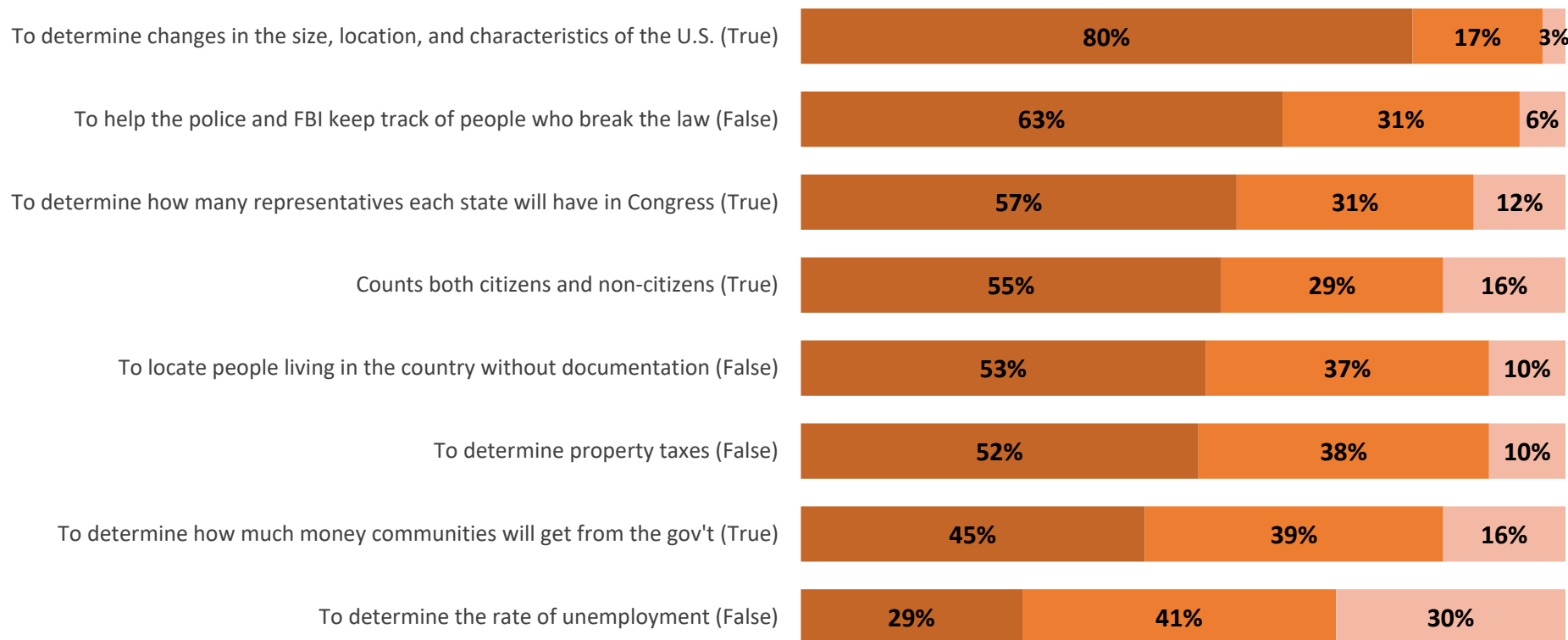
“

*[What comes to mind when I hear 'census'?] I don't know. **Isn't that like the people that want to know like everything?** They send you letters to your house.”*

*— American Indian and Alaska Native*

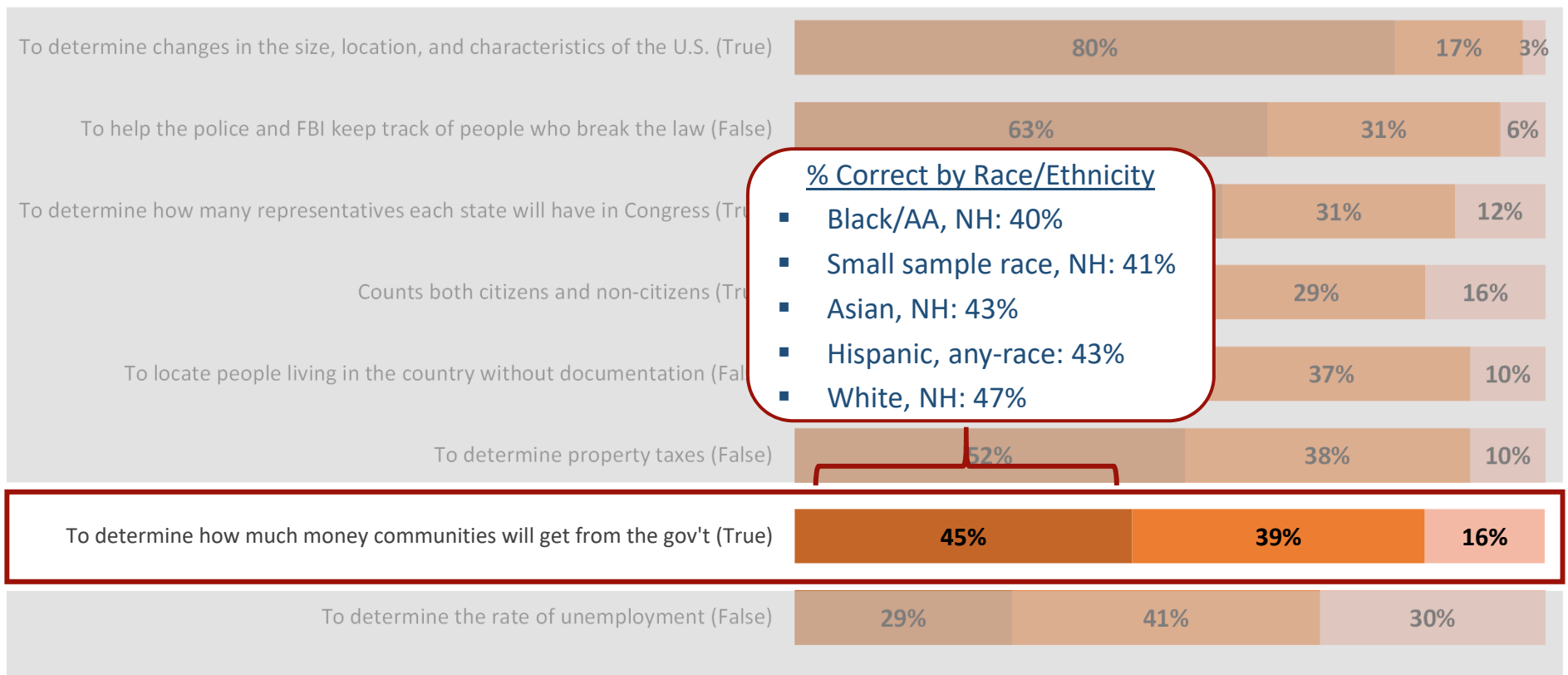
# Overview of knowledge gaps

As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?



# Knowledge about funding from census data varies little by race and ethnicity

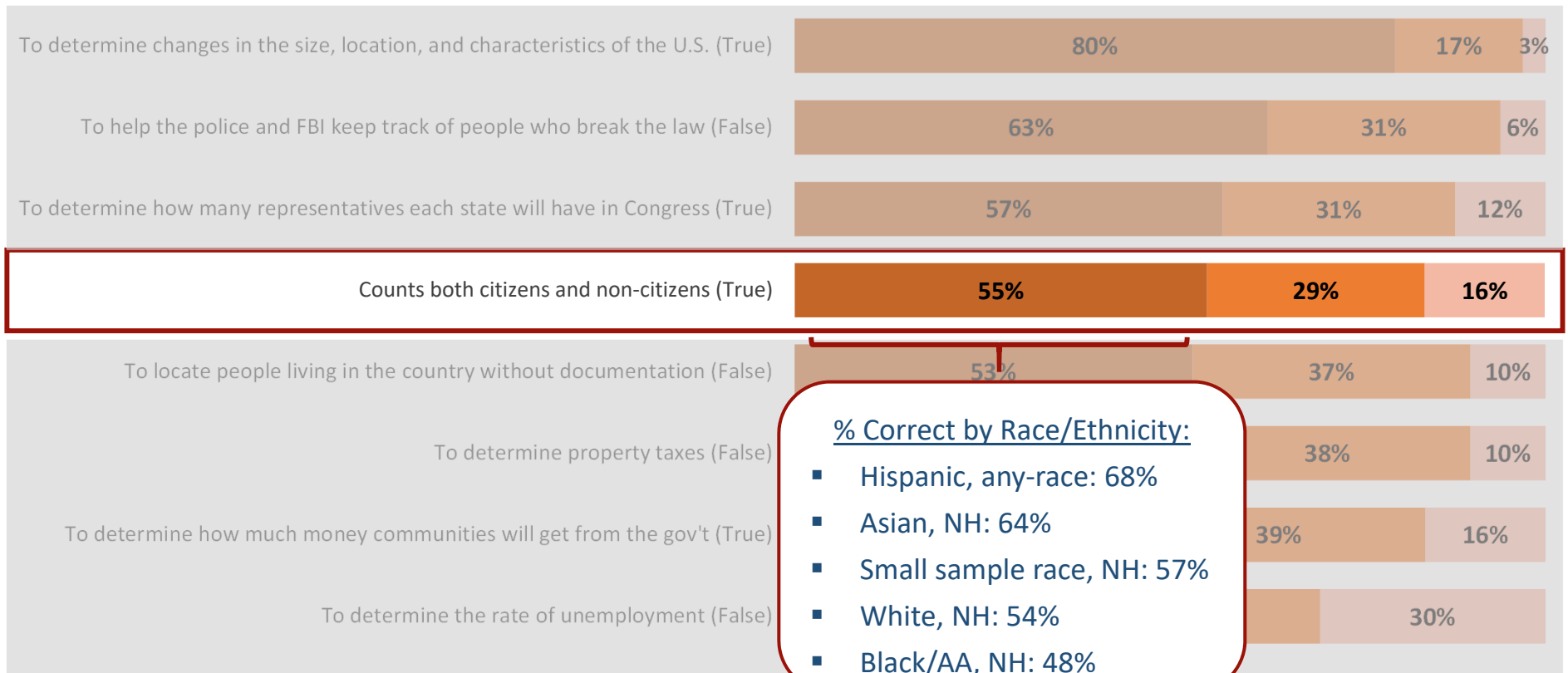
As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?





# Hispanics & Asians more likely to know census counts citizens and non-citizens than others

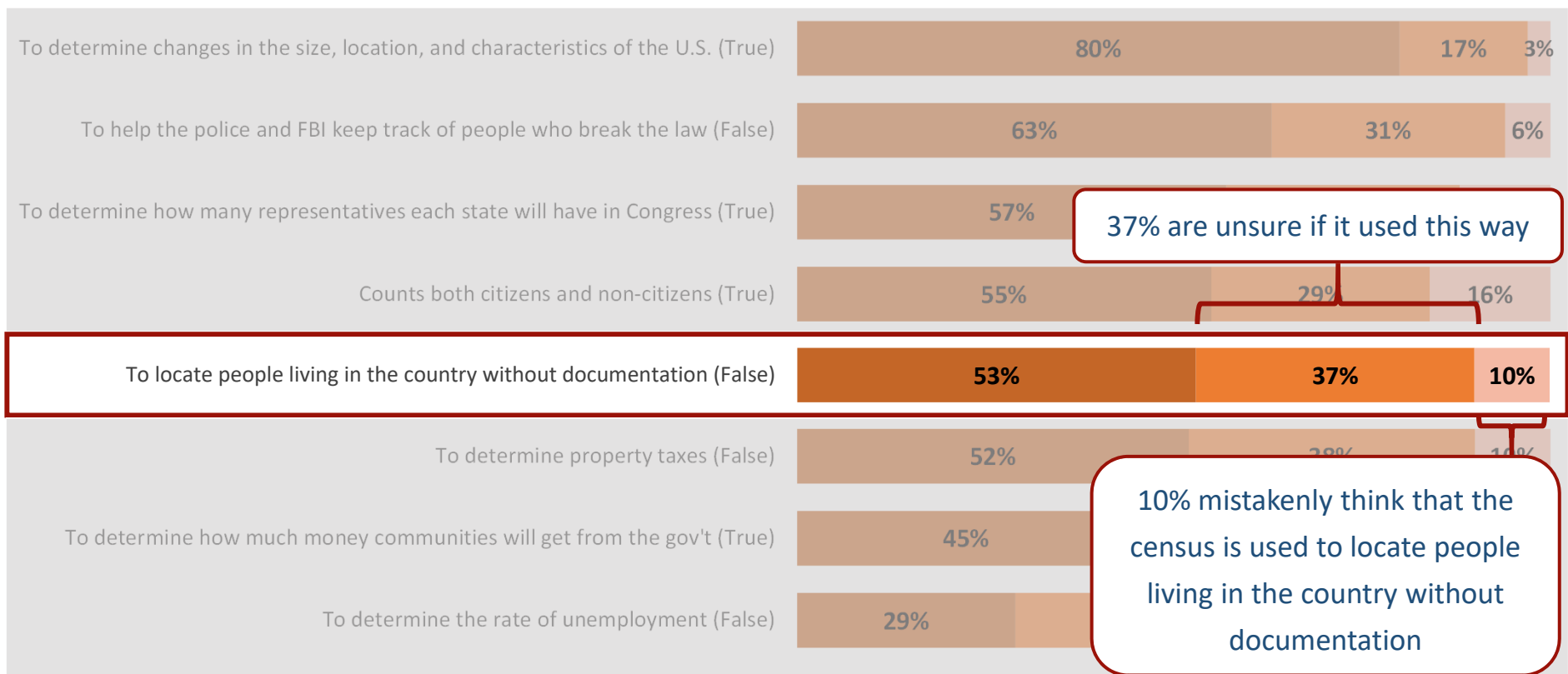
As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?



# Some misperceive the census' purpose



As you understand it, will the 2020 Census be used in any of the following ways or not?





## Potential Concerns & Attitudinal Barriers



# Potential barriers to participation in the 2020 Census



Apathy & Efficacy



Concerns about data  
confidentiality & privacy



Fear of  
Repercussions



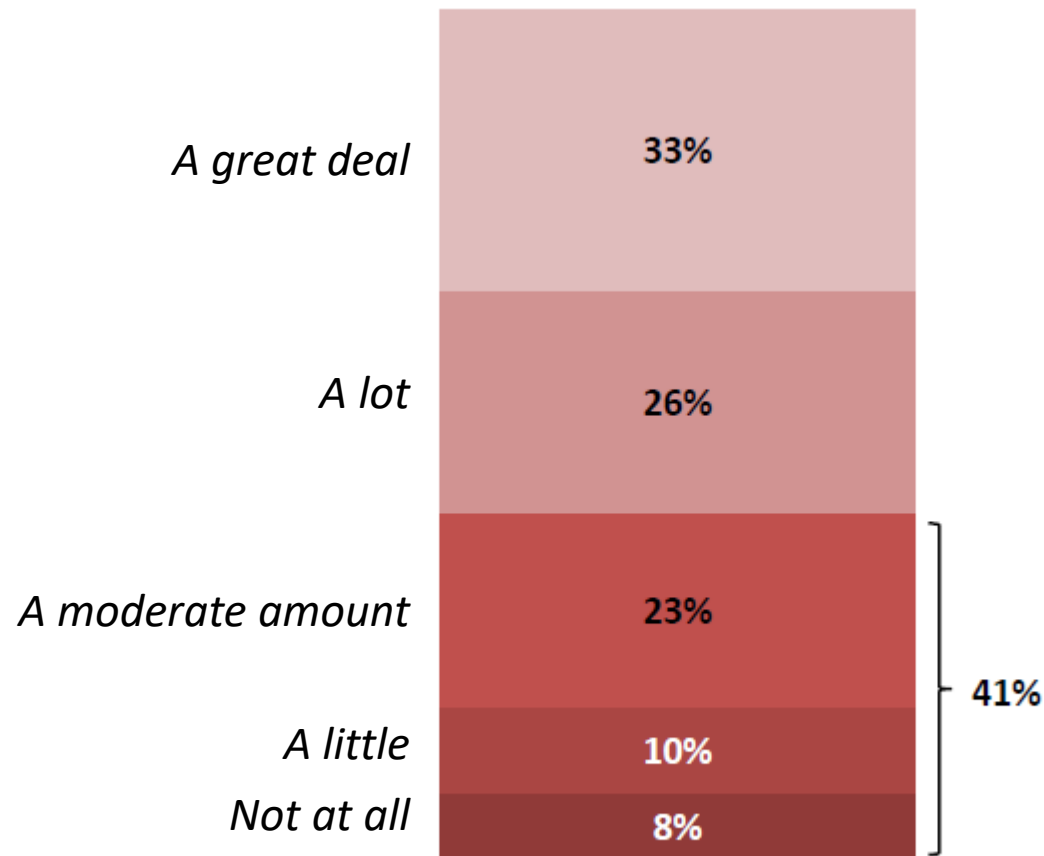
Distrust in Government



Few Perceived  
Personal Benefits



## Does it matter if I'm personally counted?



How much, if at all, do you think it matters if you personally are counted in the 2020 Census?

## Does it matter if I'm personally counted?



### Lack of Efficacy

*They won't ever come into the hood, give us stuff that we need, or give us anything. You go out where she at [a suburb] and you see parks and they get cleaned up, you see areas and centers and everything. Well, we have none of that. That's why I see a thousand kids on the block every day...So many high schools been closed. [It's connected to the census] because they not helping. **They not giving us no money. Then they up there counting, taking counts for everybody for what?**"*

*— Black or African American*

## Does it matter if I'm personally counted?



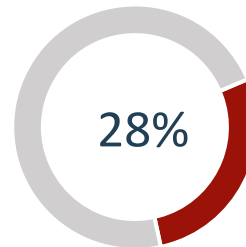
### Apathy

*[I would not fill it out] just for not wanting to do it. **Just not feeling like it... it kind of seems like taking a survey or something. Almost kind of pointless**, like it doesn't mean anything. It's not going to help anyways or do anything. It's more bothersome or more of a nuisance than anything, I guess.”*  
— Low Internet Proficiency



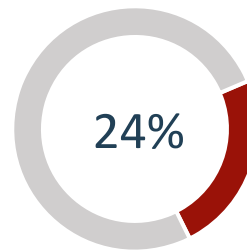
*[I would not fill out the census because] I **just don't care.**” — Chinese*

## About one-quarter of respondents worry about confidentiality



were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that the Census Bureau would not keep their answers confidential.

About one-quarter of respondents are concerned the census shares data



were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that the Census Bureau would share their answers with other government agencies.

## Privacy and confidentiality concerns in focus groups



### Privacy Concerns



*Privacy [is a reason why people would not fill out the census]. I think there's a lot of people that are out there – I work in health and we have to keep things private – they probably think, '**Why do I have to give you this?**'"*

*— American Indian and Alaska Native*



## Privacy and confidentiality concerns in focus groups

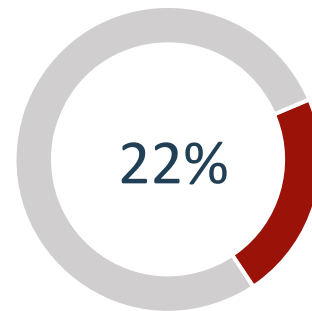


### Confidentiality Concerns

“

*Every single scrap of information that the government gets goes to every single intelligence agency, that's how it works...individual level data. Like, the city government gets information and then the FBI and then the CIA and then ICE and military...”*  
— Middle Eastern and North African

Nearly 1 in 4 respondents fear that their answers to the 2020 Census will be used against them



---

were “extremely concerned” or “very concerned” that their answers would be used against them.

Some focus group participants felt the government would use their data against their community



“

## Harm to the Community

*They could say, ‘Look, this community has, like, X amount of race or something; let’s avoid them, or let’s define that area’... you can see it sometimes where **they don’t fund certain schools because it’s in certain ‘bad areas.’**”*

— Middle Eastern and North African

...or them personally



“

## Harm to them Personally

*[Someone might choose not to participate because] **it can come back and haunt them...** Like if you get food stamps, ...and they will be afraid that it's going to affect their food stamps if they report somebody else is there.”*

*— Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander*

## The citizenship question may be a major barrier



1. **Its purpose is to find undocumented immigrants**
2. **The political discourse is targeting their ethnic group** – residents and citizens may also feel endangered

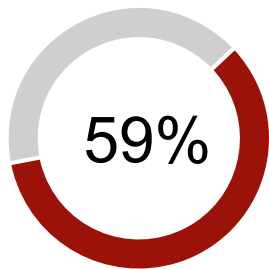
“*[The purpose is] to make people panic... Some **people will panic because they are afraid that they might be deported.***”  
— Vietnamese

“*ICE is working with different groups on **deportation sweeps**, and it would make me feel like I’m aiding in that. They’re doing a lot of illegal stuff, and so I wouldn’t fill out any of the questions.*”  
— Middle Eastern and North African

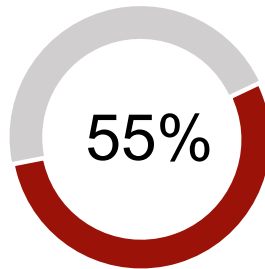
“*For this census, a lot of people are afraid. **It doesn’t matter if they ask you whether or not you’re a citizen.** The first question they ask you, are you Hispanic or Latino? And that’s enough. That’s all they need. And people are scared.*”  
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

“*[Latinos will not participate] out of fear...[there] is **practically a hunt** [for us] ...**Latinos are going to be afraid to be counted because of the retaliation that could happen** - it’s like giving the government information, saying, ‘Oh, there are more here.’”  
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)*

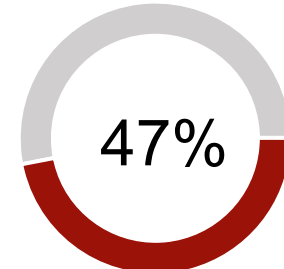
## Distrust is highest for the federal government



said they did not trust  
the federal government



said they did not trust  
their state government



said they did not trust  
their local government



## Focus group participants who distrust the government do so strongly



“

*[The government will sell personal information] in a heartbeat.”*

— Rural

“

*The government has always been **intrusive as it is**, and it's probably a level of intrusion. That's why people are like, 'Hold on, what you want to know what's in my bed, at my house, and who's using my toilet? **You should go mind your business.**'”*

— Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

“

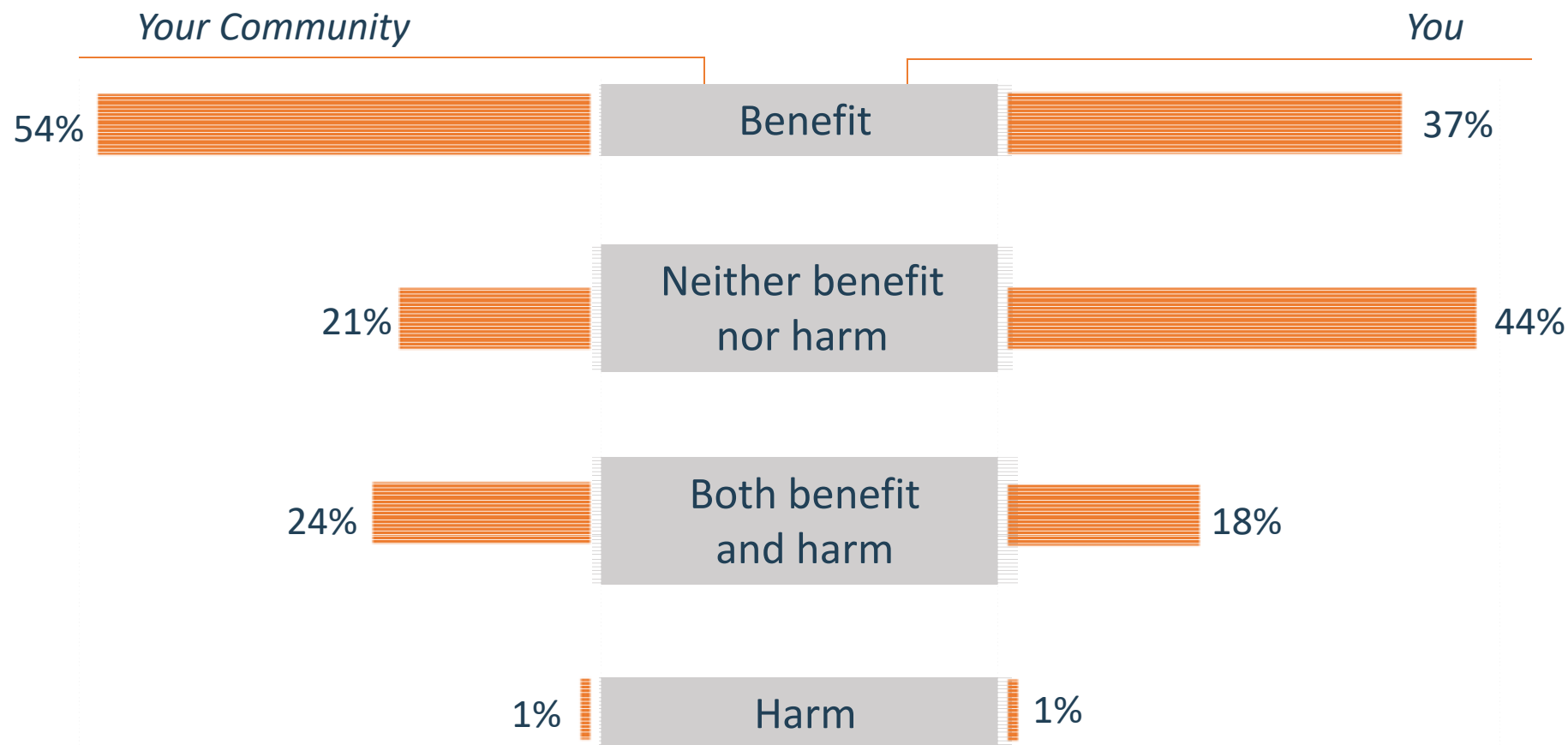
*The U.S. Census Bureau is connected to the U.S. government. I **don't trust the government not one bit**, so I wouldn't even if they told me this is what we're going to do I wouldn't.”*

— Black or African American

## More feel the 2020 Census benefits the community than them personally



Do you believe answering your 2020 Census form could benefit or harm [your community/you] in any way?



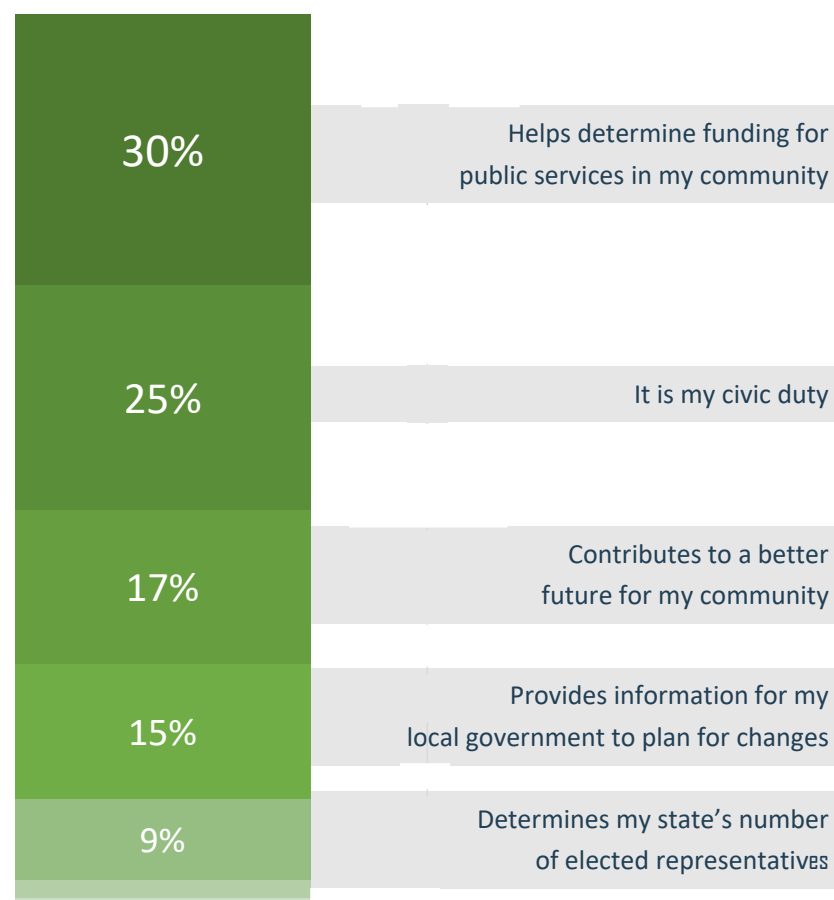


## Potential Motivators & Facilitators



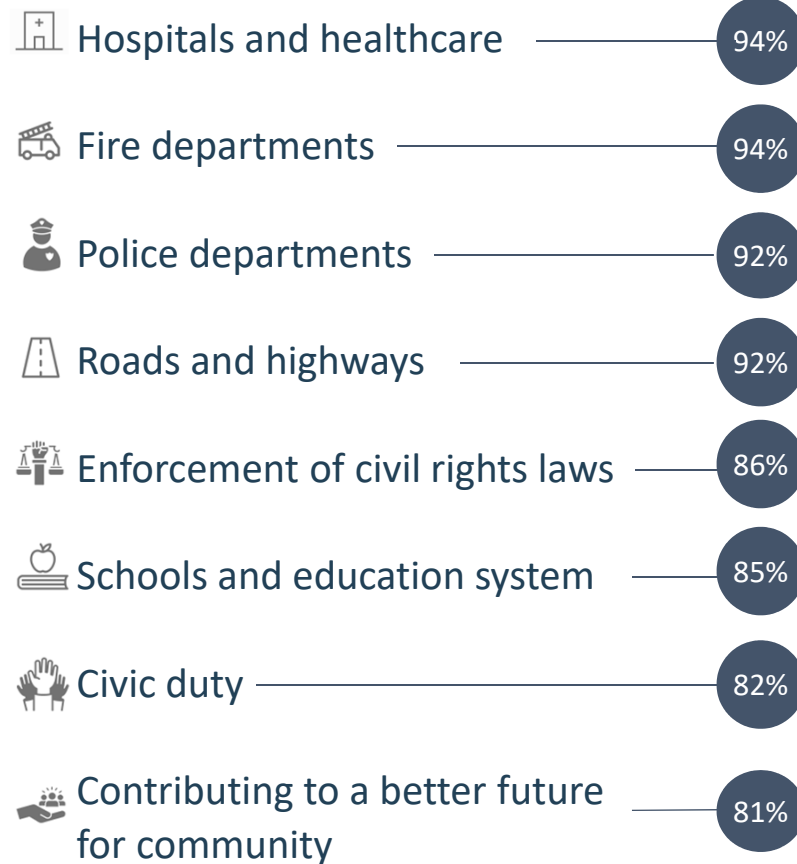
## Survey respondents chose funding for public services as the single most important reason to respond

What is the one most important reason to fill out the census?



# Public services are important to nearly all respondents


## Most Important Motivators



According to the focus groups, what would motivate people to participate?

## Conditions that need to be met to be most compelling

- 1 Information about the census and its impact
- 2 Tangible evidence
- 3 Connection to a better future



Schools & Education System

“Our schools need help. **The schools here do need help.** It hasn't been that long since the school system was shook up pretty bad, so it does need help, and I don't know about the fire departments.”  
— Low Internet Proficiency



Better Future for Community

“[I would fill it out] **because that data is going to impact my community.** And if it's not my community, because I die, then **my grandchildren and my children.**”  
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)



Focus group results imply community can assuage skepticism

**According to many focus group participants, trusted voices and organizations with deep community roots may facilitate participation among the most skeptical by:**

- **Providing information** about the community funding and the general census process
- **Assuring people** that participation is safe

## Trusted voices and organizations

“

*Those who are representing and helping the Hispanic communities [would assure me my information is safe]... Those who are independent, **who support all the Hispanics.** Those who are now helping [with] DACA and all those young people.”*  
— Spanish (U.S. Mainland)

“

*Most definitely [**my church would assure me if I had concerns about filling out the census form**].”* — Rural

“

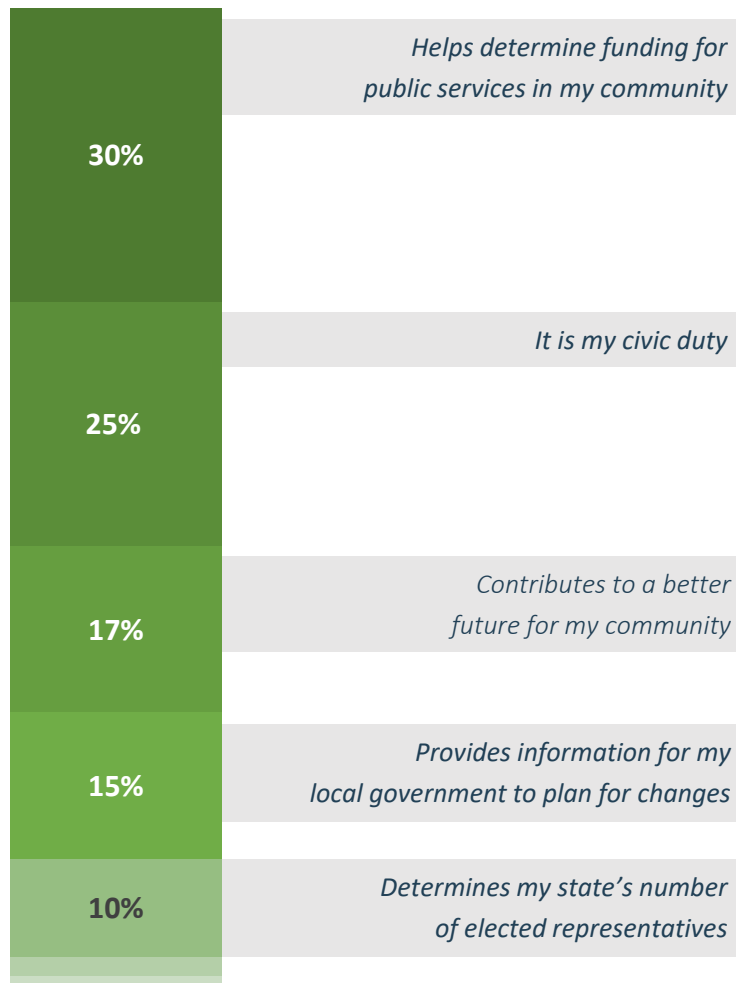
*Somebody raised in the city, **knows the hardships**, and something like that, not somebody that just got elected to be somebody.”*  
— Black or African American



## 2020 CBAMS Conclusions & Recommendations



## Connecting Census & Community Funding



Although people identified “helps determine funding for public services in my community” as the most important reason to fill out the census...

...only **45%** of people know that the census is used to determine community funding.

# Big Picture Conclusions



## Knowledge Gaps

- There is a general lack of knowledge about the census' scope, purpose, and constitutional foundation



## Barriers

- Apathy and lack of efficacy
- Privacy concerns
- Fear of repercussions
- Distrust of government
- Few Perceived Personal Benefits



## Motivators

- Funding for community needs is the most influential motivator across audiences
- Services such as hospitals, fire departments, and schools are important to many respondents

- ✓ Connecting census participation to support for *local* communities may address apathy and lack of efficacy
- ✓ Informing the public on the census' scope, purpose, and process may address privacy and confidentiality concerns and fear of repercussions
- ✓ Engaging trusted voices may address trust-based concerns, especially among the most skeptical and disaffected

# 5 2020 CBAMS Mindsets





# Creating Candidate Mindsets

For the 2020 mindsets, we used a mathematical approach to balance two goals:

1. Cluster individuals into cohesive groups with similar attitudes/behaviors.
2. Have mindset groupings that are distinct from each other.

---

Creating the candidate mindsets involved five steps:

- Step 1: Use principal component analysis (PCA) to distill 50+ CBAMS questions into a smaller number of factors.
- Step 2: Cluster algorithms to group into candidate mindsets.
- Step 3: Select a final mindset solution.
- Step 4: Name the mindsets and develop easy-to-understand personas.
- Step 5: Use mindsets to inform the communications program.

# Big Picture: Mindsets



## Eager Engagers

19% of U.S. Population



## Fence Sitters

32% of U.S. Population



## Confidentiality Minded

15% of U.S. Population



## Head Nodders

9% of U.S. Population



## Wary Skeptics

14% of U.S. Population



## Disconnected Doubters

10% of U.S. Population



*Note: U.S. population percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding error.*

Questions?

*monica.j.vines@census.gov*

