

To: **Interested Parties**  
From: **Quadrant Strategies, on behalf of Article 1**  
Date: November 2019  
Re: Recent polling on perceptions of the 2020 US Census

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Over the past month we conducted an online survey with 1499 members of the general population, with oversample of 300 English-Speaking Latinos, 300 Spanish-Speaking Latinos, 400 Muslim Americans, and 200 Asian Americans. The margin of error for the general population is +/-2.5%, and the margin of error is higher for the different subgroups.

The purpose of this survey was to understand how key audiences feel about the 2020 Census, identify what message themes are resonating and why, and pinpoint which people and/or organizations are the most effective messengers to communicate these themes.

Below is an overview of the key takeaways from our research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The challenge for the 2020 Census is becoming clear: many people in the U.S. (more than 4 in 10 overall) aren't yet fully committed to participating. While this may not be abnormal in the lead-up to a decennial Census, there are significant headwinds to contend with in this particular climate – most notably that the federal government is unpopular.

There are significant doubts that the government actually uses the Census data to guide its actions. Furthermore, certain groups – Muslims, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Young Adults primarily – are especially concerned that the government will actively use their personal information for nefarious purposes.

This polling demonstrates a few key points necessary to overcome the skepticism, ensure broad participation, and get an accurate count – particularly among the most vulnerable groups:

1. The Census Bureau must maintain a perception of independence from politics and the rest of the federal government in the lead up to the Census.
2. To guard against any growing skepticism of the Bureau (given it is part of the federal government), outside groups like community and non-profit organizations can play a big role in convincing people to participate.
3. It is imperative to communicate about the community-level benefits of an accurate Census in order to make it clear that the government does in fact use the data to make important decisions. (The Bureau's media campaign intends to do this.)
4. There is also clear value in supporting that message with a more emotional appeal – one that positions the Census as a source of empowerment for marginalized groups and truth about what America looks like.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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### *Participation*

While most people are certain they will participate in the Census, there is a large proportion – more than 4 in 10 overall – who still need to be convinced.

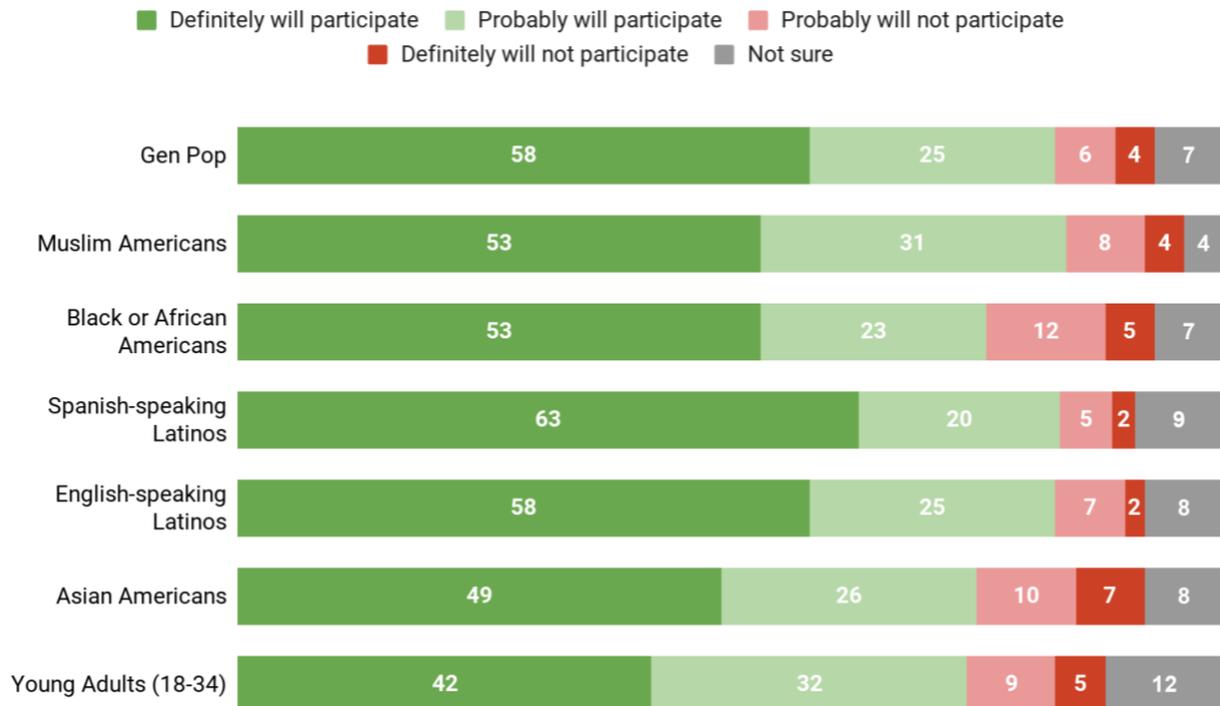
This is particularly true among Young Adults, Asian American, African American, and Muslim audiences.

#### ***LIKELIHOOD TO PARTICIPATE IN CENSUS***

*How likely are you to participate in each of the following?*

*Showing % across audiences*

*Note: Estimates reported in this chart were rounded to whole numbers so the sum of estimates equals 100%*

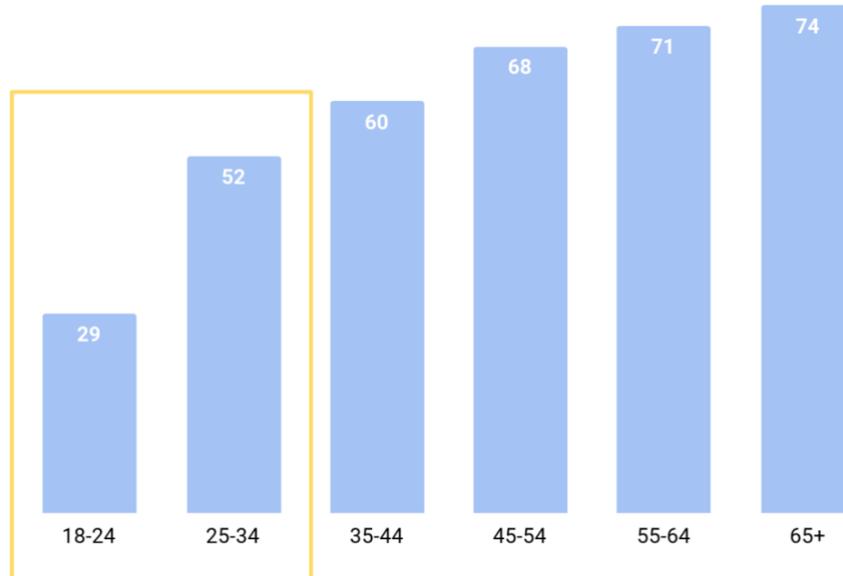


**The youngest adults are least likely to participate.** Participation by age is a sliding scale. Young adults, including Gen Z and millennials, are hesitant to participate in the 2020 Census.

***PARTICIPATION 2020 CENSUS - AGE BRACKETS***

*How likely are you to participate in the 2020 Census?*

*Showing % “definitely will participate” across Gen Pop audience*

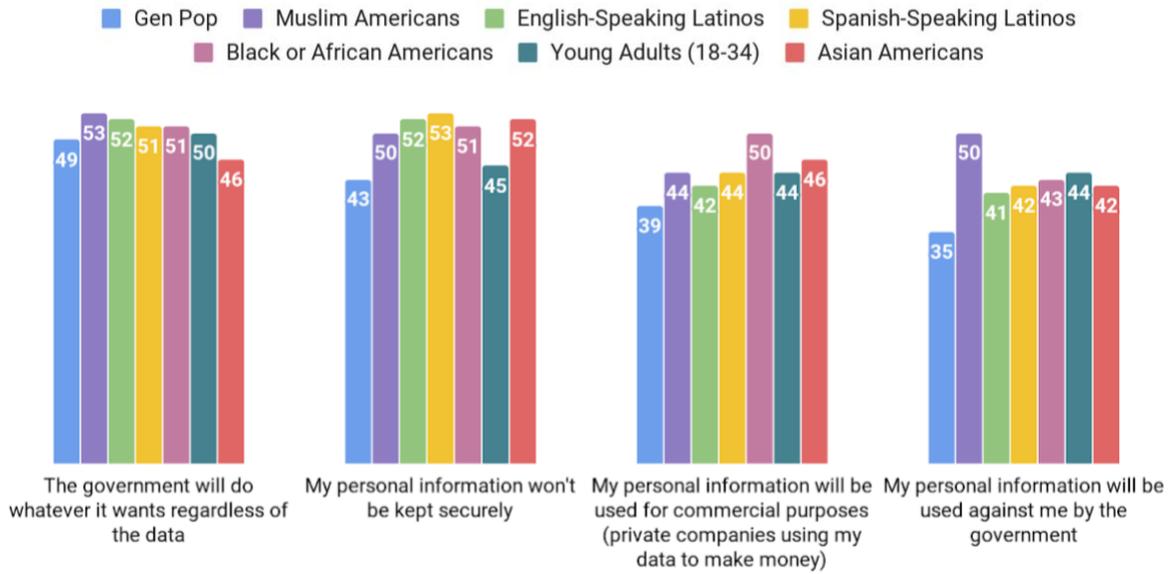


**There is broad concern that the government will simply disregard the Census data.** About half of the population (1 in 2 respondents) thinks that the government will do whatever it wants, regardless of the data.

**Motivation will be a particular challenge with hard-to-count communities – they are especially concerned that the government will use the data for untoward purposes.** Muslim Americans feel especially vulnerable – 1 in 2 think the government will use their Census information against them. And many African Americans think their information will be used for commercial purposes.

**TOP BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN CENSUS - AUDIENCES**

Please read through each concern and select the option that best applies to you  
 Showing % “major concern” across audiences



## Messengers

These concerns about the government can influence perceptions of the Census Bureau as a messenger.

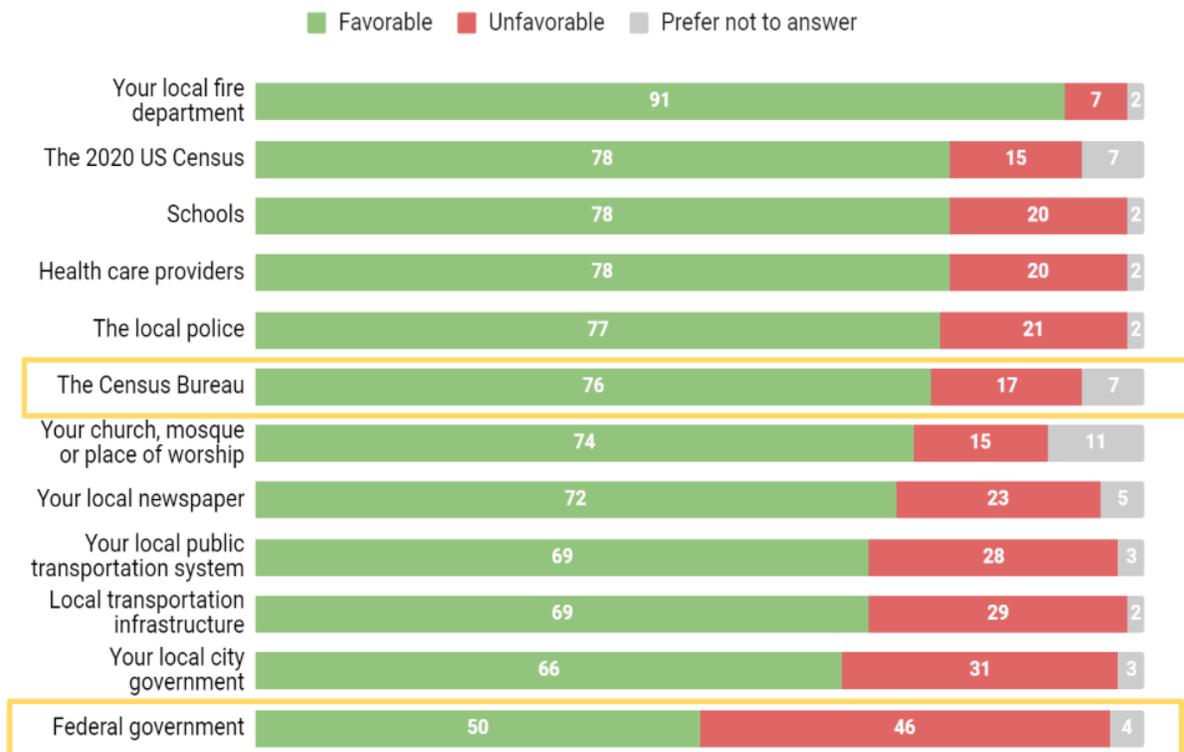
- **On its own, the Census Bureau is held in high regard.** People recognize the Bureau as important and necessary. Muslims are especially favorable, with 8 in 10 favorable toward the Census Bureau. Young Adults, on the other hand, tend to be a bit more skeptical of the Census Bureau (14 percentage points below Gen Pop favorability).
- **But, the association with the federal government can limit the effectiveness of the Bureau as a messenger.** As we learned from qualitative research, the more people learn about the relationship between the Census Bureau and the federal government, the less they tend to trust the Census Bureau. As one respondent said in CBAMS 2018, “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.”

### INSTITUTION REPUTATION

How favorable or unfavorable are you toward each of the following institutions, programs, and services?

Showing % among Gen Pop

Note: Estimates reported in this chart were rounded to whole numbers so the sum of estimates equals 100%



**Beyond the Census Bureau, community organizations, role models, and non-profit organizations working with the Bureau can be effective supplementary messengers.** This has been reaffirmed throughout various surveys on the subject (CBAMS and Pew). Non-profit organizations and community role models have the most sway in terms of credibility and reach across all audiences.

- Muslims are particularly likely to listen to their clerics.
- Spanish-Speaking Latinos are particularly likely to listen to school teachers.

### ***MESENTER CREDIBILITY***

*Below is a list of people or organizations that could tell you about the 2020 Census. Please read through each and select the option that best represents your opinion. If I heard about the Census from this person/organization, I would find them...*

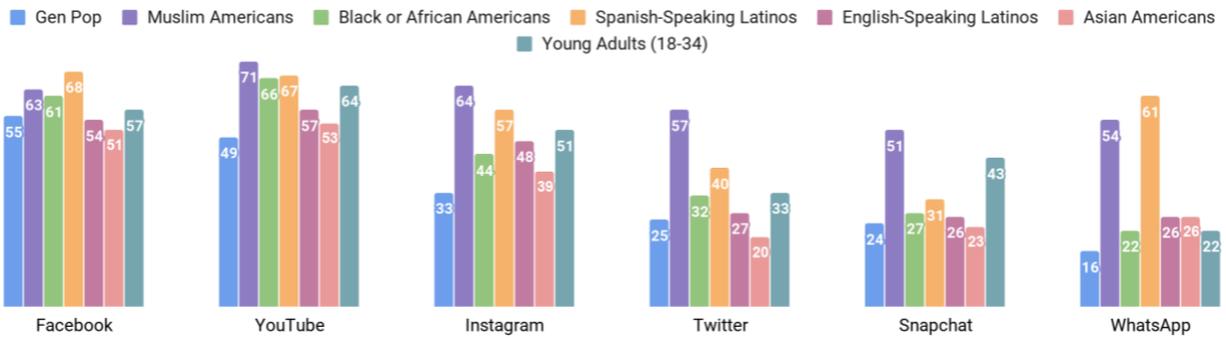
*Showing % among Gen Pop*

	Very credible	Somewhat credible	Not very credible	Not at all credible
The Census Bureau	51	33	10	5
Non-profit organizations working with the Census Bureau	38	43	12	7
A local first responder	38	43	13	6
Community or local organizations	35	46	12	7
Member of Congress from your state	34	42	15	10
Your clergy/cleric/ minister	34	40	16	10
Your local mayor or elected official	32	44	16	8
The President	31	27	14	28
Your school board representative	29	47	16	8
Your employer	28	43	18	10
Your child's school teacher	28	45	17	9
A local TV news personality	26	42	20	12
Your favorite entertainment celebrity	18	33	26	22
Your favorite professional sports star	18	32	28	23

The most popular digital platforms are Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram – they’re used daily by hard to reach audiences. Muslims and Spanish-Speaking Latinos tend to rely more heavily on these apps, in addition to WhatsApp and Twitter.

### SOCIAL MEDIA USE

*How often do you use each of the following applications?  
Showing % “almost constantly” and “several times a day” across audiences*



## *Messages*

The Bureau's planned campaign can make a big impact by highlighting community benefits that come from Census funding. Community benefits and the idea of a better future are particularly important to people, which suggests the Bureau's campaign is on the right track.

### ***CENSUS BENEFITS***

*Based on what you know now, of the reasons one might complete the 2020 Census, how important are the following ideas to you personally?*

*Showing % among Gen Pop*

	Very important	Somewhat Important	Not Too Important	Not At All Important	Don't Know
It determines funding for public services in my community, like schools and fire departments	56	30	7	3	4
It contributes to a better future for my community	52	32	8	4	4
It determines how many elected representatives my state has in Congress	51	31	8	4	5
It is my civic duty (like voting, jury duty, paying taxes)	49	33	10	5	4
It provides information for my local government to plan for changes in my community	48	35	8	4	5
It is used to enforce civil rights laws	43	29	11	7	9
Showing pride in my cultural heritage	36	27	18	13	6

**Funding that benefits the community is a natural story for the Census Bureau.** The Census is overwhelmingly associated with federal funding and overall benefits to the community.

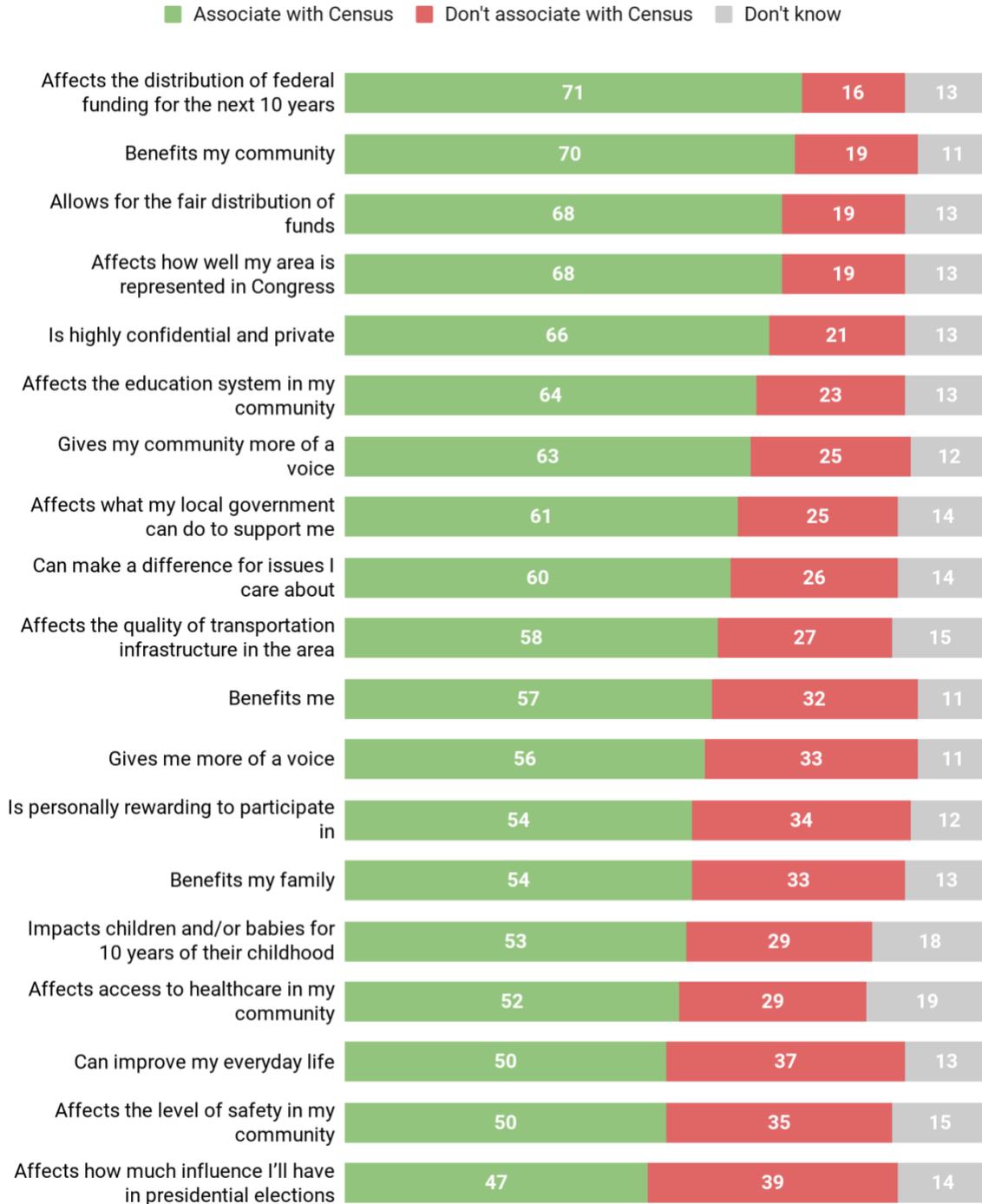
**But there are doubts about the personal and issue-specific benefits of the Census.** About half the Gen Pop doesn't recognize the Census's impact on their own lives and doesn't associate it with access to healthcare, children's future, or safety in the community.

## ***CENSUS ATTRIBUTES***

*Based on what you know, how much do you associate each of the following with the Census?*

*Showing % among Gen Pop*

*Note: Estimates reported in this chart were rounded to whole numbers so the sum of estimates equals 100%*



Overall, emotional messaging that speaks to empowerment and creating a true picture of the country is very appealing – nearly half say those messages makes them *much more likely* to participate.

- These messages can be backed up with a more functional message: the Census is easy, quick, and 100% confidential.

***MESSAGES - MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE***

*After reading this message, I am...*

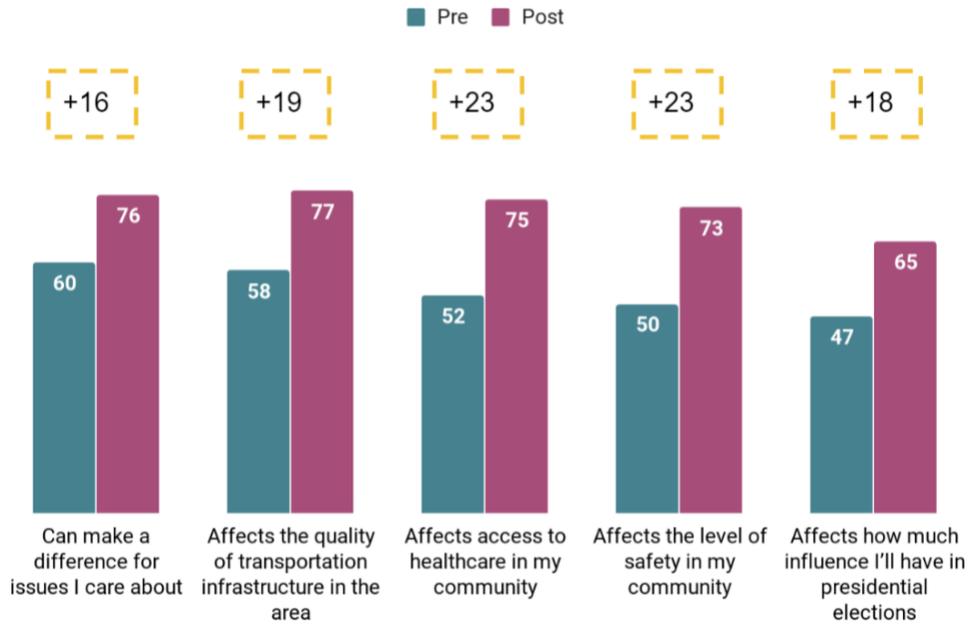
*Showing % “much more likely to participate” among Gen Pop*

<i>Messages</i>	<b>Much more likely to participate</b>
<b>They Don't Want Us To Participate</b>   Make no mistake: there are people in power who don't want us to be counted. When our community is marginalized, they stay in power. Don't let it happen. Take a stand and take control.	49
<b>2020 Year Of Civic Participation</b>   In many ways, 2020 is going to determine where this country is headed. Each and every person has the power to make an impact. Between voting in the election and participating in the Census, 2020 will be an important year for civic participation.	47
<b>True Picture</b>   For the country to advance and prosper, we need to be honest with ourselves about what America looks like today. When we all participate in the Census, we get a true picture of the country. Then we can make decisions based on fact, not fiction.	46
<b>Easy And Fast</b>   Take five minutes to fill out the Census, make a lasting impact on the community. These few short questions provide the data used to determine funding for programs that will help our community for a generation.	46

**Messaging educates people about the Census and reaffirms that the Census can have a positive impact on the community.** After seeing the messages, people recognize that the Census can make a difference for healthcare access, safety, clout in presidential elections, quality of transportation infrastructure, and issues they care about.

### ATTRIBUTES - PRE VS. POST

Based on what you know, how much do you associate each of the following with the Census?  
Showing % “very much” or “somewhat” among Gen Pop



## COMPARISON TO PAST FINDINGS

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### [Pew Research Center](#)

- Conducted: September 16-29, 2019
- Audience: N = 6,878

### [CBAMS 2018](#)

- Conducted: February - April 2018
- Audience: N = 17,500 respondents, oversampled Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and other small-sample races

**Overall, our research reaffirms findings from Pew 2019 and CBAMS 2018 on a couple of fronts:**

- Likelihood to participate is increasing as we get closer to the Census.
- The main barriers to participating in the 2020 Census are distrust of the federal government and concerns about data confidentiality and privacy.
- Some of the most at-risk audiences are Asians and Young Adults – they will need the most outreach and convincing to participate.
- While it is clear people care about funding for their communities, there isn't a clear consensus that participating in the Census leads to community benefits.

**In line with Pew 2019, our findings show that the general population's likelihood to participate has grown as the Census is nearing. Two groups in particular that CBAMS identified in 2018 remain select groups with the lowest intent to participate:**

- **Asians:** In 2018, CBAMS reported that Asians have a 55% likelihood to participate in the 2020 Census. In our research, Asians reported a 75% likelihood to participate in the 2020 Census, 8 points below average.
- **Young Adults (18-34):** In 2018, CBAMS reported that 54% of the 18-34 year olds tested said they were likely to participate in the 2020 Census. In our research, 64% of the 18-34 year olds said they were likely to participate in the 2020 Census – the lowest from all the audiences tested.

## *PARTICIPATION*

*Questions:*

- **Pew:** *How likely are you to participate in the 2020 Census? By participate, we mean fill out a Census form.*
- **CBAMS 2018:** *How likely are you to fill out the Census form if the Census was held today?*
- **Quadrant:** *How likely are you to participate in the 2020 Census?*

*Answer choices have been grouped as follows:*

- *Likely to participate = Pew/Quadrant "Definitely will" and "Probably will" / CBAMS "Extremely likely" and "Very likely"*

- *Less likely to participate = All other answer choices*

Showing % across audiences

Audience	Survey	Likely to participate	Less likely to participate
Gen Pop	Pew Research	84	16
	CBAMS 2018	68	32
	Quadrant	83	17
	<i>Change from CBAMS</i>	<i>+15</i>	<i>-15</i>
Black / African American	Pew Research	75	25
	CBAMS 2018	64	36
	Quadrant	76	24
	<i>Change from CBAMS</i>	<i>+12</i>	<i>-12</i>
Hispanic / Latinos	Pew Research	79	21
	CBAMS 2018	65	35
	Quadrant	80	20
	<i>Change from CBAMS</i>	<i>+15</i>	<i>-15</i>
Young Adults (18-34)	CBAMS 2018	54	46
	Quadrant	74	26
	<i>Change from CBAMS</i>	<i>+20</i>	<i>-20</i>
Asian Americans	CBAMS 2018	55	45
	Quadrant	75	25
	<i>Change from CBAMS</i>	<i>+20</i>	<i>-20</i>

Across the board, our survey shows that people think they're more familiar with the Census now than they did in 2018. We see the biggest discrepancy in the Latino community. However, as we saw in our survey, this stated familiarity doesn't actually reflect how knowledgeable people are about the Census. Many of those who say they're familiar score poorly on our knowledge question.

## ***FAMILIARITY***

Questions:

- **CBAMS 2018:** How familiar are you with the U.S. Census?
- **Quadrant:** Before reading this, how familiar were you with the US Census?

Showing % across audiences

Audience	Survey	Extremely / Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not very / Not at all familiar
Gen Pop	CBAMS 2018	33	46	21
	Quadrant	41	41	18
	<i>Change</i>	<i>+8</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>-3</i>
Black / African Americans	CBAMS 2018	38	42	20
	Quadrant	46	40	14
	<i>Change</i>	<i>+8</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-6</i>
Hispanic / Latinos	CBAMS 2018	31	39	30
	Quadrant	38	56	6
	<i>Change</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>+17</i>	<i>-24</i>
Young Adults (18-34)	CBAMS 2018	22	45	33
	Quadrant	33	39	28
	<i>Change</i>	<i>+11</i>	<i>-6</i>	<i>-5</i>
Asian Americans	CBAMS 2018	22	40	38
	Quadrant	20	54	25
	<i>Change</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>+14</i>	<i>-13</i>

Our findings reaffirm CBAMS' conclusion that distrust in government and concerns about data confidentiality/privacy are two key barriers to participation in the 2020 Census. The audiences we surveyed said that the two biggest barriers to participating in the 2020 Census were believing that government will do whatever it wants regardless of the Census data, and that their Census data won't

be kept securely.

### ***BARRIERS***

*Questions:*

- **CBAMS 2018:** *How concerned are you, if at all, that \_\_\_\_\_?*
- **Quadrant:** *Below is a list of concerns one might have about participating in the Census. Based on what you know now, please read through each concern and select the option that best applies to you (is it a major concern, a minor concern, or not a concern?).*

*Answer choices have been grouped according to Quadrant’s survey, and it’s reflected as follows for CBAMS:*

- *Major concern = “Extremely concerned” and “Very concerned”*
- *Minor concern = “Somewhat concerned”*
- *Not a concern = “Not too concerned” and “Not at all concerned”*

*Showing % among Gen Pop*

Concern	Survey	Answer Choice	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern
<b>Confidentiality</b>	CBAMS 2018	<i>The Census Bureau will not keep answers to the 2020 Census confidential</i>	28	25	47
	Quadrant	<i>My personal information won’t be kept securely</i>	43	31	26
	<b>Change</b>		<b>+15</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>-21</b>
<b>Fear of repercussions</b>	CBAMS 2018	<i>The answers you provide to the 2020 Census will be used against you</i>	22	17	61
	Quadrant	<i>My personal information will be used against me by the government</i>	35	27	38
	<b>Change</b>		<b>+13</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>-23</b>

Our findings confirm CBAMS’ assertion that “trusted voices and organizations with deep community roots” can serve as credible messengers. After the Census Bureau, the most effective messengers are all trusted voices and organizations in the community. These voices are both attention-grabbing and credible, and give us an effective platform to talk to the community.

There isn’t a clear consensus that participating in the Census leads to community benefits. In 2018, CBAMS reported that 54% of respondents thought that participating in the 2020 Census benefits the community, while Pew reported 48%. Our research reaffirms this conclusion – only 31% of gen pop said that they strongly associate participating in the 2020 Census with community benefits, but an overall 70% either strongly or somewhat associate community benefits with the Census.

But community benefits are by far the most important motivator for participating in the Census.

### PERSONAL IMPORTANCE

Questions:

- **CBAMS 2018:** How important, if at all, is each of the following to you personally?
- **Quadrant:** Based on what you know now, of the reasons one might complete the 2020 Census, how important are the following ideas to you personally?

Showing % among Gen Pop

Reason	Survey	Extremely / Very important	Somewhat important	Not very / Not at all important	Don’t know
It determines funding for public services in my community, like schools and fire departments	CBAMS 2018 <i>Showing average across different questions (lower than forced choice)</i>	78	12	10	-
	Quadrant	56	30	10	4
	<b>Change</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>+18</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>+4</b>
It contributes to a better future for my community	CBAMS 2018	81	16	3	-
	Quadrant	52	32	12	4
	<b>Change</b>	<b>-29</b>	<b>+16</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>+4</b>
It determines how many elected representatives	CBAMS 2018	72	20	8	-
	Quadrant	51	31	12	5

<b>my state has in Congress</b>	<i>Change</i>	<i>-21</i>	<i>+11</i>	<i>+4</i>	<i>+5</i>
<b>It is my civic duty (like voting, jury duty, paying taxes)</b>	CBAMS 2018	82	14	4	-
	Quadrant	49	33	15	4
	<i>Change</i>	<i>-33</i>	<i>+19</i>	<i>+11</i>	<i>+4</i>
<b>It provides information for my local government to plan for changes in my community</b>	CBAMS 2018	75	20	5	-
	Quadrant	48	35	12	5
	<i>Change</i>	<i>-27</i>	<i>+15</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>+5</i>
<b>It is used to enforce civil rights laws</b>	CBAMS 2018	86	11	3	-
	Quadrant	43	29	18	9
	<i>Change</i>	<i>-43</i>	<i>+18</i>	<i>+15</i>	<i>+9</i>
<b>Showing pride in my cultural heritage</b>	CBAMS 2018	56	25	19	-
	Quadrant	36	27	31	6
	<i>Change</i>	<i>-20</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>+12</i>	<i>+6</i>