



Rural Census Participation Quantitative Research

September 2019





Methodology

The Benenson Strategy Group conducted a 15-minute survey of n=836 rural Missourians from August 15-27, 2019. Interviews were conducted over the phone and online

To ensure a representative cross section of rural Missouri residents, we set demographic quotas for:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Ethnicity
- ✓ Age
- ✓ County

Due to rounding, displayed answer choices may not always add up to 100%.

What we explored :

- ✓ Benchmarks for awareness, past participation, and likelihood to participate in 2020
- ✓ Specific groups that may be less likely to participate
- ✓ Apprehension surrounding certain Census questions
- ✓ Motivators to participating in the 2020 census, including:
 - ✓ Language variations in the “Calls to Action” taglines
 - ✓ Efficacy of confidentiality assurances
 - ✓ Impact of invoking specific programs on likelihood to participate



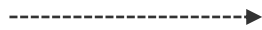
Key Findings

- The good news: 4-in-5 rural Missourians say they are “very likely” to participate in the census in 2020 and 95% of all rural Missourians are at least “somewhat likely” to participate.
 - ✓ However, the lack of certainty among 1-in-5 rural Missourians raises concerns about an undercount.
- Past census participation is a key driver of participation intent and 62% of rural Missourians both recall being counted in a past census and say they are very likely to participate this time. We should focus on the remaining 38% of rural Missourians who fall out of this category.
 - ✓ Young people – especially young men – are some of the most at-risk for non-participation. Other groups that are particularly at-risk (many of which heavily overlap with young people) include renters and parents.
- The ability to complete the census online will be crucial to a full count. While mail remains the most popular method of completion among all rural Missourians, online submission is the strong preference across key targets.
- Messaging should raise the stakes of not “being counted” by highlighting what Missouri could “lose” if there is an undercount – especially in terms of healthcare and infrastructure funding. Pointing to the state losing a seat in Congress in 2010 is also very powerful.



What to say about the census

The key line:



Be counted in the census to ensure **rural Missouri gets the funding it needs.**

How to expand on it:



For each Missourian who is not counted, **we lose \$1,300** in funding from the federal government. **Hospitals could close** and **roads could go unpaved.**

In the last census in 2010, not every Missourian was counted and we **lost a seat in Congress**, leaving our state with one less voice for Missouri in Washington D.C.

Giving the how to:



You can be counted in the census online, or by sending in your form **by mail** and the Census will **always keep your personal information private.**

Be counted in the census.

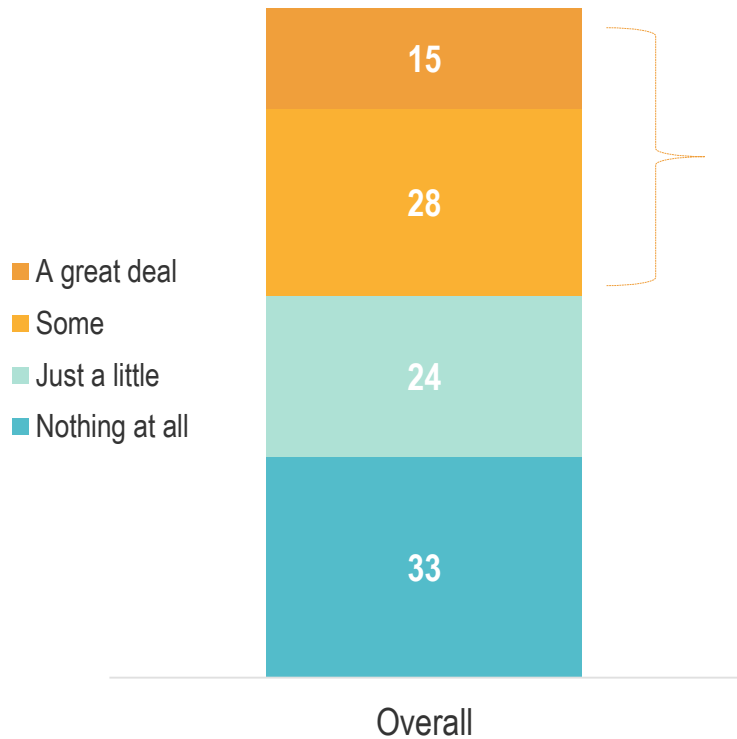


Baseline Awareness & Participation

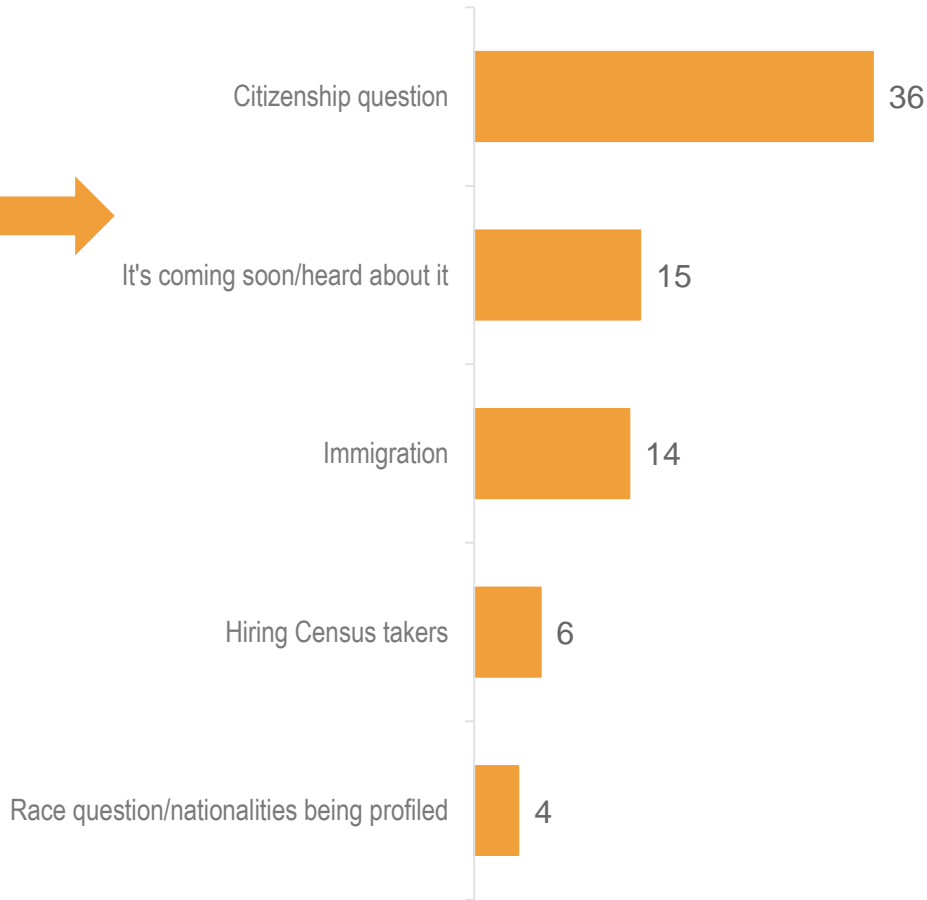


Most rural Missourians are not hearing much about the Census; If they have heard anything it is likely about the proposed citizenship question, which many confused with an “immigration” question

How much have you seen or heard about the upcoming Census in 2020?



How much have you seen or heard about the upcoming Census in 2020?



Some seemed to confuse the “citizenship” question with an “immigrant” question...

“They are going to include immigration questions.”
– White Male, 18-34

[I heard about] questions about immigration status.”
– White Female, 35-49

...while others seemed to confuse the citizenship question with the “race” question

“[I heard] about race issues.”
– White Female, 50-64

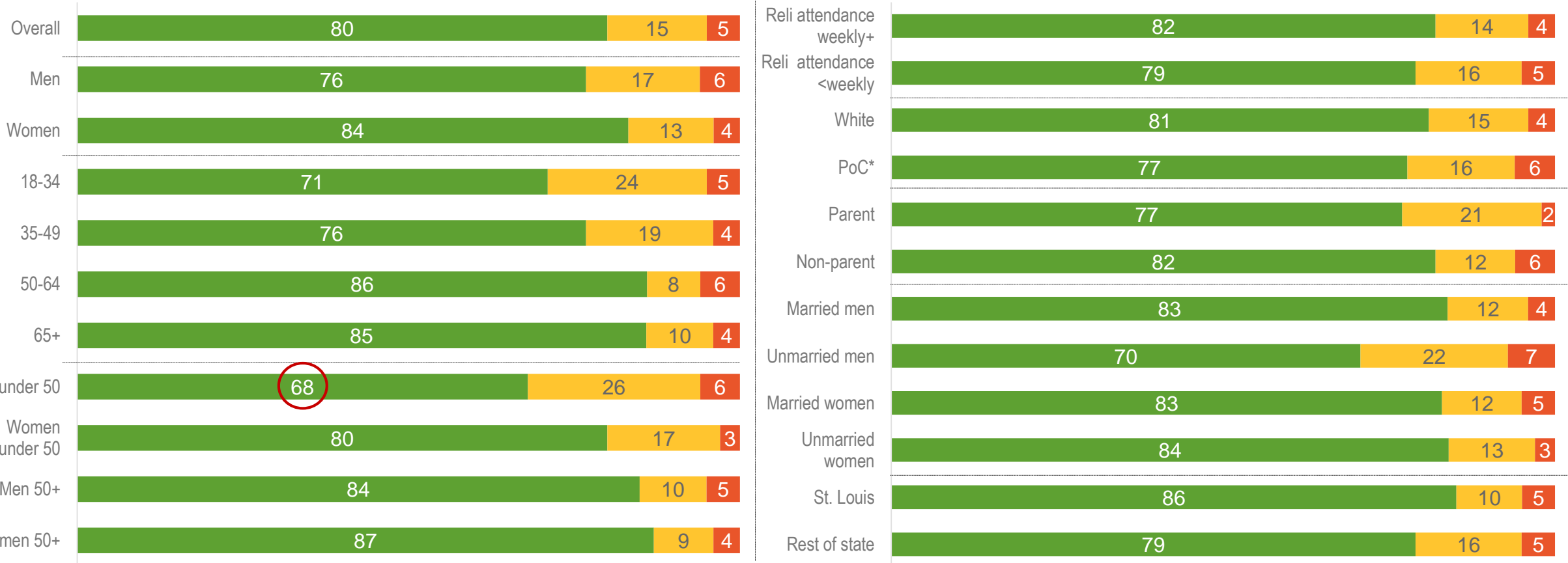
“I heard there was controversy about race being included.”
– White Female, 50-64



Strong majority of rural Missourians are “very likely” to participate, but 1-in-5 are not, leaving room for a significant undercount; young people, especially young men, are the least likely to complete

Initial likelihood to participate in the 2020 Census

Very likely Somewhat likely Total unlikely



QPARTICIP1. As you may or may not have heard, in 2020 there will be a Census in the United States to count how many people live in the country. The constitution requires the federal government conduct the Census every 10 years. It will be conducted by the United States Census Bureau, which is an independent government agency. Knowing this, how likely are you to complete and submit your Census form?

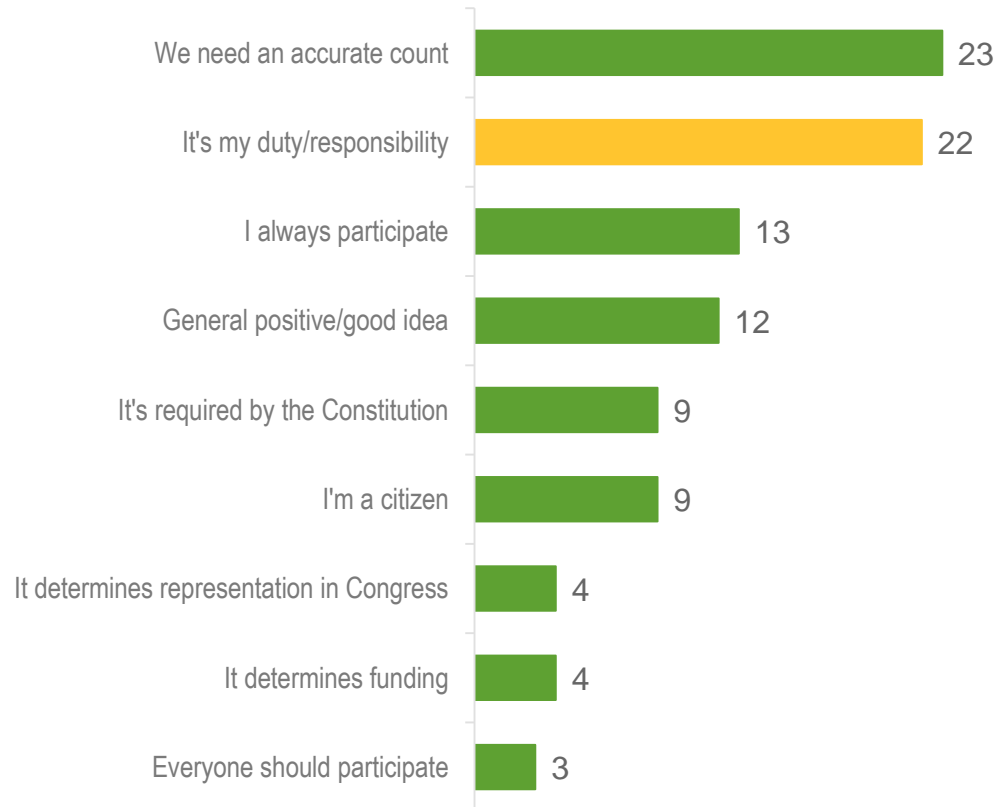
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When it comes to participating in the Census, rural Missourians are motivated by a sense of “duty” and a desire for an accurate count

What makes you say you are likely to complete and submit your Census form in the 2020 Census?

Among those who are very or somewhat likely to participate



The term “duty” was often used when they explained why they would participate...

“Because it’s my **civic duty**.”
– White Female, 50-64

“Part of my **public duty** as a citizen.”
– White Female, 35-49

“I will do my **civic duty**.”
– White Male, 35-49

“Because it’s my **civic duty** to be counted.”
– White Female, 35-49



Busy schedules and anemic interest are the primary reasons for why rural Missourians might not participate, but confusion about the census and anti-government attitudes are also a barrier

What makes you say you are not likely to complete and submit your Census form in the 2020 Census?

Among those who are very or somewhat unlikely to participate

Many had worries about their ability to complete the Census...

Too busy



Because I have 5 kids and a full-time job.
– White Female, 18-34

I will probably be too busy with school.
– White Male, 18-34

Lack of interest



Laziness.
– White Female, 18-34

I don't think it matters like voting.
– White Male, 35-49

Confusion about requirements



No ride.
– White Female, 18-34

I'm not a homeowner.
– Asian Male, 18-34

Disabilities / old age



I don't have memory and can't really write.
– White Female, 65+

Because of [my] age.
– Other Male, 65+

...while others were fearful about underlying elements

Anti-Trump



Because I hate Trump and anything to do with Trump.
– White Female, 50-64

Anti-government



F*** the government.
– White Male, 18-34

I don't trust the government.
– White Female, 35-49

Discrimination fears

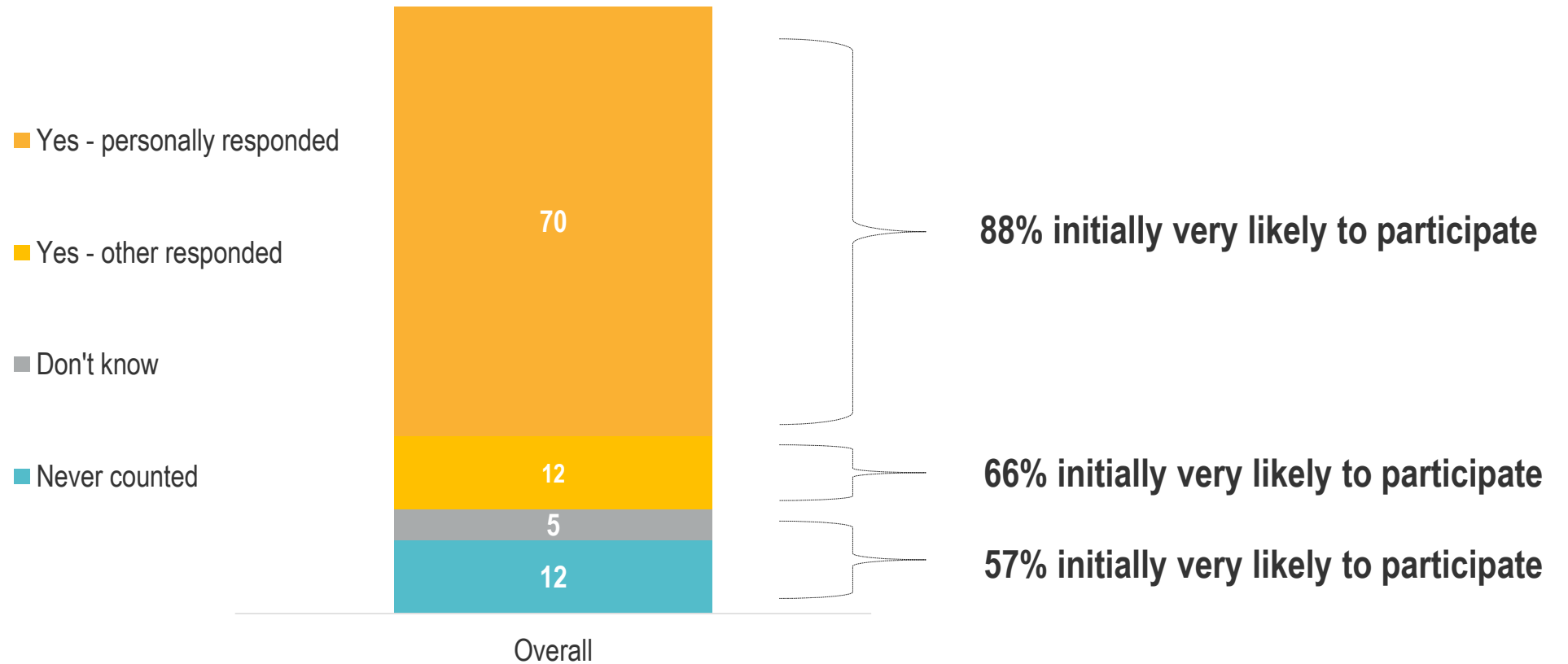


Depends on if they put something in there that would hurt other people...they might want to put something in there that would be hurtful to some race.
– White Female, 65+



History repeats itself: those who have not participated in the census in the past are less likely to do so in 2020

Participation in Past Censuses

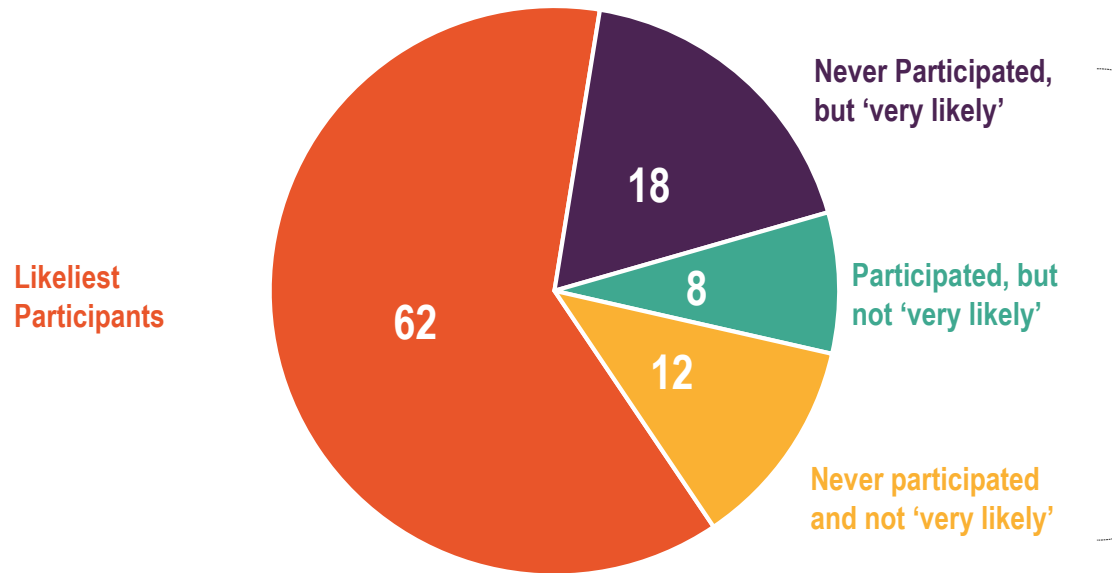


QPastCensus. To the best of your knowledge, have you ever completed and submitted the Census form in a previous year, such as in 2010, 2000, or 1990?

Q2. To the best of your knowledge have you ever been counted in the Census before because someone else in your household completed and submitted the Census form?



Outreach should focus on Missourians with no past census experience or who say they are not very likely to participate in 2020; key-in on young people (especially men), parents, and renters



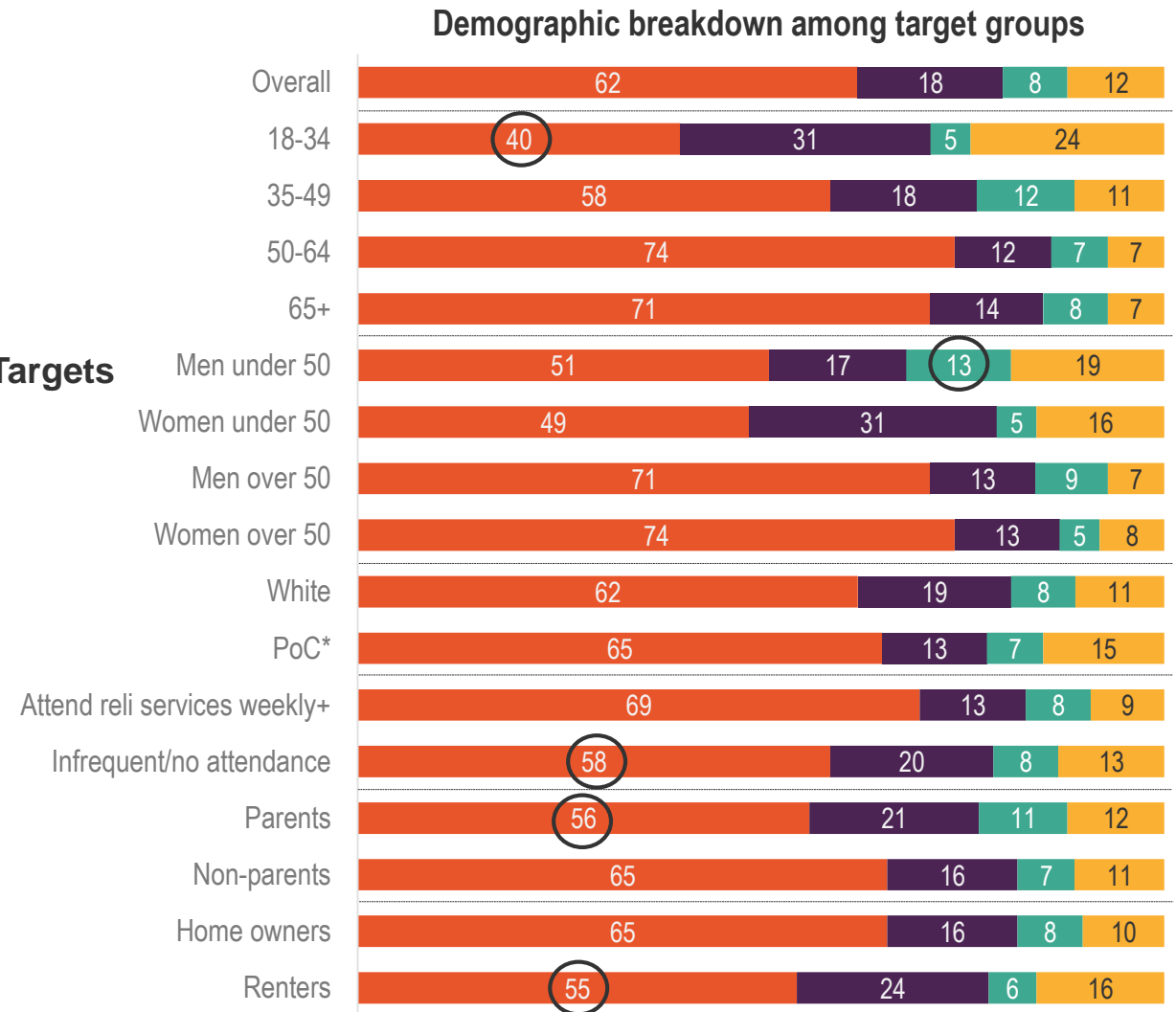
Likeliest Participants: Personally participated in a past census and were 'Very Likely' to participate in 2020

Never participated, but 'very likely': Have not personally participated in a past census, but were 'Very Likely' to participate in 2020

Participated, but not 'very likely': Personally participated in a past census, but were not 'Very Likely' to participate in 2020

Never participated and not 'very likely': Have not personally participated in a past census and were not 'Very Likely' to participate in 2020

Targets



*Base size <100, for directional use only



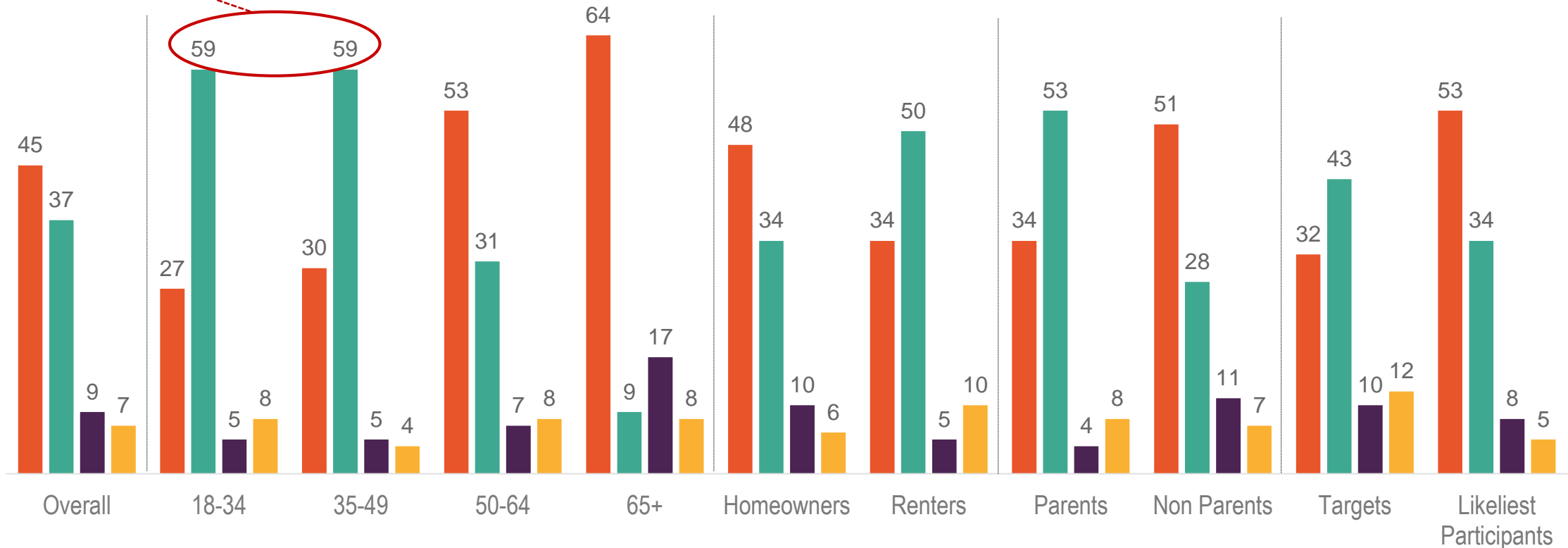
Mail remains the preferred method of completing the Census among all rural Missourians, but an online option will be essential for key audiences

Which of the following would be your preferred way to complete and submit your Census form?

Among 18-49 year olds who chose online:

- 50% prefer on a computer/laptop at home
- 45% prefer using a cell phone/other mobile device
- 5% prefer on a computer outside of their home

■ Mail-in form
 ■ Online
 ■ In-person
 ■ Phone



Q5. Which of the following would be your preferred way to complete and submit your Census form?



Folks are particularly reluctant to share their telephone number, especially young people

How likely would you be to answer a question about this on the Census?

% Definitely would answer/Total would answer	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Targets
The number of children living in your home.	80/96	73/98*	85/96	73/94*	N/A*	65/92
Your sex.	77/92	74/95	79/92	73/93	81/92	69/87
The number of people living or staying in the same house or apartment as you.	77/92	71/93	81/91	76/93	80/91	65/82
Your race.	74/89	72/86	75/90	71/86	79/92	65/82
If you own or rent your home.	68/87	66/84	70/85	63/88	73/89	58/77
Your age and date of birth.	67/83	60/79	66/82	63/82	77/87	60/76
Your first and last name.	62/77	59/75	58/69	57/79	71/84	54/68
If you are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.	61/75	70/85	75/88	56/70	48/60	53/69
Your telephone number.	30/45	25/37	22/31	28/49	43/58	25/38

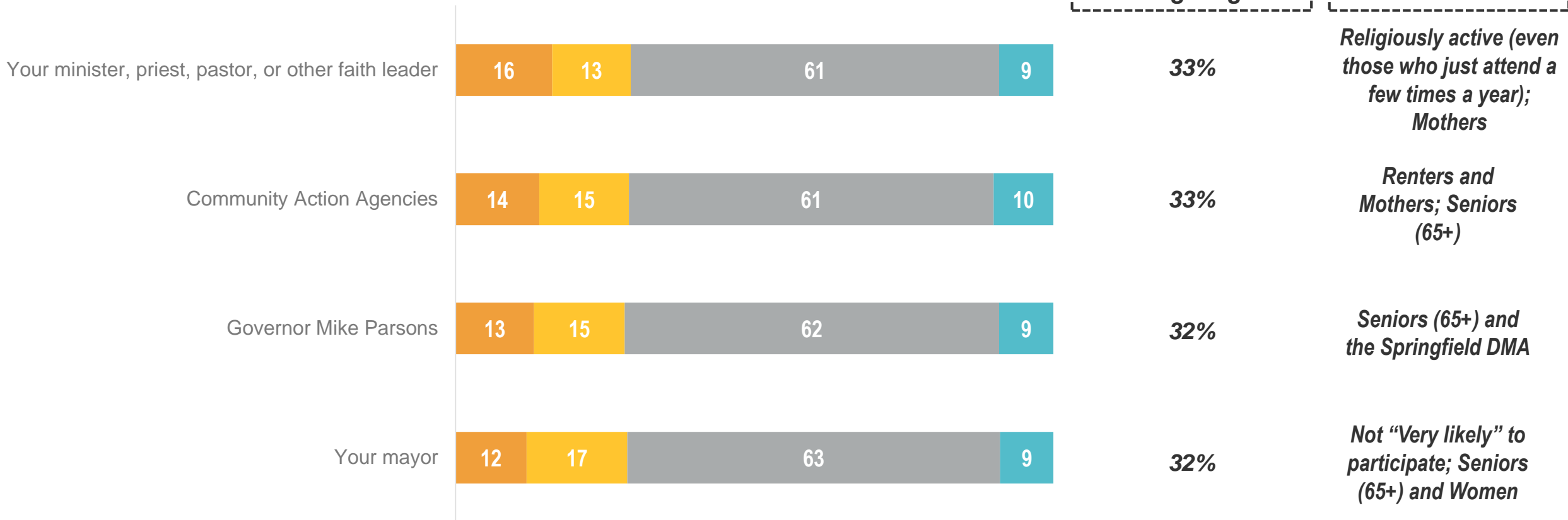


For most, messengers would not have a big impact, but they can be used in targeted ways; Mothers in particular are more responsive to encouragement from state and community leaders

If each of these people or organizations told you it was important to complete and submit your census form, would that make you more or less likely to fill out the census?

■ Much more likely
 ■ Somewhat more likely
 ■ No impact/don't know
 ■ Total less likely

Total 'more likely' among Targets **Appeals to...**



Q6-Q9. If each of these people or organizations told you it was important to complete and submit your census form, would that make you more or less likely to fill out the census?



Calls to Action



“Calls to Action” Cheat Sheet: A simple funding message is most powerful

How convincing a reason is this to complete/respond to/be counted in the Census?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Targets
...to ensure rural communities get the funding they need.	67/91	54/86
...to keep Missouri from losing another seat in Congress.	66/86	53/80
...to ensure Missouri gets enough funding to rebuild its highways and bridges.	65/89	52/81
...so we can ensure that the hard-earned tax dollars we send to Washington D.C. come back to Missouri.	65/87	49/80
...to ensure rural Missourians are counted just like the rest of the state.	64/86	51/80
...to ensure Missouri hospitals get enough funding to stay open and provide care to our most vulnerable neighbors.	63/86	54/81
...to ensure that our schools will be better funded.	63/83	56/79
...because it's a part of the constitution and my civic duty.	62/87	43/78
...so states like California don't profit off of Missouri taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars.	58/78	47/77
...because it is legally required of me.	57/83	43/75
...because we have a moral responsibility to help ensure everyone is counted.	56/81	42/71



When discussing “rural” communities, focus on tangible benefits of a full count, like funding

How convincing a reason is this to complete/respond to/be counted in the Census?

Rural Messages

Complete/respond to/be counted in the Census...	Overall	Target	Notes
RURAL – FUNDING: ...to ensure rural communities get the funding they need.	67/91	54/86	Most appealing among women
RURAL – COUNTED: ...to ensure rural Missourians are counted just like the rest of the state.	64/86	51/80	Most appealing among men and 65+; one of the worst for women

Tax Dollar Messages

Complete/respond to/be counted in the Census...	Overall	Target	Notes
TAX DOLLARS – COME BACK: ...so we can ensure that the hard-earned tax dollars we send to Washington D.C. come back to Missouri.	65/87	49/80	Most appealing among religiously active
TAX DOLLARS – CALIFORNIA: ...so states like California don't profit off of Missouri taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars.	58/78	47/77	



While all perform exceptionally well, healthcare and school-focused message are especially strong with key groups less likely to participate

How convincing a reason is this to complete/respond to/be counted in the Census?

'Help Missouri' Messages

Complete/respond to/be counted in the Census...	Overall	Target	Notes
REPRESENTATION: ...to keep Missouri from losing another seat in Congress.	66/86	53/80	Top among frequent religious service attenders
INFRASTRUCTURE: ...to ensure Missouri gets enough funding to rebuild its highways and bridges.	65/89	52/81	Top message for infrequent religious service attenders
HEALTHCARE: ...to ensure Missouri hospitals get enough funding to stay open and provide care to our most vulnerable neighbors.	63/86	54/81	Top tier message for renters
SCHOOLS: ...to ensure that our schools will be better funded.	63/83	56/79	Most appealing to ages 18-34



The Constitution and civic duty do more to convince than the law or faith-based messages

How convincing a reason is this to complete/respond to/be counted in the Census?

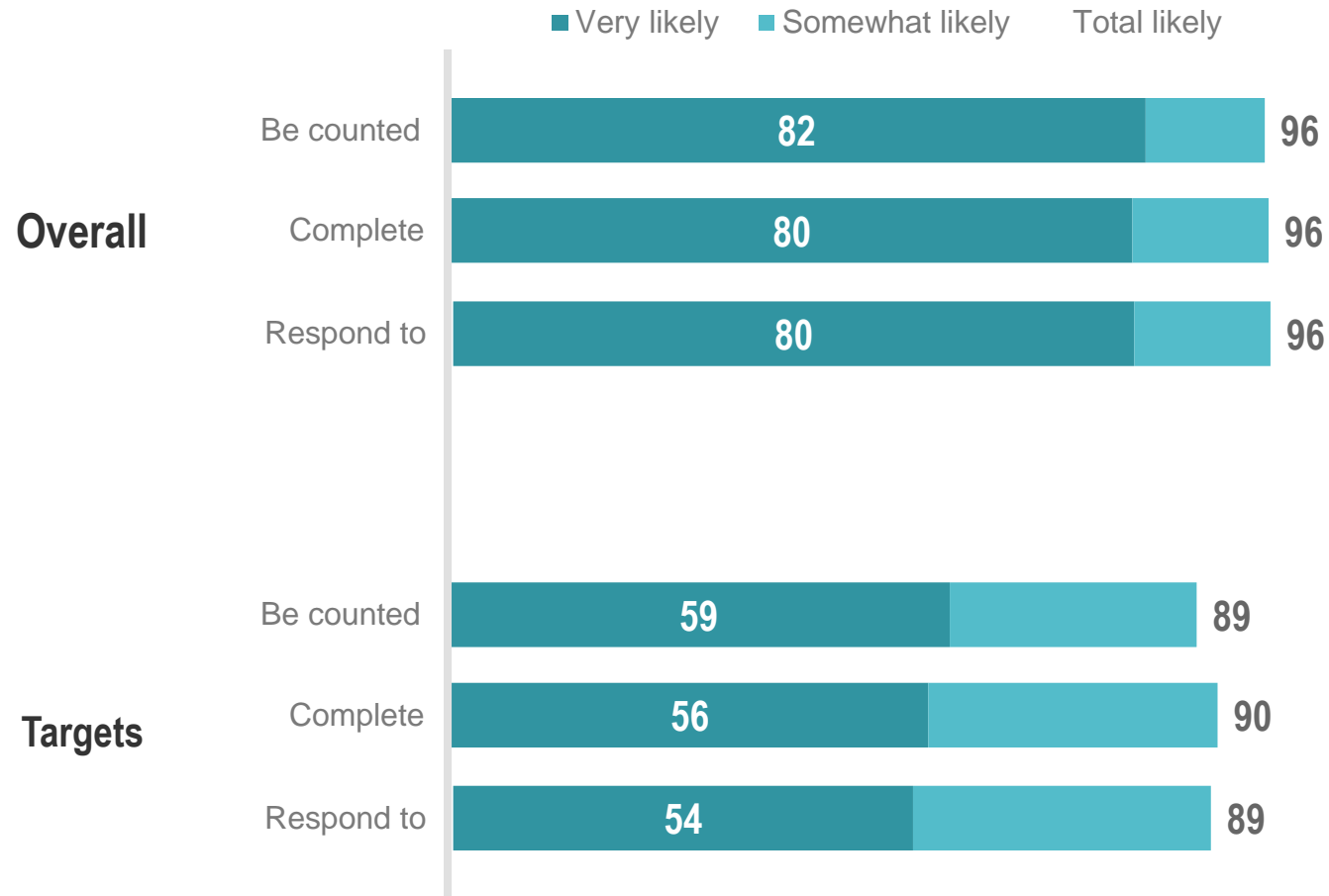
Obligation Messages

Complete/respond to/be counted in the Census...	Overall	Target	Notes
OBLIGATION – CONSTITUTION/CIVIC DUTY: ...because it's a part of the constitution and my civic duty.	62/87	43/78	Especially strong with 50-64 year olds
OBLIGATION – LEGALITY: ...because it is legally required of me.	57/83	43/75	Lower across the board, but better with women <50
OBLIGATION – FAITH: ...because we have a moral responsibility to help ensure everyone is counted.	56/81	42/71	Lower across the board, but 65+ more receptive than others



While language variations perform similarly, “be counted” has a very slight edge among targets

After hearing all of this information, how likely are you to complete and submit your Census form?
Presented with same messaging, beginning with either “Be counted in,” “Complete,” or “Respond to”





Census Facts



Simply assuring people that the Census will protect personal information does better than invoking the law

Does this make you more or less likely to complete and submit your survey in the upcoming Census or does it not have much of an impact?

% Much more likely/Total more likely	Overall	Target*	Notes
The Census will always keep your personal information private.	66/77	58/72	#1 message across almost every demo
It is illegal for the Census Bureau to share your personal information with private companies.	62/73	53/70	
The Census is required by law to keep your personal information secret.	60/76	54/75	Resonates strongest with unmarried men
It is illegal for the Census Bureau to share your personal information with other governmental agencies.	55/65	51/66	Appeals most to under 50* and parents
The Census is required by law to keep your personal information confidential.	52/71	52/70	
It is illegal for the Census Bureau to share your personal information with other governmental agencies, such as the IRS or the FBI.	52/66	49/64	
The Census is required by law to keep your personal information private.	50/70	40/72	
It is illegal for the Census Bureau to share your phone number with businesses or even governmental agencies.	41/62	24/54	



Motivators



“Motivators” Cheat Sheet

How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Much more likely/Total more likely	Overall	Targets*
HEALTHCARE—LOW COUNT MISSOURI	68/87	55/80
HEALTHCARE—NOT COUNTED RURAL MISSOURI	67/87	59/87
REPRESENTATION	65/88	57/86
HEALTHCARE—LOW COUNT RURAL MISSOURI	65/87	47/82
TAX DOLLARS—GIVES UP	65/83	55/75
TAX DOLLARS—LOSES	64/89	52/86
HEALTHCARE—MEDICAID	64/86	41/78
CHILDREN —AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS	63/87	43/81
INFRASTRUCTURE – TRADITIONAL	63/86	42/80
TAX DOLLARS – RECEIVES	62/87	46/81

% Much more likely/Total more likely	Overall	Targets*
PROGRAMS – HIGHWAYS	61/88	39/79
TAX DOLLARS – 16.5 BILLION	61/86	48/79
HEALTHCARE—NOT COUNTED MISSOURI	57/84	48/81
CHILDREN—FREE LUNCH	57/80	56/79
PROGRAMS—CHIP	56/82	52/84
INFRASTRUCTURE—ELECTRIC	55/82	37/73
INFRASTRUCTURE – USDA	53/82	33/69
BUSINESS	49/81	42/73
FAITH LEADERS	45/72	40/69
PROGRAMS—SNAP	44/74	36/64
INFRASTRUCTURE – PARKS	43/73	35/70



Overall, healthcare and hospital-based messages performed the best

How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Target*
HEALTHCARE – LOW COUNT MISSOURI: A low Census count means hospitals across Missouri could close, forcing people to drive hours to receive the care they need.	68/87	55/80
HEALTHCARE – NOT COUNTED RURAL MISSOURI: When not everyone is counted, hospitals in rural Missouri could close, forcing people to drive hours to receive the care they need.	67/87	59/87
HEALTHCARE – LOW COUNT RURAL MISSOURI: A low Census count means hospitals in rural Missouri could close, forcing people to drive hours to receive the care they need.	65/87	47/82
HEALTHCARE – MEDICAID: The Census count determines how much funding health care programs like Medicaid receive.	64/86	41/78
HEALTHCARE – NOT COUNTED MISSOURI: When not everyone is counted, hospitals across Missouri could close, forcing people to drive hours to receive the care they need.	57/84	48/81



Threat of lost funding is more powerful than talking about what Missouri stands to gain

How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Target*
TAX DOLLARS – GIVES UP: For every Missourian that goes uncounted, Missouri gives up over \$2,600** in federal dollars.	65/83	55/75
TAX DOLLARS – LOSES: For every Missourian that goes uncounted, Missouri loses \$2,600** in federal dollars.	64/89	52/86
TAX DOLLARS – RECEIVES: For every Missourian that gets counted, Missouri receives over \$2,600** in federal dollars.	62/87	46/81
TAX DOLLARS – \$16.5 BILLION: Missouri gets over \$16.5 billion a year from the federal government based on how many people complete the Census.	61/86	48/79

*Base size <100, for directional use only

**Our poll tested \$2,600 based on the thinking that this was an updated number for the impact of an individual's participation - we strongly believe \$1,300 will be equally effective



After healthcare, infrastructure is second biggest motivator; keep the message simple by focusing on things like roads getting paved

How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Target*
INFRASTRUCTURE – TRADITIONAL: The Census count determines how many roads get paved and bridges get built.	63/86	42/80
PROGRAMS – HIGHWAYS: The Census count determines how much funding goes to important programs, such as the Highway Planning and Construction program.	61/88	39/79
INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC: The Census count determines which areas get much needed upgrades to their electric infrastructure, including better internet.	55/82	37/73
PROGRAMS – U.S.D.A.: The U.S.D.A. Business and Industry Loan Program provides loans to small and rural businesses based on Census counts.	53/82	33/69
PROGRAMS – SNAP: The Census count determines how much funding goes to important programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, sometimes known as SNAP or food stamps.	44/74	36/64
INFRASTRUCTURE – PARKS: The Census count determines how many parks and playgrounds get built.	43/73	35/70



One of the strongest messages, representation certainly strikes a chord among rural Missourians; faith leaders are relatively less helpful in driving the importance of participating

How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Target*
<p>REPRESENTATION: In 2010, low Census counts resulted in Missouri losing a seat in Congress, leaving the state with one less voice for Missouri in Washington D.C.</p>	65/88	57/86
<p>BUSINESS: Businesses make important decisions by using Census data, such as where to open new locations or find a workforce.</p>	49/81	42/73
<p>FAITH LEADERS: Faith leaders across Missouri are calling on members their faith communities to be counted in the census to ensure their towns get the resources they need.</p>	45/72	40/69



Potentially spooked by the term “free,” children’s after school programs are slightly more persuasive than the idea of ensuring free lunch

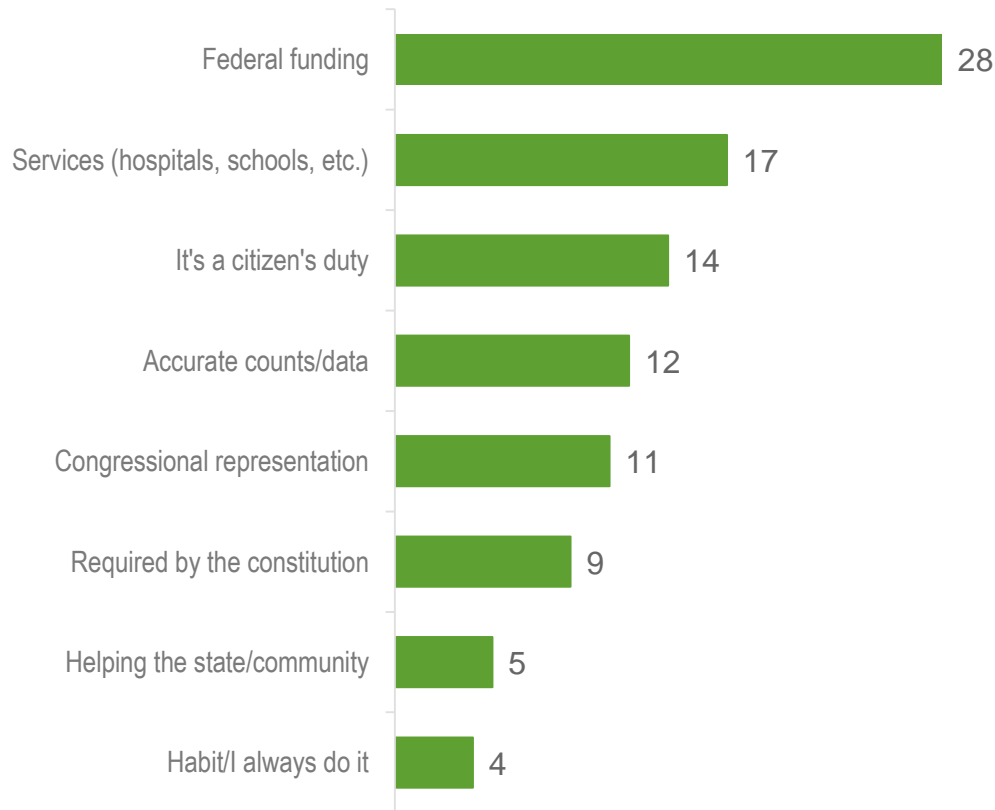
How convincing a reason is this to complete and submit your Census survey?

% Very convincing/Total convincing	Overall	Target*	Notes
CHILDREN – AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS: The Census count determines how much funding goes towards after school programs for Missouri's children.	63/87	43/81	Unsurprisingly, these messages are far more powerful with parents
CHILDREN – FREE LUNCH: The Census count determines how many Missouri children get free lunch at school.	57/80	56/79	
PROGRAMS – CHIP: The Census count determines how many Missouri children get health insurance through programs like the Children's Health Insurance Program, otherwise known as CHIP.	56/82	52/84	

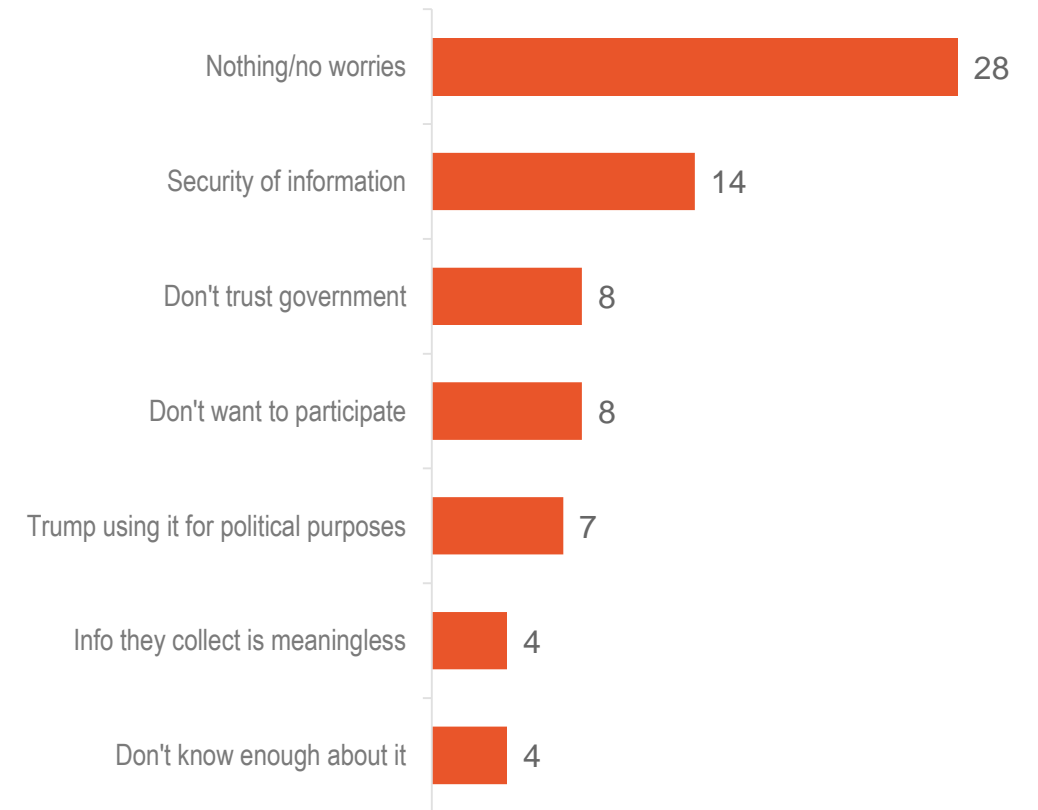


Over a quarter of those 'very likely' to participate cited federal funding as the most convincing reason why, while information security gave some people pause

What is the most convincing thing you heard about why to participate?
Among those who are 'very likely' to participate at end of survey



What worries you the most about participating?
Among those who are not 'very likely' to participate at end of survey



Q62X. What is the most convincing thing you heard about why to participate?

Q63X. What worries you the most about participating?



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Thank You

