



Case Study:

U.S. Census Bureau: 2020 Census

Year: 2021



This case study was prepared for the client U.S. Census Bureau for the 2020 Census to engage all Hispanic/Latino adults 18+ to respond to the 2020 Census. It was developed and designed by Culture ONE World. In the Media Connections & Content Strategy category, it won Silver.

Executive Summary:

Every 10 years, the decennial census is the opportunity for every person to be counted—giving voice to our community and the people who constitute it. U.S. Hispanics represent the largest racial minority and youngest population, so capturing an accurate count for the 2020 Census is critical to our future. Culture ONE World started the planning in October 2016, weeks before the Presidential elections. The results of those elections changed the political landscape and ramped up anti-immigrant rhetoric. We took on the challenge and initiated a robust research-driven campaign process that led us to important insights about attitudes, barriers, and motivators. The omnichannel approach had to go beyond an advertising campaign, with community-based partnerships, influencers, and trusted voices. We created a data-driven creative strategy that married culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate messaging addressing all the concerns. Hundreds of creative assets fed a media plan with TV, radio, print, alternative OOH, and a digital/social plan that drove traffic to the first-ever online response. Then as the 2020 Census started, the global pandemic shut the country down. Despite all the challenges and the disproportionate impact on our community, our campaign helped drive record self-response that exceeded the projected goal.

Definition of your challenge:

The 2020 Census was unlike any of the censuses in history. It was the first time everyone could respond online. But then, the years leading up to and including 2020 also unleashed an unprecedented set of circumstances in which to count every single person living in the U.S., Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. Getting Hispanic/Latino's to participate came with its own challenges. We had to engage all Hispanic/Latino adults 18+ to respond to the 2020 Census. Through a robust effort of qualitative and quantitative research, we discovered there was limited knowledge of the census and the benefit of responding. But the greater challenges were the overarching reluctance to respond to a government survey for fear of data sharing. From early 2018, there was a contentious political debate about the citizenship question fused with anti-immigrant rhetoric. When that failed, there were Presidential Memorandums requesting that data be shared from states to the Census Bureau. Then in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, national unrest, and other significant events disproportionately affected the U.S. Hispanic community. With the broad audience target defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (all Hispanic/Latino adults 18+), we first set out to develop 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.

The predominant part of the Hispanic population was in two groups: Confidentiality Minded and Wary Skeptics. There was representation in a third group, Fence Sitters, however they were more likely to respond with a little motivation. The **Confidentiality Minded** were most concerned that their answers to the census will be used against them, but they believe their answers matter and are somewhat likely to respond. The **Wary Skeptics** are the most skeptical of the government and most apathetic about being personally counted because they don't see the benefit. Therefore, they are reluctant to participate in the census. The measurable objective was quite simple. Secure self-response, which refers to a) mailing the paper form, or b) by phone, or for the first time in history c) complete it online. From the start of the planning process the overall self-response rate target was 60.5% of the American population.

The Key Insight & Strategy:

Given the general lack of trust of the government from Hispanic immigrant cultures, we had to educate our audience on the purpose of census data and how it improves their community, especially if they reside in growth markets. We needed to explain "what is in it for them" to motivate them to take a few minutes out of their busy lives to complete the

2020 Census. We had to include a reminder on all messaging that their individual responses would be held in the strictest confidence and not shared with any other government agencies or law enforcement, to combat the fears stoked by the citizenship question and other anti-immigrant rhetoric. We had to develop campaign messaging that addressed the barriers, attitudes, and motivators across each of the phases. Here are the details for how we arrived at our communications insight.

Barriers

- Lack of trust in the government and lack of knowledge, purpose and benefits of the census, combined with deep concerns about confidentiality.
- Even if it's safe, it's probably too late to respond to the census. Will the person knocking on the front door be friendly, speak Spanish, and not misuse the information?

Motivators

- Census data can improve their community especially if it is growing. It influences how funding is allocated to improve infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and roads.
- Don't be invisible: Help the community get improved infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and roads. Create a better life for your family.
- Your family and community are counting on you to respond to your census soon or someone will come to your home to complete it with you.

Key Messaging Themes

- What is the census
- Purpose/use of census data
- Census data at the individual level is strictly confidential.
- Help your community get its fair share of federal funding for schools, hospitals, new roads, etc. that could create jobs and a better quality of life for you and your family.
- Participating in the census means your community will receive benefits such as infrastructure (schools, hospitals and roads).
- It's fast and simple to respond – especially with the new online system or by mail.
- Responses will not be shared with other government agencies or law enforcement.
- Participate in the census. This is your last chance to help you, your family and your community to enhance infrastructure.

Channels/Media

A campaign of this magnitude required an omni-channel approach beyond relying only on media. We developed a community-based partnership program with thousands of companies and organizations supporting a ground game with materials we provided. We designed a school curriculum program with parent materials in Spanish that integrated Census topics into school lessons. A robust earned media with regular press briefings and panels helped to spread the word. The media plan used a mix of network and local TV, radio, hundreds of community newspapers, alternative out-of-home, and a digital plan that included programmatic display, website direct, and a paid social plan using all the platforms frequented by Hispanics.

Execution:

While we developed unique creative executions for our Hispanic audience, the foundational aspects of the 2020 Census campaign were developed collaboratively amongst the entire Team Y&R roster of agencies, therefore we had to ensure the platform idea was properly adapted for our audience. After extensive review, the client selected "Shape Your Future. Start Here." with our Spanish adaptation "Dale Forma a Tu Futuro. Empieza Aquí." It highlighted the ability of individuals to influence the future of their roads, schools, health care, and communities by participating in the 2020 Census. It also provided the actionable request that would drive self-response, especially to the website via all digital and social ads. We developed hundreds of creative assets across all media platforms and phases. Below is an explanation of the main work.

Awareness Phase

- **The Walk:** Our anthemic :60 spot showed the rich diversity of the Hispanic community expressed with a sense of pride and empowerment, which was sorely needed due to the anti-immigrant rhetoric. It explained the benefits of census participation, both for individuals and the community.
- **Kids Talk:** We heard lots of discussion in research about kids bringing information home from school and informing parents. That led to the development of a series of “Kids” creative telling us about the benefits most relevant to them - schools, parks, community centers, and even health clinics.
- **They Also Count:** This spot focused on clarifying the census is for everyone. It shows a variety of people that some might not think “count” in the census.

In the Awareness Phase, there were digital executions that extended the messages with more detail, especially in social. The print and OOH used copy and diverse imagery to drive the knowledge about the benefits of census participation. A radio series of ads used characters representative of our community sharing their concerns and getting trusted advice.

Motivation Phase

- **Everybody:** Our hero from “The Walk” returns with a new cast of diverse characters now driving the call-to-action.
- **Kids Advice:** The second in the Kids series, focused on asking everyone to respond.
- **Dinner with Friends:** We created a unique TV spot that won recognition from Ad Age as a “Creativity Pick” due to the bold and direct messaging to the undocumented community. It portrays a young man expressing concerns over whether he should respond to his friends at a dinner. He insinuates the documentation challenge, and his friends ease the concerns and address the privacy issue.
- **The Destination:** Our English-speaking Hispanic/Latino audience got its own version of “The Walk” but since we were tasked with producing it once the pandemic started, we had to rely solely on stock footage.

Reminder Phase

- **Trusted Voices:** In a pandemic reality, and with a need to hyper-focus on certain regional areas, we utilized trusted voices and enlisted them to use their phones to record inspiring messages.
- **Life Lessons:** We produced a spot focused on showing how Census Takers were following local safety guidelines, properly masked, and carefully doing their job to help everyone respond to their census.



Results:

The main benefits of achieving our self-response rate goal includes:

- Financial savings to the federal government and U.S. taxpayer since more households responding via mail, phone, and online means less homes for Census Takers to enumerate.
- Self-response means a more accurate count, which leads to better representation of our community in the final census count.

We achieved a self-response rate 120.3% against the projected goal for Hispanics, so we exceeded expectations under the most challenging of circumstances. We attribute that to strong research foundations leading to solid strategic insights that drove our creativity. The messaging and creativity addressed our audience's concerns. Furthermore, we had daily optimization meetings with tract-level response rate updates, allowing us to shift creative and geo-target media. Our overall media plan included significant added value pulling in media partners to extend our media investment. And finally, the strategy to engage and support community-based partners and trusted voices helped to convey the message.

Industry Impact:

The Hispanic community is extremely resilient. In spite of the mistrust of government, numerous political challenges, threat of the citizenship question, ongoing negative rhetoric, and a worldwide pandemic - Hispanics rose up to assert their representation and self-responded. The results of this census will not only demonstrate the diversity of our Hispanic community, but it will show the major demographic and geographic shifts. These shifts will impact funding and political representation. The results also fuel the ongoing discussion about the importance and impact of the Hispanic community across all aspects of the American landscape. But perhaps most importantly, the results of the 2020 Census will have a major impact across all industries, including marketing, as we continue to have strong growth rates and represent the largest demographic "minority" and continue to influence culture, political representation, economic impact, and social diversity.